

07. “Third Opinion” given to the BCS – Anil K. Chaudhary (Oct 1994)

THE TIME HAS COME

Autonomous sustainability of People’s Organisation is the desired outcome of the 2 Organisations model we have been working, living and experiencing with over the years. We have been debating, discussing and building up a case for the final act of cutting the umbilical chord for quite some time. There is a general sense of consensus that the time has come to clinch the issue and go ahead with plans to pave the way for the People’s Organisation to attain autonomy and flounder for it’s sustainability. In this context it is important to decipher the strategic organisational requirements from the rich treasury of experience of our joint journey with the NGO.

STRATEGIC ORGANISATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The most fundamental aspect of organisational sustainability lies in the firm grounding of its vision/mission among the membership. Whether it was initiated by NGO as an organisation or by a few individuals becomes irrelevant beyond a point in the history of organisation building. What gains precedence and becomes critical is the integration of people’s joining the organisation at different stages with the mission/vision. Shared vision and mission among the membership on one hand binds people and helps in moving from collective to cohesive; on the other hand it works as a guard against any kind of deviation due to influences of a few personalities.

Another related aspect of organisational sustainability lies in appropriate and clear strategy, its shared understanding among the membership, and an in-built ability to refine and update its strategy in congruence with the dynamics of social environment.

Another significant aspect of organisational sustainability relates to people involved in the organisation at various levels. The compatibility of people’s personal goals and goal of the organisation; people’s competence with their tasks and roles; people’s background and organisational culture; people’s aspirations and organisation’s further requirement. These are some factors which insure continuity and growth in terms of people, and which form the flesh and blood of the organisation.

Another crucial factor is “resources” and their sustainability. They include financial, material and non-material resources like credibility, acceptability, social relevance, etc.

There are some more factors which are critical in terms of organisational sustainability, even though these are subservient to the ones outlined above. One such is the evolution of appropriate systems and procedures to take care of issues like division of work, integration and co-ordination, accounting and reporting requirements, and decision making mechanism. Sensitivity of systems and procedures towards requirements of nature of tasks and people’s requirement of self development is an important dimension in the context of People’s Organisation.

TWO AREAS NEEDING CRITICAL ATTENTION

Some of these areas -i.e. broad base of understanding of the vision/mission and strategy of the People’s Organisation; organisational systems/procedures and norms; criterion of desired membership; village unit and other levels of organisation; resource requirement and utilisation, etc.- have been meticulously worked out already.

But in my opinion, based on certain unsuccessful and not-so-successful experiences, there are certain areas which require immediate and critical attention in order to transform the vision of People's Organisation into reality. Two such broad areas are as follows:

- (a) The area of issues arising out of dealing with wider socio-political environment:
 - i. In order to develop the sensitivity and capacity to comprehend the dynamics of micro and/or macro reality and to initiate appropriate and timely refinements in organisational strategy and/or tactics,
 - ii. In order to evolve an appropriate organisational aptitude and competence to deal with macro structures and processes.
- (b) The issues arising out of dealing with technology (way of working) evolved over a period of time jointly with NGO, particularly in the field of inherent tasks -i.e. book keeping, accounts monitoring and reporting, dealing with specialist staff, etc.

AVOID TECHNO-MANAGERIAL SOLUTIONS

In most of the cases these two areas were either completely left out or techno-managerial solutions like attempting to build such capacities in People's Organisation through training or hiring of professional staff had been tried out. Both have miserably failed because of their inherent flaws and weaknesses.

People from marginalised and oppressed communities cannot be expected to do away with socio-cultural and political gaps created over generations and centuries by just a few training in capacity building, or for that matter, by any another genuine effort from their side within one single generation. They cannot be expected to develop aptitude and skills within a specific time frame to deal with expert knowledge and expert-knowledge-based bureaucracies within their own organisations or elsewhere in wider social environment. There is always a limit to what can be achieved in this regard, particularly when other factors of their marginalisation and oppression remain constant in the reality surrounding them.

TAKE A POLITICAL STAND

Arriving at such a realistic assessment amounts to taking a political stand against the popular tendency of over glorification of "people and their will" and of pedagogues and methodologies we apply. It also amounts to taking a stand against a paradigm which reduces the requirements of people's empowerment to the issue of acquiring a few skills and competencies of manipulating other people, relationships, processes and structures.

The other path amounts to closing our eyes to the inter linkages of individual, collective and cohesive in the realms of ideas and action, and the unity of the two. It is taken because these suit to safeguard stakes based on middle class notions of security, etc.

The origin of such non-political or techno-managerial approaches taking precedence over political resolution of these issues lies in our demonstrated inability to comprehend the political chemistry or dialectical symphony of the 2 Organisations model. Such inability manifests in our quest to seek absolute redundancy of one (the NGO) for the success of the other (the People's Organisation).

DO NOT REJECT THE ROLE OF NGO INDIVIDUALS

Whereas while the process of operationalising the vision of autonomous and sustainable People's Organisation may require negation of NGO structures, it certainly does not require negation of its ideological commitment, integrity and experience. While opting for any techno-managerial option, we seek a negation of all these factors. The issue of capitalising upon the commitment, integrity, experience and competence generated among individuals in the NGO

is completely marginalised, or rather dropped from the check list of organisational requirements for creating sustainability in People's Organisation.

THE PARADIGM BASED ON “DOUBT”

This happens primarily because the value premise of our borrowed paradigm of organisation and its management is based on “doubt” rather than “faith”.

Since we “doubt” that the NGO individual will be genuinely interested in people's own development to an extent that he/she may be ready to forgo his/her stakes, we tend not to look at even considering it as an option. Since we “doubt” that NGO individuals will ever be able to develop a relationship of mutuality with marginalised and oppressed communities, we conclude that if the NGO ruminants in terms of individuals remain in the scheme of creation of autonomy and sustainable People's Organisations, he/she will dominate and not allow people to take charge. It definitely amounts to “doubting” the integrity, commitment and competence achieved through excessive investments of time, energy and resources. At the end of it all, what we lose are tremendous resources required by the People's Organisation and generated by people's own investment.

APPLY WILD IMAGINATION

To the best of my information, knowledge and experience, such a situation is also the consequence of our demonstrated inability or lack of willingness to innovate or apply wild imagination to evolving forms of organisation or organisational structures. We, in the past, have contributed to alternates in a lot of fields, but have conveniently avoided innovating alternatives in organisational forms and structures. We have developed the competence to facilitate processes that empower, but have not much bothered to evolve competent organisational structures to cope with the consequences of empowerment. Because of our excessive reliance on borrowed or conventional organisational forms we tend to create a caste divide (which is based on birth and not on deeds) between NGO individuals and People's Organisation, instead of optimal utilisation of the outcome of joint journey of 2 Organisational forms.

TWO SUGGESTIONS

In this background I will request BCS to have a fresh look at some of the aspects of the organisation with a view to prepare itself for future challenges. With the deep rooted tradition of rigorous discussion and deliberations at various levels and its proven capacity to take risks, I am confident that BCS can apply its wild imagination and innovate an organisational form which on the one hand will ensure its own sustainability, and on the other hand will help defy several myths or *mata* concepts surrounding the issue of relationship between NGO and People's Organisation within the value frame of faith and mutuality which is dearer and nearer to toiling sections only. The two areas for such a deliberation which I am tempted to suggest are the following:

- (a) Bringing about some changes in the structure of BCS which provide space for inclusion of those from NGO or others who are willing to share the responsibility of making the road by walking together; who have time tested commitment to the cause of BCS; and who have proven competence and relevance for BCS. This idea is not at all alien to BCS structures but needs further elaboration and clearer definition in order to ensure that the terms of inclusion or collaboration remain congruent with BCS requirements and values.

Section 16(h) of the Trust Deed provides scope for such openings in the structure. We need to define various kinds of membership -individual and institutional- and their role in terms of getting and retaining that membership a bit in detail.

- (b) The second area, in my opinion, which needs a fresh look is the statutory aspect of the organisation. While the functioning of democratic processes is well defined and provides a broad base at ground and middle levels, it is rather narrow at the top (at the Board of Trustees level).

With an amendment to Section 4 or by addition of a sub-section we can make it possible to broaden the base of Board of Trustees as well. The details of such addition or amendment should be thoroughly discussed and thrashed out.

Bagepalli,
30th October 1994.