



People's Movement



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Dear Readers,

This is our first ebook. Most of you who are regular readers of Firstpost would know that we write short, long and very longform views and analysis on the news of the day.

Anna Hazare's call to arms for strong anti-corruption legislature became so resonant, that we quickly realized that we were witnessing an urban India that is indeed finding its voice. There were many contradictions in this televised, real-time revolution. There were moments when we asked if a single representation of a systemic problem would do and if fasting was indeed the way to go about it. But, without doubt, we knew it was a time to re-examine and question and comment and, we did just that.

Our writers, columnists and production team approached coverage in so many different ways that we needed to capture the moment in one place for you, the reader.

We've picked 20 pieces from our 150-odd story coverage. This selection isn't exhaustive but it will give you a good sense of where and how we stood on the movement and the ups and downs of a prolonged negotiation that made it the unparalleled news event that it was. The videos and audios are linked, not all the highlighted text.

We will be doing more of this across our verticals and areas of interest.

Do tell us what you think at firstpostin@gmail.com.

Durga Raghunath
Exec Producer and VP Product, Firstpost

The screenshot shows a Dippy timeline for the topic "Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement". It has 22,784 views and a "Topic Settings" link. The timeline includes the following events:

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- Team Anna to organise massive prob...** (16 Aug 2011 13:16)
- Detention is unconstitutional: Kiran Bedi** (16 Aug 2011 19:13)
- Situation is worse than Emergency:...** (16 Aug 2011 15:12)
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The timeline is powered by Dippy.



What we gained, and what we lost with the Anna movement

R Jagannathan 19 mins ago

#Anna Hazare #HowThisWorks #Jan Lokpal #Lokpal #Rahul Gandhi #Sonia Gandhi #Varun Gandhi

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At the end of Anna Hazare's fast – thanks to a last-minute parliamentary fudge that allowed his followers to celebrate a verbal concession as victory – it is time to step back and draw up a list of the gains and losses to the polity and various players from the Jan Lokpal movement.



Let's be clear on what has not been achieved: Anna has not got his Jan Lokpal Bill – barring a vague assurance on his three sticking points – and that is probably a good thing. The government has not yet restored its credibility. Quite clearly, there is no unanimity in government on how to engage with civil society. It is obviously comfortable only with its hand-picked group from civil society.

Some say the confusion in Congress ranks was because of the absence of Sonia Gandhi, but the fact is she was here all along when the Joint Drafting Committee was heading towards stalemate and acrimony. However she did little to arrest this slide or offer a clear plan of action.

The opposition found its voice during the parliamentary debate – both the BJP and the smaller parties. But where was this voice when the crisis was building? Clearly, they were busy watching the Congress' discomfiture. They were mere opportunists congratulating themselves on this Anna-driven godsend.

Here is a complete balance-sheet of the pluses and minuses thrown up by the Anna movement, and the response of the public, politicians and civil society organisations to it.

THE PLUSES FIRST

Corruption has been firmly put on the nation's agenda. The Anna movement was the result of ordinary citizens being shocked by the scale of the loot going on in the government (2G, CWG, *et al*), and the Congress-led UPA's complete ineptitude in handling the fallout. Citizens were looking for a voice, and it found one in Team Anna. There is no way corruption can be ignored by the political class anymore.

Memo to UPA: if you do not deal with the issue honestly by 2014, you could lose that election. In short, avoid delaying the Lokpal Bill on the assumption that people will soon forget about it since Anna & Co are packing their bags at Ramlila.

Civil society and the people have sought to engage the law-makers. Till Anna Hazare forcibly put his Jan Lokpal Bill on the table, our law-makers tended to believe that democracy was all about wooing the electorate once in five years and then forgetting about them. The main positive emerging from the Anna movement is that now even the middle classes want to engage with politics – and law-making. This is very good for democracy. It won't make law-making easier, but it means politicians will have to engage with a wider cross-section of civil society to get their act right.

Memo to UPA, NDA and other parties: Don't restrict your civil society contacts to only those who you like. Even Sonia Gandhi's National Advisory Council NAC is not inclusive enough. Else, why would people flock to Anna?

Parliament, politicians and civil society rejected the simple, universal remedy. The best result to come out of the Anna movement is the non-acceptance by parliament of his Jan Lokpal Bill in toto. This was the result of competitive politics, parliament's last-minute assertiveness, and the rise of other civil society voices challenging Anna's. Even Rahul Gandhi made the right points – that we need all kinds of reforms and not just a Lokpal. When Anna ended his fast, he too expanded his agenda to talk of electoral reforms, land reforms, etc. This is the happy ending.

Memo to politicians: The rejection of the once-size-fits-all bill to end corruption does not mean that people are not concerned about it. Having made the point that Jan Lokpal is not the only remedy – it has too many gaps and is too draconian – they must follow through with the other things that need to be done.

The middle class' involvement means change is round the corner. The Anna movement – though widely derided as something that targets only politicians – mobilised the middle classes and brought them out onto the street. There is a good reason for this: Urban India accounts for one-third of the population now. The issues of urban India will

increasingly gain more public attention. If the middle classes now start participating more in politics, it will correct the imbalance we see in public life – where caste and identity politics predominate. Also, when the middle class becomes participatory, change will follow. No movement anywhere in the world can succeed without middle class leadership and/or participation.

Memo to politicians: Caste, religion and other reasons for divisiveness are not going to disappear, but increasingly they will start becoming less important. People want solutions to their day-to-day issues, whether urban or rural. Governance, and not just corruption, is going to be the theme – and it transcends the middle class mobilisation.

The rise of the youth brigade is now irreversible. Whether it is [Rahul Gandhi](#) vs [Varun Gandhi](#), Sachin Pilot or Jyotiraditya Scindia, change is going to be driven by the young. But it's not all about age – its about keeping youth aspirations and new ideas. The paradox of the Anna movement is that it was led by an old man of 74 – but he was the one who best personified the people's disgust with politics-as-usual at this point of time.

Memo to media and intellectuals: India is a young nation, with nearly 50 percent of the population in the working age. But youth power is not only about having a young face to lead us. Rather, it is about have new ideas – ideas that resonate with a young nation. JP led a young revolution though he was old. Anna did too. In short, understand what the young want.

Accountability is the key to electability. New ideas have been thrown up by Team Anna and the Jan Lokpal movement. The citizens' charter – where people want politicians and the bureaucracy to be accountable for their actions and deliver public service – is a sign of the times. Just as companies have to be accountable to their customers, governments have to be continuously accountable to their people. A related idea to emerge from the movement is the referendum: while there is no way to conduct referendums on every possible issue, Team Anna demonstrated its feasibility and utility by conducting one in Kapil Sibal's constituency. It was flawed, but it was an idea whose time had come. Perhaps, as e-voting comes into vogue, we could make a start with regular referendums in urban areas. We have to make the costs worthwhile though – that remains a challenge.

Another idea whose time has come is the concept of the right to recall: our MPs cannot hope to seek a once-in-five-years vote of confidence, when parties have to seek it repeatedly from the house. Every money bill, every vote under some rules, can mean exit for a government. If this is the case with government, why should individual MPs be exempt from it? The right to recall could be an important electoral reform for the near future.

Memo to law-makers and the Election Commission: The citizens' charter is going to gain in prominence. It is also going to need regular consultations not only with civil society, but also a proper eliciting of opinion from voters on contentious issues. The idea of a referendum needs to be given its due place in electoral politics.

When one institution fails, another steps in. One of the most heartening signs – and this has nothing to do with the Anna movement, but is not unrelated to it – is the ability of existing institutions to [step into the vacuum](#) when the executive or parliamentarians do not do their jobs. The Supreme Court entered the picture to guarantee the CBI's autonomy – and that is why we have forward movement on the 2G and Commonwealth Games scams.

The Comptroller and Auditor General has become a more effective whistle-blower. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has become powerful enough for the Congress to want to suppress it. The regulatory organisations are standing up to corporate power: while the RBI and Sebi went after the Sahara Group, the Competition Commission has taken on realty market leader DLF. The real estate sector is the biggest embodiment of corruption where politicians, businessmen and builders are in league to generate slush money at the cost of home buyers.

Memo to law-makers: Since you have been waxing eloquent about institutions like parliament when you took on Anna, this is your chance to ensure that all institutions are truly autonomous. Police reforms, and autonomy for the CBI are good first steps to take. Politicians, please ask you state units to free your police forces from political meddling. Manmohan Singh, please take public sector companies out of the ambit of political interference.

THE MINUSES

Our political parties are still irresponsible. Both the Congress and the BJP want to win with populism. Neither wants to govern responsibly. This is why the UPA has been able to do little about reforms. It wants to use public money to win elections. The BJP is afraid to take a position even on easy issues. Till the last day, it failed to disclose its actual stand on corruption and the Jan Lokpal Bill. It wanted to gather votes from the Anna movement, and yet not make a commitment to a tough anti-corruption law.

The Congress is uncomfortable with people politics except in a co-option model, where it will choose its areas of contact with civil society. This will simply not work. It also lacks a focus without dynasty. The BJP, too, is far from coherent. While we haven't heard the old shrillness on sectarian issues recently, it will have to move towards projecting a more inclusive leader for the future. Both Sushma Swaraj and Arun Jaitley have the potential, but they are untested in terms of vote-getting.

Memo to both parties: Leadership is not about finding where the crowd is going and running ahead of it. It means bringing difficult issues to the people, explaining them. Both political parties are wedded to populism rather than leadership. This won't work in the future. Populism will not ensure governance and service delivery.

Our intellectuals and media are simply too shallow and too politically aligned.

The Anna movement showed up our intellectuals as empty sloganeers. Some sections of the media went about advising the government to put down the Anna movement and questioned its legitimacy, while others simply went on to back Anna – no questions asked. The media's job is to report, not take sides – except when expressing opinions.

But our intellectuals, and especially Left intellectuals, are simply the pits. They are more keen to attach labels to people rather than find out the truth for themselves. When confronted with a people's movement that rose almost spontaneously, they quickly found fault with it to de-legitimise it. First, they said it was a [middle class movement](#) – and this logic is supposed to mean it is illegitimate. Next, they tried rubbishing it by encouraging Dalits and Muslims to think the movement was about Hindutva. Clearly, they are keen to encourage divisiveness unless a movement is led by their own groupies.

Memo to intellectuals: Get out of your ivory towers and meet the people – the real people. They may not look like the ones you meet at India International Centre or the Habitat Centre or various seminar circuits, but they are still the people. If you think the middle class is illegitimate, you are too. Hold a mirror in front and check if you are not part of the middle class yourself. How come all intellectuals come from the same upper and middle castes and classes that they have such disdain for?

It is not parliament that is supreme, but the people. In all the anger generated about civil society and its alleged disdain for politicians, everyone and his aunt went around saying parliament is supreme. This is not quite true. Parliament is the law-making body, it is only supreme in this sphere. Overall, it is the Constitution which is supreme; and it is the people who are supreme.

It is all right to criticise Anna Hazare & Co for trying to paint politicians in bad light and pushing for laws outside parliament, but if parliament is being challenged, it is

parliamentarians and politicians who are responsible for its denigration.

Memo to politicians: Who brings criminals and crooks to parliament by giving them tickets? If you don't want this to happen, what are you doing to prevent this? Who rushes to the well of the house to prevent the introduction of Bills? Certainly not Anna Hazare. Laluji, your party did this to prevent the introduction of the Women's Reservation Bill several times in the past. You made a great speech on Saturday defending the importance of parliament, but your own party is guilty of denigrating it.

India celebrates Anna's victory, but this is just the beginning...

Venky Vembu Aug 28, 2011

#Anna Hazare

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The entire nation is celebrating the mighty assertion of people's power led by Anna Hazare, which culminated in yesterday's historic parliamentary resolution acknowledging the popular yearning for a strong and effective Lokpal to combat corruption.

There is, of course, much to rejoice in the fact that the thunderous roar of the people – not just those who had gathered for days at Ramlila Maidan, but in cities and towns across India – was finally heard by our tone-deaf parliamentarians who had thus far been living in a parallel universe of power.

In that context, what happened on 27 August will go down in the annals of Indian political history as a defining moment when a nation was awakened anew. If this is indeed our second "freedom struggle", as Anna Hazare framed it, yesterday was a red-letter day in that struggle.

As the orderly, even somewhat scintillating, conduct of parliamentary proceedings

yesterday demonstrated, the outrage of the people has sent a stirring message to our elected leaders that real power vests in the people. And although it doesn't always find the unity of purpose that was demonstrated this time, it can be channelled to great effect when a credible leader takes charge.



The fact that a man whom very few Indians had heard of before April, when Anna Hazare undertook his hunger strike, was able to spontaneously mobilise lakhs of Indians against the entire political establishment on the sheer strength of his moral force served as a kick in the pants for our elected leaders. It's a wake-up call for them to stand and deliver.

That alone gives cause for celebration today.

Yet, the euphoria we experience today must be tempered by the sobering realisation that we've taken only the first step in the journey of a thousand miles in addressing the socio-political challenges that confront India.

For all the powerful symbolism of yesterday's developments, we don't yet have a powerful Lokpal Bill. That process only begins now, when the Parliamentary Standing Committee reconciles the various versions of the bill that have been presented to it.

As the debates in Parliament yesterday revealed, there are still many powerful political forces – including some whose influence is felt in the Standing Committee – who will oppose the establishment of a strong Lokpal institution. They may be acting to protect their own vested interests, but they can easily invoke the high rhetoric about the need to protect Constitutional provisions and the supremacy of Parliament.

Those are of course important considerations, but it's far more likely that opportunistic leaders will invoke them merely to sabotage the establishment of a strong Lokpal. The scope for mischief is still immense – and, consequently, even a newly awakened people must continue to maintain vigilance for eternity.

In any case, a strong Lokpal, as and when it comes into force, is only one of many levers that can be invoked to address India's many long-standing socio-political problems. We need a slew of reforms – of the judiciary, the electoral system, of the bureaucracy, among others – to be undertaken successively. Each of those reform efforts will see a pushback from entrenched vested interests that will seek to sabotage or at least dilute it.

And unlike the unifying force of Anna's crusade against corruption, those initiatives provide plenty of scope for an inadequately informed people to be divided along different lines. For that reason, they will test the fortitude and unity of purpose of even the most diehard supporters of Anna.

But if there is one overriding message from yesterday, it is that a peaceful mass movement that has the strength of moral force and is mulish enough to not take no for an answer can overcome formidable obstacles and achieve at least "half a victory".

So, while we celebrate this moment, we'll need to get back to work pretty soon on the project to re-energise India. And we cannot afford to lower our guard – ever.

A good man: An ode to the fasting fakir

Aug 27, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Fight against corruption #Inpraiseof

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☞ [Nine anti-corruption posters you must see](#)

By Athena Kashyap

*Athena Kashyap's first book of poetry, **Crossing Black Waters**, was a finalist in the Stephen F. Austin State University Press Award, and will be published by them simultaneously in the U.S. and India later this year. The holder of an MFA in poetry from San Francisco State University, she has published or has writing upcoming in *Sanskriti*, *The Fourth River*, *Quiddity*, *Spork*, *Squaw Valley Review*, the *Waits-Mast Poetry Collection* 2009 chapbook, *Noe Valley Voice*, *Asia Writes* among other journals.*



Old and frail, the pain
he inflicts on his body,
graphic as nails on a cross,
make manifest evil
that no longer shows
its face, morphed
into grandeur that flaunts
over the weak and helpless,
only to be pitied. Pulled
towards him, the fading
good in us is suddenly
galvanized...a good man
is dying for us, for who
we can be. Can we toss

aside our dreams
for flat-screen televisions,
luxury cars? Value the good
that outshines the shining
power can buy? We yearn
to spoon food into
his feeble mouth.

but know he seeks
a different nourishment
we have to search
deep within ourselves
to provide.

Hero of zero-hour: Why Rahul Gandhi made that speech

Mahesh Vijapurkar Aug 26, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Lokpal #PoliticalPlay #Rahul Gandhi

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≡ Rahul should not give sermons to the nation: BJP

≡ "We owe it to the people" – Full text of Rahul Gandhi's speech

There was nothing in what Rahul Gandhi said during zero-hour on Friday that could not have waited for the discussion on the Lokpal Bill promised to Anna Hazare to get him to abandon his fast.

The only urgency was to enable the young MP, who often is found in places outside the Lok Sabha, to set the agenda. This was an attempt to make his involvement in critical policy matters more visible.

Zero-hour is a significant parliamentary time which came into existence when Rabi Ray was the Speaker in 1989. The idea is to enable MPs to raise very urgent issues that require the government's attention — like rising river levels in east India, which is what Sharad Yadav did on Friday.

Zero-hour comes for a few minutes after question-hour. It is designed to optimise Parliament's time, and if possible use up any residual time. It is also uniquely Indian in which MPs are not even required to give any notice to the Speaker.



It is not the time set aside for politics.

But politics it was, especially politics of the Congress kind that was played out in the Lok Sabha.

It was possibly a signal that the transition of power, at least within the party, had commenced.

What did Rahul Gandhi say?

That the Lokpal could be a constitutional body much like the Election Commission of India, but that there was the risk of it also becoming corrupt. That democracy needed to be taken deep into our villages, that there was a need to take note of corruption and deal with it.

If he had spoken during the planned debate later, he would have been just another MP – albeit an important MP. He would then not be setting the tone, and conveying his party's stance to the public, the other MPs and the party cadres. He has to stand alone, head and shoulders above others.

That his role in the party is being raised in a calibrated manner ever since Sonia Gandhi left for surgery and convalescence abroad is also well orchestrated.

Mark the fact that he had Jitendra Pasada and Jyotiraditya Scindia, two young MPs, with him. Mark also that they led the thumping of desks. Mark that when the BJP raised a shindig after he made a mention of corruption and its links to mining and land leases, Scindia rose to heckle back at the Opposition.

The systematic enhancement of Rahul Gandhi's role has been visible ever since he called a meeting on 15 August at the party office, had the prime minister over for consultations, kept Pranab Mukherjee waiting in the anteroom, and did not even call Ahmed Patel (Sonia's close aide) in. Today it peaked to a new height and higher visibility unlike what happens inside party offices. Media reports can only convey a perception. In the full glare of TV cameras, it conveys a fact.

Watch video of Rahul Gandhi making his speech in the Parliament:



When the Anna Hazare issue was boiling over Rahul went away to Maval, near Pune, to meet the villagers who were at the receiving end of police action. But he made it a point to return and tell Manmohan Singh that the arrest of Anna was unwarranted. That led to the embarrassing backtracking and orders to release Hazare and his aides from detention in Tihar.

He also provided the cue to his crisis managers – they are good at creating one and then trying to manage it – by saying that he was “concerned” about Anna Hazare’s health.

Hours before he used zero-hour, the young Gandhi met the prime minister. At least an hour before he spoke, it was leaked to the media that he would be doing so, adding some expectations in the public domain, enough to provoke some interest.

Good PR, that. Politics, too.

Read [full text of Rahul Gandhi’s speech](#).

Om Puri's uncivil talk lets down Anna's moral crusade

Venky Vembu Aug 27, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Corruption #kiran bedi #Om Puri #PoliticalPlay

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The strength of Anna Hazare's crusade against corruption was always the moral force that he commanded. The man captured the imagination of an entire nation with his Gandhian protest – first in April and now for the past 12 days – and inspired lakhs of people across India, who normally don't associate themselves with street politics, to come out and be counted.

That moral high ground that he claimed as someone who is incorruptible is what compelled even his trenchant critics in the UPA government and the Congress party to offer grudging expressions of regret when they shot themselves in the foot with their intemperate remarks against Anna. It is what prompted even the head of the government that had him jailed in Tihar Jail to "salute" him from the floor of Parliament.

Even those who disagree with the resort to fast as a means of political protest concede that his contribution to sharpening the national focus on setting up an anti-corruption agency is unmatched. And with his persistent calls to his supporters at Ramlila grounds to always remain peaceful in their agitation, Anna has in many ways rewritten the idiom of political protests.



Yet, as his 12-day fast appears to be coming to an end – with Parliament set to debate the Jan Lokpal provisions today and perhaps pass a resolution that will address Anna's three core concerns – Anna Hazare's own band of enthusiastic supporters are, with their ill-chosen words, knocking him off the high moral ground he has thus far deservedly claimed for himself.

Two particular speeches at the Ramlila Grounds on Friday – one by actor Om Puri and the other by Kiran Bedi – have drawn criticism even from supporters of Anna Hazare and forced Team Anna on the defensive.

Om Puri, who has played many firebrand roles in films, appeared to be eager to feed off the popular disdain for career politicians, but crossed the line with his ill-chosen rhetoric .

Among other things, [Om Puri said of MPs and politicians](#):

“Yeh anpadh hain... Aadhe se zyada MP ganwaar hain...” (They are illiterate. More than half the MPs are country bumpkins.)

“Yeh MPs kya karte hain? Paanch saal tak aish karte hain, lootate hain desh ko... main jaanta hoon inko, inke gharon mein kya hai” (What do the MPs do? They enjoy the five years, loot the country. I know them, I know what they have in their homes.)

Om Puri then turned on mediapersons too, noting that some of them had been exposed in the Niira Radia tapes last year as people who were cogs in a monumentally corrupt political ecosystem. Somewhat bizarrely, he launched into a personal and distasteful (and wholly irrelevant) [attack on NDTV editor Barkha Dutt](#).

As an antidote for the entry of uneducated country bumpkins into politics, Om Puri suggested that anyone who aspired for electoral office should be made to take an exam – and only those who secured 60 per cent marks should be allowed to contest!

Although diehard supporters of Anna’s campaign are celebrating Om Puri for “saying it like it is”, [the response of many more people](#) is one of disgust.

Likewise on Friday, Kiran Bedi – one of the core members of Team Anna – appeared to get carried away by her own rhetoric and virtually incited the crowd at Ramlila Grounds to hound out a couple of MPs who had come to the venue. (More details [here](#).)

Even other members of Team Anna were evidently embarrassed by Kiran Bedi’s motormouth indiscretions, and although [she later claimed](#) that her speech was a manifestation of the “frustration against corruption”, she was conspicuously missing from the team of Anna’s representatives who held a late night meeting with minister Salman Khurshid, who has been the interlocutor from the government side.

Sure, all these are mere atmospherics, and shouldn’t detract from the larger campaign against corruption, which the government and the Congress appear to be doing their damndest so derail – by shifting the goalpost away from an effective Lokpal Bill and putting the process on

the slow track to nothingness.

Yet, for a campaign that has much to be proud of in the way it conducted itself for so long, these outlier episodes are a sad pointer to the downward spiral in the level of rhetoric. They only end up limiting the space for middle-ground supporters to defend the methods of the movement.

An open letter to Anna from Rajdeep Sardesai

Aug 26, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Gandhi #India #InMyOpinion

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≡ [From Steve Jobs to Anna Hazare: Why we need personal heroes](#)

Dear Anna,

I write this to you neither as a fawning cheerleader nor a cynical journalist, but a proud Indian like you. Let me applaud you at the very outset for having brought corruption to the national centre stage. You have worked tirelessly for more than two decades in exposing corruption in Maharashtra, but Ralegan Siddhi is a long

way from Delhi, which is perhaps why television channels hadn't featured your contribution prominently till now. An opinion poll we did just a month ago suggested that more people had heard of yoga guru Baba Ramdev than a tireless fakir-like crusader from a Western Maharashtra village.



All that has now changed. Your latest fast has made you a household name. You've brought a mighty Indian state to its knees. You've encouraged millions of anonymous Indians to come out on the streets and get a voice. You've exposed a political class, suffering from a grave moral crisis, to the wider world. You've empowered those who've felt lost in a new India where wealth is the sole presiding deity. You've become

a symbol of change and hope at a time when a scam culture has assaulted the conscience of the nation.

You've even shown that the Marathas, a community that has failed to conquer Delhi since

losing the third battle of Panipat in 1761, can indeed take the national capital by storm. But in every battle there must come a time when you must call a halt. That time may well be approaching.

Gandhi, the greatest Indian of them all, from whom you claim to derive inspiration, never went on a fast unto death by refusing medication. For Gandhi, the idea of fasting was a form of self-purification, a fast could not be undertaken as he said, “out of anger. Anger is a short-term madness.” Yes, there is anger in the streets today, an almost volcanic eruption of a lava that has been simmering for decades. Your genius lies in being able to channelise that popular anger against corruption into a well-defined goal of a strong anti-corruption law and, importantly, doing so in a peaceful manner. The real danger though now is that a peaceful, non-violent movement runs the risk of being overwhelmed by what Dr Ambedkar, the great constitutionalist described a fast unto death as, by the “grammar of anarchy.”

There have been some signs of this in the last 48 hours that are truly worrying. The gherao of the homes of members of Parliament may be visually appealing, but it encourages an anti-politician ‘*sab neta chor hai*’ rhetoric that could further destroy faith in parliamentary democracy. The increasingly strident language being used by certain members of Team Anna – a term which creates the regrettable impression of you being surrounded by a coterie – is to be best avoided at a time when a rational dialogue is called for.

Only two days ago, a colleague of mine was assaulted in the heart of the capital by a drunk biker gang waving the tricolor and chanting ‘I am Anna’ slogans. The frenzy being built up in the media by hyper-ventilating news channels and demagogic acolytes could easily transform a genuine peoples movement into a lumpen expression of mob fury. It’s a transformation that could end up destroying the hard-earned credibility of your struggle.

Ramlila is not Mumbai’s Azad Maidan nor is it the village square in Ralegan Siddhi. This is not some battle to stop the local thug from shutting his liquor shop. Here, there are multiple agendas that require dexterous negotiation and not mere sloganeering. The sight of gangster Abu Salem’s girlfriend Monica Bedi parading Mumbai’s streets with an Anna cap should convince you of the dangers of reducing the fight against corruption to a well-choreographed prime time tv spectacle.

It is true no fast can be called off till the primary goal has been achieved. If that goal is to have the Jan Lokpal Bill passed exactly as you desire then that is a maximalist position which is never easy to accommodate overnight. Gandhi himself often spoke of the ‘beauty’ of compromise. Without doubt the fact that you have forced an obdurate government to fast-forward the Lokpal Bill and accept most of your proposals is itself a major achievement. But to ram through a bill that has been hanging fire for decades within the space of a few days without a sustained and truly inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders would be

self-defeating.

Yes, one recognises you have little trust in a discredited government that only 10 days ago, arrogantly and foolishly, first defamed, then arrested you and now salutes you. A flip-flop government sorely missing a strong political authority has taken refuge in parliamentary procedure when the simpler way out to atone for their sins would have been an unqualified apology for your arrest followed by a withdrawal of the government bill and a fresh start to the pre-legislation consultation. Yes, you are hurt, and rightly so, by the government's attitude, but this is the moment to show your heart is much bigger than the petty minds who reside in official bungalows. It's time for practicality, not prestige. Why not, for example, get the government to commit to a special session of Parliament in six to eight weeks on an amended Lokpal Bill so that a new, well-considered law becomes a Diwali gift to the nation? Till then, call off the fast, continue the agitation.

Post-script: I have framed a picture of our meeting earlier this week. The caption reads: "When zero met hero!". India is not Anna, nor is Anna India, but you are now an icon for millions. Please don't allow a personality cult to shadow your ultimate gift of common sense.

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Some half-lies, half-truths, and the Lokpal business

R Jagannathan Aug 26, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Aruna Roy #Arvind Kejriwal #Baba Ramdev #Jan Lokpal #Jaya Prakash Narayan's Loksatta party #Lokpal #PoliticalPlay #Prashant Bhushan #Sangh Parivar

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If all goes well, and if the TV anchors are right this time, maybe Parliament will take the Lokpal issue seriously and Anna Hazare will give up his fast soon. If all doesn't go well, we are back to square one, as Team Anna's Prashant Bhushan famously remarked the other day.

Either way, this may be a good time to sift through the cloud of half-truths and half-lies we have been forced to accept as reality amidst breathless TV coverage. Here are some of them:

The first half-lie (or half-truth) is that the PM has been at the forefront of battling corruption. In his speech on Thursday, Singh firmly denied that he was guilty of "evil intentions" or "conniving at corruption." If honesty means not taking a bribe, Manmohan Singh is honest. But a PM who is a silent onlooker to the loot

of the exchequer by Raja and Kalmadi cannot but be seen as an abettor – even an unwilling one.

Shifting your position with every passing breeze is also not a sign of honesty or integrity. The other day he criticised Anna Hazare for claiming “a right to impose his Jan Lokpal Bill upon Parliament.” On Thursday, he hailed Anna as “the embodiment of our people’s disgust and concern about tackling corruption. I applaud him.” Clearly, Singh is both Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

His most dishonest statement was the one he made on the economy as an aside. He claimed he inherited “a bankrupt economy” – which is not the truth. The economy he inherited had turned around and had seen a good round of reforms and fiscal consolidation before he entered the picture. It is Singh’s government that has since driven the economy back to slower growth in the last four years of fiscal imprudence.

The second half-lie relates to the government’s claim that its Lokpal Bill took Anna Hazare’s inputs. There is no doubt that some points favoured by Team Anna found a mention in the government’s bill. But the fact is it dumped all the critical ones – including the need for bringing the PM under it, legislating state-level Lokayuktas, *et al.*

In fact, the *sarkari* Lokpal Bill has been universally condemned by all opposition political formations and all civil society groups on the ground that it is too weak to tackle corruption. It is likely to die an unsung death or changed drastically.

The third half-lie relates to the existence of several Lokpal draft bills. The truth is, only Team Anna actually had a complete draft bill – the Jan Lokpal Bill – apart from the government. No other civil society group had a complete draft. In fact, the so-called Aruna Roy version of the Lokpal Bill is a complete myth. The National Campaign for the Right to Information (NCPRI) has several suggestions and positions and critiques of the Jan Lokpal Bill and the *sarkari* Lokpal Bill, but it has no bill of its own as yet.



Unfortunately, sections of the media fell for this whispered Congress suggestion that there may be an Aruna Roy draft, but Roy herself never claimed she had one to offer. All she has ever said was that she had differences – serious ones – with Anna’s Jan Lokpal draft, but she chose to keep quiet

about the fact that she actually did not have a competing bill on offer. She had just ideas, positions and suggestions for

what the law should be. And this fact was accepted by NCPRI representatives at a TV show on Thursday.

The same applies to Jaya Prakash Narayan's Loksatta party. What it has is not a complete Lokpal Bill, but several [recommendations](#) generated from a couple of round-table conferences attended by eminent persons. In short, even Narayan has only bits and pieces, and not the whole bill.

The fourth- half-truth relates to Anna Hazare's leadership of the crusade. The fact is Team Anna's core group of Arvind Kejriwal, Kiran Bedi and Prashant Bhushan had come together well [before they decided to conscript Anna](#) Hazare into the anti-corruption movement. This is what makes them equal partners with Anna Hazare in the Jan Lokpal Bill.

So when media channels criticise Kejriwal & Co for being a negative influence on Anna, they are being slightly unfair. This is as much their movement as Anna's. While it is true that the entry of Anna raised the profile of the movement, the origins of the group clearly predate Anna – and Team Anna has its own legitimacy. It would thus be wrong to categorise Team Anna as a usurper and Anna as the only legitimate party to deal with.

However, Anna is not a prisoner of his Team. He may listen to them, but takes his own calls. Whether he calls off his fast or not, the decision will finally be his.

The fifth half-truth relates to the legitimacy or otherwise of the Anna protests. From day one, the government has been busy trying to delegitimise the movement by first saying it was a Sangh parivar orchestration. Left intellectuals, Dalits and Muslim organisations have waded in to make the same accusations – mostly on biased assumptions.

While there is some possibility that Sangh parivar elements may be backing the protests at various locations, the fact remains that Kejriwal, Bedi and Bhushan are firmly in the secular space.

The sudden eruption of the Baba Ramdev protests in June may have given the movement a Hindu tilt, but here one must point out that it was the UPA Government itself which gave it legitimacy by sending senior ministers to negotiate with him.

Clearly, the UPA had its own agenda when Ramdev entered the picture; similarly, the government had its own reasons for packing him off at midnight on 4 June. It wanted

someone who could undercut the BJP's Hindu vote, but when Baba Ramdev provided intransigent, it [sent him packing](#).

The Left critique of Anna was essentially that the movement was drummed up by a middle class that was impatient with democracy and Parliament – but this bland assertion has been questioned by more [conscientious members](#) of the Left. This is simply rubbish – as there is absolutely no doubt that the movement was not forced. It was spontaneous. Sure, there must have been some financing sources, some support from unnamed organisations, but the upsurge was for real. Even if it was led by the middle class, it had support from other sections of society.

From Steve Jobs to Anna Hazare: Why we need personal heroes

Aug 25, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Apple Inc. #CultureDecoder #Steve Jobs

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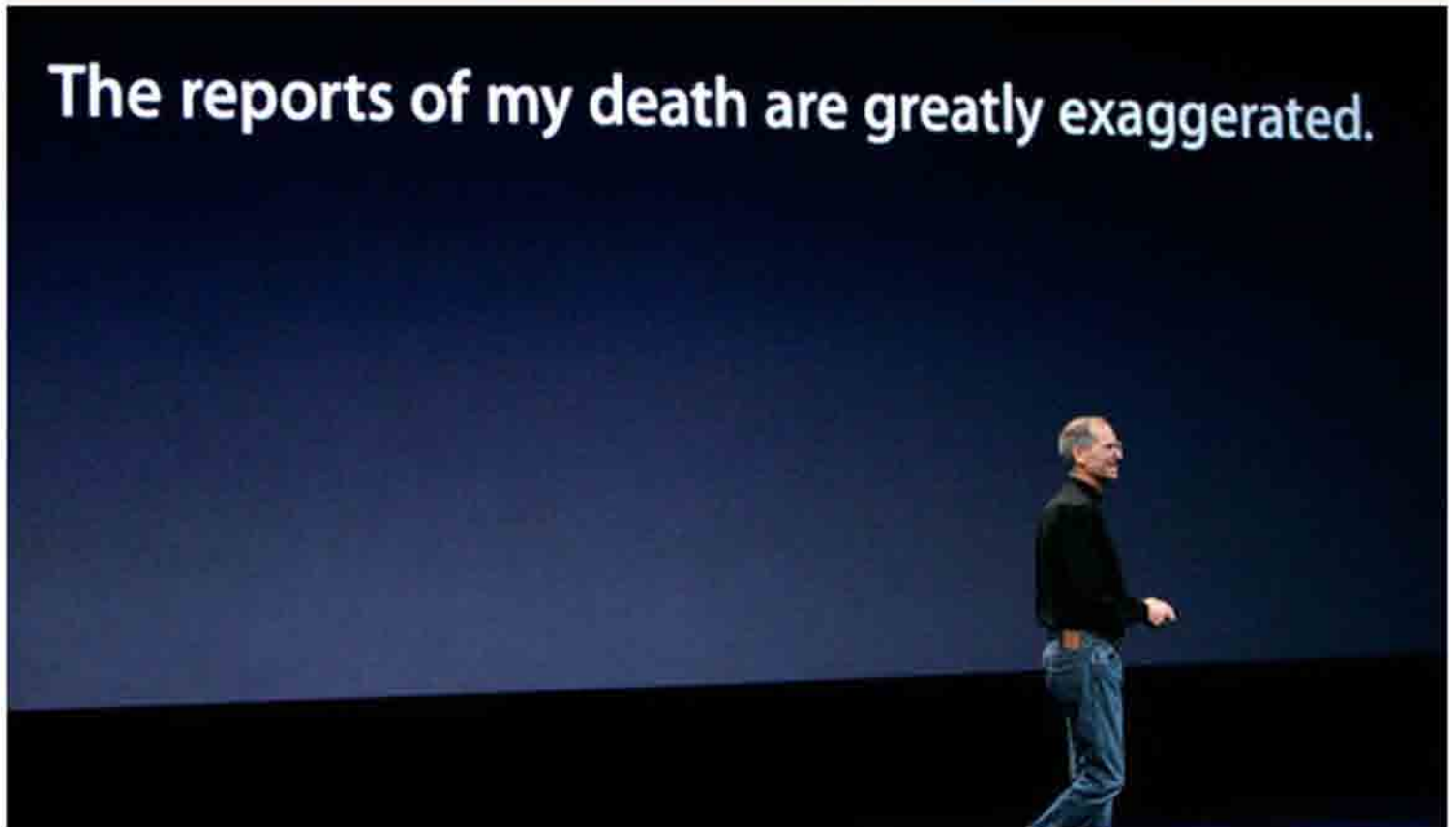
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The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.



By **Tristan Stewart-Robertson**

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 [The irreplaceable charisma and vision of Steve Jobs](#)

Mobs" for leniency... from inside his underwater glass cube where he controls the entire company and all its customers.

The obvious spoof of Apple seems apt with the news that [Steve Jobs is quitting as CEO of Apple](#) and will become chairman of the board, with chief operating officer Tim Cook set to take over at the helm.

In a recent repeat episode of The Simpsons cartoon on British TV, Lisa becomes obsessed with getting a "Mapple" product. When she downloads 12,000 tracks to her "MyPod", she has to appeal to the firm's boss, "Steve

For centuries, humanity has looked to the individual as hero, saviour, icon or even simply a reduction of an otherwise complex situation.



Thousands of people may have had their phones hacked by the News of the World, but it was the hacking voicemail of the murdered school girl Milly Dowler that captured Britain's attention.

Almost a century ago, as millions died in the trenches of Europe in the First World War, it was the war poets such as Siegfried Sassoon or Wilfred Owen who came to represent

the nameless and faceless millions. We couldn't access the scale of the horror without the individual figure.

In the "Arab Spring", Google executive Wael Ghoneim became a symbol for many fighting for a more free Egypt after he was detained for 12 days. There were countless problems with the regime its structures beyond former president Hosni Mubarak, but it was the removal of that president that was seen, initially, as key to Egypt's future.

Today in India, Anna Hazare continues his hunger strike to fight for strict anti-corruption laws. Battling corruption is nothing new in India or anywhere else for that matter, but it is the personal commitment and unique personality of the 74-year-old that has been essential to pushing the movement as far as it has to date.

Some might ascribe this to "cult of celebrity" of today, as we obsess ourselves with an individual, frequently as a form of escapism.

Even in the days of Ancient Rome, "bread and circuses" easily centred around the gladiatorial heroes of the arena. They were personalities you wanted to see win. . .but secretly wanted to lose.

ALSO SEE

☞ [The irreplaceable charisma and vision of Steve Jobs](#)

almost switching off of individualism for the sake of a strong central figure.

Obama tapped into that very effectively in his 2008 presidential campaign. The words “hope” and “change” are so non-descript that almost anyone can apply to them their own hopes and ideas for change, even if they didn’t match those of the then candidate.

Even when the healthcare bill was enacted by Congress in 2010, it has continued to be branded “Obamacare” because of his personal push for it, and because it is easier for opponents to attack the man, rather than a 2000-page document. In a world of endless information and constant bombardment by news via Twitter, Facebook, news websites, radio, newspaper, television, we need ways to reduce and summarise.



The famous Live Aid concerts of 1985 in response to African famine coalesced around the 1984 reports by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation of little Birhan Woldu who survived. We can’t process “millions dying of hunger” but can connect with a starving child held by her father.

In Canada this week, there was an immediate outpouring of public sympathy and grief at the passing of Jack Layton, leader of the left-of-centre and official opposition in Canada, the New Democratic Party (NDP).

Within 30 minutes of the news breaking, the “RIP Jack Layton” trend had climbed Twitter and within another hour or so, it was the most talked about item in Canada, number four in the world.

The 61-year-old was already known to be struggling with a second bout of cancer, but the fact he succumbed less than four weeks after he announced he was undergoing treatment came as a shock.

Even political opponents recognised that it was the personal brand of “Jack” that won the NDP 59 seats in the province of Quebec in May’s Canadian elections – 58 more than they had previously. The party became the man. And without him, questions abound about the future of the movement.

Political leaders, gladiators, anti-corruption campaigners. . .and the CEO of a company that makes our phones and computers – why do people ascribe such devotion to an inventor and corporate entity?

There is no doubt Steve Jobs has been instrumental in some of the most groundbreaking and innovative pieces of technology of the past 30 years. The New York Times showed off many of the 313 Apple patents that list Steven P Jobs amongst the creators.

But of course it takes teams of designers and experts and even marketers to make Apple the powerhouse it is today.

The celebration of Jobs, by both investors and the wider public, comes from the desire to find success in the individual. Part of this is our own jealousy or aspiration to achieve through an invention that will change the world and make us millions. And part of it is to personalise the technology we use.

The fact that less people use Mac computers than the PC variety has long created this sense that Apple users are somehow special or more unique, and many profess more devotion to the product and company than you would see on other corporate products.

Even with millions of iPhones and growing numbers of iPads, people buy into the style, the brand and man behind it.

We want to work for a company where the boss makes excited announcements in t-shirt and jeans. We want the glass staircases that are replicated in Apple’s signature stores around the globe. And most of all we want the products that look cool and represent status.

Aspiration, envy and the desire to connect people has made Apple a global powerhouse of technology because they are very human qualities, and Apple expertly tapped into them.

Whether we reduce movements to an individual, or companies to an apple logo, we will always try to identify with the solitary, because we too are solitary beings. There are billions of us, but we each want to be special, as Anna, or Jack, or Steve.

Anna, second national movement and lessons from the first

Aug 24, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Arvind Kejriwal #Gandhi #kiran bedi #Macaulayism #SteppingBack #WideAngle

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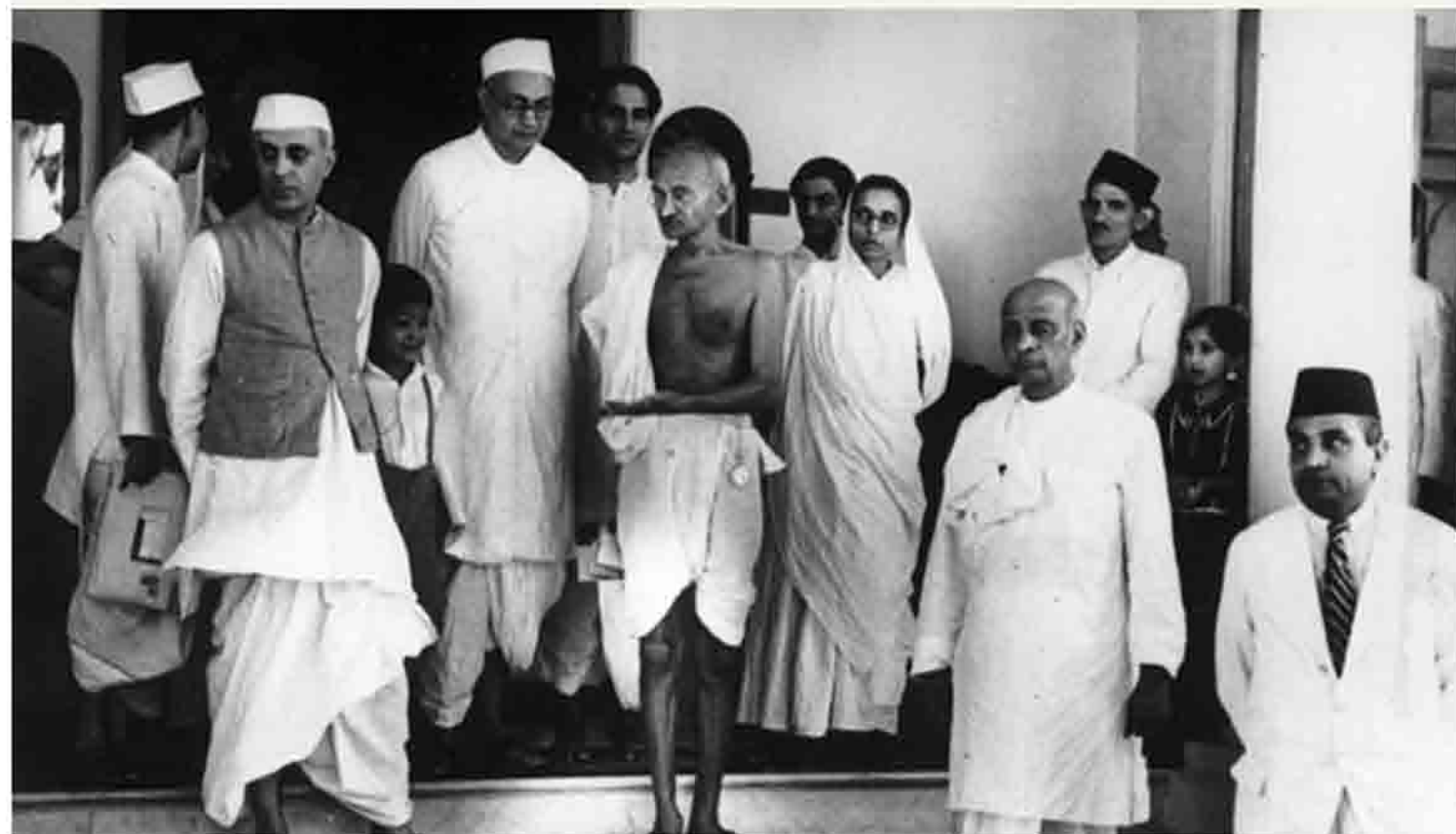
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By Shiv Visvanathan

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Team Anna didn't get it right, Brand Congress got it so wrong

Singh is (sin)Kinng

the rhetoric of their grandparents' national movement, reclaiming an older history, echoing slogans without their genealogy. Nuggets from the NCERT textbooks, family stories, pictures of Gandhi and Bhagat Singh, *Munnabhai* and *Rang De Basanti* all fuse to create a pastiche within which the second national movement is writ large. This voyeurism for the past is fascinating.

The Anna Hazare movement loves its labels and slogans. It is happy to be christened the second national movement and it gives us all the spectacle of the first one – the fast, the crowds, the parallels to colonialism, the tone deaf nervous government, the cries of *Vande Mataram*. This *youngisthan* of students is playing out

Both movements have their fasting Gandhian figure. But the cast of accompanying characters is stunningly different. Think of the Mahatma surrounded by Patel, Nehru, Azad. These were giants in their own right and with their own claim to history. Next to them, Bedi, Kejriwal and the Bhushans appear like midgets. It is almost as if history is saying, it is time to economise, that you do not need so much greatness to create history.



In the spirit of the times let us give these two movements brand names and christen them as Macaulay I and Macaulay II.

The babu, the bureaucrat, the professional

Thomas Babington Macaulay wanted Indians to learn English so the Crown would have at its disposal “a class of persons, Indian in blood and

colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.” In short he want to create the clerk, both *Babu* and bureaucracy. More significantly, it created an English speaking elite which was at home in English but did not accept the reduction of India to *Englishstan*. The first national movement, what we are calling Macaulay I, was inspired by an English speaking leadership, a middle class elite where almost all from Gandhi to Nehru to Kumarappa to Ambedkar were trained abroad.

Macaulay II stems from liberalisation and the spread of the Information Revolution. It is equally clear that the poor have little place in this carnival of the middle class. But this does not make it less potent. Macaulay I, after all, led to *Swadesi*.

Both had unintended consequences. Macaulay thought exposure to English would create the loyal *babu*, who would dance to the bidding of the empire. Instead it produced a dissenting imagination, a national movement by the very middle class that was supposed to become docile interpreters between the *burra sahibs* and the rabble. They absorbed the ideas of democracy and demanded self rule.

Macaulayism II has spawned similar ironies. It created a new professional class and an electronic secretariat to be outsourced to the world. It created an army of engineers, but instead of being content with prosperity, they challenged the pace of change. Their idea of management was different from the old administration with its obsessive rituals and

procedures.

Macaulayism II emerges from professionals like Bedi, Kejriwal, the Bhushans. Even the crowd looks as if they have gathered for a college tutorial to get their material ready for a competitive exam. The Information Revolution speeded up their lives. They live in a new information space that demands service with dignity and speed. There are contradictions here too. One visible one is between the technocrats of the information space and the new generation. The Nilekanis and Narayana Murthys criticise the movement, even as half the protestors on the streets of Bangalore seem to be the kind of professionals who would work in their corporations.

The professionals realised that protest was essential, that protest was a part of a cybernetic feedback in a society which has gone unresponsive. Secondly, this group did not want the old style of decision-making exemplified by economists like Manmohan Singh or lawyers like Kapil Sibal. They wanted speed. To them the Congress appears as an old behemoth; a replica of the old establishment confronting the new generation.

There is however a difference in style. The national movement had its collection of eccentrics. They believed in the power of dissent. The current movement is led by buttoned-down figures, suburban bureaucrats who are tired of the inefficiency of the system. Think of Arvind Kejriwal. He began as an IIT student and then joined the Indian Revenue Service. Dismissed as the clerical mouse of the movement, a pale shadow of the older RTI activists, Kejriwal has showed that he has clear tactics and clearer concepts. He looks and acts as the well behaved architect of the game plan.

Kiran Bedi was an outstanding bureaucrat, the first woman in the Indian Police Service. They wave their competence like a flag, hammer home their professionalism, matching brief for brief, bill for bill. There is a playing down of flamboyance and an emphasis on civic virtues. Their statements sound like a catechism class for citizenship.

Satyagraha as nostalgia

There is another difference. Nationalism had its story tellers. They blended history and legend, song and folktale. Our new movement seems too haunted by social science critique and social survey. It needs to open out more to popular culture, the folk song and the *katha* to elude the straitjacket of current impasse of social science and ideological politics.

But beyond these differences in style, the challenges facing the two movements are different as well. The first built a nation and the second provides a critique of nation building. The crowd in national movement faced the fury of colonial power. Its heroes invented *satyagraha* and reinvented the fast as potent antidotes to violence. The new movement faces little

violence. It follows the old techniques with exhilaration and nostalgia. It wants to renew itself by renewing the spirit of nationalism as nostalgia.

One realizes the crowd is compressing history and it does not want to wait. For it, waiting is the new injustice and this matches the new rhetoric of mobility. But it has to decide how to achieve closure.

Where will Macaulay II go from here? The drama of the middle is that period of theatre when origins are no longer in question and the end is not yet in sight. We are now in the politics of the middle. Politics has now become a waiting game with impatient players. There are fears about Anna's health. There is trepidation that the new information revolution can create new tyrannies. India watches and waits because the play is no longer about an old man fasting. It is about how India creates a fragment of its future.

Shiv Visvanathan is a social science nomad.

Singh is (sin)Kinng

Sandip Roy Aug 24, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Lal Krishna Advani #Manmohan Singh #TheBigQuestion

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Anna Hazare's fast might claim its most surprising victim yet – the one man who even his harshest critics call personally honest.

Manmohan Singh has been accused of presiding over a government steeped in corruption, of not sacking the Kalmadis and Rajas when he should have, of being too reserved, too hesitant, too slow. As Ashok Guha [writes in the Telegraph](#) he “adopted as his role models the Japanese monkeys of legend who saw no evil, heard no evil and spoke no evil”.

“The credibility of the Indian state is in tatters,” warns Guha. But even he calls the PM “supposedly incorruptible”.

But Singh's weary “more corrupted against than corrupting” patina is wearing thin. The chorus of voices calling for his head begins to grow.

On Sunday LK Advani launched his political salvo. “Dr Singh has not contested elections directly till now. At least now, the Prime Minister should quit the post and contest elections,” Advani told party workers in Nellore.

Now he's being echoed by the op-ed pundits.

"To restore faith in the constitutional process some heads must roll in government," writes [Ramachandra Guha](#) in the *Hindustan Times*. And Guha makes it clear that the PM's head would be a good place to start.

"It is time that Singh made way for a younger man or woman, for someone who has greater political courage, and who is a member of the Lok Sabha rather than the Rajya Sabha," writes Guha.

That stings, especially the dig at his age, given the movement is inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and has its patron saint, the 74-year-old Anna Hazare. Singh's one-time strength, that he was non-political, a sober man not into grandstanding, is now his liability as he confronts a tide of street politics. He is a Rajya Sabha man in Lok Sabha times.

The Telegraph is equally blunt in its [editorial stance](#). "What is bizarre in this situation is the impression conveyed by the government that no one is in charge," it complains. The need of the hour, it writes is someone "who would firmly put his hand on the tiller to steer the ship of State." Singh, it makes clear, is not that man.

Arvind Panagariya, [writing for the Times of India](#), is a little more generous. He lays the blame not so much on Singh's turban as on the Congress high command and its alternative power centre, calling the shots but ducking responsibility.



"While the Prime Minister struggles few have asked where the Congress high command stands on the Lokpal issue," writes Panagariya. But all roads still lead to the same end.

"The Prime Minister is losing the authority to govern," he concludes.

It is undeniable that the Prime Minister seems paralysed and at a loss for ideas, sending

old-fashioned oddly courteous letters to Anna expressing his "deep and abiding concern" about his health – days after throwing the man into Tihar Jail in undue haste.

But should he resign?

The greatest complaint of the civil society types and the thinking class about the Anna movement is that he is hijacking democratic process, that this is blackmail by hunger strike. A few days ago [Pratap Bhanu Mehta](#) said it was time to step back:

Social pressure is important. The movement should also recognise that various other institutions of the state, from the opposition to independent bodies, have, albeit imperfectly, swung into action... All actors in the current system, whether it is the executive, courts, independent agencies or civil society, will serve society better by discharging their proper roles, not by extending their power on any pretext. We need a fine balance, not an insolent civil society or a tyrannical state.

Now the fine balance has tipped in Mehta's own mind. And he too is [having second thoughts](#).

No one is seeing the needless diminution in bringing the PM under the Lokpal because he is a reduced figure. Anna Hazare's retort to the PM, "by whose authority do you govern?", was not without bite. This has to be corrected, even at the cost of Manmohan Singh resigning.

What happened to all that breast beating about democratic process? Manmohan Singh, for all his failures, is a legally elected Prime Minister. There is no reason to believe that he has lost the confidence of his coalition or his party. He might be the most unpopular man in the country but he is not an autocrat, installed at the top by illegal means, who has to be toppled ala Tahrir Square. Even Ramachandra Guha acknowledges that during the Jayaprakash Narayan movement his close associate RK Patil worried about substituting the "law of 'Government by Discussion'" by the "law of 'Government by Street Opinion.'"

As Prabhat Patnaik [warns in the Hindu](#):

Even if a majority of the people genuinely wish at a particular time to elevate a messiah over Parliament, this is no reason to alter the constitutional order, just as a majority wishing to abandon secularism at a particular time is no reason to do so. The Constitution is the social contract upon which the Indian state is founded.

The Congress will pay for its flip-flops. Now they are damned if they accept the Jan Lokpal Bill and damned if they don't. Manmohan Singh, as their leader, has a lot to answer for. But his resignation could just give false sense of closure to a drama that is not about him at all.

However watching him standing helplessly in the Lok Sabha the day after his government detained Anna, while the booing opposition drowned out most of his speech, one wonders if the thought of resignation does not sound like a relief to the beleaguered prime minister.

The greatest strength of Anna Hazare's movement was that he had made it about corruption not about any particular political figure. He for one had not asked for Manmohan Singh's resignation, keeping his focus on his Jan Lokpal Bill. So who will be appeased by this piece of political sacrifice? The intellectual elite who were in a tizzy over Anna but equally unhappy with Singh's inability to hold down the sweaty masses? Or the Congress sympathisers who need a sacrificial lamb to save their skins at the polls next time?

Either way the question remains: Is Manmohan Singh really the biggest roadblock to an effective Lokpal Bill? Or is it not about corruption and the Lokpal Bill anymore?

Arundhati on Anna: Losing her moral compass

Lakshmi Chaudhry Aug 23, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Arundhati Roy #ToTheContrary

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ALSO SEE

Protesters We Like: Anna, Arundhati and the doublespeak of dissent

Anna's movement is a Gandhian coup: Arundhati Roy

Scenes from Ramlila Maidan: Wake up Manmohan Singh

Arundhati Roy is many things to many people: shrill, disloyal, ethical, paranoid, righteous, or naïve. Her greatest strength is also her fatal flaw: an ideological clarity that brooks no contradiction. Roy is rarely confused. Her latest outing in *The Hindu* then marks an uncharacteristic moment of befuddlement.

“If what we’re watching on TV is indeed a revolution, then it has to be one of the more embarrassing and unintelligible ones of recent times,” writes Roy in the opening line of her op-ed. The same, unfortunately, can be said of her essay. Her arguments against the Hazare movement are “unintelligible” not because they are leftist or extreme, but because – for once – they contradict her own dearly held political principles.

In a signature use of shock-rhetoric, Roy starts out by comparing Anna to the Maoists:

For completely different reasons, and in completely different ways, you could say that the Maoists and the Jan Lokpal Bill have one thing in common — they both seek the overthrow of the Indian state. One working from the bottom up, by means of an armed struggle, waged by a largely adivasi army, made up of the poorest of the poor. The other, from the top down, by means of a bloodless Gandhian coup, led by a freshly minted saint, and an army of largely urban, and certainly better off people.

But here's a more apt – and ironic – parallel.



For completely different reasons and in completely different ways, you could say that Anna and Arundhati have one thing in common: They're both attacked for being "unreasonable" and "dangerous to democracy", for calling attention "to the utter failure of India's representative democracy, in which the legislatures are made up of criminals and millionaire politicians who have ceased to

represent its people. In which not a single democratic institution is accessible to ordinary people."

Perhaps this is why Roy's critique is muddled and scattershot. It is difficult to attack your own avatar, albeit of the mainstream, bourgeois variety. And the attempt to do so leads her down the garden path to intellectual contradictions and self-defeating arguments.

It's the protesters

For starters, take the Anna-Maoist comparison. Now why exactly is "a bloodless Gandhian coup" worse than an "armed struggle" if they both seek to overthrow the government? Because one involves tribals and the other tailors, shopkeepers, autowalas, and farmers? Roy knows the elitism charge is a bit suspect – given the absence of the usual suspects like politicians or an elite leadership – hence the weak line about "an army of largely urban, and certainly better off people." Better off, perhaps, but not by much.

So now, Roy is in the business of rejecting movements not based on their goals but their membership: the absence of the poorest of the poor makes the Hazare protest suspect. And she is sliding down the slippery slope of defining down elitism. Even those much-beloved farmers are too rich for her taste.

This isn't, however, an egregious flaw in terms of the Roy style of argumentation; she has always been an ideological purist. But what is more damning is her amnesia. [This is Roy](#) defending herself back in the Narmada Bachao days: "In many ways, people try to delegitimise the involvement of the middle class, saying, how can you speak on behalf of these people? No one is speaking on behalf of anyone."

If Roy's own middle class credentials weren't a problem then, why should the class profile of the protesters be an issue now? To reiterate the Roy position, it's not about who is protesting, it's what they are protesting about.

No, wait, it's what they oppose

Having run into this first dead-end, Roy attempts to extricate herself by attacking the goals of the protest: corruption, and by extension, the Jan Lokpal bill:

Whether it works or not depends on how we view corruption. Is corruption just a matter of legality, of financial irregularity and bribery, or is it the currency of a social transaction in an egregiously unequal society, in which power continues to be concentrated in the hands of a smaller and smaller minority? Does the solution to the problems faced by ordinary people lie in addressing the structural inequality, or in creating yet another power structure that people will have to defer to?

Now we're in a chicken-and-egg situation. How does one address structural inequality except by passing laws and implementing policies? And would it matter what these laws or policies were, if their execution is defeated by corruption. Take, for example, [the failure](#) of the NREGA to provide employment to the "poorest of the poor". It is the effect of rampant corruption, with officials routinely [gouging bribes](#) from rural workers.

In fact, corruption is often used as an easy excuse to oppose any legislation aimed at helping the poor on the grounds of inefficacy. An excuse Roy herself offered for her tepid support for NREGA, saying, "It's important, it's effectiveness is debatable. It is also working as a honeypot around which corrupt people have flocked and have tried their best to prevent it."

Perhaps Ms Roy is holding out for a revolution to bring down the international capitalist order, but until then the poor will surely be better served by a clean – or at least, cleaner – political system that delivers what modest benefits it can offer? Or would she prefer they

starve while they wait for redemption?

ALSO SEE

≡ [Protesters We Like: Anna, Arundhati and the doublespeak of dissent](#)

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Actually, it's what they want

Team Anna's diagnosis of the disease is wrong-headed, Roy claims, but its cure is nothing short of monstrous:

The Jan Lokpal Bill is a draconian, anti-corruption law, in which a panel of carefully chosen people will administer a giant bureaucracy, with thousands of employees, with the power to police everybody from the Prime Minister, the judiciary, members of Parliament, and all of the bureaucracy, down to the lowest government official. The Lokpal will have the powers of investigation, surveillance, and prosecution. Except for

the fact that it won't have its own prisons, it will function as an independent administration, meant to counter the bloated, unaccountable, corrupt one that we already have. Two oligarchies, instead of just one.

Now, this is a valid worry about the Jan Lokpal bill, one voiced by critics across the political spectrum, including the government itself. Uncomfortable perhaps at keeping such dubious company, Roy tries to differentiate herself — and to bizarre effect. By the end of her essay, she is arguing for the inclusion of “corporations, the media, and NGOs... in the jurisdiction of a Lokpal bill.” A recommendation that will surely make any Lokpal even more bloated and all-powerful.

In any case, if the Lokpal will indeed be a dangerous oligarchy, it certainly can't be accused of undermining the powers of the state. Yet Roy's final conclusion is that the Lokpal will lay the grounds for free-market free-for-all:

Now, by shouting louder than everyone else, by pushing a campaign that is hammering away at the theme of evil politicians and government corruption, they have very cleverly let themselves off the hook. Worse, by demonising only the government they have built themselves a pulpit from which to call for the further withdrawal of the state from the public sphere and for a second round of reforms — more privatisation, more access to public infrastructure and India's natural resources.

Now it is a bit amusing to witness Roy complaining about “demonising” government or warning against the withdrawal of the state she has [accused](#) of hunting down its poor “with guns, with helicopter gunships”.

But such cheap shots aside, isn't the Lokpal an institution of the state? It is a watchdog agency that is part of the state apparatus. How does its creation make the state any weaker or force it to "withdraw"? In the case of Bellary mining, two state institutions, the Lokayukta and the Supreme Court, have instead forced corporations to shut down illegal mining. Even if the Lokpal were to turn corrupt, as Roy predicts, it would reinforce the power of the state, not weaken it.

No, no, it's who they follow

Roy's problems are the same as a number of her fellow Anna critics on the Left. Attacking the state has always been the time-honoured preserve of Leftists. What in the world does a good Lefty do when the same middle class – who you routinely condemn for its shallow materialism and self-interested apathy – takes up cudgels against that very same loathed government and state? And is now making a number of arguments that you've long upheld – oh, the horror – with the full attention of the corporate media.

This is a genuine political and ideological conundrum, and there have been a number of thoughtful responses from other Lefty critics, irrespective of where they come down in the end. ([Read this](#) or [this](#))

The Anna moment is especially tricky for Roy who [famously declared](#): "The role of being a member of civil society does not mean making the journey from citizen to a politician holding office. It's about how do you keep power on a short leash, how do you refuse to relinquish your freedoms."

A woman who has also said: "Real public power has to come from outside, from a dissenting public that says, I am sorry but I don't accept this choice."

Given such pronouncements, surely the Hazare movement – for all its flaws – ought to provoke some soul-searching. Not quite.

Determined to stick to her blinkered anti-establishment guns, Roy instead finds herself in the shoddy position of accusing various members of Team Anna – with the exclusion of her friends Prashant Bhushan and Medha Patkar – of being corporate stooges running NGOs funded by US corporations like Coca Cola, Lehman Brothers, and (god forbid!) the Ford Foundation.

And in doing so, she sounds like every other [paranoid right-wing blogger](#) who sees an international conspiracy any time an NGO works on human rights or climate change. The 'foreign hand' is now an equal opportunity bogeyman.

There are two possible tacks open to Roy if she wants to maintain her anti-establishment stance against a mainstream movement. She can attack the Lokpal and its advocates either as the enemy of the state or as its Frankenstein-like creation. Either course forces her to invert the traditional leftist position —i.e. to uphold the ruling order or demonise those who would challenge it. Roy in her infinite wisdom has chosen to do both.

Written with inputs and research by Sandip Roy

Aruna's bill demanding but allows govt breathing space

FP Editors Aug 23, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Aruna Roy #ConnectTheDots #Lokpal

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Anna ill-advised, govt's Lokpal Bill can still be changed: Roy

Lokpal is within reach: Anna + Aruna = Win-win

Virtually pushed to the margins ever since Team Anna launched its high decibel campaign on the Jan Lokpal Bill, other civil society players are trying to make their voice heard now. It could not have come at a better time. With Team Anna stuck to its extreme position and government having nothing significant to offer, a proposal striking a balance between both was overdue. It has come from the Aruna Roy-led National Campaign for

People's Right to Information (NCPRI).

Aruna Roy, a member of the National Advisory Council and a prominent leader of the Right to Information movement, had earlier maintained that Anna Hazare's Jan Lokpal Bill was impractical and complicated and it was a "threat to democracy".

"Jan Lokpal is a bill impossible to implement. Also, it derails the checks and balances between the judiciary, executive and other organs of the democratic structure," she had said, insisting that the Lokpal legislation should be thoroughly deliberated by activists, lawmakers and all other stakeholders.



The bill submitted by NCPRI is much closer to that of Team Anna's bill than the government's though it in agreement with the latter that the higher judiciary and lower bureaucracy should be out of Lokpal's purview. It appears more practical and better thought-out than the Jan Lokpal Bill. Moreover, it does

not seek to bypass the
parliamentary procedure and

fixes no hard deadline for the passage of the bill.

According to a [report](#) in *The Times of India* NCPRI's bill fine-tunes many of the clauses proposed by Team Anna. Both NCPRI and Team Anna agree that the same law should also establish Lokayukta in the states. The government wants separate legislations for both.

In a departure from Team Anna's position on having all levels of bureaucracy under Lokpal, NCPRI holds that the Central Vigilance Commission should be strengthened to deal with lower bureaucracy while Lokpal should be concerned with higher bureaucracy only. The government's bill empowers Lokpal to investigate cases involving Grade A officers only.

It agrees with Team Anna that the Prime Minister should not be exempted from Lokpal's ambit but proposes additional safeguards. It says there should be no investigation against the Prime Minister without the Supreme Court's clearance and that the Cabinet's collective responsibility should not expose him to vicarious liability. The government's bill keeps him out of the purview of the ombudsman; any investigation is possible only after he demits office.

On the issue of making MPs accountable for their conduct in Parliament, NCPRI's proposal says it is desirable. However, it says a constitutional amendment is required to remove the immunity enjoyed by MPs. It wants an undertaking from the government that it would make such an amendment within a year, says the *Times of India* report.

On the composition of Lokpal, NCPRI wants the dominance of judges to go. It says there's no justification in restricting the chairperson's office to judges. The Jan Lokpal makes a similar demand.

According to The Times of India report, "...since the nine-member selection committee envisaged by the official bill is overrun by those who are either part of the government or appointed by it, NCPRI went further than Team Anna in making the process quicker and more inclusive. First, it reduced the selection committee to three members: Prime Minister, leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha and a SC judge. NCPRI also suggested that the 10-member search committee, which will short-list candidates, should consist equally of retired state functionaries and civil society representatives."

NCPRI rejects the government's proposal that allegations against Lokpal members should not be probed by the SC without a reference by the President. NCPRI proposes the removal of the reference condition.

Scenes from Ramlila Maidan: Wake up Manmohan Singh

Aug 23, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Fight against corruption #Ramlila Maidan #VeryCloseUp

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By Nivedita Menon and Aditya Nigam

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≡ We should be there: The Left and the Anna moment

We went to Ramlila Maidan yesterday, the four of “us” considerably swelling the numbers of about a lakh and a half of people there by 6.30 pm, when we left. They were either sitting inside, milling about outside all around its walls, or pouring in having walked from India Gate. (Is the media exaggerating the numbers? In our opinion it is underestimating them considerably).

We got off our car at 5 pm, about half a kilometre away, at the beginning of Asaf Ali Road, and at that point we were at the end of a long orderly line patiently inching along in the sweltering heat. I can assure you from that point onwards, the four of us stood out by our upper class markers the way PLU do in any ordinary part of Delhi, especially Old Delhi. Even just really middle-class people were few and far between, the large majority seemed lower middle class to working class. Much *Vande Mataram* all along, and just as we were muttering ‘what

happened to the *Inquilab*, we reached a section that gladdened our ears with the *zindabad* to revolution. Yes, it was a small one, that section. (Do let's stay away more from these places, that will help.)

When we reached the entrance to the *maidan* at the back end, we realised we could stand there forever to get in – there was a mass of people in orderly ranks inside the barricade already, and the top of the line that we had walked past, was entering one by one. We decided to walk around to the main entrance and see if there was a greater possibility of getting in from there, and we circled the *maidan*, which practically shares a wall with a *masjid*, the roof of which was lined with people looking down.



As we turned the corner, the crowd started growing, more groups of people shouting *Vande Mataram*, more flags, and we gradually reached first, the media entrance (which is also the exit from the *maidan*) and then another entrance through which some people were entering. We realised later that that entrance had probably been kept for those coming from India Gate, for by the time we left, there was an

endless line outside that one too.

Inside, just people, people, people. No hysteria, no major flag waving, though many were holding flags; much of the performance you see on TV is done especially for the cameras. Away from all of that, people were just seated fairly quietly and listening to incendiary speeches like *Pata hai aap ko, hamare mulazim, in mantriyon ki tankhwah kya hai? Ek lakh rupaye mahine. Kya hamein yeh haq nahin hai ki hum unse hisab mange?* (Do you know what salary these employees of ours, these ministers, get? One lakh rupees a month. Don't we have the right to ask them for accounts?).

That amount – one hundred thousand rupees – seemed so huge and unimaginable when we looked around at the kind of people sitting there...

We could just about barely see the huge Gandhi backdrop over the sea of heads, but never actually reached a point where we could see the stage itself, because towards the front, many were standing. As we slowly pushed our way through a yielding wall of people to the front,

which we never reached, because we gave up and turned back, not once did we feel unsafe or threatened (two of us were women), and the wall was never solid, but yielding and swaying to let people go up front, and to turn back.

Suddenly, we heard the strains of *jaago mohan pyaare jaago* and thought oh-oh... How happy our friends will be. (Because most of them are waiting with bated breath, with great hope, for our self-fulfilling prophecy to come true, for the movement to go the Hindu right way.) Then we thought, but *iftar* was also celebrated here yesterday, so surely...And then we heard the words of that well-known *bhajan* to Krishna, only they were *jaago manmohan pyaare jaago* – it was a prayer to our PM to wake up and listen to the people. The audience also sang *Raghupati Ragahava Rajaram*, led from the stage, and as enthusiastically responded to the cry of *Inquilab* from there.

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≡ [We should be there: The Left and the Anna moment](#)

We could imagine our very own Sumangala Damodaran's IPTA songs going down very well there, and had a brief moment of fantasy about the strains of *Jaanevale sipahi se poochho* echoing around the maidan. (No, never. Let us proudly stay away. We are proud members of the pure Left, don't pollute Sumi's music by making her sing

there, to a hundred thousand people – each and every one of whom must surely be communal and casteist).

In the short period we were there we randomly asked a few people where they were from . Here's the list in order of our meeting them:

- Arunachal Pradesh Chakma Students' Union
- Farmers from western Uttar Pradesh
- People from a village in Sonipat, Haryana
- Some men from a *madarsa* in Nangloi
- A whole team of *darzis* (tailors) from NOIDA
- A middle class family (not upper class English speaking, but sort of middle-middle) from Janakpuri, another from Rohini and another from Shahdara.

That was just a quick survey that took us about 15 minutes.

There were proportionally about as many women as there are in our kinds of protests, by the way, to answer a specific question someone asked us at some point; women of all ages and in all sorts of clothes.

Our friend Rachana Johri sent a mail which said in part:

So I did go to Ramlila maidan yesterday. I wasn't there for very long but will definitely go again, if nothing else to sense the nature of this movement. It immediately struck me as different from the many marches and dharnas I have been too.

I was immediately struck by the total absence of familiar people. I actually scanned the crowd to check for any university type and couldn't find one. It was a Saturday so clearly work was not the reason. People were walking in largely it appeared on their own initiative. (This seemed somewhat altered already by the evening when Ashok and I drove past the maidan again. At that time people were arriving in trucks and I wondered what that meant)

Anna was of course quite far away from the crowd. The area had a small partition for women. There were at least 300 women seated inside it. This separate space for women was fairly comforting although it was not mandatory for women to be inside. I found myself quite moved when I saw people distributing bananas with another person collecting peels in a bag. The entire atmosphere resembled a cross between a keertan and a langar. There was a distinct Hinduness to the idioms which worried me although someone like Nandy might say it is a South Asian quality. Anyway, I guess what I'm saying is that I went and feel tempted to go again but I did feel alone and a bit of a foreign element in the context.

We know what she meant. Unlike any other *dharna* or demonstration that we generally go to, where we expect to see many people we know, and sometimes every single face is familiar, this was one place where we were routinely mistaken for "media" whenever we talked to someone, for our class markers were so unmistakably different.

We were told by a friend who is deeply suspicious of this thing, in a revelatory sort of way that the Amarnath Yatra Trust is providing food at Ramlila. Perhaps. And a *gurudwara* did at Chhatrasal Stadium to the people detained there. We don't know how many and who are contributing in what ways. But we did read in the papers of a hundred farmers from NOIDA who had cooked food for a few thousand people – from their own resources – and brought it along. But we did not see a single banner or flag or symbol of any particular group.



Meanwhile, another friend Charu Gupta told us her parents had been to Ramlila *maidan* the previous day. They were so moved by the atmosphere, they wanted to come back again. They reported how, amidst all the chants of various Hinduised nationalist slogans (like *Bharat Mata ki Jai* and *Vande Mataram*) that make us so uncomfortable, there was an announcement that it was time for the *iftar namaaz* at the adjacent mosque. Pin drop silence. Indeed, some of those ending their fast came and offered their *namaaz* right inside the venue, near the dais.

The Great Unwashed?

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≡ We should be there: The Left and the Anna moment

All the way back home, at different points – in the lower middle class areas of Shakarpur and in the middle class housing societies of Patparganj, we saw small rallies and processions, carrying candles; there were teenagers, the elderly. Those who could not make it to India Gate to join the big rally were taking out rallies in their own areas. There were neither TV cameras nor spectators – except those who were about on their daily work.

We wondered at the arrogance and cynicism that can only see communalism and casteism in these protests. The arrogance of the ‘Enlightened’ – who can only deal with ‘the masses’ as long as they are an abstract category and shrink in horror when confronted with them in reality. We kept thinking of the hundreds of thousands of people participating in the movement. So many of them – easily the huge majority – were semi-literate workers or peasants. The ‘great unwashed’. These *darzis* and *kisans* are largely OBCs, against whom the anti-Mandal agitation took place. They are all there in pretty large numbers even if it is in their name now that the pious, pure Left stays immured in its fortress.



And while we are at casteism, why not also look at the charge of ‘communalism’? Today’s Jansatta carries a story “*Andolan ka Daira Phaila, Muslim Bhi Saath Aaye*” which mentions how organisations like the All India Muslim Women Personal Law Board and the Okhla based ‘Real Cause’ have joined in the movement. Kamran Siddiqui of Real Cause claimed that members of his organisation

are going to Ramlila *maidan* everyday, in order to express support to the movement. Shaista Ambar of the AIMWPLB also claimed that from the day that Anna Hazare was arrested, her organisation decided to stand by him and the movement.

And while the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid has been exhorting Muslims to stay away from the movement due to its communalism (and we know how secular his own track record is), the Imam of Fatehpuri Masjid Mufti Mukarram Ahmed also came out in support of the movement saying that it (and Hazare) has raised an issue under whose impact the entire country is reeling. He also said that the anger of the people on the corruption issue was completely justified.

What 'Corruption' signifies

We must confess, though, that we too came back with many questions.

We saw noisy intimidating exclusively male motorcycle rallies roaring into the area, and the slogan of *vande mataram* from them sounded like an incitement to violence. Another friend travelling with her small daughter in the Metro said she experienced real fear when a large group of men entered shouting the same slogan, and I know it is no coincidence that she is from a minority community. Nothing happened in either case, and perhaps we were responding to a historical memory, but the feeling of threat was real.

This is the messy terrain of mass politics, there are troubling tendencies and it throws up a whole range of issues for us to think about, completely afresh.

But we need to get one point repeatedly thrown at us out of the way first. We are no great votaries of the Jan Lokpal Bill and in fact, have on other earlier occasions, incurred the wrath of our left-radical community for our utter lack of faith in the Law. We stand by that larger position. For us the issue is not that of the Lokpal Bill but of what is it that is moving the people from all walks of life in such large numbers.

Clearly, the Lokpal idea or the Jan Lokpal Bill has here become the rallying point for a slowly accumulating mass anger – not just against one party or government (the Congress and the UPA) but against the entire political class itself. This anger was waiting to be tapped – and the political class or the system could have redeemed itself, had it taken up the issue of corruption. It did not. Until an entirely new cast of characters came and occupied centre-stage. As we have said earlier, 'corruption' is the name by which a larger democratic principle is being enunciated quite clearly – the accountability of elected legislators to the people whom they represent.

A friend from Sri Lanka, Pradeep Jeganathan, asked, "Would you disagree that one of the

underlying catalysts for this protest is felt need, by 'the people' for a point of neutrality, that appears to be beyond politics, like the supreme court used to be?"

We do actually disagree. This was the kind of critique that was initially made and is still being made by some, but as we have noted earlier, the Janlokpal Bill is about appointing an Ombudsman, and Arvind Kejriwal has explained that his/her powers are "no greater than that of an Income tax Officer " who has the power to scrutinise everyone's tax returns, up to the PM. While there may be sections among the supporters of the movement who hanker for army rule/strong and incorruptible leader etc, what is reiterated from the platform (and we heard it again yesterday) is the people's right to ensure accountability of the people they send to Parliament, and this can be ensured only if the overseer is not one of them. Not outside politics, but outside the circle of politicians and bureaucrats who must be kept in line. Very much inside politics as such, then.

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If you're not with us...

It is the logic of the development of a mass movement in all its messiness that we seek to understand, rather than look for that pure, 22-carat revolution where everything will proceed according to the programme laid down by

the Left elite. Nothing less than our maximum agenda is acceptable – from SEZs to farmers' suicides, from AFSPA in the Northeast to the murder of democracy in Kashmir. If you will not accept even one of these points, you're out. We will have nothing to do with you. It is not "they" who say 'if you are not with us you are against us', this arrogant divisive slogan has always been ours, alas.

Those issues listed above are our issues too, but what if a mass movement does not raise them? What if it articulates itself around a more generalized and widespread concern? Any student of mass movements anywhere in the world knows that mass movements of this scale only arise around issues where the largest sections of the people feel affected by it. They can never arise around sectional issues – however big the sections concerned may be. And the question really is of the potentiality of the movement rather than what it is, at any given point. It will only be inclusive to the extent that it is able to draw in the largest number.



We will of course have to part ways at some point to fight our separate battles, but we can come together for a specific limited goal.

What to do with religion!

The real question for us, however, is the one raised by some of the most thoughtful comments in the various posts on Kafilā, especially by Rahul Roy, and by Rachana Johri's

email – of the presence of religious symbols and slogans in mass movements and how we might deal with them. Now, there is a very simple solution: become a mobile republic of one and secede. No questions asked and no responsibility to take. This is not an option available to those who believe in larger transformations of any sort, especially transformation of our ways of thinking, which are so deeply inflected by our beliefs, our cultural repertoire and myths and legends. These ways of thinking may include anything from caste practices to the practice of *Sati*.

Any change in these requires our engagement with on-going internal debates within communities – for it is important to recognise that no practice is uncontested internally. Mere legal enactments that outlaw specific practices can produce just the opposite results – as they indeed have. They simply widen the gulf of incomprehension between the secular modernist and the believer.

Creation and expansion of this space for internal dialogue with believers is critical – if we are to prevent them from being mobilised time and time again, by the religious right. Some people will have to take the risk of being ostracised from their happy community of secularists, in order to be able to 'be there'. Those who wish to preserve their purity are welcome to do so, but we have not forgotten that not very long ago, it was this aggressive arrogance which led to the labelling of the likes of Ashis Nandy, Partha Chatterjee, and TN Madan as agents of the Hindu Right. But let it also be underlined that few secular intellectuals have been attacked by the Hindu Right in the manner that an Ashis Nandy or Prabash Joshi have been.

In the end, it is a question of strengthening the democratic fabric of society and the lives and dignity of minorities; for this, it is necessary that the Hindu majority stays away from the

Hindu Right. And this project is doomed from the start if we continuously ridicule their ways of thinking, their symbols, and their untutored 'unpolitical' language.

So urgent is the need to attack the inconvenient and disobedient people, that often analysis is upstaged by rhetoric. Arundhati Roy for instance claims "the Maoists and the Jan Lokpal Bill have one thing in common — they both seek the overthrow of the Indian State."

Huh? India Against Corruption, with its most liberal and minimalist of agendas, directly addressing the state and seeking to make it accountable, is about overthrowing it? And then Arundhati makes the even more astounding assertion that militaristic Maoist groups working through secretive cells are doing the work of transformation from the 'bottom up' while a massive non-violent movement is working 'top down.'

What to say?

What 'being there' means

Many friends have raised the question about how they can possibly 'be there' when their soul is elsewhere. Our answer is, at the very least, just don't be judgemental and dismissive. 'Being there' does not mean that everyone has to be there, literally; it is rather the stance that we adopt that is important. There are already people there who are engaged in internal contestation in the movement – if you look, for instance, at the composition of the core team and many others at other levels. Vituperative attacks will only strengthen the more negative tendencies within the movement and widen the gulf between it and the secular/liberal/ left sectors. The continuous equation of the movement with its most right-wing elements is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

But being there physically also means something else. If we enter the field physically in our usual style – of being the vanguard, trying to 'capture' the movement, to split it – the entire effort would be self-defeating. This is our shameful legacy and has never yielded any positive results.

Intervention calls for patience, engagement and transformation, not instrumental 'takeover'.

Finally, many have asked – should we be in places just because large numbers of people are there?

Of course not, but do we have to turn away sharply in the opposite direction because the people are there?

This article has been republished from Kafila.org.

With funds and ideas, Indians abroad advance Anna's struggle

Venky Vembu Aug 22, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Arvind Kejriwal #Fight against corruption #Hong Kong #ICAC #kiran bedi #Lokpal

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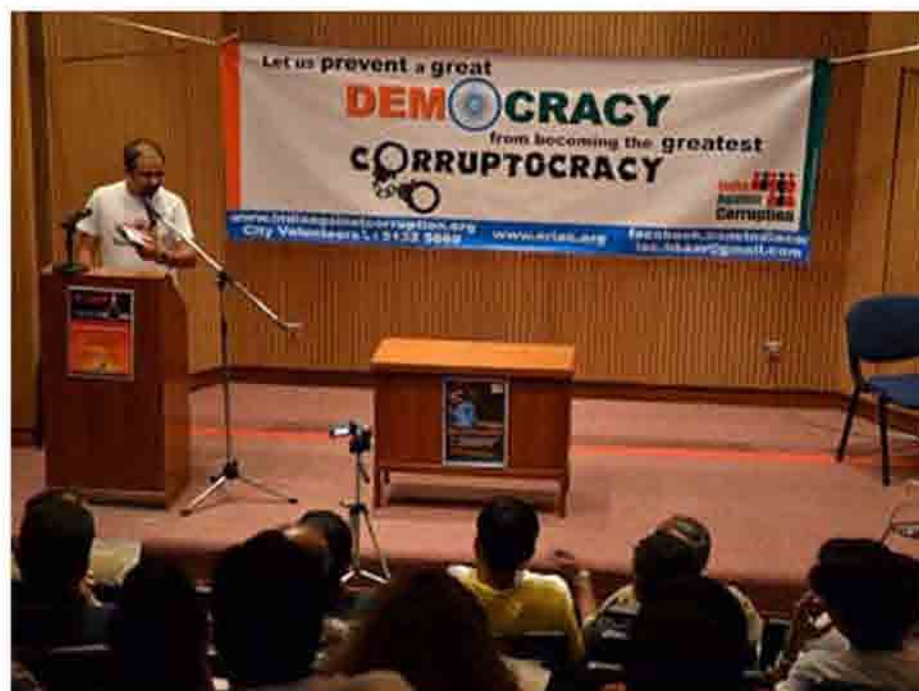
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The upsurge of sentiments in Indian cities and towns in support of Anna Hazare's movement against corruption is being matched measure for measure by a focussed mobilisation by Indians overseas who are contributing with ideas to take forward the fight against corruption.

From Hong Kong to Singapore to Sydney to cities in Europe and the US, non-resident Indians have been staging demonstrations in support of Anna Hazare, helping to spread awareness about the Jan Lokpal Bill and contributing with money and mindpower to advance the cause.



Supporters of the India Against Corruption (IAC) movement, the umbrella organisation that is spearheading the movement, made their presence felt overnight at the India Day parade in US cities to celebrate India's independence day. The parade routes were lined with Indians sporting the trademark "I am Anna" Gandhi topis and placards in support of the Jan Lokpal Bill.

On Sunday evening, at a meeting of the Hong Kong chapter of the IAC, a large gathering of Indians resolved to mobilise themselves and press their MPs and MLAs back in India to support the Jan Lokpal Bill. "The intention is to get our elected leaders to take a stand in the fight against corruption – and contribute in every way to keeping Anna Hazare's campaign going," said Dilip K. Pandey, convenor of IAC-Hong Kong.

Campaigners were also urged to become more aware of their MPs' and MLAs' record in office by tracking information about them on an online database of elected representatives. "Do check out the database, and get to know your own MPs and MLAs, their criminal record and

history of corruption, and you might get a sense of the candidate you've been supporting," says Pandey.

The campaign to pressure legislators, which follows up on Anna Hazare's call to get elected representatives to support the Jan Lokpal Bill, has already picked up momentum in India, with activists and supporters on Sunday picketing the homes of several leaders – from [the Congress](#) as well as [the BJP](#) – to get them to take a public stand on the Jan Lokpal Bill.

At least two activist-members of IAC-Hong Kong are in India, having taken leave from their investment banking careers to participate in the hunger strike and demonstrations against corruption that have galvanised India in recent days. As *Firstpost* noted earlier, they said they felt the need to be part of this historic movement, and not be mere spectators from the outside.

But even those who cannot take leave and join the protests are contributing with ideas to keep the spirit of the movement alive. "One important way that Indians abroad can contribute is by conveying to people back home the efficiency of anti-corruption systems that have been put in place overseas, which are worthy of replication in India," says Vinod Venkatasubramanian, an IT professional with a multinational.

In particular, Hong Kong's own experience of establishing a strong anti-corruption agency in the 1970s has served as an inspiration for Team Anna, whose members studied several overseas models and drew on best practices from around the world while drafting their Jan Lokpal Bill.

As Arvind Kejriwal, one of the core members of Team Anna, noted in [his recent speech at IIT-Chennai](#), Hong Kong's model of establishing the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), which came [after a community uprising](#) against widespread corruption in the police force, offers perhaps the most striking example of the importance of setting up an anti-corruption agency that is independent of the government.

In addition, NRIs are helping to raise general awareness about the demerits of the Lokpal Bill – as has been presented to Parliament by the government – and the case for the Jan Lokpal Bill by mobilising the social media. "We've launched an 'NRI phone home' campaign, as part of which we're asking each NRI to make 20 calls to India – to friends and family – and explain to them why the Jan Lokpal Bill is needed to fight corruption," says Pandey.

Vinod adds that there are other ways in which NRIs can contribute. On his visit home to India in September, for instance, he plans to enlist with the Bangalore chapter of IAC – and see if he can organise a visit by activists to nearby villages to spread the word about the differences between the two versions of the Lokpal Bill and explain why the Jan Lokpal Bill matters.

At a recent phone-in interaction with NRIs from around the world, Kiran Bedi, another core member of Team Anna, discussed yet more ways in which Indians overseas could contribute to the movement.

All of which just goes to show the extent to which Team Anna's campaign has energised and resonated with not just Indians at home, but with Indians overseas as well, and given them a chance to contribute – with funds and with ideas – to keeping the momentum of the protests going. Just by standing up and being counted, Indians overseas are doing their bit to keep the tricolour fluttering on foreign shores.

Answering Anna's critics: 10 posers and rebuttals

R Jagannathan Aug 19, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Jan Lokpal #Lokpal #ToTheContrary

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Why the Anna 'movement' leaves the aam aadmi cold

Varun Gandhi to take Jan Lokpal to Parliament

Anna's campaign has no personal agenda: Santosh Hegde

Large sections of the Indian intelligentsia have shown a complete disconnect with – if not disdain for – the Anna Hazare movement. It's not that they do not have a point. They do. But often the objections they raise can apply in almost any situation. Here's a checklist of the anti-Anna arguments, and how they should really be looked at.

Fasting for a cause is undemocratic. It is emotional blackmail.

This is true. But any form of pressure can be seen as blackmail. So why point a finger only at fasting? When political groups insist on censoring *Aarakshan*, isn't that really blackmail? When workers go on a strike, it is also blackmail. But we defend that as part of workers' rights. When Kashmiris organise stone-throwing extravaganzas, is that not blackmail? Any form of pressure by

organised groups can be seen as blackmail. A fast can at least be justified as being non-violent.

It is simplistic to believe that a strong Lokpal alone can achieve a corruption-free society

True. But this can't be used as an argument against having a strong Lokpal. Nobody is stopping the Union government, or, for that matter, state governments, from implementing all those other reform measures – e-enabling transactions, electoral funding reforms, unique ID-based supply of subsidies and benefits for the poor – to tackle corruption at other levels. Where is Team Anna blocking reforms? This is just a red herring to argue against a strong Lokpal.

The Jan Lokpal's ambit is too huge – it can't become a super government.



This is the strongest and most reasonable argument provided by the anti-Anna groups. We cannot have a super-power agency that will usurp all the powers of the CBI, the CVC and the judiciary. But, and it's an important *but*, the problem is the current power structure has no reason to share power with a Lokpal. The Anna group is seeking a strong Lokpal in order to countervail the power of the politician and the

bureaucrat. The government cannot hope to control the Lokpal (like it does the CBI and the police), just as the judiciary cannot have control of who polices it.

We need a countervailing power – whether it is through an independent Judicial Accountability Bill or a Lokpal whom the government cannot influence. More discussions are needed on this front. Team Anna needs to be willing to compromise on this, without losing sight of the need for an independent and strong Lokpal.

The Jan Lokpal Bill has many flaws.

This is something that all critics – from newspaper editors, to civil society groups to government spokespersons to opposition parties – have agreed on. And, surprisingly, it is the

easiest to rebut. The flaws can only be ironed out through discussion and compromise. And, in any case, there is almost no law in existence that does not have a flaw or two. So, go ahead, and hold discussions that can be played on live video. If Anna is offering ridiculous arguments to press his points, the world will know and his movement will melt away.

The Anna Lokpal is very draconian and anti-democratic.

Maybe. But in India we have penchant for tough laws. Are the laws to protect SCs/STs not draconian? But we live with it. Are the laws to prevent dowry and domestic violence not very powerful? We mutter under our breath and carry on. Is the Communal Violence Bill dished out by the National Advisory Council not draconian? But few people have attacked that as much as they have attacked the Jan Lokpal Bill. Was Tada not draconian? Is the Armed Forces Special Powers Act not draconian? When there are so many laws on the statute book with few checks and balances, why single out Jan Lokpal alone for abuse?

The Anna movement has no space for the poor, Dalits, and minorities.

This is an argument that one can make against any movement. At any point, groups of people will organise themselves to deal with issues that *they* consider important. The new middle class may agitate against corruption that affects it. Muslims may agitate against police harassment in terror cases, Dalits may organise to prevent any change in quotas. Lawyers may agitate against the high-handedness of some judges. Where does inclusion come into the picture? Should all people's movements have representative quotas from all communities? Are Muslims and Dalits not victims of corruption? Why won't a Lokpal benefit them?

How can Anna insist that only his Jan Lokpal Bill is right? Isn't this undemocratic?

It is undemocratic, when seen from the perspective of the government. However, the fact is the UPA blew it. When there was a joint drafting panel, there was a good chance of developing a consensus on most points. But instead of engaging the group, and creating an all-party drafting group that included civil society members, the UPA chose to undercut Anna. The bad blood resulting from that dishonesty is what has pushed Anna & Co towards insisting that only their views are right.

Laws are made by Parliament, not on the streets.

This is a technical argument. Laws are not made in a vacuum. People have to be consulted at all times and all levels. Groups will agitate for laws that they want introduced or changed. Parliament has to handle these pressures and deal with them in a sensitive way.

The Anna Hazare movement is supported by the Sangh Parivar.

We don't know this for sure, but even assuming the Parivar is powering the movement, it does not explain the broader support the movement has been receiving. Also, the support – or lack of it – from some groups does not make a movement itself illegitimate. If the Maoists support Mamata Bannerjee, does that make her campaign against the Left Front illegitimate? The Left idolised mass murderers like Stalin and Mao for decades, but no taint seems to have attached to them. But if the RSS backs anything, the movement itself is suspect? Isn't the RSS a part of civil society, even if you don't agree with them? Will Anna's movement get legitimacy only if the Congress or the Left back it?

And, here's the ultimate reason for a strong Lokpal, which its critics have not answered.

The problem with corruption in India is that it has become systemic. Since everyone from politicians to bureaucrats to criminals and businessmen are involved in corruption, is it possible that they will legislate something against their own interests? Only an outside power – and which is what gives Anna his muscle-power – can break this cosy arrangement. Anna's power is that he is not a part of the cartel of vested interests currently running the country. This is what gives him legitimacy – and the will to demand huge changes.

Love him or hate him: Anna IS the newspaper this morning

Sanjeev Srivastava Aug 18, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Chhatrasal stadium #Mumbai #PressReview #Tihar jail

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8 Comments

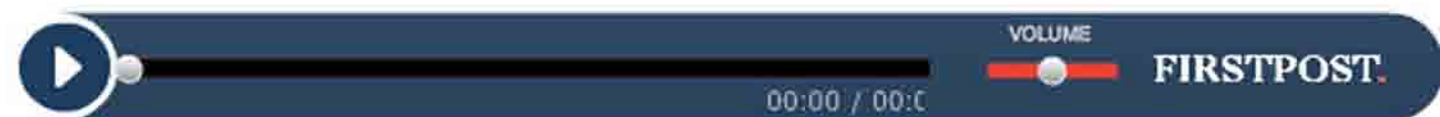


Predictably this mornings national newspapers are dominated by Anna Hazare. What with Hazare's refusal to come out of prison, the swelling crowds at Tihar jail and the Chhatrasal stadium, the protests all over the country and the subsequent debates and statements in parliament, yesterday was an extremely eventful day. Most newspapers have commented on the fact that Hazare has won

a resounding victory over the government, adding that the UPA government is looking increasingly demoralized and powerless. There are also a slew of interesting smaller stories, such as the account of a investment banker who has joined the fast from Mumbai.

Editorials in the major newspapers have also predictably focused on Anna, with some saying that this is an opportunity for something really big to happen, while others say that the government should not be held to ransom in this manner.

Listen now:



Anna was an afterthought in anti-corruption crusade

Raman Kirpal Aug 17, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Arvind Kejriwal #kiran bedi #PoliticalPlay #Prashant Bhushan #Right to Information Act

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☞ PM defends Delhi Police for arresting adamant Anna

If the figure of Anna Hazare has become a larger-than-life symbol of the anti-corruption movement in India, the real story is a bit more complicated. Anna wasn't always the leader in waiting, and a strong Lokpal Bill wasn't the destination of the movement. In fact, it wasn't even a movement to start with.

The story doesn't begin with Anna starting out as an anti-corruption crusader building his movement brick by brick and finding followers along the way. In fact, corruption wasn't the focus of the initial movers and shakers in this story.

It began with different civil society activists pursuing their own goals before it all fell into place as events unfolded over 2010. Anna Hazare was grafted onto the movement at the last

stage — once the activists decided they needed a credible face to show the world.

The first chapter begins with 43-year-old Arvind Kejriwal's quest for a role in the Central Information Commission, the apex oversight body under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

When the post of Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) fell vacant, Kejriwal and his associate Manish Sisodia started a campaign to promote the idea that the job should not be reserved for retired government servants. Kejriwal felt that the RTI structure had itself become very corrupt, and probably nursed thoughts of taking on the job himself. But the fact is he didn't stand a chance.

In the absence of any backers in officialdom, Kejriwal decided to back former IPS officer Kiran Bedi's name for the CIC post. To promote Bedi, he launched a [Facebook campaign](#) and even issued letters to the media and the government to build visibility. Letters were written to Sonia Gandhi asking her to ensure transparency in the appointment of the CIC.

It was at the peak of this campaign, around end-2009, that we see Anna Hazare entering the picture — but only as an endorser of Bedi's candidature for CIC in place of Wajahat Habibullah, who was retiring. The common link between Kejriwal, Bedi and Anna? All three were Magsaysay award winners.



Apart from Anna Hazare, Bedi's [other backers](#) included people like Subhash Chandra of Zee Entertainment, actor and producer [Aamir Khan](#), Infosys' NR Narayana Murthy, and interestingly, [Baba Ramdev](#) — who was to be another failed actor in the fight against corruption later.

In the event, the Bedi campaign flopped as the government ultimately opted for the safety

of a retiring official, [AN Tiwari](#), in September 2010. *Firstpost* has documented the [dubious ways](#) in which Tiwari pushed his candidature in a story published in July.

So, till late 2009, we see only Kejriwal and Bedi coming together to make a bid for an RTI post, in cahoots with Manish Sisodia. So where did the others — the father and son duo of Shanti and Prashant Bhushan — enter the picture? And Anna Hazare himself?

This is what happened, according to close associates of Kejriwal, Sisodia and the Bhushans. Even as the campaign to catapult Bedi as CIC was petering out in the face of bureaucratic machinations, corruption was emerging centre-stage with the unveiling of the Niira Radia tapes.

Prashant Bhushan's Centre for Public Interest Litigation had moved a petition in the Supreme Court seeking a court-monitored investigation into the 2G spectrum scam by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Shocked by the extent of corporate lobbying involved in the 2G scam – as evident in the Radia tapes – the Supreme Court decided in mid-December that it will indeed directly monitor the CBI's investigations.

This was a turning point where Kejriwal & Co shifted their goalposts from RTI to corruption. They roped in Bhushan and his father at this stage, but once this was decided, they realised that they still needed a credible face to lead the movement. Who could it be?

At this stage, Kejriwal and Kiran Bedi, with the consent of Prashant and Shanti Bhushan, went to meet Anna Hazare in his village Ralegan Siddhi in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district.

Why did they zero in on him? After all, Anna was hardly a nationally known figure. And despite the fact that he had worked wonders for his own village, he did not have a huge following even in his home state of Maharashtra.

One factor worked in his favour. Despite having many detractors and with a reputation for stubbornness, everybody was clear on one thing: he was personally incorruptible.

Anna signed on to the Kejriwal-Bhushan plan and the group strategically decided that it would focus its attention on a strong Lokpal Bill. By March-April 2011 their strategy was in place and they used the device of a fast-unto-death by Anna at Delhi's Jantar Mantar in April this year to push for it.

The huge public support for the fast – virtually unexpected when the movement was launched virally through Facebook and social media campaigns – convinced everyone that they had got the right issue at the right time. The people were ready. And now they had a face that could not be smeared easily to lead it.

As the government caved in to Team Anna's demand for a joint drafting of the Lokpal Bill, Kejriwal and Bhushan realised that they were on to a good thing with Anna. The only mistake the latter made was to praise Narendra Modi in public in the early stages of the campaign.

This would have been a deal-breaker for the Bhushans. But luckily for the Bhushans, Anna soon backtracked on Modi and saved the day.

Aided by TV, a sharp shift in public mood against politicians and their corruption, Team Anna was on its way to stardom.

Protesters We Like: Anna, Arundhati and the doublespeak of dissent

Lakshmi Chaudhry Aug 17, 2011

#Anna Hazare #OnOurMind #Politics #protest

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Anna's detention sparks angry protests in US cities

Anna was an afterthought in anti-corruption crusade

PM fails to take Parliament with him, Jaitley tears into Manmohan logic

Do ends justify the means? It's an age-old question at the core of all political action, be it of the revolutionary, democratic or fascist kind. And this is inevitably the question that looms large in the fierce debate over the Anna Hazare-led protests underway.

In his speech to the Parliament, Manmohan Singh offered an unequivocal answer: "Anna Hazare may be inspired by high ideals... However, the path he has chosen is misconceived and fraught with great consequences for our democracy." He went on to warn: "There are many forces who do not want to see India realise our place in the world. We must not play into

their hands, create an environment where our economic progress is hijacked by internal dissension.”

This official view finds resonance, oddly, with sections of the liberal intelligentsia whose members have long challenged the autocratic and often bloody policies of the Indian state. The kind who stood in solidarity with Medha Patkar during the anti-dam protests back in the day, or are likely to invoke the name of Irom Sharmila. Yet when it comes to Hazare, a number of these anti-government stalwarts echo Singh, describing his fast as ‘blackmail’ aimed at hijacking the due processes of a parliamentary democracy.

At best, they offer an inverted version of Singh’s argument, as in the case of Pratap Bhanu Mehta in the [Indian Express](#):

There is no doubt that Anna Hazare’s movement powerfully expressed anger against corruption, even as its own proposed solutions border on unreasonable daftness. But it has to be said that the way in which state power is being exercised to control and squelch protest is a dangerous trend for Indian democracy... So we are now in the awkward position of worrying that though the state is right in asserting the supremacy of institutions, it is becoming dangerously arbitrary and arrogant.

The state may be in the right, but its “thuggish” methods are not. Hazare and his ilk are, however, wrong on both counts. Not only is the Jan Lokpal unreasonably daft, but they are eliding “the distinction between protest and fast-unto-death. The former is legitimate. The latter is blackmail.” Mehta goes on to warn of “a dangerous moral climate being created by Manichean worldviews of good versus evil [that] will ill serve the cause of justice,” arguing that “civil society should not contribute to this frenzy, lest it itself become the victim.”



There are then two parts to this anti-Hazare argument: one, certain forms of protest are more legitimate than others; two, the ‘bad’ kind of protest is not just illegitimate but poses a danger to democracy itself. But this formulation in turn raises the bigger question: who or what determines whether a protest is ‘good’ or ‘bad’? If we rely entirely on popular support – as we might in a democracy – then Mehta and

Singh are most certainly on the losing side. Yes, the vast majority of Indians may not even know of Hazare, but most of those who do are inclined to support him over the government. Forget Hazare, how about the *aam janta* that is taking to the streets or going on strike, are we to condemn their actions as illegitimate, as well?

But democracy is more than just a numbers game, and more so in the matters of dissent. A democratic society must protect the right to non-violent protest, be it by 'daft' people or otherwise, or whether they espouse popular causes or not. And yet few among us seem to recognise or uphold this basic democratic right, including – oh, the irony – some of Hazare's staunchest supporters.

"Annaji is symbol of honesty, and he represents the concerns of the Indian people. I am just amazed at the government's reaction. They have not understood the mood of the nation," declared actor Anupam Kher in a television interview. In other words, the actions were "amazing" because Annaji is widely respected and his views have some measure of popular support. Would they be less amazing if the cause was unpopular, as in the case of Arundhati Roy or Syed Ali Geelani? Or how about if the arrested were no-name displaced farmers or tribals who are routinely put behind bars?

Legitimate dissent includes not just action, but also speech and ideology. As the Supreme Court pointed out in the case of Binayak Sen, being a Maoist sympathiser – or even being suspected of being one – is not sufficient grounds for arrest. And yet how many of those who stridently uphold Hazare's democratic rights today spoke out on behalf of Roy last year? At the time, [Alok Tiwari](#) noted:

The lack of outrage at the conclusion by Delhi police that there is "a fit case" to charge Kashmiri separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani and author Arundhati Roy with sedition for what the two said in a seminar at Delhi is appalling. Only a few civil liberties advocates spoke out against the move. The opposition Bharatiya Janata Party openly bayed for their blood. Congress maintained a studied silence. The minor parties were just not bothered. Union Law Minister Veerappa Moily didn't come out to well when he suggested that freedom of expression couldn't be used to violate "patriotic sentiments", whatever that means.

In the end, it is not about Geelani or Roy. It is about our own idea of India. It is sad that police even in national capital cannot differentiate between an act of rebellion and a contrary opinion. It is sadder that the entire political establishment remains silent when citizens are threatened with criminal charges for voicing opinions – howsoever unpopular or offensive.

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It is absurd to speak of democratic rights when you extend them only to causes you support, either for political or personal reasons. The same BJP that is up in arms over Hazare said little when Narendra Modi's police [arrested and lathi-charged](#) nearly 5000 farmers who were peacefully protesting the illegal acquisition of their land in Mahuva in February, 2010 – led by a veteran 92-year-old Gandhian, no less.

The Congress party too applies democratic principles at will, and according to political expedience. As Mehta points out, Law Minister Salman Khursheed criticised the Mayawati government's use of Section 144 in Bhatta

Parsaul, saying, "If we don't have a right to protest, we don't have anything at all."

No, we don't and that 'we' includes even those we don't like, support or respect.

Slamming the elite for its valourisation of Hazare, P Sainath wrote in The Hindu of the media's affection for People Like Us:

The Indian elite play the PLU game like few others do. Entry into the club is by birth or invitation only. And getting certification from the classes that matter takes some work. Your own background can be surmounted however, even turned to advantage, if there are enough strong PLUs around you. Anna Hazare had this. Baba Ramdev did not have it. Both claimed to speak for 'civil society.' A media applying that word with reverence to those around Anna Hazare, denied it with scorn to those they saw as Ramdev's rabble.



Yet what is elided in this easy condemnation of the elite is the liberal intelligentsia's own discriminatory criteria. Would they be as harsh if Hazare was fasting on behalf of displaced tribals or army excesses in Kashmir? Clearly middle class angst over corruption doesn't qualify. We all seem to have our list of pet causes — the ones that we uphold in the name of democracy, while others, we argue, threaten the

same.

The unfolding Hazare brouhaha has revealed us to be a nation of convenient democrats. On [an NDTV panel](#) last night, historian Mridula Mukherjee argued Gandhi believed fasts ought to be “used very rarely, and only when all other means failed.” So fasting is okay only when it meets some Gandhian standard of probity? Sez who? Journalist Tavleen Singh accused “all this jumping around Jantar Mantar” of “reducing our democracy to a farce.” But surely it is more farcical to argue dissent has to meet some subjective criteria to be deemed “appropriate.”

We don't support the principle of protest, just Protesters We Like.

The idea that protest has to meet some arbitrary standard of utility or legitimacy is deeply undemocratic. In a landmark US Supreme Court case in 1977, a Jewish civil liberties lawyer, David Goldberg, successfully defended the right of neo-Nazis to hold a rally in Skokie, Illinois, where one out of every six Jewish citizens was either a Holocaust survivor, or was directly related to one. Impossible in India, perhaps, where an equivalent event would be deemed as unnecessarily inflammatory. But it's an important reminder of what democracy looks like.

“The dance of democracy unleashed by you and your team has every danger of destroying our democracy,” warns Hema Raghavan in an [open letter](#) to Anna Hazare. But what is most dangerous to democracy is the argument that it is too fragile to endure dissent. That's the claim made over and over again by our government, whether in attacking Arundhati Roy, lathi-charging farmers, cracking down on tribals, or arresting Anna Hazare. Our democracy has survived Partition, wars, famines, the Emergency, riots and more. It's about time we stop selling ourselves short. Gurucharan Das claims we are a “nation in our puberty.” Or maybe we're a nation frozen in a state of arrested development, and it's finally time for us to grow up.

Now that the ill-advised and unnecessary detour through Tihar is behind us, let the Hazare supporters fast, hold their rallies, and make their demands. The protest will either produce some concessions or run out of steam over time. And those who disagree with his politics or his means should stage a counter-protest right by his side. Both the nation and our democracy will be stronger for it.

Anna Hazare: the last Gandhian standing

Sandip Roy Aug 16, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Anti-Corruption movement #Manmohan Singh #Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
#ToWhatEffect #UPA government

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PR machinery: Anna gets it right, Congress gets it wrong

Why Anna Hazare should enter electoral politics, not be an outsider

Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Act. Singh probably didn't want to draw too much attention to the Father of the Nation when his government was making plans to put the most famous Gandhian around into preventive custody. An intention he signaled when he declared any Bapuji-style dissent to be unproductive and improper:

When Manmohan Singh gave his Independence Day address to the nation yesterday, one man was missing in action.

Mahatma Gandhi.

Usually no Independence Day speech is complete without some quote from the Father of the Nation. But this time there was only **one mention** of his name: the

It is essential that when we consider these issues, we do not create an atmosphere in which the country's progress comes into question. Any debate on these matters should reflect the confidence that we can overcome these challenges... Those who don't agree with this [Lokpal] Bill... should not resort to hunger strikes and fasts unto death.

In one fell swoop – in the name of defending progress – our Prime Minister repositioned his government as the Gandhi-shunning *angrez sarkar*. And come the morning after Independence Day, we found ourselves transported back to the days of the British Raj: preemptive arrests along with calls for a jail *bharo* movement. As a grizzled Anna Hazare supporter on television put it, “It has become like a British government. As of this day, I am naming Manmohan Singh government as the *sarkar* of Churchill.”



Game, set, and match to Hazare. A planned protest that could well have tested the patience of a nation od-ed on fasting leaders now has the makings of a nationwide civil disobedience movement. *Gandhi-giri zindabad!*

From Anna to Mahatma

Back in April, when Anna Hazare talked about a *Corruption Bharat Chhodo*

movement, it seemed a clumsy attempt to re-stage a bit of *swadesi* theatre, complete with *prabhat pheris* and patriotic songs. At the time, media commentators dismissed him as naïve, arguing *Gandhi-giri* was better suited to fight colonial rule than the far more insidious and ubiquitous disease of corruption. Hazare was living in some Gandhian Neverland, an old man trying to relive his glory days. As damning evidence of his anachronistic politics, he'd even been joined by Gandhi's last living personal secretary, Venkita Kalyanam.

What was the old man going to do next? Make some salt?

As it turns out, he didn't need to – thanks to the UPA government which played right into his hands this morning.

“During Jallianwallah Bagh, the *gora Angrez* did a terrible injustice. Now the *kaale Angrez* have done the same,” said Hazare after the government's Ramdev crackdown. A charge that didn't quite take root with Ramdev because of his reputation of a bit of a carpetbagger with

political ambitions. And while the government's midnight raid didn't do its reputation any good, Ramdev's attempt to flee from the Ramlila grounds in a salwar-kameez didn't help him either.

But where arrests and crackdowns may have worked in sidelining the yoga guru, they have the precisely opposite effect with Hazare who is chomping at the bit to be a 21st century Gandhi. His video message to the people makes that clear when he describes the anti-corruption movement as "*azaadi ki doosri ladaai*" (the second Independence struggle). By throwing him into preventive custody, and sweeping up Arvind Kejriwal and Kiran Bedi — just as the British did with Nehru, Patel and Azad — the government is playing its part to a tee.

The problem for the UPA is that a cranky, dogged old man has managed to get a famously apathetic cynical middle class off its collective butt. The only reason he's been able to do it is because there is no indication of a personal agenda or power grab. His claim to moral authority rests on the fact that he appears to have no interest in electoral politics, or in securing himself any position of political power. He's also stayed above the fray of party politics, having never once asked for the resignation of the UPA government despite all its scams. And that is why all of the government's ham-handed attempts to discredit him have fallen flat. At a time when the Gandhi *topi* itself had become the symbol of the greedy politician, he's put the starch back into the old *khadi*.

Congress leaders clearly gambled on a Ramdev Redux. Just shove the guy off-stage and out of sight and the country will go back to channel-surfing. The TV channels instead are filled with images of crowds slowly gathering in various cities, from Mumbai to Patna, and of activists and lay citizens bearing banners proclaiming, "Arrest Me." Now is Manmohan Singh really ready to deal with a new jail *bharo andolan* on his hands? Whether a crowd gathers at Jantar Mantar or merely on Facebook, whether Hazare is able to spark a genuine civil disobedience movement or not, the government comes across as the *burra sahib* with a tin ear, making noises about corruption but without any conviction, as the British once did about self-rule.

The UPA government has turned Anna Hazare into the last Gandhian standing.

Anger, solidarity and calls to action: Social media for Anna

Ayeshea Perera Aug 16, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Chhatrasal stadium #Delhi #TweetFeed #Twitter

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The detention of Anna Hazare this morning has galvanised an already vocal online community who have rushed to his support.

The [Facebook group](#) of the Mumbai chapter of the “India against corruption” movement to which Anna belongs, has urged people to change their profile pictures to plain black squares as a means of protesting the government decision to take Anna Hazare into preventive custody before he left for Rajghat to begin his fast.



A wall post on the page read, “A HUMBLE REQUEST: Democracy can’t be murdered so brutally. Please change your profile pic to ‘Black’ at least for a day to oppose the arrest of team ‘Anna’. Co-operation expected !!!.”

On Twitter meanwhile, 8 of the 10 items on the ‘top trends’ list for India were all directly related to the fast.

#isupportannahazare is the most highly ranked of the lot, but the topics “Delhi Police”, “Kiran Bedi”, “Sushma Swaraj” and “JP Park” are also on that list

On Youtube meanwhile the video message posted by Anna Hazare to be viewed in case he got arrested, has been duplicated numerous times, with around 8 – 10 channels all showing the message. The comments on the videos are as outraged as those on Twitter and Facebook. One user had said, “Today Indian Democracy has been thrown into the gutter by the protectors of the corrupt looters on my Nation.

Anna Hazare, we are behind you !!! God Bless you!"

Most of these tweets and Facebook updates read as either expressions of anger against the Delhi police and government or support for Team Anna.

A user named @atulkasbekar tweeted, "U may not agree wt Anna's ideology or his methods. That's fine. BUT U CANNOT TAKE AWAY HIS RIGHT TO PEACEFUL PROTEST! #isupportAnnaHazare"

While @LON3WOLF said, "On 15th Aug, we got our independence and on 16th Aug the Indian Government took it away x-(#isupportannahazare"

But besides expressing solidarity/anger many people have also begun to use the social media networks as calls to action on the ground as well.

A Facebook user, Abdul Akthar has drafted a letter to the Supreme Court of India and provided an email address, urging fans of the page to copy the message and send it to the court from their own email id's. The message is basically a request for Suo Moto action in the public interest for the freedom to peacefully protest.

Meanwhile on Twitter, various groups and individuals are using popular hashtags like #isupportannahazare or #annahazare to organise on the ground protests against his detention.

One user under the name @damayantig had said, Folks seen carrying Indian Flag is being arrested by police. #isupportannahazare Call: 7303150500, 80972 97905 in MUMBAI to protest. The same user had also said, "AURANGABAD MAHARASHTRA #isupportannahazare pls Come to Kranti Chowk in large number rs to protest Anna's arrest, send sms to friends to join" She later tweeted that "More than 1000 people present, more than 100 people fasting at Balgandharva PUNE"

In Delhi, a twitter user named 'Rishi' had tweeted out his number, asking people to join his movement to court arrest at the Chhatrasal stadium. Speaking to Firstpost, Rishi Kesh who identified himself as an administrator at the Faculty of Law in the Delhi university, said that he was the head of a movement comprising both students and faculty members in support of Anna.

"Around a 1000 people from campuses across DU have already been arrested, but many many more are still going", he said.

And taking a leaf from Kiran Bedi's book, where she continued using her Blackberry to tweet

even as she was taken into preventive custody, users are tweeting from inside the stadium too let others know what is happening.

@asamulya, who is inside, tweeted “Chatrasal stadium full with 5000 inside! #isupportannahazare” while @hitesh_jain90 said, “Chhatrasal Stadium house full. #isupportannahazare #annahazare Parliament Democracy in Emergency”

Govt's dirty tricks dept probes Team Anna record, comes up with zilch

Raman Kirpal Aug 16, 2011

#Anna Hazare #Congress party #Indian Army #kiran bedi #Manish Tewari #ThatsJustWrong

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Anna trusts involved in minor violations, not big crimes

The Anna Hazare movement has just grown bigger

In a series of goof-ups, the UPA government led by the Congress Party has launched a hush-hush preliminary inquiry into Anna Hazare and Kiran Bedi's pasts.

Soon after the first episode of Anna Hazare's indefinite fast for instituting an effective Lokpal bill ended, the government sent feelers to the personnel department of the Army Supply Corps to dig into Hazare's past. Hazare

had joined the Indian Army in 1963 and served as a soldier for 15 years with the Army Supply Corps.



Sources in the Indian Army reveal that Anna had left the Indian Army in 1978 and such old records are not maintainable in the Army Supply Corps stationed in the Army Headquarters in Delhi.

The Army's record division is in Bangalore, and a rank of Major General was asked to look into Hazare's records in Bangalore. The Indian Army, sources say, has apparently given its

findings: the Army report says that his service record with the Army Supply Corps was 'exemplary'.

The UPA government is understandably sitting over the Army report. Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari made a desperate attempt to character assassinate Anna Hazare by referring to an [eight-year-old Justice Sawant report](#). He made allegations against Hazare out of context and thus the Congress' claim fell flat.

In the process, however, Manish Tewari himself spilled the beans when he said: "Annaji keeps saying that the Indian Army is investigating into his records. A few days ago, the Indian Army received an RTI seeking past records of Anna. The Indian Army wrote to Anna to find if he has any objection against the Indian Army giving those records to the RTI person. Anna has not replied to the Indian Army's query to date."

Manish Tewari said this in his press conference and in a way he too confirmed that the Indian Army was asked to investigate into Anna's past Army record.

Not only this. A month ago, an investigating agency made several checks on fund sources for Kiran Bedi's NGOs – Navjyoti and India Vision Foundation. On 3 January 2008, Kiran Bedi had launched two web portals – [indiapolice.in](#) (for the welfare of policemen' families) and [saferindia.com](#). Microsoft India, Intel and Infosys are among several organizations, which have provided funds for these two portals.

Kiran Bedi's India Vision Foundation has also gone international. It has two offices in the US, and one each in Australia and Mauritius. The investigating agency is digging out the funding pattern. Also, it has directed the web host (in the US) of Kiran Bedi's websites to provide logs and emails of the two websites, the sources add.

Why Anna Hazare should enter electoral politics, not be an outsider

Venky Vembu Aug 16, 2011

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The Anna Hazare movement has just grown bigger

The events of recent weeks, culminating in Anna Hazare's detention this morning, mark in many ways a defining moment in India's evolution as a democracy. The upsurge of popular sentiment in cities across India this morning in solidarity with Team Anna's detention is stunning. And the readiness with which people who normally go to elaborate lengths to avoid engagement with "dirty" politics are now courting arrest or are otherwise organising public protests – or even just quietly observing a day's fast at home – to give expression to their sense of disgust with the UPA government's handling of the Lokpal Bill exercise is quite unprecedented in independent India.

I know of professionals who have taken leave from their investment banking jobs abroad, where they earn six-figure dollar salaries and bonuses, just to be in India today to be part of this movement. One of them has even prepared his young wife for the inevitability of his arrest – which in his family would normally be considered a shame and a scandal – and has been organising protests in Mumbai for the past few days.

At NRI gatherings of Indians Against Corruption, the energy of young Indians sharing ideas to make India corruption-free has been palpable. The extent to which they are ready to step outside of their 9-to-5 grind and donate time and money for the biggest public cause that confronts India is a surprise – even to them. They say they used to think of themselves as apathetic to politics. But now, they've found a cause they believe in.

Watch images from the protests



Anna's supporters shout slogans while waiting outside a gate of Tihar prison. AP

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This is the second time in the past few months that Anna Hazare has convincingly demonstrated the popular, mass-based nature of the support that his campaign enjoys, across class, caste and religious distinctions that normally divide us. We first saw it in April, when he launched his fast at Jantar Mantar, and electrified India. Since that time, he and his team have had the entire political establishment – and, to be honest, a cross-section of media commentators – clueless about how a man with little or no financial resources can command so large a following with only rustic simplicity and the power of a message that has great resonance with millions of people.

So, the fact that Anna Hazare and his team enjoys enormous goodwill with a large-enough constituency of people who are sick of corruption and jaded with politics as usual and who

have completely lost faith in the political establishment in its entirety is blindingly obvious.

What next?



The question then arises: how can Team Anna now leverage this goodwill? Should it continue to remain the “outsider” calling the political establishment to account? What are the odds that it can succeed? How can it channel the deep-seated distrust of the political establishment and bring about demonstrable change.

To address that, it helps to assess the extent of “success” that Team Anna’s campaign has had. It’s beyond dispute that Team Anna’s one major success has been in giving voice to and amplifying the popular disgust with the top-down, 360-degree corruption that pervades our public life — and in showing up starkly that for all the power games that go on with the various political parties, they are pretty much united in their opposition to a strong Lokpal institution.

Yet, while Team Anna gets full marks for elevating the issue of corruption to the top of the agenda and for creating mass awareness, its attempts beyond that have only met with limited success. For instance, the Lokpal Bill that’s now before Parliament is a mere shadow of the strong anti-corruption agency it envisaged. And [even those who are willing to stand up and be counted](#) along with Anna aren’t fully convinced that Team Anna’s Jan Lokpal is the answer to corruption. If you can’t convince even those who support you, what chances do you stand against those who oppose you?

It is in that context that Team Anna needs to formulate a forward-looking political strategy.

Since it’s the current UPA government that is now doing its damndest to water down the Lokpal Bill, it’s fair to say that it will pay a big political price when general elections are due next in 2014. By default, an alternative political formation could then come to power. But even in the event of, say, a BJP-led grouping coming to power, there’s nothing to suggest that it will work to change the system because it’s now too entrenched in the wily ways of electoral game-playing (as was demonstrated most strikingly in its handling of affairs in Karnataka). The BJP has thus far adopted only a wishy-washy stand on the Lokpal Bill, which validates

the suspicion that it doesn't want to alter the rules of the political game too drastically.

Enter the political arena

In any case, why should Team Anna do all the grunge work only to see another status quo-ist party ride on its back and come to power? Why not bite the bullet and enter the "dirty" political fray yourself?

It's true that Anna Hazare has a disdain for electoral politics as it is practised now, where – in his words – people sell their vote for a bottle of liquor. He also considers himself "unelectable", given the reality of the political arena. Yet, the biggest criticism that cripples the movement today is that since it is not elected – "or electable" – it has no right to influence the discourse on the Lokpal Bill, now that it is before Parliament.

It's not just Congress lackeys who make that criticism. Even non-Congress politicians and [insightful commentators](#) make that point.

On that count, Team Anna's best days as an agent of change from the "outside" may be already over. From here on, it only risks elevating its politics of confrontation, which could erode the political goodwill it now enjoys. It's perhaps time for Team Anna to enter the political arena and work for change from within.

Even if it does that, it doesn't have to become just another political party. With the goodwill that it now enjoys and the energy it has infused in its supporters, it can change the way politics is played in India. What it lacks in money power, it can make up for with a bottom-up movement that, as has been already demonstrated, enjoys great resonance. In any case, as we saw with the routing of the DMK in Tamil Nadu, money power stands no chance when a people are set on throwing out a corrupt regime.

The challenges to becoming a mainstream political party are formidable, particularly when you're (for now) only a one-issue party. But that issue – corruption – is one that is right at the top of people's consciousness. And as the only political force that today enjoys a nationwide profile, is untainted by corruption, has a vision for changing the system – and a volunteer force that can more than compensate for the money power of its opponents with boots-on-the-ground campaign, Team Anna has enormous strengths in this battle.

Moments such as this come only once in a generation. By a curious alignment of planets, Anna Hazare has captured the imagination of an India that is crying out for fundamental change. It is time for it to seize the moment, stop being an outsider that has exhausted its influence as a change agent, enter electoral politics, and recreate an India in its own image.

The Anna Hazare movement has just grown bigger

Akshaya Mishra Aug 16, 2011

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Anna's arrest prior to his fast was expected. In fact, his pre-recorded message to the nation makes it clear that the Gandhian himself anticipated it. The police action has created ripples of reaction across the country. It won't be surprising if the ripples turn into waves later in the day and Anna's supporters across the country court arrest in large numbers. He has already termed his movement 'the second freedom struggle' asking people to fill jails. His message is likely to trigger widespread passionate action.

The Supreme Court is expected to step in at some point. Activist Prashant Bhushan has already said that he would move court as soon as it opens. The court, most likely, would find the government's action unconstitutional and against the law. The government will certainly find it difficult to explain its action on the civil society activists. It will have to release Anna under the court's order, handing him over a small, yet important victory.



The opposition, of course, would try to make most of the government's predicament. For the BJP and the Left it is a godsend. Both have already resurrected memories of the 1975 Emergency to whip up passion.

The BJP is likely to move an adjournment motion in Parliament to nail the government. It would, no doubt, be backed by other

opposition parties. The government would be up for some very uncomfortable questioning.

For the BJP, the party in waiting to take over power at the Centre, it's the best opportunity to hit hard at the government. Its own approach to the Lokpal Bill reeks of double standards – it is more in agreement with the government's position than that of the civil society on the issue. But in the time of high passion not many would take note of its hypocritical position. The mother organisation, RSS, has already jumped in to support Anna. It is hint enough for the party to go the whole hog.

The civil society members, buoyed by the popular upsurge in their favour, would like to make the maximum of the situation. Anna has already set the tone through his address to the nation. Earlier on Monday, he had said that if Gandhian methods did not yield results, people would resort to the methods of Chhatrapati Shivaji. It's hard to miss the implicit warning.

Civil society activist Kiran Bedi has taken it forward by equating today's situation with the days of Emergency. "This is exactly what happened during Emergency. Emergency has revisited the country. This detention is unconstitutional and undemocratic," said Bedi while courting arrest. The words of members of Team Anna will resonate loud across the country. As more and more people join the movement the government would find itself hopelessly cornered.

The UPA, more specifically the Congress, is in a bind now. It had worked itself into a situation where it would be damned if it allowed Anna's fast to happen and damned if it didn't. Now that it has bitten the bullet, it cannot escape the consequences. It's not clear what the party think tank had on mind when it launched an orchestrated attack on Anna. It was expected to backfire and cause a lot of collateral damage.

A storm is brewing and the party has to brace to pay heavy costs. The leadership, obviously, is in a muddled state of mind. The senior leaders have lost the plot; it's up to Rahul Gandhi to step in and make an impression now.

PR machinery: Anna gets it right, Congress gets it wrong

Aug 16, 2011

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Anna Hazare calls for 'jail bharo' if he's arrested

It's the big day: Showdown imminent in Anna's battle

Shadow-boxing over, time for real action

By Amith Prabhu

I have no idea how the machinery of Team Anna Hazare works. I was at a mall on Sunday evening and as I was leaving, there was a bunch of youngsters promoting India Against Corruption – a movement spearheaded by Anna Hazare.

The Government led by Manmohan Singh at one end and the Crusaders against Corruption led by Anna Hazare at the other, have been at loggerheads for a while now.

What we see on news television every night and read in the newspapers the next morning is the result of the communication efforts of the two warring parties.

Here is a quick round up of how the communications game plan of the two parties in question is panning out:

What is Team Anna Hazare doing right –



- Team Anna has realised early to strike a chord with the common man. The campaign, as projected by Team Anna, has one clear goal – and that is to make the Aam Aadmi benefit, and this is cutting ice. The Email, SMS and BBM campaign is being well managed to reach millions of people of all ages.

- The use of direct citizen outreach through mini

movements across the country (like the one I saw outside the mall) is working brilliantly for Anna. Doing the right things at the right time is also key. Anna Hazare visiting Raj Ghat followed by a media briefing was a smart thing to do; he dominated news television on a day when Manmohan Singh ought to have dominated it – Independence Day.

- Anna Hazare has chosen his core group carefully. The media management by this group is well coordinated and hats off for the effort.

What is Team Anna Hazare doing wrong –

- Not putting right wing parties in their place is sending mixed signals that this campaign is supported by the Sangh Parivar and individuals like Baba Ramdev.
- Losing one's cool especially taking on the Prime Minister who most Indians still consider to be a man of high integrity is not a great idea.

What is the UPA government doing right –

- They are playing the card of elected versus self-appointed very well. Most of the negative comments on Team Anna are rooted in this thought.
- By getting Kalmadi to cool his heels in jail along with the former telecom minister A Raja and Kanimozhi, daughter of the leader of their key ally, DMK, for the CWG and 2G scams respectively has given them an upper hand of showing they are serious about fighting corruption.

What is the UPA government doing wrong –

- Getting ruthless spokespersons from the party to attack Anna Hazare personally is a complete disaster. Stooping to such low levels is a great short term idea but it's a self-goal in the long run. Having a single, soft and sober spokesperson from the government rather than from the party would be a better way to manage communications on this issue.
- Not getting to do the drawing table quickly by taking along the opposition and civil society is a major failure. The fact that some attempts have been made to achieve this but have not been highlighted is not serving any purpose.
- Changing the course of the dialogue by making 'real development' and 'real impact to the common man' a focus area hasn't yet taken place. It has to learn from Gujarat, which changed

the perception of being a communal government by selling development of the state to the entire world.

In the final analysis, the Crusade against Corruption has an edge over the democratically elected government both, on credibility as well as communication coordination and this seems like a long war that has just begun. The first battle has just been won — the battle of managing perceptions.



Amith Prabhu is a Public Relations professional and a keen observer of Indian politics. In the past eight years he has worked in a PR firm and a Public affairs consultancy. He presently works with a media planning company leading its corporate communications function. He was the first student intern in the history of the Indian National Congress having spent the summer of 2003 in the party's media department. Views are personal.



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