

Annihilation of Caste: Can an Anarchist Perspective Work?

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We have been debating tirelessly on different ways to abolish caste and other social evils which permeate the society that we have today. Raising voices against oppression, forming political parties and contesting in elections and also trying to force the government to form and implement policies which will give the Bahujans their fundamental rights. We have come a long way through decades of struggle in gaining rights, but the present political scenario of the country is not looking hopeful to the Bahujan aspirations for breaking away the shackles of caste.

With the diluting of labour laws and enabling state sanctioned exploitation of Bahujan labour, implementation of NEP which further marginalize the Bahujan children and extinguish their hopes of upward social and economic mobility, a proposed EIA which will rob the Bahujans and Adivasis of their land and livelihood, implementation of CAA and NRC to deprive the status of citizenship, privatization of key public utilities and destroying the already weakened public healthcare system, the government is openly showing its motives as a corporate stooge which dances to the whims of Adani, Ambani and other Brahmin Bania masters.

Armed with a grass roots organization like RSS and corporate funded media outlets, they have complete dominance in creating narratives they want the public to believe and they also have a well-oiled IT cell to spread fake news against any dissenters who dare to raise voice against them. Even though there are voices in the society which are raising against these government policies, there is a lack of grass root organization and common vision is sometimes lacking. This doesn't mean that all the opposing forces against the fascist regime, which is murdering our democracy, should be centralized under one political entity. Instead it is time to think about exactly the opposite, the expansion of the idea of democracy from merely being a political tool used while casting vote once every 5 years to inculcating an idea of democracy in all aspects of life — political, social and economical and decentralization of all aspects of society.

Anarchism is a political philosophy which rejects all coercive and oppressive forms of hierarchy, be it caste, class, color, creed, clan, gender, age, orientation or country. It says that every system of power hierarchy should be scrutinized and made to justify its existence, and any system which fails to justify itself and is trampling the freedom of the individual will have to be abolished. The idea of questioning oppressive power structures is inherent to the idea of anarchism. It prohibits a system where

even a party or a few leaders decide on how the society will function. Instead it focuses on decentralizing power to local bodies and communities so that decisions are made at the lowest level possible, thus eliminating the concentration of power into a few hands. It also shares the view that people who are most impacted by policies and decisions are the ones who are most capable of making them.

Historically, humans have developed to live in societies which didn't have the kind of huge inequalities as it exists today. There is an intrinsic instinct to cooperate and help each other which is visible when a disaster strikes or the self-organization that appears out of nowhere in organic movements against oppression. Solidarity and mutual aid are the foundations of an anarchist society. The "right to well-being" of all human beings, meaning "the possibility of living like human beings, and of bringing up children to be members of a society better than ours" (Kropotkin, 1892). Two of the examples of societies which function close to anarchist principles today are Zapatistas of Mexico (Nacional, 2002) and Rojava in Syria (Democracy, 2018). Extreme corruption, colonization and environmental exploitation forced the indigenous people of Mexico to form an autonomous region where people directly form communities and decide the policies. Similarly, the people of Rojava, battered by the civil war, have formed an autonomous region with direct democratic ambitions based on an anarchist and libertarian socialist ideology promoting decentralization, gender equality, environmental sustainability and pluralistic tolerance for religious, cultural and political diversity based on democratic confederalism. One of the principles of direct democracy is that there are no elected representatives for a fixed term, any member who is elected will just be a spokesperson of the community and can be withdrawn immediately if he goes against the decision taken by discussion and deliberations. The means of production will be owned by workers and run by worker councils. Conflict resolution mechanism and alternative systems of judiciary exists within the community run by the members. There won't be police or other systems which grant power to one person or group to take away the life and liberty of an individual, rather power will be distributed equally or rotationally which is controlled by the community. During the current times of BLM protests all over the world, it is clear that the police institution is just a tool employed by the ruling and propertied class to control the lower class and there is mass class for defunding the police and transferring the resources to community welfare projects.

We need to look at how these communities organize themselves in the face of an oppressive regime and come up with innovative ways to decentralize and create institutions which we are brainwashed to assume will work only if they are centralized. Decentralized community gardens provide food for the community which is maintained by them. Systems of education, community defense, criminal justice systems, industry and healthcare can be decentralized and we need to focus our efforts in building such grassroot level communities which function along the principles of solidarity and mutual aid. We already have systems of mutual aid in our communities, all we need to do is to transfer these tendencies to all the systems we live by.

The Indian social mentality of following a leader or waiting for a savior needs to change. Any system which can consolidate power in the hands of the few can change into authoritarianism. Even if the leaders are benevolent and have the will to serve the people, there are systems of coercion which exist in our society, where economic, political and social power resides in the hands of the few, that they will bind the leaders from doing their duty to the Bahujans. The leaders and parties we look up to keep failing and disappointing us time and again. Now, action needs to be taken directly at grass root level by the Bahujans by creating communities and networks of solidarity and mutual aid and practicing decision making and direct participatory democracy. The culture of outsourcing decision making to politicians or other ruling class needs to stop. This has to start at all sectors of industry, agriculture and services too, and also within family.

We can't turn to the state for protection anymore as it the state apparatus which is being systematically abused by the ruling castes to exploit Bahujan labour to create their wealth. Along with the efforts to educate Bahujans through social media and other means to sensitize them of their exploitation, effort needs to be focused at the bottom most level to inculcate the habit of participatory democracy at individual, family and community levels, respecting the liberty of the individual. The fight for annihilation of caste cannot be won, unless all unjust power structures in the society cease to exist and power is decentralized and distributed to the people directly, where individuals themselves can organize and make decisions about their life without being coerced or exploited to create wealth for others.