

“WITHER THE PEOPLE’S MOVEMENTS IN INDIA?”
THE CASE OF NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF PEOPLE’S
MOVEMENT

Alka Pal.*

ABSTRACT

In order to *survive social movements must categorically maintain their autonomy from the established institutional and ideological structures if they are to give their own alternative paradigm*. And they also need to maintain, *a dialectical balance between its urge to institutionalise and radicalize*. An in-depth analysis of a movement’s structural organising, networking/ alliance building, ideological framing allows us to have an in-sight into the movement’s capacity to maintain its autonomy, which allows for its survival and success. This paper tries to analyse the same in the context of National Alliance of People’s movement. It is more of a descriptive documentation of the movement and its trajectory.

Key Words: National Alliance of People’s Movement, Land Acquisition, SEZ’S, People’s parliament, People’s Audit, Neo-liberalism.

*** Ph.D Research Scholar, Centre for Political studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi**

Social Movements can straddle into diverse trajectories like: co-option, splitting apart, decline in the radicalness of the movement, institutionalisation of movements: within itself or within the formal terrain of politics. The social movement literature on Resource Mobilisation Theory and Political Opportunity Structures can help us a lot in understanding why certain movements are successful while others are not able to reach their desired objectives. ***In order to survive social movements must categorically maintain their autonomy from the established institutional and ideological structures if they are to give their own alternative paradigm.*** And they also need to maintain, a dialectical balance between its urge to institutionalise and radicalize. An in-depth analysis of a movement's structural organising, networking/ alliance building, ideological framing, allows us to have an in-sight into the movement's capacity to maintain its autonomy, which allows for its survival and success. This paper tries to analyse the same in the context of National Alliance of People's movement. It is more of a descriptive documentation of the movement and its trajectory.

NAPM¹ is one of the largest alliances geared towards an alternative paradigm of development which is pro-people. The Alliance has been working both at the national level by organising national campaigns and also at the state level. At the state level it operates through the state level organisations which are a part of the alliance. NAPM works through a loosely institutionalised structure and what it has basically led to, is the institutionalisation of the idea of struggle against the state and its neo-liberal agenda in the current scenario of 'development-induced-displacement'. It can be considered as an alliance that is still in the process of evolving, "it is a process of like minded groups, movements and organisations, retaining their autonomous identities. NAPM brings together struggles of various marginalised sectors into an alliance, which emphasizes the primacy of ownership of natural resources by communities, who live and are sustained by these resources."²

NAPM can be seen as an effort which tries to bring in different 'single issue movements and organisations' under one umbrella of 'people's movement'. This idea of unity of 'people's

¹ (NAPM) denotes that the data has been taken up from the official website of NAPM.

² Dana Van Breukelen, "Marching in The Spirit of Gandhi: A Case Study into Gandhian Elements of The Lok Samiti Movement in Mehdiganj, India", *Masters' Thesis – Asha For Education*, April, 2006, http://www.ashanet.org/austin/mehdiganj/visit_reports/ThesisGandhi.pdf, (accessed June 21, 2014).

movement' is well explained in the words of Govind Pansare (a veteran leader of Communist Party of India, Maharashtra), "there has also been a change in the attitude of the 'one-issue' movements during the last five to seven years...we are evolving a larger movement where all of us will be marching separately - striking together on one target. However, there is a need of a unity in marching, striking together on one target."³ The trend towards the emergence of combined solidarity front of progressive parties, left front parties, movements, organisations, NGO's on the issue of landlessness and displacement is still in the process.⁴ *This explains the networking done by the social movements and which contributes towards their survival and facilitates them to remain radical and maintain their autonomy. Since it is possible for the State to crush the movements which are located regionally and are explicit but it is not easy to trace out networks especially when they are in their latency phase (where they are continuously deliberating, consolidating, and are involved in consciousness raising activities).*

EMERGENCE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

NAPM has been in a continuous growing process and has been in existence since two decades. Its genesis started with the Harsukh Sammelan (28th September, 1989) in the Narmada Valley. It was over here that the idea of 'Jan Vikas Andolan' was introduced, implying that what was needed, was not simply development but People's Development. It was a record event where about 3500 adivasis, dalits, shramiks and fishworkers participated and about 250 organisations all linked to movements directed against the State, were a part of the event and they all together gave the slogan of 'Vikas Chahiye Vinash Nahi'.⁵

The idea of forming a broad alliance of People's Movement got a boost and an immediate material context with the announcement of Neo-Liberal reforms in 1991 and the Babri-Masjid incident. Thus making it imperative for all the progressive minded movements to align against the dual forces of Casteism-and-Communalism on one hand and globalisation on the other. This larger context had "lent a greater urgency to the need for an effective alliance to strengthen the

³Govind Pansare, "Left Unity Means United Struggle by Parties and People's Movements." *The People's Movement: News Magazine for The National Alliance of People's Movement*, March- April 2004, 15

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Medha Patkar, "Building up of National Alliance of People's Movement", *Citizen News Service – CNS*, <http://www.citizen-news.org/2011/01/building-up-of-national-alliance-of.html> (accessed June 23, 2014).

secular ethos, and struggle for development that empowers people against the hegemonic, exploitative culture associated with the terms of privatisation and liberalisation”⁶ .

A meeting of like minded organisations including some trade unions was organised in Bhopal on December 1, 1992, where the process of alliance formulation finally started taking shape. Among the various programmes, the public meeting held at Delhi on March 3, 1993 against the Dunkel Draft and New Economic Policy (NEP) which was attended by over 10,000 people from the grass root organisations from all over the country has been of crucial importance in consolidating the idea of the alliance. A national conference on ‘Development and Displacement’ was organised at Mumbai in September 1995 in which 80 organisations engaged in mass struggles on development issues had participated. After the first rally in Delhi, the alliance building got its momentum.

The activists and the people, who have been affected by the current developmental policies of the government, also participated in various other struggles that were on their peak, like Narmada Bachao Andolan, Chilika and others. Thereafter it was decided to have a national tour from 30th January to 30th March 1996 and by the end of the tour the Alliance had visited about 55 places. A three day long deliberation was held at Wardha and the activists tried to evolve a People’s Resolve, which was neither to be a manifesto nor a charter of demands. It simply endeavoured to clarify the ideological position of the alliance on most of the issues, which could become the basis for the strengthening of the unity among people’s organisations of a wide range. “A National Programme for NAPM which has a twofold action plan- at the local as well as the national level was finalised by consensus at Sewagram, thus both the People’s resolve and the National Programme for NAPM got finalised in 1996.”⁷

The consolidation of the Alliance, has been facing certain challenges and one of them being, bringing together of various cross-cutting issues and various caste and class divisions cutting across the various issues. Thus, it became imperative that NAPM should not simply remain a

⁶ Michael Levien, (2007). “India’s Double Movement: Polanyi and The National Alliance of People’s Movement”, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology: Globalisation and Social Change*, 52, no. 119 (2007):129.

⁷“National Alliance of People’s Movement” *Proxxa: Politics: People’s Movement*, <http://www.foil.org/politics/napm.html> (accessed June 2, 2014).

process, if it wanted to go for the long haul. The veteran leader Medha Patkar who is the main stalwart of the movement said:

“How long can we do it when government and capitalist forces were going ahead, communal parties coming to power and so on, so we must have a national action which should be a very indefinite, preserving and intervening action, politically-intervening action, for which ***there was a need for not just a platform, or a network or an alliance, but a forceful organisation, a movement and not just an organisation.*** A common movement which will need a common organisation.”⁸

NAPM got its formalised institutional structure in 1996. The organisational form and administrative framework, which the alliance should have was also thoroughly discussed and it was decided to have a team of National conveners and State conveners. It is the task of the State level conveners of the NAPM to call a meeting of all the concerned organisations and individuals and introduce them to the issues and goals of NAPM and forward the process of a national unity through state level committees and common action programme. The Alliance was not to function as another party cadre (the idea of having centralised and strict party cadres as the left oriented parties have was discarded) and anyone who supports the NAPM’s cause was to be allowed to attend the meetings of NAPM.

NAPM is an alliance of around 200 associate organisations, coming from different regions and which stand for diverse issues, a large number of Pan-Indian organisations and fraternal organisations at the National level are a part of this large alliance. The Alliance has its National office at Bombay and another office at Delhi, at the National level. The alliance also manages its own website (www.napm-india.org) and manages a blog (www.napm-india.org/blogs), where it keeps updating all its current events held Nationally and regionally. The Alliance also conducts an annual meeting at the National level (biennial conventions of NAPM). And publishes a bi-monthly magazine in English, called as ‘*Movement Of India*’ another magazine in Hindi, named ‘*Sanchi Muchhi*’, and another magazine in Marathi language named ‘*Andolan*’. ***The National***

⁸ Medha Patkar, “Building up of National Alliance of People’s Movement”, *Citizen News Service – CNS*, <http://www.citizen-news.org/2011/01/building-up-of-national-alliance-of.html> (accessed June 23, 2014).

level activists have been a part of the policy making circles and have been negotiating with the policy makers especially the National Advisory Council, which has acted as an extension of the cabinet and tries to act as a lynchpin between the movement activists, the civil society and the government.

After the emergence of the broad alliance, the next step was, the transformation of this alliance or process into a strong political force. NAPM leaders have constantly articulated that electoral politics is something in which they don't want to enter into, ***the aim is to create a political movement rather than a political party.*** Medha Patkar argues that, "it is also necessary that we also create a concept, a form of new politics - that new form of political consciousness where individual citizens, too small civil society groups and too large people's movement could participate"⁹ ***There is a need to move beyond electoral politics to people's participation, not just at the symbolic level but also action oriented. The alliance as such has remained away from electoral politics and contesting from elections and has tried to put pressure on the Indian State by creating a strong political movement and influencing the policy makers, the aim is to have an alternative form of politics, which is de-centralised in terms of participation of people and exercise of power.***

FRAMING OF IDEOLOGY, NETWORKING AND ALLIANCE MAKING

The alliance has been facing a challenge in terms of evolving a common ideological background. The challenge is of coming together and remaining together despite differences of opinion on electoral politics, there is also the challenge of avoiding 'manabhed' (differences of heart and minds) even if there is 'matabhed' (differences of opinion). The problem is how to make the regional organisations and movements go beyond their regional commitments? It's true that most of the times problems are locally situated, but since post-emergency period the movements have started making their influence felt directly on the policy initiatives of the government, rather than depending on electoral politics, or their constituency leaders for the amelioration of their depressing conditions.

⁹Ibid. (accessed June 12, 2014).

This makes it imperative on the part of the movements to realise that how their struggles are related. May be not in terms of the strategy adopted to carry out the struggle, or the different ways in which their oppression, marginalisation and dispossession is carried out implicitly or explicitly by the State, but the relation definitely lies in terms of what might be the solution and the issue at stake and in terms of having a common target of action. The “regional issues are important, but when you talk of radical transformation one has to go beyond that, especially in the era of globalisation. The role of capital has become so central all around the globe. So, if we talk of radical transformation then we have to sacrifice some of our regional commitments and give time to it”¹⁰.

The ideological plank of NAPM is to resist Indian government’s New-Economic Policies of liberalisation, Globalisation and Privatisation. Michael Levien (2007) in one of his articles has rightly argued in this regard, that:

“NAPM’s most salient master frame - the discourse that most accurately captures what most of its movement are fighting for and that ‘articulates’ its constituency is that of ‘displacement’ by a disembedded market. Beneath all this diversity, what most of these movements hold in common is displacement from houses, fields, forests, fisheries, water resources and means of livelihood by dams, mining, projects, slum demolitions, coca-cola, factories, urban renewal schemes, special economic zones, steel plants, forest enclosures, new industrial technologies and various other forms of dislocations and dispossession which have intensified in this neo-liberal era.”¹¹

The way NAPM brings in all the issues of land acquisition and SEZs, under the larger frame of reference, ‘the agricultural crisis and food security’ and ‘development induced displacement’, which again is clubbed under the larger reference of ‘Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation’, allows it to broaden its frame of reference. This ‘frame extension’ allows the Alliance to bring in different organisation and movements together under the banner of NAPM. NAPM in its efforts to create an ‘umbrella alliance’, a kind of ‘populism’, has been working to construct an ‘alternative hegemony of people’ and an alternative mode of development and

¹⁰Ashok Chowdhary, “Alliance Building”, *The Movement of India: News Magazine of National Alliance of People’s Movement in India*, April, 2010, 7.

¹¹Michael Levien, “India’s Double Movement: Polanyi and The National Alliance of People’s Movement”, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology: Globalisation and Social Change*, 52, no. 119 (2007): 129.

planning which implies communities control over land, water, forest, aquatic wealth and mineral resources; electoral reforms; struggle against corruption; and removal of socio-economic inequalities.

NAPM is an alliance of diverse shades - Gandhianism, Ambedkarism, Environmentalism, Feminism and various other shades of Socialism (Kothari and Sethi 1984..cited by Michael Levien). *It predominantly attempts, “to create an organised countermovement against the intensified commodification of land” and “calls for decommodification of land and the re-embedding of natural resources within the direct democratic control of communities.”*¹²

Despite of the efforts made at the National and regional level by many of its vocal activists like Medha Patkar and other important figures like Aruna Roy, Madhuresh Kumar, Ulka Mahajan and many others, the alliance has not been able to translate itself into a formidable force to reckon with. Even NAPM leaders themselves agree to this fact that they have not been able to achieve a cohesive National movement, NAPM still has limited national level organisation and has had only a few major campaigns that have achieved significant national level participation. *Levien has forwarded certain reasons that create the constraints in the alliance making process. He divides these obstacles into two categories: (1) “social contradictions and antagonistic political histories”; (2) “the single-issue and localised nature of neo-liberal dislocations.”*¹³

The first category of obstacles includes the caste and class contradictions to alliance making. NAPM for instance tries to bring in ‘farmers movement’ and ‘dalits movements’ under a common platform and many times both of the movements have brought up the issue of land as an important livelihood resource and thus have been struggling for land reforms. But the picture is not that simplistic as it appears to be even within farmers movements there have been various strands. The demands of ‘small and marginal farmers’ can be different from those of ‘rich and dominant farmers’. The Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) believes in modern industrial farming technologies which run at cross-purpose with the other movements of NAPM who see this as destructive and exploitative. This deep tension was demonstrated in 1999 when Sharad Joshi led

¹² Ibid., 130.

¹³ Ibid., 132.

a mass protest struggle in Gujarat in favour of Sardar Sarovar Project where NAPM and Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) had been protesting against it since long.

During the Action 2007 campaign somewhere around 1000 to 2000 people from the National Forum of Forest people and Forest workers (NFFPFW) left the protest movement because it did not favour NAPM's alliance with the BKU since they view BKU as an organisation of rich and dominant upper caste farmers who have been exploiting them as agricultural labourers in their villages and have been disproportionately appropriating the natural resources from village common lands. NFFPFW finds it easy to work in collusion with the Madhya Pradesh Kisan Sangharsh Samiti (MPKSS) but not with BKU. This shows how caste and class can cut across each other and create impediments to alliance making. Levien argues that the second category of obstacles is due to the single issue nature of Neo-Liberal dislocations. *There is a proliferation of single-issue struggles which are finding it hard to create a comprehensive ideology and to bring themselves together onto a common political project.*

THE MOVEMENT SCENARIO: LAND RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

NAPM has been demanding that, both the Land Acquisition Act 1984 and Rehabilitation & Resettlement Act should be combined into one comprehensive Act. NAPM had also submitted its own version of the Act, which was accepted by the National Advisory Council (NAC) and which became the basis of the NAC's draft on the National Development, Displacement, and Rehabilitation Policy which was then presented in the parliament in 2007. But the bill could not get passed, and then finally various movements joined together to launch the Sangharsh campaign in order to get this draconian law repealed and tried to link this with the larger Land Rights Movement in the country. The case of Nandigram in West Bengal, Maha-Mumbai SEZ (MMSEZ) in Raigad, Maharashtra, Pohang Iron and Steel (POSCO) SEZ in Odisha and many others are the instances where the affected people have come up with the radical objective of not giving away their land at any cost.

The Action 2007 was initiated with a 24 hours fast kept by the activists and it also organised a People's Parliament from 19th to 24th March at Jantar Mantar. The aim behind the People's Parliament has been to, bring the people, who are being affected by the current trends of

Privatization, Industrialisation and Globalisation to deliberate upon their problems and to reach at some common consensus, “on issues such as people’s rights over natural resources and its management, right to plan the development policies, human rights violations of dalits and minorities, need of comprehensive legislation to safeguard the interests of unorganised labourers, against foreign capital and right to equality for women.”¹⁴ After these discussions meetings were held with different ministries like Ministry of Forest and Environment, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Labour Ministry, Water Resources, Social Justice, to present the demands of the people that were discussed and deliberated in the People’s Parliament.

On 22 March a protest was held in front of the planning commission and many people were arrested while they were protesting. On 2nd April, on the invitation of the Planning Commission, a team of 20 members from Action 2007 went and had a discussion and forwarded the idea of a decentralised and people centred development agenda and that the planning process should start from the villages and the ‘bastis’. The Planning Commission had finally promised to hold consultations in different regions before finalising the 11th plan. On 3rd of April a South Asian People’s Parliament was organised by Action 2007 to discuss the various problem plaguing the Third World Countries. From April 5 to 7, the Action 2007 rallied its movement against SEZ and displacement.¹⁵

NAPM organised its 8th biennial convention which ended on October 26, 2010 in Badwani, Madhya Pradesh. It was a three day convention where almost 700 hundred participants from 20 states and nearly 150 organisations participated to deliberate on the contemporary issues and to elect the new National Convener’s Team and also to formulate National and regional programmes for the next two years. The critical issues discussed were: land acquisition and displacement in urban and rural areas; forest rights act; inequity faced by the ‘unprotected’ labourers; constructions of dams and water policy; communalisation of politics; discrimination against dalits. The convention also endorsed the idea of having ‘Jan Sansad’ (People’s Parliament), “it will be demonstrative of direct (not representative) and just democratic forum

¹⁴Action 2007 - Day 16- First Phase Culminated With South Asian People’s Parliament, NAPM, <http://openspace.org.in/book/export/html/545> (accessed 15 June, 2014).

¹⁵National Alliance of People’s Movement (NAPM) – Open Space, NAPM, <http://openspace.org.in/book/export/html/420> (accessed 12 June, 2014).

and processes. It would strive to bring together people's representatives, eminent activists and progressive professionals from various walks of life who would petition and challenge the conscience of the nation..."¹⁶

On August 2, 2011 the Sangharsh campaign was launched which gave a call for a three day protest mobilisation in Delhi, demanding the immediate repeal of archaic Land Acquisition Act 1894 (LAA) and its replacement by a 'Comprehensive National Development Planning Act'¹⁷. Several National level alliances like NAPM and others under the banner of Action 2007 have been opposing LAA and have been for long demanding, the National Government to take steps towards *institutionalising the idea of 'community control over natural resources and the right to livelihood'*, some crucial steps have been taken in this regard by the PESA Act, 1996 and the Forest Rights Act, 2006 but even these are not being properly implemented.

The Lok Shakti Abhiyan is another important initiative taken by NAPM and its allies. It was conducted from December 2011 to February, 2012 in four phases: (1st phase) December 20-2- Uttar Pradesh and Haryana; (2nd phase) January 9-14- Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh; January 23-29- Bihar and Jharkhand; February 6-13- Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa. After the completion of the four phases, Lok Shakti Abhiyan organised a one day preparatory meeting, for the proposed National Jan Sansad in Delhi during the budget session of the parliament in March, 2012. The Abhiyan was more of a mobilisation campaign, trying to create the consciousness among the people of their grievances and that, how the state-corporate nexus was perpetrating the 'land grab' scenario? The Lok Shakti Abhiyan stands for, "the people's demands of people's democracy, land rights, anti-SEZs and other anti people policies passed by the government callously that are adversely affecting adivasis, dalits, working class and other marginalised communities across the country."

Another one of the major events held up by NAPM has been its initiative to create "an alternative people's political forum", *The Jansansad* (or people's parliament), with the

¹⁶"Towards Peace Justice and Democracy: NAPM's 8th Biennial Convention – A Brief Report", *Movement of India: News Magazine of National Alliance of People's Movement*, November, 2010, 20.

¹⁷.*New Entries – Sangharsh Blog - Word Press.com*, (Sangharsh),<http://sangharshblog.wordpress.com/page/6/> (accessed 6 July, 2014).

substantive aim of creating “an ongoing people’s parliament which will hold its sessions in different places in the country and start dealing with the issues of the region and forge movement solidarity” (NAPM). The Jansansad meeting was held for three days from 20th to 22th March, 2012 at Rajendra Bhavan, New Delhi and on 23rd March 2012. A Jansansad march was staged from Shaheed Bhagatsingh Park to Jantar Mantar. The first session of the National Jansansad, was led by social activist Medha Patkar and was held in New Delhi on March 19, 2012. She made it amply clear that, what the idea of Jan Sansad would imply, she said:

“Casting votes once in five year do not make a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Our Jan Sansad will be constituted by more than 500 people’s representatives, 67% of the members in Jan Sansad will represent marginalised people, from areas threatened by resource grabbing in the name of development. They will ideally be chosen through their Gram Sabhas, Mohalla Sabhas or by the community groups. Remaining 33% will be ‘jan sahayogis’ consisting of academicians, intellectuals, professionals, experts, and others to be nominated by the movements and people’s groups struggling in those areas” (NAPM).¹⁸

NAPM held its 9th biennial convention at Thrissur, 17th November, 2012 on ‘*Alternatives to the Current Hegemonic Paradigms of Development and Politics*’. The convention was attended by about 800 delegates from 20 states. The convention discussed on viable alternatives on various issues such as, “energy paradigm, community control over natural resources, democratic development planning, agrarian crisis, politics and governance, state repression, popular culture and media, education and health.”¹⁹ The slogan raised at the convention was ‘*vikash chahiye, vinash nahi*’ (we want development not destruction); ‘*desh bachao, desh banao*’; ‘*sansaad bachao, sansadan banao*’. The three day convention concluded with the resolve of furthering the primary mandate of Sangharsh and Nirman (struggle and reconstruction), for the purpose of which a ‘*Navnirman*’ march was made within the NAPM. The convention further resolved to fight tooth and nail for the rights of the people over ‘*jal, jungal, and jameen*’ through the Gram Sabhas and Mohalla Sabhas.

¹⁸ *Jan Sansad: National Alliance of People’s Movement*, (NAPM), http://napm-india.org/Jan_Sansad (accessed 18 June, 2014).

¹⁹ *NAPM’s 9th Biennial Convention Demands New Political Alternative*, (NAPM), <http://napm-india.org/node/831> (accessed 12 June, 2014).

NAPM also took the decision to further the protest against the proposed Land Acquisition Bill in the upcoming parliament. They declared their opposition to the proposed Right to Fair Compensation, Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Transparency Bill, 2012²⁰ in their upcoming Delhi Convention on 24th November. A *Janmorcha* was also organised on 21-22-23 August 2012, in front of Jantar Mantar, New Delhi to protest against the land grab and the anti-people Right to fair compensation R&R Bill 2012.

The Action 2007 (Sangharsh 2007) has forwarded its own critique of the proposed Right to Fair Compensation, Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Transparency Bill, 2012, for not taking into consideration, the demands of the People's Movement. There basic critique of the proposed act has been: (1) there should be no acquisition of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes and this includes both land used for single-cropping or multiple- cropping; (2) land should be acquired only for public purposes and not public-private-partnership or for private purposes and that the definition of public purpose should be clearly defined; (3) the People's Movement also demanded that all the central 16 acts (related to acquisition directly or indirectly) should be brought under the purview of new act, to make all equal before the law. But the "Ministry of Rural Development wants to exclude 13 out of 16 Acts including Industrial Development Act, Land Acquisition (Mines) Act, National Highways Act and others from the purview of the new act. This means that 90% of the land acquired as on today will continue with injustice and force used, with no change at all"; (4) involvement of 'gram sabhas' and 'mohalla sabhas' in every land acquisition process; (5) the People's Movement has suggested that the if the acquired land is not put to use for 5 years then it must be returned to the people (after five years from the date of possession), the ministry has accepted the five year time period, but has not accepted to give that land back to landowners instead it proposes that the land will go to the State Land Bank; (6) the People's Movement has suggested that the law should be applied retrospectively and suggested that the ministry should re-examine the issue and make necessary provisions but the ministry has rejected this proposal made by the People's Movement.²¹

²⁰ Sagharsh Blog, *Sagharsh*, <http://sangharshblog.wordpress.com/> (accessed 13 June 2014).

²¹ Sagharsh Blog, *Sagharsh*, <http://sangharshblog.wordpress.com/> (accessed 13 June 2014).

NAPM has been actively involved in many other single – issue struggles also, where it deploys the strategies learned and experimented at the National level and at other regional level protest movements against land acquisition. NAPM has been involved in the anti-land acquisition movements of POSCO, Nandigram, Singur, MMSEZ and many others. In the case of POSCO struggle, NAPM has been working under the banner of POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti and has been engaging with the state at the level of dialogue around the illegality of the issue. In the case of the struggle in Nandigram, NAPM constituted a fact finding committee to find out about the ghastly massacre that happened on 14th March 2007 in Nandigram. The team paid a visit to the various affected villages of Nandigram and also talked to the victims and their relatives. The team also met the District Magistrate and Collector of East Midnapur and held discussions with various political and people’s organisations.

People’s Audit of SEZ²², conducted by NAPM and other movement organisations aligning under similar agendas, has been one of the many attempts where NAPM or the alliance has acted as an interface between People’s Movement and the State. ***Knowing the technicalities of law and having the knowledge of the Land Acquisition act and the SEZ Act, the Forest Rights Act and other legal provisions allows the social activists and experts working under the banner of NAPM to provide for the articulation, aggregation and framing of the people’s issues, grievances and demands in a technical legal language which can be deliberated with the State.*** The SEZ act was passed in the parliament in June 2005, and over 714 proposals (approx.) for the setting up of SEZ have been granted approvals in various parts of the country and it was in opposition to this that the People’s Movement launched a People’s Audit on SEZs.

The first People’s Audit was conducted in Maharashtra on September 15th 2009. This was followed by similar audits in Tamil Nadu (24-26th October 2009), Karnataka (8-9th November 2009), Andhra Pradesh (7-9th December 2009), Goa (19-20th December 2009), Gujarat, and the final People’s Audit was an attempt to consolidate the findings done at the state level. The final National People’s Audit of SEZ process was organised on 6th of July 2009 at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. The process of People’s Audit of SEZs involves two levels. Firstly, the peoples

²² “People’s Audit of SEZ”, *The Movement of India: News Magazine of National Alliance of National Alliance of People’s Movement*, July, 2010.

who are affected by the SEZ project and the related land acquisition submit their testimonies to an eminent panel of social activists, social scientists, economists, retired bureaucrats, journalists and independent researchers who then deliberate upon them and critically examine the issue, “the issues ranged from land acquisition, displacement, environment impact, compensation to employment to generation, livelihood loss and labour rights as well as those related to the development paradigm and economic growth.”²³

Another effort in the direction of struggle for a just and equal society has been, Sangharsh 2014 which tries to bring in NAPM and many other organisations under the common umbrella platform. Sangharsh 2014 tries to give the People’s Movement a political turn by bringing it into the arena of mainstream institutionalised politics. Since the Sangharsh campaign has tried to mobilise support for the candidates who are a part of the People’s Movement and standing for the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. It brings together under its umbrella platform different mass movements and trade unions which include diverse social groups, like tribals, dalits, forest working people, agricultural workers, fish workers, handloom weavers, domestic workers, street vendors and hawkers, women’s groups and organisations. The Sangharsh 2014, protest demonstration was held on the 23rd and 24th March on the occasion of commemorating the martyrdom of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. Around 3000 people participated in the rally that was taken out on the day of Shaheed Diwas and around 250 people attended the political meeting held on the next day bringing in people from different states like, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Kerela, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Gujarat, Ghorkhaland and Delhi (NAPM).

THE FUTURE TRAJECTORY OF THE PEOPLE’S MOVEMENTS

The historical trajectory of the movement as analysed above makes it amply clear that one of the major draw backs or limitation of people’s movement’s in India is their divided nature and inability to create a ‘unity of struggle’ either due to caste or class issues. What can be discerned from the above analyses is that the movements need to maintain their regional base and at the same time lend support to other movements because they need to remain a united formidable

²³ “People’s Audit of SEZ”, *Movement of India: News Magazine of National Alliance of People’s Movement*, July, 2010, 17.

force and also strike the established institutional and ideological system at multiple levels. The ‘single issue’ based movements need to broaden their ‘frame of reference’ in order to make alliances with other movement organisations, if they are to become a formidable force and create pressure on the state.

The history of alliances has been shifty and NAPM has found it difficult to make the alliance a formidable force at the national level but still the two decades of history of the alliance has shown that it has been able to maintain its autonomy without compromising upon the radical nature of their demands. Though the decision of NAPM regarding trying to change the system from within the policy making circles and thereby participating in the formal institutionalised politics by going for electoral politics, holds unknown prospects which would need further introspection and will take a lot more time to unfold itself and is also beyond the scope of this paper but one can definitely presume that it will definitely affect the trajectory of the movement.

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