CAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS LEAD TO EDUCATIONAL CHANGE? SOME REFLECTIONS ON A CASE STUDY OF THE ADIVASI MUNNETRA SANGAM

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Debates on making Indian education more inclusive and egalitarian tend to revolve within two kinds of paradigms: (a) educational content and method, viz. improving the curricula, textbooks and teaching methods, bringing them in line with educational goals which may variously range from creating skills and human capital at one end of the spectrum to an emphasis on self-discovery or good citizenship at the other; (b) enhancing organizational and systemic processes, which may range from improving teacher colleges to privatization of schools to strengthening the roles of leaders. These two paradigms are popular with both the state as well as with the NGOs which are increasingly active in this sector. They are also inter-connected, though relatively few organizations work upon all of these together. In contrast with the above two, a voluble but smaller group of voices has emphasized the role of politics as an independent force for improving education in India and elsewhere (Saxena 1998, Bowles and Gintis 2011/1976, Anyon 2005, Apple 2007). It is argued that the key and primary factor missing for educational change is the lack of political will and not technical abilities and resources. Social movements are one of the main ways of creating that political will. It is through social movements and shifting the balance of power within the political system that the normative orientations of key actors will change. Only then shall strategic institutions generate the will to pull attention and effort away from competing demands and put them into improving the education system instead.

The political perspective would say that the disadvantages faced by adivasis and other marginalized groups in education are because of the presence of interest groups in a systemic relation of domination over them. So long as education's personnel, processes, curricula and pedagogy continue to be controlled by groups in oppressive relations with the rest of society, there is little hope for change. Sometimes critics of this approach balk at the conspiracy theories which appear to underwrite it. However, if one picks out from this theoretical perspective the suspicions of conspiracy and allegations of vindictiveness and replaces them with the concept of just plain simple indifference on the part of the elites, the consequences of a structure of impersonal domination upon education remain still much the same. The result would still be bad or non-existent schools for the marginalized.

The proponents of this power-centric approach would say that a shift in the orientations and character of the key decision makers will lead to better schools, more relevant curricula and so on (ibid.) The education establishment has within it entrenched interests for whom the improvement of adivasi education is not a priority and who may even look down upon them as second class citizens. The consolidation of power in the hands of elites of developing countries is so daunting that even influential international bureaucracies like the World Bank, UNICEF and others avoid directly targeting these interests and try to manoeuvre through supposedly apolitical spaces. While international bureaucracies and large NGOs are themselves part of a politics or balance of power, they find explicit tugs of war and confrontations difficult to negotiate, preferring instead to use the methods of bureaucratic decisions and backroom lobbying. There is also the feeling amongst them that activism and confrontationist talk is self-defeating. It does not achieve anything and only alienates the very people one is wanting to change.

It is well known in comparative education that political processes have a significant role to play in the expansion and improvement of education systems. The examples of communist countries like

Cuba (Gasperini 2000, Carnoy 2007) and the USSR (Zajda 1980) show how a strong dictate from centralized command systems led to a dramatic growth of access and an improvement in average quality. For all its problems with the US embargo and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba still managed to have the highest levels of achievement scores in South America (UNESCO 2008). Similar evidences of the key role of politics in improving schooling for the lower classes comes from Western Europe. For instance, in the second half of the twentieth century the growth of comprehensive schooling and the decline of streaming in UK was driven by changes in the ideologies of the rulers, a culture of greater egalitarianism and new social and political alliances which expanded the bases of power (Lawton 2004, Aldrich 2002). Combined with a change in the economic structure, it was this shift which led to the opening of new universities and increased social mobility (Halsey et.al. 1992), though recent decades and further policy shifts may have seen a reversal of that trend (Themelis 2008).

We should not be surprised to note that the configuration of power in social and education systems may lead to results that go against a particular society's own avowed goals of spreading education to everyone. Every organization, be it a state education bureaucracy or an NGO or a revolutionary party runs the risk of starting to ignore its larger goals. Organizations are, after all, driven by balances of power and it is common to see those in control trying to hold on to their positions of privilege to the detriment of their original objectives. It may even be that the very purpose of the organization is to maintain the domination of a class or group. The resulting imperviousness of bureaucracies and other powerful institutions has been the context within which social movements have played a constructive role in education as well as other sectors. The significance of social movements, specifically, is that their energies come from outside the establishment. They do not primarily operate through the state's machinery or through the command and control systems of NGOs. This, in principle, permits them to act outside the formal structures of power, which often get controlled by the dominant actors in a society. Social movements across the years have proven to be an important process for challenging and transforming the establishment. By operating outside concentrated forms of control by mainstream institutions they give a chance to speak and be heard to those whose voice gets lost in the corridors of bureaucracies. This is also why established institutions usually find social movements awkward to work with. The eventual institutionalization of many social movements does not weaken this pattern of the radical significance of social movements, since these institutions may now have embedded in them new sources of legitimacy and membership. Within their institutional structure may lie a new configuration of social relations.

In a country where educational change seems to be going at a snail's pace and one repeatedly meets students who have had only a fraud perpetrated on them in the name of schooling and college, it is reasonable to wonder whether there are indeed vested interests which are disinclined to promote the expansion of education for the poor and marginalized. It is this which leads one to examine the possibilities and limitations of social movements as a source of transformation of the education sector. This paper is about the Adivasi Munnetra Sangam (AMS), a social movement for adivasi empowerment which emerged in the Nilgiri hills of Tamil Nadu and the impact it has had on local education. An analysis of its work is hoped to be able to give some insights on what one can expect social movements to achieve in the south Asian context and also what they cannot be expected to achieve.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS FOR EDUCATION

The study of social movements has been an active area in both sociology as well as in politics. These may be defined as having dense informal networks engaged in a conflict with some other entity, united by a collective sense of identity (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 20). In sociology there has developed a considerable body of theoretical work around social movements, but this has mainly been oriented to explaining their rise, success and decline. Theories which explore social

conflict, social organizations and networks, political opportunities and mediation, identity, culture and framing have provided rich insights into many social movements across the world (cf. Della Porta and Diani 2006, Opp 2009). Social movements for specifically transforming education have been an area of special interest for scholars in the United States and Canada, particularly for those inspired by critical pedagogy. Michael Apple (1999, 2007, 2008, with Beane 2009), Stanley Aronowitz (2008, with Giroux 1987), Henry Giroux (2001, 2005), to name just a few, have written extensively about social movements or community-based organizations working to defend and strengthen public schools there. For them the significance of such movements has lain in their potential to balance the influence of neo-conservative, neo-liberal and religious fundamentalist forces in education. In recent years there have even emerged how-to manuals with instructions for mobilizing communities (Kahn 2010, Warren and Mapp 2011).

A clear inference from studies of social movements is that their possibilities and limitations have to be understood only with reference to the local context. There is no single formula from which a movement can spring. Nor can its impact be deductively predicted from looking at one situation into another. The political opportunity structure, local cultures, institutions and contradictions, all these impact what a movement can be expected to achieve. Studies of social movements in other regions, therefore, may provide great inspiration and many ideas, but do not translate easily into the South Asian context.

Amongst developing countries it is in South American countries like Brazil, with its vibrant tradition of struggle for local democracy, that one finds studies on social movements for the improvement of education. The left leaning parties and activist groups in Sao Paulo and elsewhere have contributed substantially to transforming the space for the poor in education (O'Cadiz et.al. 1998, Gandin and Apple 2002). However in south Asia studies of the possibilities of social movements for improving formal education are scarce. While there has been work on KSSP and literacy campaigns (Parayil 1992, Saldanha 1995), these are basically about informal education and that is a very different institutional space.

Amongst the well known social movements of South Asia which have had an educational dimension the foremost, perhaps, has been the Indian freedom struggle, with its Nai Talim, that rapidly lost ground after independence as the middle-class education bureaucracy became thenceforth the main voice for the cultivation of schools. In the post-independence era, there has been the Narmada Bachao Andolan which set up many Jeevanshalas as a parallel to the dysfunctional government schools in regions which had been earmarked for sacrifice in the name of development. The RSS and its Saraswati Shishu Mandirs have been gradually building their momentum, though studies there have focused mostly on the ideological character of their views on education rather than on the overall transformation they have or have not wrought.

Sadhna Saxena (1998) is one of the rare few who has tried to systematically examine how an organisation sought to build a social movement and allied that with work in education. This was Kishore Bharati in Madhya Pradesh, which along with trying to get government schools to teach science through activities and with an underlying message of empowerment also sought to organize the rural poor. The latter aspect of their work soon drew opposition from local landlords, district government authorities, the police and assorted goons and criminals. The kind of violence against critical educational work which India seems to witness is very different from the scenario in the US where decades of efforts, including through the Civil Rights Movement, have succeeded in creating a space for critical pedagogy. The struggles which Sadhna wrote about eventually quietened down to a more moderate tone of working in government schools, in alliance with the state. The grass-roots organization took on a life of its own while Kishore Bharati closed down, albeit after seeding Eklavya as a separate organization which focused entirely on working with the government education bureaucracy in a spirit of collegiality and partnership. From Saxena's article it appears

that important obstacles which the social movement faced included a political environment hostile to any mobilization and a disconnect between middle-class activists and the local community, with the middle class activists soon losing direction and momentum.

The adivasi movement studied here presents a more optimistic picture. It was analysed with the hope that it might yield some more insights into the realistic possibilities which may be expected from social movements in education. Among the questions which the rest of this paper would explore through this case study are: Can social movements change the balance of power in education systems? Can they transform the daily functioning of educational institutions? Do they really have primacy over curricular, pedagogic and organizational changes?

ADIVASI MUNNETRA SANGAM

ACCORD (Action for Community Organisation, Rehabilitation and Development) is an organization which began work in 1985 in the Gudalur block of the Nilgiris district in Tamil Nadu, abutting the border with Kerala and Karnataka. ACCORD built a cadre of adivasi youth who in turn formed a community-based organisation, the Adivasi Munnetra Sangam. The AMS has led protests for the recovery of land for adivasis which had been taken over by outsiders. Over the years it has established itself as an important and effective voice for the protection of adivasis. This mass base is significant since it has led to a different trajectory in its educational work than that seen in NGOs which work directly with the state and government schools. Their educational work was studied through extensive interviews of teachers and activists, classroom observations and by drawing upon various documents generated by ACCORD and the AMS.

Gudalur block lies in a valley of the Nilgiri hills and has a mixture of forest, plantations and homesteads. It is home to five adivasi communities – Paniyas, Bettukurumbas, Mullukurumbas, Kattunayakas and Irulas. They number around 20,000 people and constitute about 10% of the population of the Gudalur and its adjoining territory. The Paniyas, the single largest tribe and who constitute around 40% of the tribal population, were mostly bonded for a few centuries to a landowning group called Chettis, migrants from Karnataka. The Mullukurumbas have small landholdings which they supplemented by hunting and the rest have been primarily hunter-gatherers.

Gudalur has been growing tea and coffee since the mid 19th century. British planters started the process of clearing the forest and this compelled the adivasis who lived in them to constantly stay on the move. There was no protest as the forests in which they dwelled stretched into Kerala on the one side and Karnataka on the other. The 1960s saw the forests coming to be occupied by migrants from Kerala who became small land owners. The 1970s saw another wave of migrants – Tamils from Srilanka. Both these migrants were, unlike earlier occupants, quite aggressive in seeking control of land. This compelled the adivasis to move again, withdrawing deeper into the forest even as the boundaries of the forest itself shrank. The passing of the Gudalur Janmam Estates (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Act in 1969, to acquire land from a Raja in Kerala resulted in almost the entire land area of Gudalur coming under litigation which remains unresolved to this day. This in turn meant that unoccupied land was up for grabs, including forests, and the adivasis' habitat came under further pressure. Then came the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980, which eventually led to the declaration of the forests as wild life sanctuaries and prohibited human entry into them. Overnight adivasis had become trespassers and encroachers in their own homes. They were denied access to livelihood, water, fish, firewood, medicinal herbs, housing materials and above all their Gods. Some adivasis did get land titles in their names when the British were around but not knowing what to do had kept those documents in safe keeping with the landlords under whom they now worked. When the clamour for land grew, it became difficult to recover those land titles, too.

It was this context that triggered ACCORD's work. The adivasis were at the brink of starvation and there was endemic hopelessness and despair. Activists tell of visiting villages where individuals just sat slumped over, not knowing what to do next. ACCORD's work took off in 1985, initiated by Stan and Mari Thekaekara and an adivasi youth leader KT Subramani and aimed to build a cadre of youth who could get back the land the people had lost. These youth set up groups called sangams in each of the hamlets, which were later federated into the organisation called the Adivasi Munnetra Sangam.

The AMS was able to bring all the different adivasi communities under one umbrella. The adivasi culture and its festivals were important for cementing this partnership. The AMS activists would often visit a hamlet and over two or three days of interactions there would develop a dance-theatre performance on the injustices of their existence. This had a dramatic effect on the local community and helped to mobilize them. Adivasi festivals were a time for dance and the effervescence of togetherness. They easily lent themselves to becoming sites where the conditions of the adivasis could be discussed, leading to further consolidation of their political force. Thus adivasi identity and revival of their culture became as important as the land issue as sites for political action. In 1988 the AMS called for its first major demonstration in the town of Gudalur. Several thousand men, women and children came together. This shocked not only the local people but the adivasis as well as they themselves had no idea that so many of them existed.

The efforts of the AMS within the community led to redeeming over 1500 acres of land from landowners, estates and the forest department, giving every family some amount of land. This was the most pressing need since all other sources of livelihood had been cut off from them. Subsequently work on agriculture, health, education and housing cooperatives was also initiated. All of these were built on the substratum of the highly decentralised organisation of the AMS. The adivasi activists had a decisive voice in what was needed and how it was to be operationalised. There was a conscious decision not to centralize power and thus avoid the fate of most NGOs. It meant keeping alive a culture of grassroots democracy and never becoming just service delivery personnel for the government. This implied continued and deliberate efforts to enhance the adivasis' decision making powers, their culture, their unity and their values. This was in marked contrast with many NGOs' trajectory of consolidating power within a narrow bureaucratic structure and building firm-client relations with their beneficiaries, which eventually debilitated the local community and its sense of agency.

The emphasis on the community and its culture as a political strategy came at least partly from the previous experiences of some of the non-Adivasi activists. They had been exposed to community-based mobilization while at college in Chennai and Bangalore in the 1970s and from their student days had been involved in working as equals in and amongst the rural and urban poor. When they came to Gudalur they had several years of experience in bonding with local communities and identifying in a participative manner their main concerns and building community-based organizations through which they could negotiate with state functionaries and create networks with allies.

EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION

Given the importance of adivasi identity, culture and language to AMS's methods of mobilization, it was inevitable that education draw its attention. The first challenge was that of how to straddle two worlds – that of the adivasis and that of the region's dominant cultures. The elders insisted that if the children went to school they would lose their language and culture and end up with low self-esteem. Yet they knew that without modern education they could not survive in the world. The second challenge was what kind of education could they get that would not dump them again at the bottom of the social and economic heap. They wanted instead an education which could set them up as

independent self-respecting community members.

In 1999 a survey conducted by ACCORD showed that only 27% literacy existed among the adivasi community and the rate among women was as low as 17%. There were only 737 adivasi children whose names were enrolled in the school registers which was 25% of the total children of school-going age. There were 14 Ashram Shalas or government run residential schools for tribal children in the block, but the state of affairs there was pathetic. Non-adivasi teachers and staff showed little empathy or concern for the adivasi children.

An investigation of reasons for children not going to school or dropping out showed that language itself was a huge issue as each of the four tribes spoke a language different from Tamil, which was the medium of instruction in most local schools. This created a serious mental block to any kind of learning. Language it was realized was the vehicle for the carrying forward of a culture and so the fear that the next generation would not speak their language and therefore not respect their culture was reason enough for the community to either not send their children or to actively encourage dropping out. One of the first programmes the movement took up was to work with the Central Institute of Indian Languages to develop a script for each of the tribal languages. Along with community elders they have used this script to bring out a primer, a book of stories and songs and so on.

Given the fact that the community's own systems of transmitting knowledge had collapsed with the destruction of their homesteads and environments, the school was rapidly becoming the only space for their education. The question that arose was what kind of education would they get?

The support of sympathisers within the state led to an early initiative which demonstrated the political strength of AMS. Adivasi volunteers were selected and placed inside the government's Ashram Shalas, to try and get them to function properly. As an activist said, they had thought that anyway the principals of these Ashram Shalas only rarely showed up. It should be possible to take over the Ashram Shalas and get them to improve. However it did not work out like that and there was a sharp reaction from the staff of the government run schools against the class 10th graduate adivasi volunteers. As the volunteers began to expose malpractices the resistance to them began to stiffen even further. In one incident volunteers caught a truck with food meant for the Ashram Shala which had been diverted to a local shop. The staff members complicit in this became even more determined opponents of the AMS. While it had been possible to get support from higher levels of the education bureaucracy, getting the lower levels of the same system to cooperate was proving to be a much more difficult proposition.

The AMS volunteers found themselves in a fix. They felt unequipped to teach the children by themselves and also stonewalled by the government staff and blocked from instituting any reform. After a while they withdrew for a two year intensive course on teaching and education run by ACCORD and then moved to focus on an alternative school which had been taken over by AMS. The penetration of the AMS volunteers right into the power structure of the school was a remarkable feat, helped by the support the movement had garnered even within the government bureaucracy. However the local structure of the school blocked them from being able to achieve all that they wanted. This is an indicator of some general limitations of the social movements approach to interventions, to which we shall return later.

The alternative school taken over by the AMS was Vidyodaya school, which had been started by Rama and Ramdas for the children of the staff of ACCORD. They were aware of current literature on progressive education and had had experience in running a similar school in Pondicherry. In 1995, at a Mahasabha meeting of the adivasi leaders, it was asked for Vidyodaya to be handed over to AMS. This, the activists felt, would be a space where they could model the kind of education

they wanted.

The taking over of the school led to the entry of a number of adivasi youth into it who began to learn to teach and to manage educational spaces. A teacher training curriculum was set up which introduced them to the history of adivasis in India. It also established why they were at the bottom of the social and economic ladder and that it was no fault of theirs. It discussed ways of getting out of the cycle. Into the school curriculum for children were introduced the history of the land rights movement, the geography of their villages, their food and living practices. Elders from the community came into the class room to talk of their experiences, their rituals, customs, values and the way forward. They taught their origin stories, their songs, stories and dances. These became part of the daily routine of the school, breaking some of the barriers between home and school.

Today it is the adivasis who run the school and they have been able to further develop curricula which integrate their lives into the school context. Not just in terms of content, but also in terms of values. Among other things, in keeping with the ethos of the adivasi community there is a very non-hierarchical system of functioning in the school. For instance, there is no principal's office and in the room in which visitors meet school teachers and administrators there is no desk across which they must talk. The symbolism of bureaucratic power is avoided to create a more egalitarian space for the parents of adivasi children to come into and feel comfortable with.

AMS's political stance of the centrality of adivasi culture underwrites and encourages pedagogic innovations that support that culture. The respect and compassion of the teachers, para-teachers and activists for adivasi students has led to several remarkable practices in Vidyodaya school which go a long way to help adivasi children make the best of school life. For example, when children join in the first grade, they are not compelled to speak in the state's official language. As the teachers say, Tamil is anyway a foreign language for them at this point of time. Nor are the new entrants compelled to sit in class. The teachers call the youngest children of the school "wanderers" as they are not used to sitting and focusing on an instructor for long periods of time. They are therefore allowed to move from place to place. The school's design deliberately has no doors separating the classrooms so that children can move in and out freely from one space to another. It is after about six months that teachers begin to get them to start sitting to learn for an increasingly longer period. This approach of the teachers is very effective in getting the children to integrate painlessly with the school environment. It can be contrasted with the bewilderment and increasing irritation of teachers in conventional schools at children from marginalized social groups who arrive in grade one but seem to find it difficult to pay attention or even sit quietly at one place.

Along with the school, AMS has set up an extensive network for supporting children to get into and then stay in school. A common problem was that the local adivasis found it very difficult to get a child to school at the right time. The mothers often had to themselves leave for work in the plantations by 7:30 or 8:00 am. Getting children ready, organising their meals and then ensuring they reached school by 10 am was a task which called for strange new logistic and time management skills. AMS organised elder members of the local community who took up the responsibility of getting the children out of their homes every day and escorting them to school and then bringing them back in the afternoon. AMS now ensures that every adivasi child goes to school and so over 3000 children are now in various panchayat, tribal welfare and private schools. They continue to train at Vidyodaya what are called para teachers through an intensive residential two-year course. These para-teachers teach in the government schools or in Ashram Shalas or in study centres of the Sangam. AMS's activists in the government schools no longer seek to seize control of them, but instead try to work as partners with the local government teachers. One of the important programmes of the Sangham is conducting regular camps for adivasi children during holidays and weekends. These camps are used to motivate the children, discuss their problems in the school and at home and to bring in an assertion of adivasi culture so that their self-esteem is not lost in the

schools they go to. A recent development in the increasing trust of AMS by the state has been that Sarva Shiksha Abhiya has asked the AMS to run a residential school for tribal children.

The processes involved in all these educational activities by ACCORD re-affirm local democracy and participation, thereby avoiding the passiveness which could come up by handing over agency to the bureaucratic machinery of an NGO or the state. Empowerment and mobilization is deliberately cultivated and protected. Each cluster of villages decides what they want for the year and this is sent to the various educational, livelihood, etc. bodies under ACCORD. For instance, if they want an anganwadi or a study centre or a teacher or scholarship for a student, this is put up at the cluster level meeting and after approval sent to the relevant AMS body to implement. The institution does not have a veto power. All school and para-school staff are selected by AMS leaders and sent to Vidyodaya for training. AMS leaders also have a say in the admission of students to the school. The cultivation of a substantive democracy with continued participation of the people is a keystone of AMS's work.

POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF MOVEMENTS

AMS and its work present an opportunity to reflect upon the possibilities and limitations of the social movements approach over the nowadays more familiar approach of working directly upon curricula, pedagogy, school organization and teacher education through state institutions or NGOs. There are obvious difficulties in generalizing on the basis of just one case study. And yet the benefit of a case study is the insights it may offer for generalization building and subsequent testing. The AMS study does seem to support the notion that a substantial change in the nature of political control over educational institutions is very important for moving them into more egalitarian directions. This political change must include relevant shifts in the normative orientations and cultural beliefs of the elites who control the education system. It may or may not actually be a change of classes or groups or in the composition of the elite, but at the very least their ideas and culture must change for significant improvements in a static education system. Social movements offer a way of achieving such a political change.

In consummation of the ideology that it is committed to, perhaps the greatest achievement of the AMS movement has been its affirmation of adivasi identity and dignity. In their educational work they have propagated a narrative of oppression rather than backwardness. This emphasizes a belief by the adivasis that they have been unfairly treated and have indeed the capacity to be an equal of all others. This is something which a movement could achieve much more easily than, say, a teacher education institution, because of its reach within the community. The origin myths, stories, the respect for the community's dress, ornaments and food practices and so on, all these become sites for the movement to act upon, where it can debate and re-interpret meanings. The drama and emotional energy of these cultural elements is sometimes conveyed through demonstrations and meetings and much more frequently produced and reproduced through myriads of daily interactions. The effect upon the ideas of selfhood and self-esteem of adivasi teachers and students is considerable. This is much more difficult to achieve through bureaucratised processes of teacher education and conventional schooling, with their impersonal and formal structures, with fewer spaces for the enactment and participation in powerful cultural narratives.

The cultural message of the movement carries through with ease into all of its institutions, particularly into its model school, Vidyodaya. Adivasi dignity is in the air and affects many aspects of the school's functioning. Clear messages from the school authorities convey a tone of support for adivasi identity and strengthen its legitimacy. This makes a sharp contrast with the way most other public institutions in the region operate. Vidyodaya clearly illustrates the effects of political control on school functioning. Many of the pedagogic practices of the school bear the mark of the values and beliefs of the movement.

However the limits of what social movements can achieve are also suggested by this case study of AMS. A key role in implementing the school's innovations was played by pedagogic knowledge and expertise which came from outside the movement. This was brought in by individuals who gained relevant theoretical and practical knowledges at other locations before they came in touch with the adivasi movement of Gudalur. It is difficult to say that the movement alone could have created the same pedagogic innovations from within, if these individuals had not been present. Perhaps social movements cannot be the answer to everything. The cultivation of educational knowledge and practices may need to be done through various institutional processes that do not necessarily follow the logic of movements. Organizational structures that give primacy to knowledge cultivation and building of professional teacher and researcher identities rather than to activism and political mobilization may yet have a constructive role to play in educational change.

Another limitation seen here is in the degree of control the movement was able to achieve over the educational institutions of the region. The impact of the movement on the local education bureaucracy is far less than what can be seen in the institutions directly under its control. The initial attempt to take charge of the government tribal residential schools had to retreat in the face of resistance from the government teachers and staff members. ACCORD volunteers presently work alongside teachers in local government schools in a much more collegial manner. Vidyodaya runs as a model school but there is not much that it can achieve by itself. Considering the numbers and distances involved, it is to government schools and now the burgeoning low fee private schools where a large number of adivasi children must necessarily go. But the movement has not been able to assert high levels of control over them and without that there are sharp limits on what can be achieved. The AMS has responded by working intensively outside the schools, but that does not lead to transforming the school system itself. The SSA's asking AMS to run a tribal residential school does show an increasing trust between the state education bureaucracy and AMS, but the transformation of the state bureaucracy is still a distant goal.

From the difficulties of AMS in transforming the entire local school system two further inferences may be drawn regarding the place of social movements in creating more egalitarian educational systems. Firstly, the inability to transform all the government / private schools in its region may not be a limitation of the social movement approach itself, but that of the specific conditions within which this particular movement has emerged. It represents the voice of a small number of people within the block and they in turn are just a tiny drop inside a large state. The political muscle it is able to command is quite limited outside its immediate neighbourhood. Its resources are rather sparse, even getting an adequate number of graduate tribal teachers is a challenge. The demographic constraints merge with the cultural politics of the larger world to make it quite difficult to gather a sufficiently large number of people needed to work at the scale needed to touch each and every school in the region. Decision makers at the district, state and national levels control many aspects of schooling. Influencing them is way beyond the resources of this small group.

That social movements can at least in principle still resolve or shift these obstacles is shown by American efforts to impact schools through community mobilization (Reneé et.al. 2010, Shirley 2010). They display intensive networking and interconnecting of different local movements which then become regional and national forces. These were then able to collectively exert pressure at the top of education bureaucracies.

Lastly, it may be suggested from the AMS experience that quite distinct efforts from within the logic of bureaucracy and organizations to improve school organization and the administrative system still continue to be important. While political movements may be able to lean upon them, the resistance by school teachers reaffirms that bureaucratic organizations are remarkably resilient and resistant to external pressure. Transformation from within must also go hand in hand. This may

mean all the usual processes of organizational reform – getting better people, building cultures of putting organizational goals before other things, having sufficient resources, acquiring the required technical knowledge, having effective feedback loops and so on. Social movements may not be able to replace education bureaucracies and efforts to improve the latter from within their own logic must still be made.

LESSONS FOR BUILDING DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS

Meanwhile, building social movements still does emerge as an important and under-emphasized component for changing educational systems, particularly for tilting their activities in favour of the weak. There are several lessons ACCORD's work holds for those who may want to build movements that seek to empower the powerless. The first thing is that any intervention has to be clear as to whose interests lie at the centre of the intervention. If it is the community's then the intervention must be conducted according to their ideas and the decisions taken by them. In the present case, most community members will not have heard the names ACCORD or Vidyodaya. The school is Sangam school and all the activities are Sangam activities. People's participation should not be to carry brick and mortar but to imagine, design and plan.

Secondly, it is important that people who have been historically marginalised realise that they are where they are because of others and not because of themselves. The sense of failure and oppression that has been internalised has to be brought to the fore. For this one must use what Freire calls the material that life offers and make it into their learning materials.

Thirdly, one must recognize that people in such situations have never been in decision-making positions and therefore have to learn to do so and often by making mistakes. This space must be available to them. They have to learn to be unafraid of making mistakes. Having been physically and psychologically assaulted for the least mistake in order to keep them in line, fear is a very, very real factor.

Finally, AMS's experience of working with adivasis has shown that even the least educated people are capable of handling institutions and difficult challenges. One only needs to make available to them the necessary inputs. In the final analysis, a highly motivated person can self-learn anything. Motivating them and getting them to believe that they are not marginal to anything but are subjects creating and recreating history is the most important facet of the work.

At the level of educational systems as a whole, the present case study supports the idea that shifts in the composition of or at least in the cultures of those holding the reins of power are important to ensure that substantial educational change takes place in the direction of greater equality. Trying to improve participation in educational systems without that runs the risk of remaining at the level of just tinkering here and there, becoming only a token gesture towards education reform. If political cultures change to permit greater voice to weaker sections, then it seems reasonable to expect that the new equation of power would insist on at least some self-expression. However the AMS and Vidyodaya experience also points to the importance of cultivating technical expertise along with political strength. Pedagogic knowledge and the ability to formulate new curricula are key abilities for changing the education system and these may be developed at sites other than social movements alone. While social movements can give them momentum, the cultivation of teachers requires more effective teacher education institutions.

Social movements for greater democratisation have the capacity to change the overall climate within which institutions function. Without such a change the cultural milieu and goals of institutions may continue to remain under the influence of entrenched dominant groups. And yet, it would appear that "institution-building" continues to be important, whether it is for strengthening of

teacher education institutes or the effective functioning of school bureaucracies themselves or improving teaching and research in the higher education system which generates potential teachers who know their subjects well. For those who want to work for egalitarian education systems, it is worth asking whether democratic social movements may well be a necessary ingredient for educational change that empowers the oppressed. At the same time, it also seems plausible that while necessary they may not be sufficient to ensure that such change takes place.

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