

# **The People's Movement**

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News Magazine of the National Alliance of People's Movements

## **Global Resistance for Justice: Relevance and Role of World Social Forum**

**Globalisation and Internationalism**

**Here And There**

**An Open Space.....**

**WSF: Process & Understanding**

**WSF: An Explosion of Expression**

**WSF: An Imperialist Design**

## Contents

<b>We Start Again...</b>	<b>1</b>
From The National Coordinator <b>A Collective Task</b> <i>Medha Patkar</i>	<b>1</b>
Editorial Comments <b>Unemployment and Ethnic Convulsions</b> <b>For a New Political Force</b> <b>Trishul or Geeta?</b>	<b>2</b> <b>3</b> <b>4</b>
Current Affairs <b>Assembly Elections: Manipulating Popular Emotions</b> <i>Surendra Mohan</i>	<b>5</b>
Analysis <b>New Ideology and Politics</b> <i>Sanjay Sangvai</i>	<b>6</b>
Cover Story <b>Globalisation and Internationalism</b> <i>Thomas Kocherry</i>	<b>9</b>
<b>Here and There</b> <i>Sanjay Mangala Gopal</i>	<b>11</b>
<b>An Open Space.... To Relate, Debate, Reflect, Celebrate....</b> <i>Meena Menon</i>	<b>12</b>
<b>The WSF Process and its Understanding</b> <i>Vijay Pratap</i>	<b>15</b>
Open Forum	<b>18</b>
Interviews <b>WSF: An Explosion of Expression</b> <i>Anand Mazgaonkar</i>	<b>21</b>
<b>WSF: An Imperialist Design</b> <i>Rajani X. Desai</i>	<b>22</b>
News Capsules	<b>23</b>
Book Review <b>The Truth, If You Dare</b> <i>P. Aravinda</i>	<b>26</b>

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# We Start Again...

We are happy to announce the renewed publication of the bimonthly bulletin, *The People's Movement*, earlier published as 'NAPM Bulletin'. National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) has been trying to coordinate the people's struggles, their issues and striving to shape an integrated new ideology and politics of just, equitable and sustainable development. We hope that *The Movement* will be a medium for this new awakening.

Initially, the NAPM friends in Kolkata brought out quarterly *NAPM Bulletin* regularly despite the financial difficulties, under the erudite eye of Prof. A.N. Bose. Sukhendu Bhattacharya, Subhashish Mukhopadhyay and colleagues helped in this. It soon became a veritable reference source for the activists and journalists alike. Later the *Bulletin* was shifted to Bangalore where veteran trade unionist

Babu Mathew and P. Babu gave it new flavour. It was decided to shift the bulletin to Mumbai and bring it out as *The People's Movement*. The new editorial and production team is indebted indeed to all those involved in the publication of the NAPM Bulletin. We are sure that the new team too will get the support of all those who stood with NAPM, its ideals and activities.

There is need to bring out varied aspects – from political, economic to culture – inherent in the new consciousness that is being developed through various movements and struggles against existing ways of development and decline of democracy in India. These struggles have also been shaping a new politics of development. *The Movement* will try to be a medium for this new, dynamic and creative churning.

It will essentially be journalistic endeavour, a newsmagazine for people's movements and issues – a reflection of real, dynamic and contemporary India, which is being neglected, ridiculed and jeered at by the glossy corporate media. Such a task will be possible only with your help. You can help with small, factual or analytical write-ups about the issues, events in / about your area / work or some pressing ideological issue. And we await for your feedback and critical appraisal also.

## Editorial Team

*From the National Coordinator*

## A Collective Task

The rapid changes in the polity, economy, the culture and environment around us are beyond ones comprehension. Whether it is the glaring appropriation of our common natural resource by the corporate powers, total deterioration of the electoral politics, or the vulgar consumerist culture among the handful of elite and the utter destitution faced by the displaced and the downtrodden or the criminal injustice and violence against the dalits and adivasis and minorities, the impact on each ones life, livelihood, social psyche and security is startling and threatening and at the same time challenging. Those facing the backlash of all this in the name of development, governance or nationalism can't

afford to be just stunned and mute witness. They know the issue is of survival that can't be attained and sustained without a struggle – to save our land, water, forest, life and livelihood. A struggle that millions in this country are in and carrying forward, the struggles by the socially, economically and politically disadvantaged – women and men, organized and unorganized, thus weave not just a network but also a vision of reconstruction, of rebuilding a world of equality, justice and peace.

Together, therefore, all of them committed to such a holistic transformation help evolve the movement. In this world of global powers making the sovereign nation states subservient, the movement can't be just local. In order to have an impact, it needs spread and strength through alliances – national and global. This is the dream of the National Alliances of People's Movements or the forum such as the World Social Forum. Rooted into the communities, we would surely have to challenge the WTO or wherever there is, a resistance against imperialism and colonialism, beyond the artificial borders. The movement must be with a widest range of citizens,

activists and organizations contributing in their own way to the egalitarian society, democratic socialist polity, sustainable natural resource harnessing and a non-violent stream of humanity, which is our hope and horizon.

Introducing *The People's Movement*, a bi-monthly publication reflecting the views, the news and the vision of this family of us all, will serve a special purpose. Weaving through the issues and experiences of the struggles, we will put together a critique of the actors and forces around us, along with critique of our failures and limitations, priorities and plans. It will try and respect the plurality and diversity, underlining the unity and commonality of ideologies and strategies. For this, hundreds of activists, writers, researchers and supporters will have to come forward, join us, share with us and take this beyond our own reach.

Through strengthening and empowering the civil society we aim at converting this effort into a challenge to the corrupt, criminal, corporatised politics. We would, therefore, strive to respond to social dissent, processes, major political-economic decision and action. While remaining committed to a much wider people's politics, that may not be always attractive enough to seek place at the public book stalls, we hope certainly to carve our own niche, amidst the glaring media, as a medium of just communication and humane transformation.

#### *Editorial Comments*

## Unemployment and Ethnic Convulsions

The assaults on about thirty North-East passengers in trains in Bihar in the middle of November, which led to massive retaliatory killings of Biharis in Assam, have shown up some major fault lines in the political, economic and cultural fabric of our country. These can break open and erupt into massive quakes again and again, unless underlying root-causes are effectively addressed. If the situation is neglected, Assam can go into further anti-foreigner convulsions, switching from Hindi speakers to Bengalis or Bangladeshis. The alienation of citizens from the North-East vis-à-vis mainland India can also grow to unmanageable proportions any time. Identity politics can carry the day and become destructive to the detriment of respect for life and livelihood and unity of the working classes. While Bihar was fast in quelling the violence, which was originally triggered by preventing Biharis from writing exams for Class D posts in the railways in Maligaon in Assam on Nov 9th, 03, the Assamese government was not effective in controlling the ULFA and AASU, as well as some other groups involved in killing and looting. However, the "alleged" rape of a Naga college student in the Guwahati Dadar Express near Jamalpur and threats against a below fourteen girls sports team from Nagaland, caused ripples in Kohima as well.

Our team of volunteers and volunteers alone, will work day and night to achieve this but not without your contribution, cooperation, criticism and subscription, all for our common cause.

It's only more than appropriate and deliberate that the first and the foremost issue of *The Movement* is on and about the World Social Forum. It is the process of unification of the people's efforts towards redefining our world perspective asserting our human values and emergence of an alternative political force. Let's share this faith and join the people across the world through actions – small and big – towards its realization. *The People's Movement*, I sincerely hope, will help inspire us to do so.

**Medha Patkar**

In Mumbai, the Shiv Sena was fast to point out that rising unemployment is the root cause. In this, it was on the right track, together with the left parties so to say. However, it's adamant harping on the "sons of the soil" issue fanned the violence in Assam and worked into the hands of chauvinistic forces there. The brunt was born by the Bihari truck-drivers, workers and traders, over fifty of whom lost their lives, while thousands lost property and livelihood. The "protective" closure of brick-kilns in Assam must have affected many thousands of families from Musaffarpur and Chhapra in disastrous ways, as people from this region regularly depend on this migratory work during this season.

While the economic aspect has to do with liberalisation policies causing rising unemployment and coveted government jobs becoming more and more scarce, the political aspect is connected with fragmenting of the railways administration into seventeen zones and the fact that successive railway ministers have used this decentralisation to cater to their regional constituencies. Such regional politics is not necessarily a democratising element, as we have painfully learned over recent years.

It can strengthen language and caste chauvinisms and ultimately ally with fascist forces at the centre. The "peace politics" of the central government in Nagaland plays with Naga identity politics in dangerous ways. It neglects the volatile situation in adjacent states and promises "development" by means of a multi-thousand crore

thermal power-project, as announced during the prime ministers recent visit to Kohima.

This points to the deeper going economic agendas underlying the present crisis. The real survival issues of people, like creation of work places together with the protection of the resource base of water, forest and land, remain un-addressed and unresolved. The North-East of our country is most rich in water resources and bio-diversity. Multinational corporations are only too eager to appropriate these resources, and the government is willing to cater to their interests. The recent chaos in Assam distracts from these very basic issues. We only hear of killings in these parts, but not of the valiant struggles against big dam projects like Pagladia and Tipaimukh-dams.

However, there is a silver line. The people of Assam came out in impressive numbers mobilising for peace, sanity and human dignity. If fragmentation and violence are not to carry the day, such aspirations working for democracy and working class unity must be forged into a political force. Only then, the resource base can be protected. Only then, further militarisation can be prevented.

G. D

## For A New Political Force

The outcome of the Assembly Elections in five state of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi along with Mizoram are pointers to the changing nature of politics in India. The elections have demonstrated the superiority of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in political management, strategy planning and execution. It has exposed the complacency, hollowness of Congress Party's organization and planning. Other parties like Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) or the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) were useful in cutting the votes in favour of BJP. These elections have consolidated the *status quo* politics.

It may seem that the progressive/radical politics has little space in this hurricane. But even in that hurricane, the valiant

comrade of people's movements like Dr. Sunilam (Samajwadi Party) won from Multai, while Janaklal Thakur (Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha), Fagram (Samajwadi Jan Parishad) were polled 25,000 to 10,000 votes and came to third position in respective elections. Ms. Shamim (SJP) did also make impact. All these comrades are either poor or belong to middle-class. Without any money and muscle power, without big leaders, big meetings and big parties all these comrades were able to make a decisive impact in their constituencies. It is a sign of hope that the people do vote for those parties or individuals who raise the basic issues of life, livelihood, rights and justice.

The people's movements in India while have been concerned with the electoral politics also. However, since 1980s they have been participating in elections under their own banner or joining some political party suitable for their ideas or disposition. It is a time to make some decisive impact on the electoral politics, while strengthening the people's politics and people's power, which is the ultimate *raison d'etre* of the people's movements. There is a need that the movements should have/control an electoral apparatus, which shares their views and visions. Such an electoral outfit will

need the guidance, sustenance and mass-base from the people's movements.

Politics is any action or process effecting a change in the power relations and decision making power. The actions and struggle by the non-party formation too is a politics, since it attempts to change the decision-making and power relations within the given system. There is a need to widen and improve such a support-structure. Such a formal-informal, flexible and all-pervading associations are the major strength of any political party, which other parties lack. Therefore, the radical political parties must encourage such a people's politics. And there should be a manifest and not-so-manifest coordination between these diverse entities of the progressive politics.

## Trishul or Geeta?

On June 6 2003, when Vishwa Hindu Parishad was to organize *trishul diksha* in Sultanpur, Loktantrik Samajwadi Party decided to distribute Geeta instead. Whereas *trishul* (trident) represented an aggressive religious ideology, Geeta was a symbol of restraint and modesty. *Trishul diksha*, something which cannot be justified by any of the Hindu *shastras*, just like the temple of Ram alone cannot be, has been adopted by Vishwa Hindu Parishad as a medium to try to raise the Hindu communal temperatures. It is part of the exercise to repeat Gujarat experiment elsewhere, as already declared by the Sangh Parivar. Geeta, a truer representative of Hindu *dharma*, was chosen because it presents probably one of the finest examples of how one can practice the core values of *satya* (truth) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) in real life. In a battle between people wanting peace and harmony and people who want to resort to violence and hatred, the common Hindu must decide which side s(he) is on. S(he) cannot be a mere spectator in what is an attempt to change how the Hindu religion is going to be perceived by the rest of the world. The common Hindu must decide what the core values of his/her religion are and must speak out to defend them. S(he) has to tell the world who s(he) considers are the true representatives of the Hindu religion.

If the Hindu religion and culture have survived for the longest time in the history of civilization it is not because of its aggressive properties but because of its accommodative nature, which on one hand allows new ideas to be born within itself and on the other absorbs external ideas. Co-existence, not confrontation, is the essence of culture of this land. It has never harboured expansionist ambitions, neither felt insecure because of external aggression. It has rather taken things in stride. After going through a number of ups and downs today we still find that the majority of the people continue to live in the mainstream culture of this land, which itself is a wide spectrum of diversity. Not only we survive but also remain a vibrant culture. Is that a mean achievement?

The media and trite analysts find 'developmental agenda' in the campaigns of both the BJP and Congress. Development is something larger than mere *bijli-sadak-pani* mantra, that is being repeated *ad nauseum*. Nobody mentions the displacement, destitution, unsustainable production and consumption patterns. The political party/parties based on the vibrant people's movements can make the people understand the true meaning and limitations of development.

S.S.

So what is this threat that the Hindutva organizations warn us against? Who do we need the trishul for? It doesn't appear anything more than an instrument of politics. The religion is being abused for politics and violence being justified in its name is a pity. More serious is, however, the threat that this exercise poses to our value system. In the programme at Sultanpur the copies of Vinoba Bhave's *Geeta pravachan* distributed were purchased from donations by Muslim friends. There were Muslims both among distributors as well as receivers. That day Gita represented the value of tolerance and Hindu-Muslim unity. Fortunately, the people who participated in the Geeta distribution programme outnumbered the ones who went to *trishul diksha* by eight times. Hopefully, the larger society will preserve the sanity of our culture.

A.D.

# Assembly Elections: Manipulating Popular Emotions

Surendra Mohan

General elections were held for Mizoram, Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh State Assemblies. Except in Mizoram and Delhi, the ruling party lost the election which, in the case of these States, was the Congress Party. This election has created the prospect of the emergence of a two party polity. The BJP suffered a setback here, although it had come into power in Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, as part of State- level broad fronts. It had hoped that this circumstance would boost its image in the entire region.

In M.P., the Congress Party was in power since 1993. When the anti- incumbency factor which has generally operated in the general elections since the late 1980's, except in a few cases, ousted the ruling parties in all other States in 1998, the Congress Party's Government survived in this State. Therefore, this factor operated even more strongly here. It was reflected in the noticeable difference of over 9% in the votes polled it and the victorious BJP. This difference of votes between the two Parties hovers around 3% in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, putting the victories of the BJP in these States into proper perspective.

Somehow, political analysts have not looked at the results of the previous (1999) parliamentary general election in these States. This election was held 18 months after the elections to the State Assemblies. One feature of that election was that it was held in the wake of the Kargil conflict and the patriotic sentiments had influenced it,

somewhat. However, the performance of the two Parties in this election is given below:

Chhattisgarh (which was then part of M.P.):	BJP 10; Congress Party 3
Madhya Pradesh	BJP 21; Congress Party 8
Rajasthan	BJP 15; Congress Party 9

The overwhelming number of the MPs of the BJP from these States could not but bestow greater clout on the Party than the few MPs of the Congress Party.

Since the anti- incumbency factor has, as usual, played an important role in these elections, then one need not be surprised by the defeats that the Congress Party has suffered in these three States. The Congress Party came into power in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Assam, Orissa, Kerala, Rajasthan and Delhi owing to the same factor.

This factor has failed to dislodge the United Front Government from power in West Bengal from 1977 until now. In Bihar, Laloo Prasad's Party has held on to power from 1990 until now. In Gujarat, the BJP returned to power last year, defying the anti incumbency factor. Delhi's Congress Government has retained power in the recent election, but observers explain it to be the operation of this factor against the Union Government for the reason that maintenance of law and order, housing and several medical and higher educational institutions are under that Government. Here is a strong warning against over- emphasising the anti- incumbency factor. Obviously, trained cadres imbued with a sense of mission or capable of manipulating popular emotions can also help win elections.

The danger from the RSS lies here: in its capacity to manipulate sentiment with the help of trained cadres. It can be defeated on a long- term basis, not by a combination of cadre-less secular political parties or a combination of small, localised people's groups, but by recruiting workers from among the youth and training them in a definite ideology. Yet, electoral coalitions of like-minded parties and groups might be formed to ensure the defeat of the BJP and its opportunistic allies.

For instance, an electoral understanding among the Congress Party, the Nationalist Congress party and the Samajwadi Party could deprive the BJP,

victory in 17 constituencies. In Chhattisgarh, the 7% vote polled by the NCP, added with the Congress Party's, could ensure the defeat of the BJP in 15 constituencies. But, then, it can be logically asked as to how such aggregations of the votes are realistic in a society where considerations of caste and community and the personal pull of the candidates also count? On the other hand, the 20-25% non-BJP and non-Congress vote cannot be dismissed as negligible.

Some observers have commented that the BJP kept stressing on developmental issues, while keeping its 'core' issues in the background. They wish that the BJP adopts this attitude for all the coming elections. However, it appears that this wish has influenced their analyses. Uma Bharati is herself

a personification of Hindutva. Narendra Modi not only campaigned but also over five thousand of the workers from Gujarat were on duty in hundreds of villages in M.P. and Rajasthan, with their message of Godhra. The oath taking by the two Chief Ministers was held in a manner that only belied the hopes of these observers.

*(Surendra Mohan is the editor of Janata, and a senior Socialist)*

*Analysis*

# New Ideology and Politics

Sanjay Sangvai

The new social movements in India and many parts of the Third and First world, particularly in the 1980s onwards, have been blending of various burning contemporary issues, aspirations and principles. They are challenging the conventional developmental model prevalent in the capitalist mode of production and consumption. They have developed a formidable critique of one or more aspects of the current development project, policy or paradigm. The seemingly 'negation' carved out some parameters what the development should be like. The resistance against the Silent Valley, Narmada and Tehri dams, the issues emerging out of Bhopal Gas tragedy, the resistance to the multinational and national capitalist forces, the struggles of tribals, fisherpeople, labourers and peasants, Dalits and other backward classes, the campaigns for peace and communal harmony or the new constructive movements for alternatives in water, energy, education and health etc. have all added different dimensions to the struggles.

The quest for the New Development is very much contemporary, forward looking approach towards an enriched life for all. Various aspects of such a new development have been evolving in a diverse ways. Very briefly, we can delineate some parameters and basic presumptions of the new vision.

## Environment and Democracy As Development

The new movements have reiterated that the development *also* envisages the equality and the exercise of the democratic rights. The techno-economic aspect becomes conditioned to *other equally valid aspects of development* and need to be changed due to the consideration of political, cultural or social justice and equality, that equally constitutes 'the development'.

Along with the profitability and production, the issues like employment for the eligible persons, rights of life and livelihood and the environmental sustainability become important. Right over the resources - land forest and water - become a key issue in the development process. The environmental values too become the intrinsic part of the development. The ecological and environmental values and policies are necessary to enrich the quality of the life of *all* the people. The forest, tree cover, unpolluted water sources and water-bodies, the pure air are necessary for the good life for all, and particularly the depressed sections of the population, as that is the only aspect of the life on which they have an equal right as human beings and citizens; it becomes a major necessary condition for the material development of all.

## Economy of Permanence

The revolutionary politics – either Socialism or Communism - primarily emphasized on the distribution and redistribution of the

social assets and production. The new movements are now questioning the very process and technology of the production. The unequal and unfair distribution also partly stems from process and technology of production.. The sustainable and equitable production, distribution is linked with the consumption pattern.

On the other hand, the movements have started the process of critical evaluation of the existing and ongoing projects, and have exposed the high claims of benefits in many a projects. These movements have been instrumental in challenging the archaic and stubborn ways of thinking amounting almost to superstitions in the name of development and science.

Number of affordable and sustainable alternatives based on the people's knowledge and participation has been pro-pounded. About marketing also, the new efforts have been concentrating on the primacy of the demand and supply on the local and regional levels, without denying the wider interactions. The alternative models for small scale and cottage industrialization, education system and content and alternative health system have been experimented by hundreds of dedicated groups all over India.

The conventional view regarding the science and technology is being replaced with the critical and broad understanding of these issues. The knowledge base of every community and in every period becomes a valid knowledge on the basis of certain universal values. This has led to the variety and diversity of the knowledge base and enriches it further. The movements have brought out integrated nature of the various aspects of the development.

The exploration of a more humane, equitable, environmentally sustainable development paradigm would invariably lead to different concepts regarding the

technology, economy, needs, lifestyle and consumption. On the macro-level, these movements have been striving for securing the rights, resources and decision-making power in the hands of community rather than the State or the Market.

### **Lifestyle Debate**

Here inevitably comes the issue of the lifestyle. It is a matter of the personal and social priorities. For providing equal life necessities for all, on a sustainable basis the society will have to demarcate the extent of the permissible consumption for the individuals. It is a need for India and for almost all the parts of the world, to set a upper ceiling to the consumption – to conserve our scarce natural resources and for distributive justice. Restricting the consumption is not denying the basic needs and comforts of the have-nots. Instead, it is aimed at making available these life-sustaining comforts for *all*, within the overall resource matrix we could have.

The rampant consumerism can be allowed only in a centralised and dictatorial system. It is but an extension of the capitalism and commercialization. It is naive to believe that the consumerism occurs only because people need it. It is also an imposed and loaded choice.

The Alternative lifestyle strives for a really aesthetic, enriched economic, social and cultural life. It gives spaces for more diverse and authentic expressions of aesthetic and cultural values of individual and communities, the productive capacities and creativity in various individuals and groups, along with providing a dignified livelihood for them within the system itself.

### **The State And Governance**

Almost all such movements have been insisting on the decentralizing of the authority and governance, to make it more democratic and people oriented. The a-centralized polity seems to be the best answer for the grassroot democracy. The movements are also aware of the limits and perils inherent in mere decentralization if it is not accompanied with the equality among the villagers/community and the environmental sustainability in its approach towards the development. In the present global scenario, it has become necessary to have a 'state', to counter the onslaughts of the global capital and other hegemonic forces. The movements are insisting that the state and governance should be just, rational and according to the rule of law and insist that the state must act on behalf of the victimized and depressed classes. The movements also have criticized the Indian judiciary for not protecting the fundamental and constitutional rights and rule of law. The increasing democratisation, identity and assertion among the hitherto depressed classes is questioning the prevalent concept of nation.

### **Non-Violent, Non-Party Politics**

The struggles have been exploring the ways to make the non-violent

Satyagraha more effective, intensive and wider. The non-violent mass struggle has been a deliberate choice by most of the organizations - both as a strategy and as a principle. The struggle would become a democratic and political only if all the people including the weak, old, young, women and depressed sections be able to participate in the action. If the struggle has to be a democratic one, it will have to remain non-violent. However, the non-violent mass action alone would be effective if it is synchronized the simultaneous actions on all other fronts and layers.

The movements have expanded the dimensions and scope of the Politics, which hitherto has been primarily confined to the electoral politics. Politics means the processes related with the power-relations and decision-making power within a given community.

### **New Internationalism**

The new internationalism is interrelated with the global political-economic realities and policies. The Globalisation can be effectively countered by the New Internationalism. This struggle deals with the environmental sustainability and fair deal, justice with the third world people. The recent global struggle against the WTO and the World Bank comprises of the ecological, socialistic groups, labour unions, the groups fighting against the MNCs and for the rights of peasants, tribals, minorities, migrants, workers, along with the peace and anti-nuclearization organisations, ecological groups on the issues ranging from pollution, fish and animal rights, conservation, vegetarian, alternative lifestyle .

The movements have a difficult task to break the spell of the 'development' of the general people, particularly the opinion-makers' in urban-industrial areas and creating the 'public opinion', and the media. The movements and organisations will have to project the fact that their issues are a part of the more enriched and harmonious life and a larger alternative social economic and political cultural agenda on national and global levels. The emerging trends of Globalisation and pseudo-nationalism, both apparently contradictory but sustaining each other in reality have posed new problems before the people's movements.

As against this, somewhere a process of coming together of the movements and organisations engaged in fighting for a new development has started. National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) has been such a process. The process within the new movements, their difficulties, obstacles and internal contradictions needs empathetic analysis. The movements of new environmentalism and the egalitarian movements like the dalit movements to the constructive work and various other movements and processes will have to debate, communicate, coordinate and expand themselves. Only such an integrated ideology and multi-pronged, coordinated struggle can lead an equitable, sustainable and just life.

*(Sanjay Sangvai is the Executive Editor of The Movement)*

# Globalisation and Internationalism

Thomas Kocherry

Today we are in the context of globalisation. The process of globalisation has ensured the free movement of capital. Market determines investment and production; but market in the context of Globalisation is not to meet the basic needs of the people, but the artificially created needs. Market has no other value than Money-Profit. People have no value. Common peoples' basic needs and aspirations have no value. Those with money look for ways and means of making more money and go ahead to achieve their purpose by hook or by crook. While free movement of capital is promoted, labourers are not free to move. There is no distributive justice and ethics.

In the 20th century, the world witnessed the uprising of people for political freedom. Most of the countries have won the political freedom. But economic exploitation continued through Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and Trans National Corporations TNCs. Unfortunately, the rich and the ruling class of the newly freed Third World countries are siding with the MNCs and TNCs for their own advantage. Again the natives, the indigenous people and the fisherpeople are the worst hit. Though the concept and the practice of political freedom was accepted and promoted, economic control and the exploitation of natural capital continues through the MNCs and the TNCs.

As a result according to a UN study 20% of Northern minority of humankind has 80% of the world's wealth and resources. And the 80% of Southern majority have only 20% of the world's wealth and resources. 94% of all research, develop-

ment, and technology are in the hands of the northern minority. It is in this context that we should understand Neo Globalisation and Neo Liberalism. Those 'haves' are bound to get more. This means more accumulation and centralisation. The whole point of Neo Liberalism is that the market mechanism should be allowed to direct the fate of human beings.

## International Dimension

In the period following de-colonisation and political independence of the Third World (South) countries particularly after World War II, the international relationships among the countries at bilateral and multilateral levels were considered very important and viewed as mutually beneficial. This language and practice seems to be in the wane today. The Northern MNCs put a lot of pressure on the UN and want to take control of it. They are more interested in strengthening the WTO than the UN. The UN arms such as the ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO etc, which were the human face of the UN are making less and less impact due to various policies and created shortage of funds. The MNCs and the TNCs and the developed nations talk of Democracy and Human Rights but they have no concern for people in the South, particularly the poor. The UN has become a weak instrument for justice and peace and is in the process of becoming an instrument of Globalisation. Globalisation is beneficial to those who have. All those who are have-nots are the victims. Globalisation does not take into account human relationships and purpose and meaning in life and therefore it is easily manipulatable by the wielders of power. The mechanistic process of Globalisation, once it is started, automatically affects every area of life leaves us with no choice and alternative.

Moreover, there is a close link between this kind of warped development, accumulation and centralisation on the one hand and militarisation on the other, particularly the control of atomic weapons.

The National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) has been a part of a larger alliance, the National Alliance of Peoples Movements (NAPM), all of whom are victims of Globalisation. There are over 150 peoples movements in NAPM, not only struggling to survive but searching for alternatives to the present form of development which in the long run is destruction for all.

We can fight Globalisation only if we are able to stop buying and selling of the natural capital - land, water and forest. Those communities like dalits, fisher people and tribals that depend on these for their livelihood should own and manage the same. This is going to be our Do or Die agitation in the

coming months and years. These should be owned and managed by these communities. Land, water and forest should become the common property right of these communities.

## Global Campaign

In order to ensure sustainable development I propose the following to be realised by the victims through on going struggles in the world:

- \* Empower individuals, households and communities to gain greater control over their lives and resources.
- \* Ensure common property right of natural capital for sustainable development to the communities that depend on the natural capital for their livelihood
- \* Ensure food security for the poor.
- \* Ensure micro credit for the poor.
- \* Ensure education and health for all
- \* Build social safety nets.
- \* Strengthen gender equality.
- \* Do not deplete natural capital.
- \* Stop militarization and dismantle all atomic weapons.
- \* Stop displacing peoples in the name of development.
- \* Ensure the collaboration of all the developed nations to eradicate poverty.
- \* Ensure the participation of all peoples and all nations to reconstruct a New World.
- \* Complete cancellation of all debts.
- \* Dismantle WTO
- \* Empower the UN through a democratic process.
- \* Stop killing innocents in the name of terrorism.
- \* Stop corporate rule by alternate production by the communities and people.
- \* Stop dumping waste particularly toxic and hazardous waste into water bodies.
- \* Strive for the creation of a peaceful world, where every faith is respected.
- \* There will never be genuine, lasting security in the world while inequality and injustice are so universally evident. It is a moral duty for every one and every nation to eradicate this for one's own survival.
- \* Primary Health Care must be adopted as the approach to sustainable and equitable development.
- \* Equitable distribution of wealth and resources within a nation and between nations should be made mandatory.
- \* Free movement of labour should be made mandatory.
- \* It is the bounden duty of every government to guarantee drinking water to every citizen.
- \* Land reform should be at the centre of sustainable development.
- \* Implementation of organic farming should be made compulsory by law.
- \* Bring about conservation of bio diversity and measures to combat climate change and desertification with penalty provisions at both national and global level.

\* Discourage use of private cars and public transport system should be made compulsory at a global level.

\* Bring about legally binding global convention to prevent illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.

\* Bring about internationally binding agreement to effectively control coastal and off-shore mining and oil extraction.

\* Bring about integrated coastal zone management.

\* An integrated approach to energy supply, where all existing hydrocarbon biomass, wind, solar sources, waves need to be developed equally along with measures to enhance energy efficiency and energy conservation in every sphere of the economy, public, private and household.

\* Enforcement of polluter pays principle globally.

\* Abolishing the export of waste from North to South.

\* TNCs must be held accountable for their greenhouse gas emissions and there must be a global legal system to monitor and implement measures to reduce their emissions.

\* An international regulatory regime within the United Nations to set minimum standards that apply to all countries.

\* A legally binding convention on corporate accountability to hold TNCs accountable to people and environment and not just shareholders.

\* A people's global solidarity opposed to capitalist Globalisation.

\* The abolishment of the UN Security Council and in particular the veto rights of some nations. The UN General Assembly can then constitute a sub committee through a democratic process to deal with peace and security.

There is a need for a global campaign to achieve the above. All over the world people must demand these. We need to organise in the line of Global peace march, Peoples Global Action, World Social Forum, World Forum of Fisherpeople's

(WFFP) campaign for the ownership of water bodies, fishing implements by the small fishing communities. Here information technology has to be used massively. All these different movements in the world must see that they work in a complementary manner. Thousands of movements all over the world like National Alliance of Peoples Movements (NAPM) of India, Via Campesina, Peoples Global Action, International Forum on Globalisation are involved in these struggles against WTO, corporations and globalisation.

There is a need to create a new paradigm of development and politics, in which all human beings have right to live, with equal access to the resources and opportunities. Development cannot be measured solely by the quantity of production, but by its

sustainability, by its capacity to protect the livelihood of all human beings. Production should be coupled with distributive justice. True globalisation should make free movement of labour unhindered by national boundaries. The year 2000 was jubilee year by letting nations feel true freedom and equality by unburdening them of their debt. Information technology should be made use for this campaign and change in the world. In the context of globalisation we need a new dictum - 'THINK GLOBALLY AND ACT GLOBALLY'. For this, we must make use of information technology in a massive way.

True development is not by conquering and enslaving, not by accumulating and centralizing, not by displacing people and destroying cultures. True development is only by integrating and working together, through distributive justice and decentralization by nurturing and including natives, tribals and indigenous peoples. The life of the planet and the dependent health and welfare of humanity must not be sacrificed to the greed of a few.

*(Thomas Kocherry is the National Convener of NAPM and is a senior activist of National Fishworkers Forum and World Forum of Fisherpeople)*

*Cover Story*

# Here And There

**Sanjay Mangala Gopal**

'Here' the movements are built up on the issue of survival and acquired some importance and impact. Here we had very strong labour movement since independence, particularly the contribution of textile workers will be written in golden letters. When the issue of survival of the textile workers came up after the closures of mills one after the other, Girmi Kamgar Sangharsha Samiti (Textile Workers Struggle) fought a unique struggle.

From project affected people from Narmada valley to the footpath dwellers of Kolkata, tribals uprooted from forest from Jharkhand to Kerala, farmers and farm labourers fighting from so called developed state of Punjab to cyber-savvy Andhra Pradesh, fisher people on entire

coastline struggling against the attack of multinational trawlers and many such organizations have built the strong struggles on the issue of their survival. In a way they don't have any other alternative but to struggle otherwise vanish!

In the U.S. and Europe, it seems that the issue of survival or livelihood crisis is not so urgent as it is here. So the struggles tend to be about the wider issues. People fight for saving environment or for peace against war, or protection of democratic rights, etc. As the issue of human livelihood has been addressed to some extent, now the activists can fight for the protection of sharks or tigers! The people's movements in the Third World countries are in a constant debate and conflict with the NGOs dependent on funding from the First world, about the priorities between tiger or human being.

There is also a difference about the kind of activism. Though the participation and support of the conscientious middle class is important, who themselves may not be the victims or the crisis, eventually it is the affected people who form the mainstay and backbone of any such movement or

struggle. This has led to the grooming and developing of many illiterate persons or those from non-English speaking or literate background don various organizational responsibilities. In contrast, in US and Europe the activists are well educated, trained, become active after ideological preparation. Due to this contrast alone the nature of organizational skills, priorities, strategies, style of functioning and nature of programmes, preparation...everything is totally different.

Also there are efforts to follow democratic functioning in the organizations and programmes, like proper time planning, efforts to get participation of all in these organizations. People are trained for all this run the organizations. Invariably, this work-culture is being transmitted to others. The programmes are more artistic, suggestive and innovative. It is not that we here don't have it at all. But I feel that some how we lack the culture of democratic alliance building. Are we insecure in alliances here?

There is vast difference in the resources available. The Indian movements raise resources from amongst their mass-base - the exploited, deprived sections of the society, to which supporters from middle and higher middle class contribute. In the West the business groups are legally bound to contribute certain percentage of their profit for such activities. In some countries, governments provide funds.

The laws and rules do bind the rulers, bureaucrats and political leaders in these countries. However, in India the laws and rules are made ineffective by the system and even strong, well versed movements having large mass base are made ineffective.

*Cover Story*

# An Open Space.... To Relate, Debate, Reflect, Celebrate...

**Meena Menon**

In January from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup>, 100,000 representatives of movements and NGOs from all over the world will gather for the World Social Forum 2004 in Mumbai There will be those who marched against the WTO in Seattle, in Genoa, Prague, Quebec; those who derailed the WTO Ministerial in Cancun, the big anti-war movements all over Europe, Israeli peace movements, students from the US who are campaigning against their government's aggression against Iraq and Palestine, Latin Americans who are fighting the US-led economic aggression represented by NAFTA, European movements which are fighting the EU free market regime,

Can alliance, unity, mutual support between movements then possible globally? Merely helping or funding from 'out there' will neither suffice nor will it be appropriate. It will be rather be counter productive. The exchange has to be on equal footing. Learning, proper exchange of ideas and experience from each other is essential. Moreover, there is a need to adjust also with each other. Due to overall differences in the background to present reality, there is bound to be variance in programmes and priorities. However if both are clear that they oppose the unjust globalisation it is possible to travel together on many be different roads not too far from each other and meeting occasionally with each other. Then only the possible another world will become proper, just and beautiful.

*(Sanjay M.G. is the National co-coordinator of NAPM and National Secretary of Samajwadi Jan Parishad)*

farmers of the Movement of the Landless from Brazil, Canadians and Argentineans who have been fighting on the issue of water privatisation, Assembly of the Poor from Thailand, dam affected people from different parts of Asia, all these voices which today no international institution or government can afford to ignore. There will be 15,000 activists from outside India, from

almost every country in the world. And there will be 85,000 delegates from every state in India. Thousands from different movements from India from different sectors: workers, dalits, women, indigenous people, small traders and businesspeople, farmers, agricultural labour, government employees, minorities, child rights groups, environmentalists, citizens groups, students and youth, have joined the WSF process and more are joining.

### **Why in India**

The World Social Forum will be four years old when the WSF IV takes place in Mumbai. The earlier Forums were held in Brazil in the southern city of Porto Alegre and saw a significant increase in international participation every year; 100,000 delegates attending the last Forum in January 2003. Responding to pressure from different movements, which insisted that the event and process did not have enough participation from Asia and Africa, the International Committee suggested that India should host the Forum the next year. Accordingly the process of consultation between different peoples movements in India began in a National Consultation held in Bhopal in April 2002.

This decision was adopted by the National Consultation. Later it was decided by the India Working Committee formed in this Consultation, to hold an Asian event (the Asian Social Forum) in January 2003 and to offer to host the WSF 2004 in India. The Asian Social Forum, as a dry run, was a success in terms of the great response and participation from different parts of India despite its lacunae and glitches. Over 20,000 delegates attended from over 800 organisations. In Porto Alegre during the WSF III, the International Committee declared that India would host the WSF IV in January 2004.

### **The concept of open space:**

The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Mankind and between it and the Earth. (from the WSF Charter of principles)  
There are no two organisations or movements which will attend the WSF and agree with each other on every issue of importance. In India, where the concept of inhabiting the same space while openly disagreeing with each other, is comparatively new. The diversity of the participation in the WSF reflects the diversity and even divisiveness of the political scenario in the country.

Many organisations have been pointing to the disagreements within the WSF internationally, as points of disagreement with the WSF and as reasons for non-participation. However most of these differences are voiced within the WSF by people who have been part of the process and continue to participate in it, bringing their differences and openly stating them. The WSF is not an ideological platform. It is a platform FOR ideology. It is a space where ideological, political, strategical differences are expressed and debated. It is just an 'open space', a forum for cross sectoral, cross political debate, which is different from the polemical discussions within separate political/ideological tendencies. The WSF has no political resolution by itself. Different coalitions take stands on different issues and give calls for action.

The great anti-war demonstrations of February 15, 2004 came out of the call given by the Anti-War Assembly in the World Social Forum of last year. In every WSF the social movements assembly brings out a common resolution with a common political program and call for actions.

The WSF 2004 is expected to be the facilitation of the process of coming together, of the process of coalition building. At the same time the WSF is by no means the only forum for such a purpose. There are many and there will be many more as part of the process of building an understanding among different movements and strengthening the possibilities of a united struggle against neo-liberal globalisation, war, communalism, casteism, patriarchy and race. The WSF is an open process. All organizations, big and small, local or national, which believe in this broad agenda of the WSF are invited to make contact and come into the process.

### **Alternatives and strategies:**

The reason for the creation of the World Social Forum, inspired by the Seattle demonstration and its success, was to debate alternatives and strategy, which was not possible to do during demonstrations. The reason

why movements from all over the world responded positively was because they felt the need for such a forum for debating these issues. 100,000 people were not forced to participate in the Forum. They came voluntarily, farmers, workers, young people, anti-war activists, parliamentarians, anti-globalisation NGOs, and even UN officials. The success of the Forum and its growing popularity helped to build what is now being called a 'global public opinion' against the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions. Most movements saw this as a positive step towards the building up of a strong and effective international struggle against imperialist led globalisation. The WSF 2004 is a place for dialogue, learning, strategizing and coalition building, and for building a close friendship and solidarity with people who are fighting for justice in all parts of the world. Each organisation can find its own allies within the process and there is no compulsion that they should ally or debate with others they do not wish to ally or debate with. It is easily the biggest activist gathering in the world. In the WSF 2004, there will be over 1000 conferences, seminars and workshops from January 17 till the 20<sup>th</sup>. There will be panel debates and testimonies, and cultural programs by artistes from all over India and the world.

#### **Domination and exclusion:**

The WSF is not represented by any particular group. It is an open space owned by everyone and no one. All are invited and no one needs an invitation to participate in the event and process.

There are many opinions and debates in India, about various tendencies dominating the India process of the WSF. There are some who feel there is a domination by big NGOs with money to spend. There are others who feel there is a domination by left parties. There are many who feel on the other hand that the core of the WSF is dominated by non-party social movements and that the role of the party is rejected in the WSF, since political parties are not (according to the charter of principles) invited to participate in the WSF. It is clear from the diversity of these feelings that each of them have a valid grievance and yet all cannot be right! It perhaps reflects the discomfort of having to share an open space with tendencies with whom one has basic ideological differences while all agree to fight globalisation, communalism (religious sectarian politics) casteism, patriarchy, war and racism.

Besides political parties, the others who are excluded by the Charter of Principles are armed groups. There are differences within the WSF about both kinds of exclusions. It is also true that both political parties and armed groups do participate in the Forum as part of people's movements. These are still issues of debate in the WSF.

There are those who say a commitment to peaceful means is essential while others point to the resistance of the Palestinians and other liberation struggles as proof that this cannot be a criterion; that means depend on the political situation in a particular country.

The initiators of the MR 2004 had been invited to participate along with their differences in the Forum. Their decision to hold another event is according to their understanding and opinion, and any event against globalisation can only be a positive step in the direction of building an international movement against imperialist globalisation whether within the WSF or without. Any such coalition building process can help the political ideological debate. However it is impossible to debate a charge that the WSF is a creation of, and in league with, imperialism!

#### **Funding**

The WSF maintains the principle of complete transparency with regard to funding and expenditure. All participants in the WSF except for the speakers pay for their own travel, stay expenses etc. Nobody who works in the functional groups in the WSF India is paid anything by the WSF. They are supported by their own organisations. Each organisation that becomes part of the India General Council pays a sum of Rupees 5000 as a contribution. Besides each organisation pays a sum for registration and for stalls if they book them. Registration of events is free so that all can register. In all the state processes, organisations collect and spend their own resources.

The main expenses of the WSF are therefore bore by the participant organisations. The funds from the central funds of the WSF are for the events organised by the WSF Committee, for the venue and logistics, for campaign material and for the office. The central funding comes from various organisations from all over the world. This being a global event, the WSF in India could not be financed only by local funds. The financing that has come for the WSF India are from Oxfam, Hivos, SIDA, ICCO, Action Aid, to name a few. Funds are also being mobilised from

organisations in India and Mumbai. The WSF India has taken a decision not to take any funding from multinational corporate trusts like Ford Foundation.

### **Another World is Possible!**

All of us agree that there has to be an alternative to the present system but most are unclear about what this system will be. Never has this debate/discussion become as crucial as today. The WSF is a place that focuses not only on the problems and issues but mainly on the alternatives to the capitalist system. There are some who say they can have no truck with anyone who does not accept socialism as the alternative. But the problem is still that all those

who espouse socialism are not agreed on what this means- in terms of economic, political, social cultural policies. There are some socialists who are closer to the humanists than to the left parties, others who are closer to Gandhism. The question is- are we prepared to debate with each other, to listen to and understand different opinions?

The challenge of facing and formulating an alternative to the rising rightist forces is not something that can be done only through the WSF. Many fora, many debates and discussions, many united struggles, many political processes and changes will be necessary before we can make significant gains in this direction. But first we will all have to agree that no one has a monopoly to the truth, no one has managed to offer a viable alternative that is acceptable to the Indian people. And this alternative will have to have an internationalist agenda in the era of neo-liberal imperialist globalisation. Hence the importance of using a forum like the WSF.

*(Meena Menon works with Girni Kamgar Sangharsha Samiti and Focus on Global South, and is a member of Indian Organising Committee of WSF)*

### *Cover Story*

# The WSF Process and its Understanding

## **Vijay Pratap**

*(Excerpts from the speech at the WSF-Bihar meet at Patna)*

We try to bring all democratic forces together when we think that no single organisation or ideology can do much. These people include all subscribing to the ideologies such as Ambedkarism, Lohiaism. Socialism, Sarvodaya, Marxism-Leninism, Marxism, and so on, so forth.

The WSF is a meeting point, a forum for coming together at a single place with all humility and self-confidence, a place we can assemble with our deep-rooted belief that there is an ample possibility of frankly talking to each other on the issues of common concern despite differences on ideological, political and other levels. Poverty, starvation, health and illiteracy related issues are our common concerns that attract attention unequivocally. This does not mean that we tend to forget the

ideologies, programmes, agenda or distinctiveness of our own organisations if we strive together to achieve the collectively agreed goals. Those organisations that have this level of self-confidence and self-esteem are welcome in the WSF process.

The WSF is a process, an open forum for open ideas on collectively agreed issues borne of neo-imperialism and one-way globalisation propounded by the multilateral agencies and multinational companies under the patronage of institution such as World Bank (WB) and World Trade Organisation (WTO). It is neither an organisation nor a front. Ideologically, the WSF is an open space who are open to talk to others despite differences, and those who have the desire to listen to others' viewpoints.

The WSF does not allow any person or organisation subscribing to ideology of revolution through the medium/vehicle of organised violence. Also we not here to make it an alliance like we do here in India or elsewhere. The WSF remains an open forum for all those who have faith in another world, progressive people of all hues are most welcome to be a part of it. Also, those democratic people and organisations are welcome that do not believe in accusing each other or maintain double standards.

It is not at all possible to make it an organisation or a front. The basic spirit of it lies in its uniqueness of being a form where all participatory organisations have the freedom to play supportive, or complementary roles without challenging each other or indulging in competition with other organisations. A collective thinking is, however, obligatory toward working for a common goal. It is the Charter of Principles of the WSF that government ministers, officials of the World Bank and of similar organisations as well as members of the political parties as representatives of their respective organisations cannot take part in the WSF process. However, people can take part as individuals or as members of the student, mass organisations or other such bodies.

There have been some efforts by the proponents of radical change to make the process a collective or front of the like-minded forces, but it is quite clear that WSF process is not a front. When hundreds of thousands of people in Europe jammed streets in their respective countries on 15 February 2003 opposing war against Iraq, the same kind of impression was created in the minds of people, though the credit for such a large mobilisation deservedly went to the WSF process. The longer we keep it as an open forum the better we would do to it. This will allow the different organisations to come at one place for a longer period.

The day we try to convert it onto a front, its creative possibilities will end prematurely. The process of new organisations coming into its fold will also stop. The attempt to make or project it as a front smacks of something else. Please let it remain what it is today.

Instead, the WSF process should have the confidence to announce that another world is possible. Such a confidence has built up itself on the consistent work accomplished by the process of the WSF.

The WSF should also not be used for party politics. This will create a problem as people subscribing to different political ideologies are in it. If we start pulling each other's leg, the whole debate will get diluted and diverted. Something else will become our agenda. How can we attract new and smaller groups towards the WSF process if we make a battlefield for settling scores?

There are people and organisations, which are for the movementisation of the WSF process, as according to them the world cannot be changed through such open spaces or processes. But would not it be better if we do not disturb its present character and let it move the way it wants to. As long as it is an open space, it will be a forum for more and more forces to come in tandem. Moreover, we do not depend on the WSF process for all issues that have been haunting us over the years and which we have been fighting against for decades. The process is distinct in the sense that it allows space for bringing in change inside as well as outside of the organisation and their ideologues.

## **Doubts and Debate on the Role of Funding Agencies:**

Accounts of the WSF India committee are ready. Anybody can approach the WSF India's office in Delhi and know the details of the expenses during the ASF Hyderabad. Besides, all the expenses incurred during the WSF meets are open and transparent. They are available on their website. I also am of the opinion that everything must be clear and transparent.

People like me have been doing the WSF work for last two years but it has not extended any financial help to them. For their participation in such programmes, they receive funds from their own organisations.

There are doubts about the sources of funding. Most of the events or programmes are organised with the self-organised resources by the participant organisations. More than 80 percent organisation depend on their own resources be they trade union or farmers' bodies or a students' federations. The finance committee of the WSF India makes estimates about its own expenses and discusses the matter with the WSF India council and suggests the self-mobilised ways to bear the expenses. International council is also there to play a supervisory role and take appropriate actions.

When some funding agencies come forth to provide funds for the WSF related events, they make it sure whether the beneficiary organisations are able to manage a major part of the expenses. Only after exercise, they provide limited funds.

The issue related to the Ford Foundation's role has come out quite often. In this context, I would say that the WSF secretariat in Brazil did accept funds from the Ford Foundation (FF) and other such

organisations. During the Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad (2003), several movement groups and mass organizations pointed out that they did not know about the funding agencies and their activities, hence funds must not be accepted from them. Thus, it was decided not to request the Ford Foundation for funds. The decision was implemented in letter and spirit and till the end. Despite this, some organisations charged that the FF money was involved in the ASF Hyderabad process. This time as well as, the WSF India finance committee has taken a clear-cut decision that no funds would be requested from the FF.

India committee of the WSF has not taken any direct or indirect money from the FF, though there was a proposal that the FF money should go to the Brazilian committee. I believe that the Brazilian committee is in favour of an international secretariat with some delegated powers for the smooth running of the organisation.

We may also have a post-WSF debate or discussion on the issues related to the politics of funding in the context of the objectives of international solidarity, the question of funding the movement, the issue of taking care of the volunteers and activists, etc. The point is that we must have a frank and honest discussion on the subject. The very debate is right now being used unfairly as a whip against each other.

As regards the European NGOs, ordinary middle class people there support most of them. A survey conducted by the Action Aid revealed that about 80 percent of their funds originated from the ordinary people who looked forward for a progressive change in the world order and were supportive to the upliftment of the deprived sections.

Other source is the money provided by the European government, which come from

the taxpayers' pockets. Our government does a similar act by supporting the institutions like the India Council for Historical Research (ICHR) or the university Grants Commission (UGC) in order to strengthen the concept of autonomy and democracy. Similarly, the taxpayers money is the staple diet of the progressive NGOs of Europe, however it is true that they have succeeded in making their system more democratic and transparent. There even those people get unemployment allowance from the government whose agenda is to oppose the system and the government. So, in a way the opponents of the system also depend on that very system. Taxpayers' money is also routed to the political parties, no matter through which organisations. Most of the Nordic countries and Germany have such a system. If our organisations do not get money from foreign agencies, they will be able to maintain their own ingenuity, creativity, originality and the very Indian essence.

### **Participation:**

This time, no money is being charged for registering the events, though it is expected that the participating organisations would definitely make contributions. If any organisation does not do that, does not matter. This will not be a hurdle in registration of their events.

All democratic and progressive organizations or groups functioning at any level or in any region of the world and among any community or in any sector can become a part of the WSF process provided they have the faith in its objectives, ideology and Charter of Principles.

The forum provides space for all to express themselves in their own ways. It is place for improving so many things at so many levels. It is a place where we can improve others or ourselves. There are all types of people trying to make points and trying to make others listen to them. It is a *chaupal*, like an open place in a village where everybody has the right to make a point. And taking part in the WSF process in India itself would be an important intervention at a time when the forces of fundamentalism or the regimes like the WTO are trying to undermine the values based on democracy, justice and equality at all levels.

It is true that the participant organisation themselves have to take care of their expenses during the WSF process in Mumbai. But it is also true that attempts are always there by the resource-rich organisations to bear the expenses of fund-starved organisations so that the process turns out to be really meaningful. Such examples were shown during the ASF Hyderabad by several organisations with larger resource base. Now, some of the civil society groups are there to extend such help.

*(Vijay Pratap is with the Lokayan and is one the trustees of WSF)*

# Open Forum

*Some of the responses The Movement received from activists and intellectuals about their views on the processes and organization of the WSF. We hope that it will start a healthy discussion among organizations and movements within and outside India.*

## For a Human Face of Globalisation?

I am of the opinion that the WSF, as it is today, is incapable of promoting anti-Globalisation struggle of people. Contrary to its profession, I have a strong suspicion that it is created to contain peoples' wrath against the imperialist onslaught. A cursory look at its genesis and development can explain why.

The genesis of the WSF is traced to the spontaneous but massive demonstrations of protest in November 1999 at Seattle in the US that disrupted the conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and various series of struggles that seriously disrupted every major event the imperialist powers and institutions. These demonstrations had certainly stirred the imperialist camp into thinking of the strategic ways to respond to this impending threat. Their response came in the form of forums wherein the opponents of people will sit with the promoters of Globalisation ostensibly to reform the Globalisation process to make it humane.

The WSF charter bars the forum from any meaningful action. It specifies that the participants in the Forum should not take decisions as a body that would commit all or the majority of them. As a result its charter itself reduces it to be mere a 'talk shop'. It accepts money from imperialist killers; embraces NGOs funded by them, invites individuals that represent pro-Globalisation states but would not tolerate genuine people's struggle against imperialism as they inevitably have to be violent. For example today's Palestinian or Iraqi resistance movements and yesteryears' Vietnam Peoples liberation struggle would be barred from the WSF because they kill people.

The problems with the WSF indeed are a legion. It's calling itself a process bares its reformist character. It believes like IMF and the World Bank that Globalisation can have a human face. Its reliance on civil society to germinate resistance betrays its anti-class struggle stance, a la Hindutva position of Samarasata. Everyone knew that 'another world is possible'; the point however is to make it. But, the WSF detests action. Its talk shop might enthuse intellectuals and academicians to have perennial 'reflexive discussions and debate' but certainly not the activists craving for a fundamental change on peoples' behalf; never the victims of Globalisation! Indeed, it

appears to be an imperialist intrigue to contain peoples' wrath, institutionalize their dissent and thwart their resistance to Globalisation.

**Anand Teltumbde**  
(Radical Dalit Ideologue)

## WSF- Some Issues and Expectations

WSF is a broad based huge anti-imperialist gathering. Some people feel this is not 'genuine' anti-imperialism. I do not think that there are any widely agreed criteria on 'genuine anti-imperialism'. Nor do I believe that anti-imperialist movement can be co-opted by any conspiracy. However, the WSF needs to be evaluated, especially regarding its cost-efficacy and the implications of heavy dependence on donor agencies.

As was in the case of People's Health Assembly –2000, held in Kolkata, has there been a build up from below in the earlier WSFs? Has the option of simultaneous Social Forums being organized in say 10 places in different parts of the world been explored? Would not the impact, mobilization be more with less expenditure? The estimated local expense of organizing the WSF in Mumbai

would be around Rs. 10 crores and the overall WSF- expenditure, including international travel would be around Rs. 135 crores. Which organisations are channeling these funds and how is their influence on the WSF process kept under democratic control?

What would be the outcome of these expenses? The WSF does not build upon earlier meetings. So WSF 2004 would not build upon the consensus or even distinct positions that could have emerged during earlier WSFs. There do not seem to be plans to foster coalitions on specific action-plans by the participating organizations. WSF as a body may not itself plan any action-strategy. But should it not aim at fostering autonomous action- coalitions on specific issues? In absence of any content wise continuity or action focus, are such huge expenses justified ?

WSF 04 has decided not to approach certain funding agencies. But the participating organizations may be receiving funds from these very same agencies for WSF related activities. Some agencies have the European governments as back-donors. In what capacity the officials of EU, IMF, World Bank etc. have been participating in earlier WSFs? What has been their role and impact?

The second aspect of WSF is spread of anti-imperialist material. How much of anti-imperialist material was produced, how much of it was sold? What has been the media coverage? At the ASF in Hyderabad, barring exceptions, the information or analysis wise content of many discussions did not rise above what was already generally known to the participants. Why not focus on sharing of the experiences of struggles against Globalisation and the perspectives that underlie these struggles.

The third positive expected outcome of

gatherings like WSF is emergence of action-coalitions. How many such action-coalitions have emerged? What actions did they undertake? What new strategies, consensus emerged through the WSF? Have any policies been modified as a result of WSF? Will the WSF-04 be different from the previous gatherings and in what way? Some sharing of work and experiences by activists could be done in an organised form.

We can use other appropriate parameters to have a very rough idea about the cost-efficacy of WSF. All such questions should be asked about other gathering also. But since the WSF-expenses are huge and since many movements are its co-organizers, these questions need to be addressed.

**Anant Phadke**

*(People's Science Movement, Pune)*

## **Open Space, Restraint and Responsibility**

Situated within the context of Palestinian political violence on one hand, and fall of Argentina due to globalisation (Reaganisation) promoted by Washington on the other, WSF is a world wide global movement to collectively respond to the imperialist globalisation.

World Social Forum is post-modern space in some sense, as it is against providing a 'universal prescription' to a particular problem or issue and believes in the plurality of the solutions, which is embedded within the cultural, social and political context of a society and culture.

Open space gives a great deal of freedom to all of us but it must be handled with restraint and responsibility. It has opened up opportunities for all of us towards building a strong global resistance against globalisation, injustice and conflicts. It is a place to make global calls through networking and collective action. It has made it possible for people's movements, NGOs and people of different ideologies to come together despite initial hesitation and scepticism, even for those who were ideologically placed at the extreme ends of the spectrum.

Although it is focussed on advocating the cause of the marginalized and exploited communities and nations, the levers of movement seem to be are mostly in the hands of rich NGOs, individuals, elite class intellectuals and INGOs. There is need to question the effectiveness of WSF in terms of time, money and human energy spent to organize it. Over dependency on larger donor agencies is also one of the issues to tackle.

We still rely mostly on e-mails and cyber space, which has a limited reach especially in developing countries. But some times the over presence of red becomes quite intimidating for many people. We need to make efforts to involve people from different colours consciously.

We are clear what we are against but not clear about what and how we want to construct. What is the 'Another world' or shall we say 'Another Worlds'. The open space, individual freedom, democracy and diversity may call for Another World in plural than in singular terms.

**Mukta Srivastava**  
(NAPM Coordinator in WSF)

*Here are some of the responses The Movement got from European friends on the WSF. This can form the basis for the further improvement in the WSF processes. All the three respondents are involved in the process of People's Global Action (PGA) in West Europe.*

## **For A Democratic Grassroot International Politics**

The criticism of both (WSF and ATTAC) is very deep, however I still think that we cannot ignore the WSF and we cannot forget that however questionable is ATTAC leadership, there are many interesting people in its base groups. WSF is so totally top-down organised that frankly WTO looks democratic beside it. In WTO there is green rooms and representatives. In WSF there is only a green room!

I have just made a proposition for another way of functioning for friends involved with the European Social Forum. For me the main criticisms of the Social Forums are that

1) There are almost no small groups (except on the margins) and thus no possibility for people to debate (except in the corridors and cafés). Information is nearly all top-down: a total paradox for a movement of grassroots movements! 2) Plenaries, seminars and workshops are all predefined entities that have no relation, no process linking them. A series of informative sessions that don't as such lead anywhere. 3) Consequently, activists have the disagreeable impression (despite the enthusiasm of the numbers, the interesting ideas, etc.) of being individual and passive consumers in a supermarket of leftist ideas. 4) The Assembly of Social Movements makes proposals at the end of the ESF, giving the illusion that they somehow are a collective fruit of the Forum, which is really not true and even a bit dishonest. Even the assembly doesn't give itself the tools for any debate. How can our "horizontal" movement go on functioning in such a totally top-down way? This isn't even representative democracy, its such evident green room functioning that it only passes because the motions proposed are totally bland and consensual.

We must offer the possibility of at least part of the ESF being a productive encounter in which strangers can really meet and collectively elaborate ideas and projects. We must have a structure that enhances the most

important part of ESF (or any conference): the meetings in the corridors! This entails:

- a) Some way of sharing suggestions for debate and action at the beginning (not at the end!) of the forum.
- b) We must be able to divide into small groups to work on them (no doubt at least two or three meetings of the group in order to really be able to listen to each other and move forward a bit).
- c) And finally some kind of assembly or coordination of the working groups to put together conclusions and recommendations.

This scenario is obviously nothing new! It's what democratic, grassroots movements have practiced for years. The challenge is how to make this work in such a huge international meeting.

Dream on!

**Olivier de Marcellus, Geneva.**

*(Economist, participant in 1968 uprising in France, political ideologue and activist.)*

## **WSF May Inspire Struggles...**

Personally I am also a deeply convinced pacifist and do for that reason not feel comfortable with the strategies that contain violent elements, coming from most left wing groups and many anarchist groups, but I respect others' views.

WSF does in my view have a positive role although one may speculate that a more narrow focus and specter of groups might have been more "efficient." I do not know how important it is. For reduction of poverty I perceive to be more important that the people who are poor stand up for themselves and demand power. WSF may be inspiring for poor peoples struggles like MST in Brazil, and it helps spread informa-

tion in rich countries. Like in the colonial time - the countries had to demand independence themselves, but it was not bad to have supporters inside the colonial powers, to the contrary it would have been ridiculous if they spent a lot of energy on critics their supporters.

Let us now for simplicity use the term WSF, as opposed to "PGA-like groups" to represent the alternative WSF.

I have been involved with Attac in Norway since the start and - yes, I agree that it is "reformist" but yet OK for now. ...ATTAC has grown to get 3000 members in three years and had a lot of media coverage, and organized a lot of stuff around huge demonstrations for our countries (10,000 against a WB meeting in Oslo last summer). By now everybody knows that WTO, IMF, WB is criticised and I would estimate that 30-50% of the population may be open to the idea that these are bad and corrupt organizations. It is quite an achievement.

**Reidun Heiene**

*(Involved with People's Global Action, Oslo, Norway)*

*Interviews*

## WSF: An Explosion of Expression

*Anand Mazgaonkar is a senior environmental activist and is working with Pariyavaran Suraksha Samiti in Gujarat. The People's Movement talked to him about World Social Forum*

**TPM:** *What are your expectations from / reservations about WSF 2004?*

**AM:** Expressing and asserting peoples' will is what the demonstrations from Seattle to Prague to Doha have done. Globalisation of people's movements is the real globalisation we are seeking, learning from each other and thereby enriching our cultures is real globalisation, fighting together and making common cause to remove poverty and injustice anywhere in the world is the form of globalisation that is desirable. That is the high expectation from WSF. Admittedly, a large event such this will have the looks of a jamboree, but that is an element of festival and celebration, the explosion of expression by communities that otherwise face repression and myriad injustices.

There are not many known models of non hierarchical, horizontal democratic func-

tioning, hence there will be problems, there may not be unanimously agreed programmes or priorities and strategies. But that is an integral part of the process of democratisation and coming together. This is just the beginning. There's a mighty long way to go. There will be power games and pettifogging, but rising above it is the test we must collectively pass if we claim to present visions of alternatives.

I have had the queasy feeling that the WEF and Davos are forgotten, the battle at the moment is between the WSF and Mumbai Resistance. It is a shame.

**TPM:** *What do you consider as an appropriate way of global resistance against Globalisation?*

**AM:** \* Change starts at home, lifestyle that is nonviolent with other people, with nature, and does not appropriate others' resources for own use,  
\* Globalisation of movements in a decentralised way,  
\* respect for diversity among activists from various cultures and countries,  
\* learning from each other, making common cause with others,  
\* experiment with alternatives, and replicate them,  
\* not trust politicians and political parties to deliver  
\* explore exemplary avenues and methods to assert people's will  
\* accord top priority to protection of natural resources, common property,

and their ownership by people rather than Governments, and Corporates.

**TPM:** *What is the role of WSF in the global struggle for justice?*

**AM:** WSF can be a platform to share visions and experiences, not to form an organisation. Our challenge today is to be democratic, diverse, autonomous, coherent, united, nonviolent, effective, and stand up to the violence of the existing order, all at the same time.

Where people from all over the world meet, we ought to be able to outline strategies, some symbolic collective/synchronised programmes such as the 15th/16th Feb '03, demonstrations against war by 8 to 10 million people in 600 cities the world over.

## WSF: An Imperialist Design

*Rajani X. Desai is working with Research Unit for Political Economy, Mumbai. Recently RUPE had published 'The Economics and Politics of the World Social Forum: Lessons for the Struggle against 'Globalisation'. She discussed with **The People's Movement** about her perceptions on globalisation and WSF.*

**TPM:** *What should be the outline and nature of any global campaign against Globalisation?*

**RD:** First, the term 'Globalisation' is vague. What you perhaps are referring to is *the current onslaught by imperialism* on the people of the world, particularly on people of the third world. The imperialist *system* plays a key role in stalling world progress and in inflicting wars on the world people.

As such it is not a particular policy measure against which one can wage a campaign. Rather, people must wage struggles against imperialism in whatever form it confronts them, as are the workers of the privatised firm Modern Food resisting retrenchment by the multinational Hindustan Lever, Bolivian masses preventing US robbery of their country's gas supplies, Brazilian employees fighting the IMF-dictated, Lula-implemented theft of their pensions, or Iraqi fighters attacking the US occupation forces. Around such actual struggles worldwide solidarity campaigns can play an important, albeit secondary, role. If such campaigns place such specific struggles in the context of what imperialism is doing worldwide, people throughout the world will lend solidarity as part of their own struggle against imperialism.

**TPM:** *How do you view the non-violence as a political instrument – in theory and in practice?*

**RD:** In the simple literal sense of non-violence, non-violent means of struggle are of course adopted routinely and with great success by people's organisations throughout the world. Every leaflet, rally, or strike is a non-violent means of struggle. In that sense it hardly needs to be said that such forms are essential for any people's struggle. And, of course, people would prefer to achieve their demands peacefully, whenever possible.

It is the so-called theory of non-violence, as preached by M.K. Gandhi, that is pernicious. As a "theory" non-violence is merely an instruction to the oppressed that they must abjure the use of force, even as the oppressors

routinely and ruthlessly resort to it. No great struggle in history (be it the American war of independence, the English civil war which dealt a blow to feudalism, the French bourgeois democratic revolution, the Russian revolution or the Chinese revolution) has been based on this alleged theory or practice. In fact, a careful study of the Indian independence movement too reveals that in practice it was far from non-violent, despite the best efforts of the top leadership of the Congress. It was this that led to the departure of the British from India. But the "theory and practice" of non-violence by the top Congress leadership helped shape the transition to the new Indian State. Under this new State land has remained in the hands of the landlords, foreign capital in Indian industry has been assured security, and violence has been routinely meted out on those who try to change these two facts.

**TPM:** *How the struggle against Globalisation can be made stronger and inclusive of various shades – or are they destined to be separate?*

**RD:** The struggle against imperialism must include various shades, and indeed that will strengthen the struggle enormously. It is not essential that they hold common views on matters such as the theory of non-violence, the exact form of society they wish to build, and so on, as long as they are united in struggle against imperialist depredation, and progressively better understand its nature and mechanisms.

But it would be absurd to think that *all* shades of political opinion can be accommodated: after all, the anti-imperialist struggle surely cannot include those forces which *represent* imperialism (eg. the political representatives of imperialist countries), or are *doing the bidding* of imperialism (the parties in power at the local or central level in third world countries which are implementing conditions imposed by the IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and so on), or *depend* on imperialism for their sustenance ("non-governmental organisations" which are funded directly and indirectly by foreign institutions). Rather, it is essential that a *clear line of demarcation* be drawn from such forces.

**TPM:** *Do you think that criticisms of WSF like the one you did in "The Economics and Politics of the World Social Forum" can mould the process to a better global platform of protest? Or do you think that primarily it is a faulty process?*

**RD:** We have tried to show, in some detail in our publication, that the WSF was not in fact a genuine continuation of the series of militant protests that began at Seattle in November 1999. Rather it was set up by a coalition of imperialist-funded NGOs and political forces (such as the "Workers" Party ruling Brazil today), which verbally oppose imperialism but scrupulously implement its dictates. The structure of the WSF is not designed to promote anti-

imperialist action but a diffuse talking shop and networking fair, in which the centre-stage is occupied by prominent NGO personalities. It is not by accident, but by specific decision, that the WSF has excluded various fighting forces of anti-imperialist struggles around the world.

Forces worldwide fighting against the current imperialist onslaught no doubt need to join hands in struggle; however, we concluded from our study of the WSF's genesis, material base, and actual operation that *it* is not an instrument of such struggle but a diversion from it.

## News Capsules

### Eminent Persons ask Supreme Court to take suo-motto action in Narmada Issue & the Plight of Dam Oustees

A number of eminent persons have written to the Chief Justice of India, Jst. V. N. Khare, asking him to intervene in the issue of Sardar Sarovar Project, where gross violations of Supreme Court judgment and human rights is happening. The signatories include Former Chief Justice of India, Jst (Retd) Venkatchallaih, Retired High Court Judges, Jst (Retd) Daud and Jst (Retd) Suresh, noted social worker Baba Amte, economist and former diplomat L.C. Jain, and former Chairperson of National Commission for Women, Mohini Giri, Former Minister of Finance, Madhu Dandavate, literateurs Mahasweta Devi, Arundhati Roy, Former Chiefs of Navy Admiral Ramdas and Admiral Vishnu Bhagavat, Environmentalist Vandana Shiva, veteran journalist Kuldip Nayyar, General Secretary, CPI A.B. Bardhan, Politburo Member, CPM, Sitaram Yachuri, Senior Lawyers of Supreme Court Rajiv Dhawan and Kamini Jaiswal.

In the letter, in October 2003, they appealed to the Chief Justice to direct the concerned governments and authorities not to permit or carry out any further dam construction until an independent body looks into the situation of compliance or otherwise (of Supreme Court judgment and rehabilitation policies) and, report back to the Chief Justice, on the ground reality of the Narmada valley today and till rehabilitation of all families in the village communities affected at 103 meters height, is ensured.

In a shocking incident, on December 5, the attempted suicide of 15 Project Affected People (PAPs) at the Sardar Sarovar dam site brought to public attention the grave injustice and destitution faced by dam-affected people in Gujarat. The PAPs are adivasis displaced from villages in Nandod and Naswadi talukas (District Narmada and Baroda respectively) by the Sardar Sarovar Project reservoir and other project-related works and shifted to resettlement sites as early as the 1980s, but not yet adequately rehabilitated. The government promised, among other things, that at least

one member of each family would receive jobs from the government upon displacement. After this and other promises of rehabilitation failed to materialize and numerous appeals went unanswered, the desperate PAPs felt they had no options left. They were arrested by the police and put in the jail.

For more information, [www.narmada.org](http://www.narmada.org)

## **One crore (10 million) signature campaign for local government empowerment**

In a significant development, over 1 crore (10 million) people from Andhra Pradesh have signed in support of local government empowerment. Federation for Empowerment of Local Governments (FELG) and LOK SATTVA launched a campaign to this effect from August 9 to October 2, 2003. We are proud that they have exceeded the target of 1 crore and tally of signatures affixed as of current information is 1,06,32,816. More significantly, they made the people understand the importance of local government empowerment. This historic effort, never before attempted on such a scale on an issue, which has neither emotive nor religious appeal, is unparalleled in India. Thanks to the efforts of thousands of volunteers who have toiled day and night for the 10 weeks, the organizations have succeeded in making the people realize that, local government empowerment is not a trade union issue of elected representatives but an issue which will truly empower them and improve their quality of life profoundly.

Now for the first time in our democracy, instead of the parties setting agendas through their manifestos at campaign time, the people have set their own agenda. Surely, this assertion of public opinion will force parties to include this agenda in their election manifestos and through civil society pressure.

For detailed information - [www.loksatta.org/felgreport.htm](http://www.loksatta.org/felgreport.htm)

## **Coca-Cola ordered to stop extracting ground water at Plachimada, Kerala.**

In a significant victory to the people's struggle against the Coca Cola plant, the High Court of the state of Kerala in December 2003 gave the firm one month to close its bore wells at the plant in Plachimada. A village governing council had complained about overuse of water and had filed a writ challenging bottling operations. However, the court also ruled that the council had no authority to close down the bottling plant.

Kerala High Court Justice K Balakrishnan Nair granted Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Limited one month to close down its wells and find an alternative source of water.

The council's writ had challenged an order by the state government that permitted the functioning of the bottling plant in the area. The court observed that ground water was a national resource that belonged to the entire society. It also pointed out that the Supreme Court had stated in earlier orders that underground water belonged to the public and the state should act as a trustee for its protection.

## **Pak-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy**

The NAPM colleagues participated in the sixth convention of the Pak-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy held in Karachi, Pakistan, on December 12-14, 2003. While Thomas Kocherry and colleagues from NFF also participated in an enthusiastic reception organized by the Pakistan Fisherpeople Forum, Sandip Pandey, Priyadarshi, Putul and others participated in a meeting organized by organizations struggling against dams and displacement. The meeting suggested a South Asian Alliance of People's Movements. An ad-hoc committee was proposed to contact and probe the possibilities of such an Alliance.

The convention and organizations from Pakistan responded enthusiastically to the proposal of a twin Peace March from Delhi to Wagha border and from Karachi to Lahore, initiated by Sandip Pandey. The March will be organized by the Forum in India and Pakistan, along with NAPM, Coalition Against Nuclear Militarization.

## **Second International Meeting of Dam Affected and their Allies**

The Second International Meeting of Dam Affected and their Allies, held at Rasi Salai, Thailand from November 29 – December

3, 2003. The conference was attended by over 300 representatives of people's movements opposing destructive dams, experts and academicians from 62 countries.

Over 20 people participated from India. They include Medha Patkar, Magsaysay Award winner, Mr. Rajendra Singh, Mr. Kailash Avasia, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Mr. Roy Laifungbam, CORE, North-East India, Dr. A Latha, Chalakudy Puzha Samrakshana Samithi, Kerala and Dr. D.K.Mishra, Barh Mukti Abhiyan.

Prominent among the international participants include, Ms. Liane Greeff, Environmental Monitoring Group, South Africa, 39Ms. Berta Caceres Flores, COPINH, Honduras, Mr. Patrick McCullay, International Rivers Network, USA, Mr. Ejaz Ahmed, Tarbela Dam Affected area, Pakistan, Mr. Chainarong Srettachau, Southeast Asia Rivers Network, Thailand and Mr. Jose Josivaldo de Oliveira, MAB, Brazil.

Narmada Bachao Andolan was a member of the International Agenda Committee for this Conference.

For more information, [www.irn.org/riversforlife](http://www.irn.org/riversforlife)

## Court-Affected Peoples' Forum

A unique, unprecedented forum called the Court-Affected Peoples' Forum was held in Mumbai on December 16<sup>th</sup> 2003, organized by the National Alliance of Peoples' Movements (NAPM) along with National Railway Mazdoor Union (NRMU).

Swami Agnivesh inaugurated the hearing, presenting his own case of the court giving a judgment with utter ignorance of the complexity of bonded and child labor issues, and also the executive sabotaging the good judgment when the court had no courage and sensitivity to punish the guilty

Brian Lobo of Shoshit Jan Andolan asserted that against the Supreme Court's total insensitivity regarding traditional and customary rights of adivasis to lands and forests that have been in their possession for generations, the only way to attain justice is to unite and fight for justice.

Abdul Haq Ansari of Nirbhay Bano Andolan, Pravin Ghag of Girni Kamgar Sangharsh Samiti, N.D. Koli of the National Fishworkers Forum and Senior union activist of National Railway Mazdoor Union (NRMU), Shri Dharmadhikary were some of the others who presented their cases.

The panel of judges included Adv. N. D. Suryavanshi and Barrister Sharad Palav, social scientist Ms. Nalini Pandit and political activist Avinash Mahatekar. Medha Patkar chaired the hearing.

# The Truth, If You Dare

P. Aravinda

'The Best Democracy Money Can Buy'

by Greg Palast

[www.gregpalast.org](http://www.gregpalast.org)

Plume 2002 \$14

Markets for electricity don't work and can't work. Exxon's oil spill in Alaska was no accident but a disaster waiting to happen. The IMF & World Bank expect riots in the countries they are restructuring. Televangelists divert the money raised from their religious programs for private and political gain. Corporations pay big bucks for access to legislators in democracies, and woo dictators who can ensure "good governance." Money can silence the press. No surprise to veterans of rallies and sit-ins on corporate liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. Yet few rally evidence so strong with presentation so clear as journalist Greg Palast, who has collected some of his sharpest investigative reports in the newly published volume *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy: The Truth about Corporate Cons, Globalisation, and High-Finance Fraudsters*.

Corporates sponsor think tanks and buy column space in the "free press" to promote their views. Journalists seeking to work in the public interest may have to go to great lengths to see their reports in print. Palast moved with his family from the US to England, where his reports are carried by the London Observer, the Guardian, as well as the BBC. To find out how Bush was really "elected," or how Exxon Valdez crashed, Americans must turn to the UK Press. Palast also gets inside how US and UK corporations buy influence not only in US and UK but around the world. He not only sniffs out secret documents, some of which are reproduced in his book, but also poses, Tehelka-style, as the suitcase-man for a US corporation in the UK.

And just what is the extent to which first-world multinationals will go to secure return on investments? A UK company with 40% interest in an electricity plant in Pakistan had this take on the 1998 coup by General Pervez Musharraf: "Now we have a situation where we can be paid." At that same time, Maharashtra voided its contract with Enron, prompting Clinton to send top Cabinet officials and later Bush to send his Vice President to demand payment or else.

Why doesn't the average Indian, or for that matter the average American, know this?

For airtime or column-inches, development and globalisation, however insightfully reported cannot compete with the whims and fancies of the rich and famous. Even The Hindu splashed a colour photo of Miss Universe on its front page. The story of the Coca-Cola sponsored cricket match made headlines while the ruling against the Coca-Cola plant in Plachimada was buried within.

Painstaking investigation and detailed documentation afford Palast opportunities to let the people, especially those whose evils he exposes, speak for themselves. He states the views of his opponent in strong language, and then mounts his attack fair and square. To complain that regulations and lawsuits are getting in the way of productivity is easy. Palast provides the hard evidence that increasingly routine and, without lawsuits, unpunished violations of these regulations has put people's lives at risk.

It has become common among progressive writers to dismiss the major political parties as Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Few attack the complacency of the liberal left which passes these comments, including those who were quick to interpret the World Trade Center attack as an ideological war or those who are ever ready to valorize small business and rural

...Continued on page 28

## ***Book Announcement***

# **River Linking: A Millennium Folly?**

Edited by

**Medha Patkar**

Published by

National Alliance of People's Movements & Initiative

Considered to be the "mother of all projects", interlinking of rivers is projected as the one and the only solution to all water problems – droughts and floods. Never before has any proposal won the unstinted support of the apex court, the first citizen and the chief executive of the country, all at the same time. Armed with unprecedented support, the concerned ministry has pressed all available resources to steam roll this controversial project, keeping at bay the anticipated socio-economic and ecological implications as well as the compelling concerns of the conscientious citizens.

The rights of the riparian countries are not taken cognizance of while planning this mammoth project. A unilateral decision by India, without a fully consulted prior consent of the concerned countries, can inflict a serious injury to the already fragile political atmosphere in South Asia.

The experiences of and the lessons they learned from similar interlinking projects in other countries should be an eye opener to us to understand the likely implications and negative impacts of this seemingly beneficial scheme.

This is a collection of articles by experts in the field, dissecting and analyzing the proposed project from various angles.

## ***Contents***

Note on Contributors

Setting the Discussion

**Questioning the Diktat**

*Medha Patkar*

**River- Linking Project: Many Questions**

*Ramaswamy R. Iyer*

**Interlinking National Rivers: To Link Or Not To Link?**

*Major General (Retd) Sudhir Vombatkere*

**The Inter-Linking Of Rivers: A Misconceived Plan Of Water Management In India**

*Kalyan Rudra*

**River Linking: Death Warrant for India's Rivers**

*Himanshu Thakkar*

**Interlinking of Rivers: The Super Market Approach**

*Sudhirendar Sharma*

***Linking of Rivers: Lessons from the Past***

*Biksham Gujja and Hajara Shaik*

**Linking the Rivers, De-linking the Relations: Nepali Perspective**

*Gopal Siwakoti 'Chintan'*

**India-Bangladesh: 21st Century Battle For Water Sharing**

*Jamal Anwar*

Annexures

Copies of this book will be available at the NAPM bookstall at WSF and from:

National Alliance of People's Movements,  
Haji Habib Bld, A Wing,  
Naigaon Cross Road, Dadar (E),  
Mumbai, Maharashtra- 400 014  
Tel: (022) 24150529  
Email: initiative@riseup.net, sansahil@vsnl.net

Price: Rs.100

\$ 5

*...Continued from Page 26*

country life. I am guilty of indulging in such analyses. Palast, guided by the dictum "to comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable," hauls up these cliches and urges the lazy progressives to get off their swivel chairs and meet the people working in the Twin Towers or in the small towns. Palast has.

Guided by righteous indignation and a genuine love for humanity, Palast's simple prose brings home complex issues so that we no longer have any excuse to sit idly while these injustices go on. No greater revolution than simple straightforward law enforcement, on matters as mundane as minimum wage, product safety, and one person-one vote could do wonders towards welfare and social justice. He ends on a personal note, describing his genuine love for the country he left in order to tell the truth, and urges readers to join all those struggling to expose corruption, stop exploitation, and build resources and institutions for progress defined by people.

*(P. Aravinda is with the Association of India's Development)*

## **NAPM at World Social Forum**

(Please confirm the timings)

### **Jan 20**

2 pm to 5 pm Venue: Hall 1

Conference

***Development Induced Displacement: Perspectives and Strategies***

### **Jan 20**

9 am to 12 pm Venue: B 49

Seminar

***Impact of Globalisation and the unorganised worker***

### **Jan 20**

5 pm to 8 pm Venue: D 134

Seminar

***Indigenous People's Identity and Their Rights***

### **Jan 18**

1 pm to 4 pm Venue: A 13

Seminar

***Peoples Forum Against Coca-Cola***

### **Jan 18**

5 pm to 8 pm Venue: A 4

Seminar

***Water for Livelihood: Linking People, Not Rivers***

### **Jan 17**

5 pm to 8 pm Venue: B 49

Seminar

***Agrarian Struggles: People over Profit***

*The Movement will welcome short write-ups about the various struggles, processes and issues, and responses from the readers. The unsolicited write-ups should be precise (not exceeding 800 words) and send either by email or post. The Movement reserves the right to use them in whatever possible format – either short article or struggle note, or letter.*

*This is a song of some decades back, sung over by millions across the globe. This is a song which inspired and lit the imaginations of thousands. As the global powers choke the lives of millions around the world and the Davids of resistance weave the web against the mighty Goliath, here is something to hope for... to strive and dream for...*

## **Imagine**

*by John Lennon*

Imagine there's no heaven, It's easy if you try,  
No hell below us, Above us only sky,  
Imagine all the people living for today...

Imagine there's no countries, It isn't hard to do,  
Nothing to kill or die for, No religion too,  
Imagine all the people living life in peace...

Imagine no possessions, I wonder if you can,  
No need for greed or hunger, A brotherhood of man,  
Imagine all the people Sharing all the world...

You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one,  
I hope some day you'll join us, And the world will live as one.