

# **CIVIL UPRISINGS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this paper is to study the role of media and civil society in mobilising citizens' in issues of urban governance by looking at case studies of protests against hike in power tariff and proposed water reforms in Delhi in 2005. An attempt has been made to study the role of civil society and media in the entire process and assess their contribution in success of these protests mooted as civil uprisings.

The methodology used has been identifying and interviewing stakeholders and tracking and analysing media reports on these issues. It has been observed that though media gave enormous coverage it did not attempt to investigate claims made by different stakeholders. For instance no attempt was made to find out the actual number of people who refused paying their power bills to protest against the 10% raise in tariff. The government stated that the number was just 1%. Intensification of the protests led the power companies and the regulators to blame each other for deciding the increase in power tariff. The media did not attempt to verify these opposing claims.

Media did try to gauge public opinion on these issues through surveys and opinion polls but did not go a step further to check how many people actually participated in the protests or supported actions like non-payment of bills. The Times of India got a snap poll done by Synovate to gauge public opinion<sup>1</sup>. It featured the results in red on the front page. They said 88% Delhi residents said hike was unjustified and 62% said they wont pay bills irrespective of consequences. However the poll was done in affluent areas of the city and only 200 residents were questioned. No resident will say that heftier bills are just. It goes contradictory to the Chief Minister's claim that only 1% residents did not pay their bills. The Times of India or any other media house did not try to verify this.

The coverage also helped in raising public awareness about measures that would ensure fair billing like fixing faulty wiring etc. It had an educative value. It raised questions on efficacy of private solutions in provision of essential services like water

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<sup>1</sup> The Times Of India, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2005

and power to the people. It has been observed that the parties leading the protests from civil society were opposed to the manner in which the state administered reforms not reforms per se but it did strengthen an anti-reform stand. Information gap and rhetoric made the water reform project being projected, as water privatisation while it involved no transfer of assets. Major newspapers like Hindu addressed the project as water privatisation.

Many issues got mixed. Power tariff hike was the main issue that got more support due to allegations of faulty faster running meters, overcharging due to theft and corruption in process of privatisation. The rhetoric of water being a human right helped mobilise opinion against a reform proposal that aimed at providing 24X7 water. In the water issue a lot of negative coverage due to World Bank's alleged interference in selection of consultant for the project marred prospects for the entire project. Lack of transparency and involvement of users in chalking out the reforms affected its success.

These protests were well managed. Use of celebrities, threatening non-payment of bills and talking through the media were interesting ways of getting authorities to submit to their demands. The political equation at that time was also exploited to advantage. Many members of the ruling party itself opposed the government and supported the protests. The opposition had a minimal role to play.

It is projected as a mass movement as issues of power and water involve everybody but not everybody protested and even those who did were divided on many issues. It can be seen as a representative movement as it claims to represent interests of the public at large. Overall it can be a middle class movement but not a mass movement.

## Table of Contents

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Methodology
- 3.0 Case studies
- 4.0 Role of Media
- 5.0 Role of politicians
- 6.0 Role of civil society
- 7.0 The campaign
- 8.0 Mass movement versus class movement
- 9.0 Future implications
- 10.0 Tables
- 11.0 References

## **INTRODUCTION**

The term civil uprising is used for armed rebellion and a state of unrest. It is associated with violent protest against the established order. However the protests in Delhi against hike in power tariff and proposed water reforms were non-violent but they succeeded in making the government rollback its decisions. Tariff hike was cancelled and the water reform project was abandoned. These protests were hailed as victory of people over the state. Convenor, United Residents Joint Action (URJA), Promod Chawla called them non-violent Satyagraha<sup>2</sup> in lines of the freedom struggle in a presentation. How true are these high claims? Was this really a victory for the common man or just powerful interest groups exploiting the mass sentiment? What was the role of media and civil society in the entire process? This study tries to answer these questions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Protests against hike in power tariff and proposed water reforms in the capital were taken as case studies to study the role of media and civil society in getting people interested in issues of urban governance. Newspaper reports on these issues were tracked and analysed. Online archives of Hindu and The Times of India from July 15 to September 5<sup>th</sup> were studied. Punjab Kesri's archives for the same period were also read and coverage on these issues was scanned.

Stakeholders were identified and interviewed. Residents welfare associations, civil society activists, media persons who covered these issues, politicians who supported or opposed the protests were identified as major stakeholders. They were interviewed. An attempt was made to assess the role of media and civil society in success of these protests. Alleged role of vested interests was assessed. An attempt was made to study the process of an issue transforming in to a movement.

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<sup>2</sup> Satyagraha refers to form of non-violent protest used by Gandhi during India's freedom struggle.

## CASE STUDIES

### 1. POWER

A 10% hike in power tariff was passed in July 05'. Residents' welfare associations all over Delhi and the NGO People's action opposed it under the banner of Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike (CAPTH). They also opposed installation of new electric meters in houses and claimed it led to heftier bills. Forced installation of meters was called meter terrorism. They demanded that privatisation should allow residents to choose their own supplier and supported entry of new players in the field. They also alleged that power theft was responsible for honest citizens' being charged more.

Later on the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) submitted a report where it found irregularities in accounts submitted by power companies. The committee was headed by congress MLA, S C Vats. The Delhi government rejected his report and he offered to resign. Subsequently a CBI inquiry was demanded. It added fuel to the already intensified protests where residents refused paying their bills if the hike was not rolled back. There demand was finally accepted and the hike was taken back in a way that the government gave 5% subsidy and the power companies paid the other 5%. However the other demands are pending.

Features of the power protest:

- ❖ Aggressive technique like threatening non-payment of bills, Public meetings, and press conferences, marches were used.
- ❖ Credibility of the movement became questionable when the chief minister announced that only 1% people did not pay bills while 99% paid.
- ❖ It received excessive media coverage and support from mainstream newspapers like the Hindu and times of India.

- ❖ The movement got fragmented. Residents Welfare Associations (RWAs) were divided in to two groups. One group protested under the banner of joint front, a RWA confederation formed in with 150 members under the leadership of VC Tandon. The other group was led by the NGO People's action under the banner of Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike (CAPTH). They both opposed the hike but on different platforms. Ex-South Delhi convenor of URJA, Rajiv Kakria says People's action both these fraction competed with each other in the protest which helped the movement. The major difference was Joint front did not appeal people to stop paying bills or paying them 10% less. They also met the chief minister and tried to negotiate with her while the other group boycotted the meeting. President, people's action, Sanjay Kaul says, " Bhagidari<sup>3</sup> loyalists wanted to avoid direct confrontation with the government".
- ❖ Celebrities like Roshan Seth, Shiv Khera and Pritish Nandy supported the movement and became its spokespersons. It generated a lot of media hype.
- ❖ The movement had certain Long-term implications like formation of a RWA federation URJA that has been articulate in many other issues like reservations.
- ❖ The protests addressed people as consumers with a right to good service and choice hampered by the present system.

## 2. WATER

Here two issues were involved. In 1998 DJB requested a \$ 150 million loan from World Bank for a water reform project called the Delhi water supply and sewerage project. It aimed at dividing Delhi in to 21 zones and giving private companies operational responsibility for distributing water in those zones starting with two zones in South Delhi.

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<sup>3</sup> Bhagidari is a joint programme to promote cooperation and interaction between the RWAs and the state government.

Activists from many NGOs led by Parivartan opposed it. Suchi Pande from Parivartan, claimed the World Bank loan was a bad decision as the rate of interest was commercial and high and on being transferred from the centre to the state utility would become more costly. It is reflective of the colonial hangover that India still needs foreign advise to do something right. This should be done only when the foreign reserves are scarce or the technology is too costly, which was not the case here. Parivartan claimed that it would lead to substantial hike in the water bills in areas where the project would be implemented. Parivartan launched a right to water campaign to protest the decision.

The bank gave a loan of 2.5 million dollars to appoint a consultancy to work on this. The DJB invited bids Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) lost it. The bank did not give a NOC but asked the DJB to explain the basis of evaluation and after this asked for setting up new sub criteria. It is alleged it bullied the DJB officials into submission as bids were again invited. This time round too the PWC lost it. The Bank was not satisfied so it asked the DJB to submit individual scores of the evaluators and even asked low score given by a particular evaluator to PWC to be deleted. Finally the PWC did make the cut and was appointed<sup>4</sup>. Arvind Kejriwal of Parivartan through RTI accessed this information and made it public. This was deemed as interference in internal matters of a sovereign government by the NGOs. This was widely reported in media circles.

### **Features of the water protests:**

- ❖ The protests received selective media support. Initially it had a fair share of hostile coverage from many sections of the press but after the PWC controversy arose the press became more supportive of the movement.
- ❖ The movement had ideological underpinnings. It was against privatisation in water sector.
- ❖ Attempts were made to back claims by facts and Background research. RTI was effectively used to obtain relevant documents like the entire communication

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<sup>4</sup> Parivartan Handbook on 24X7 water project and World Bank intervention 2005

between the World Bank and DJB on letters. Support from some members of Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institute of Management (IIMs) lent credibility to the claims of the project being unsustainable.

- ❖ People were addressed as citizens. Right to water was the slogan used.
- ❖ Publicity generating techniques like Parivartan, President, Arvind Kejriwal writing a letter to the World Bank President and sending it to the media were used.
- ❖ The immediate goal was getting the government to withdraw its loan to the World Bank and abandon the project. There has been no evident follow up though it is claimed that alternative suggestions were made to the DJB for improving water supply in the capital. However DJB, Additional CEO, Ashish Kundra denies receiving any suggestions.

## **ROLE OF MEDIA**

Media had an extremely important role to play considering the amount of space and effort it devoted to these protests we can say it became a stakeholder by proxy.

Hindu covered the power issue in a consistent manner. Water issue was also given prominence. From July 15th to September 5th it ran 35 stories on the power issue. It also ran 7 stories on the water issue<sup>5</sup>. The Times of India had 15 stories on the power issue during the same period. Punjab Kesri the newspaper that claims to be read by the masses had 33 stories on power and 1 on water during this time 3 stories on power were carried on the front page<sup>6</sup>.

The RWAs used media to talk to the government. Media was the intermediary that disseminated information, viewpoints and suggestions. It can be said that consistent media coverage built the pressure on the government. However it is difficult to say whether the media was leading the public opinion into supporting the RWAs or simply following it to please readers. Issues of water and power are important to almost every

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<sup>5</sup> Table 2

<sup>6</sup> Table 3

average urban citizen and by focusing on them the papers did strike a chord. Richie Veram, Reporter, The Times Of India says, "We are a people's paper any issue that involves the people finds space with us."

According to Rajiv Kakria, Localisation in media has made media more sensitive to issues like water and power that concern common citizens. Local supplements cater specifically to these issues and give citizens' a space to articulate their day-to-day difficulties. Thus media focus on the power protests is a continuation of this localising trend.

What strikes you is that the media in most cases was reporting facts, quoting viewpoints and offering suggestions does not try to initiate any investigation. For instance no attempt was made to find out the actual number of people who refused paying their power bills to protest against the 10% raise in tariff. The government stated that the number was just 1%. Intensification of the protests led the power companies and the regulators to blame each other for deciding the increase in power tariff. The media did not attempt to verify these opposing claims.

The Times Of India got a snap poll done by Synovate to gauge public opinion. It featured the results in red on the front page. They said 88% Delhi residents said hike was unjustified and 62% said they won't pay bills irrespective of consequences. However the poll was done in affluent areas of the city and only 200 residents were questioned. No resident will say that hefty bills are just. It goes contradictory to the chief minister's claim that only 1% residents did not pay their bills. The Times Of India or any other media house did not try to verify this.

The water issue initially got hostile coverage from the press. An Indian Express editorial<sup>7</sup> written by Shekhar Gupta criticised the movement and suggested that the leaders of the movement be put in jail for 24 hours for threatening to stop paying bills. Arvind Kejriwal and others participating in the protest wrote replies which were later

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<sup>7</sup> Indian Express,

printed by the newspaper. According to Madhu Bhaduri, World Bank's involvement in the issue made the media unwilling in criticising the reforms."

The water reforms drew flak from a lot of professors from IIT and IIM whose expertise on the issue was questioned by the DJB Additional CEO, Ashish Kundra but they nevertheless got a lot of positive coverage from the media. This could be due to the high regard for these institutions in this country as institutions for excellence.

The focus was on taking whatever was being given and not going beyond what was said. Ashish Kundra, Additional CEO, Delhi Jal Board (DJB), in charge of the water reform project said, "the media listened to us but journalism is practically about meeting deadlines and carrying sensational stories that interest readers so the scandal doled out by the NGOs becomes more newsy. Media shapes both political and public opinion so to catalyse change one has to ally with the media, this is our lesson from the controversy."

Kundra laments the fact that public service utilities like the DJB do not have good expertise to manage media relations. Public Relations (PR) of government bodies is not competitive while the NGOs are good at it. He says media space is filled with all kinds of voices and often things get blotched so he says he won't say its media's fault to lend more ears to that side. Arvind Kejriwal, President, Parivartan, which led the protests against water reforms, says, "Every issue has its own merit which decides its fate." On the contrary Sanjay Kaul, President, People's action, accepts media's importance adds, "We created ground for media to intervene".

## **ROLE OF POLITICIANS**

Politicians had an important role to play in the entire process. It was interesting that many members from the ruling party openly opposed the government and took side of the protesting parties. Ajay Maken and Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) President Ram Babu Sharma supported the RWAs against the power companies. These too openly asked Shiela Dikshit to resign.

SC Vats a Congress MP was chairing the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). Its report stated irregularities in the process of power privatisation. He offered to resign when his party did not accept the report. BJP in spite of being the main opposition party had a minimal role to play. They did make anti-government statements but the disgruntled ruling party members outshined them. BJP leader Vijay Goel took a padyatra<sup>8</sup> in Delhi protesting against the hike and the party also organised rallies in West and East Delhi. Suchi Pande said, "Parivartan approached the Left to put pressure on the union government for withdrawing the loan application to World Bank".

CM Sheila Dikshit was opposed for being hand in gloves with the power Distribution Companies (Discoms) when she told the residents if they don't pay their power bills their power supply would be cut off. She also claimed that only 1% of consumers did not pay their bills while the 99% did so the majority was with the government. She was seen defending the erring Discoms instead of protecting the citizens when she made a statement asking the people to pay bills or face their power connection being cut off. She was also accused of driving a unilateral agenda when her party members did not support her.

It was also alleged that the protests were anti-Sheila Dikshit and not anti-government. President, Joint front, V C Tandon says, "The protests unfortunately took an anti-CM colour as some of the parties involved were trying to pin all blame on her". PAC chairperson and Congress MLA S C Vats says she had no option but to defend the power Discoms because criticising them would have been criticising herself as she has all credit of bringing them to run power supply in Delhi. He adds, she was targeted not because the protest was motivated against her but because leaders have to take blame when something goes wrong and lead on the front foot.

## **ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

Civil society refers to the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to the force-backed structures of a state (regardless of that state's political system). In these protests we

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<sup>8</sup> Foot march used to spread awareness on an issue

saw residents' welfare associations all over Delhi joining hands with NGOs like People's action and Parivartan to oppose the state's system. They were also supported by politicians and eminent citizens like theatre actor Roshan Seth, author Shiv Khair and environmentalist Vandana Shiva.

In the case of power People's Action organised open houses and seminars for RWA members and sought their cooperation. The RWAs joined them as their interests could be aligned. No resident would want to pay a higher electricity bill specially if she is not satisfied with the services provided, suspects billing meters of overcharging and being told she is paying more due to theft she has not committed.

People's Action launched CAPTH and asked residents' to pay their bills after reducing the 10% extra charge or pay nothing. Interestingly Joint Front of 84 residents welfare associations headed by V.C Tandon also launched a campaign against the hike. However most of the RWAs supported CAPTH. Joint front too launched a parallel but separate protest against tariff hike later on. Sanjay Kaul, People's action, said, "VC Tandon was loyal to the CM as he had been an important player in the Bhagidari movement which aimed at aligning the RWAs and the government". VC Tandon says he did not support non-payment of bills because if the strategy would fail once it would ruin an organisation's credibility forever and people in general are not willing to take such risks. It should be reserved for extraordinary circumstances. His stand is vindicated, as only one percent residents of the city actually did not pay their bills. He also alleges that NGOs like People's Action do not have a stake in these issues like RWAs who are directly affected.

According to Secretary, Greater Kailash – M Block RWA, T N Tiku "Internal feud was visible due to clash of personalities on the top," The power protests were well managed. Public meetings, press conferences, marches and most importantly threatening non-payment of power bills were main techniques used.

On being asked whether protests were stage managed Sanjay Kaul said, "An objective will not achieve itself but a plan has to be devised to achieve it". Taking note of his background in Public relations he did a good job. Celebrities like Roshan Seth, Joginder

Singh and others were also visible spokespersons who drew a lot of media coverage and popularised the issue. According to secretary, GK-Mbloc RWA, TN Tikku, "They were hunting for publicity". Sanjay Kaul says, "They came on their own as they could identify with the issue."

In the water issue Parivartan led the movement by collecting details on the project and claiming it would lead the tariffs to shoot up by 8% and then using the RTI to prove World Bank's interference in selection of the consultant for the project. They were able to convince the RWAs of this by organising presentations and seminars. The Reforming agency tried the same but failed. A simultaneous Right to Water Campaign was launched by Madhu Bhaduri in alliance with Parivartan. Arvind Kejriwal claimed that 24X7 water promised by DJB is an impossible dream. It's impossible to answer whether Parivartan's claims were right or the DJB was on the right track but one thing is certain they tried hard and got desired results.

According to Suchi Pande, Parivartan, "we were desperate to stop the clearance of the loan application by the World Bank which was to be cleared on 30<sup>th</sup> November so it was a race against time." Techniques used were similar to the power protests RWAs threatened not paying any bills, presentations were made to the media and politicians specially the left parties were appealed for support.

Use of celebrities was visible as Arundhati Roy attended their conference. "The row contains most of the elements that usually raise hackles among India's anti-globalisers. Alas, the ideological debate may delay a solution to Delhi's water crisis." Another interesting aspect is that the RWAs did not actually verify Parivartan's claims of possible water tariff rise.

The appeals for change were made not to the bodies that were directly involved but politicians and the government. In case of power no negotiations were held with the Discoms or the regulatory authority DERC. According to Sanjay Kaul, "We elect the politicians so they are answerable to us we don't care about the private companies. The regulator is a quack so no point negotiating with them either." RTI had a huge role to play in the success of the water protest as it enabled Parivartan to access the

correspondence between World Bank and DJB to establish that the former was interfering in internal affairs of the latter and secure negative coverage for the proposed reforms. The water reforms drew flak from a lot of professors from IIT and IIM whose expertise on the issue was questioned by the DJB CEO Ashish Kundra but they nevertheless got a lot of positive coverage from the media. This could be due to the high regard for these institutions in this country as institutions for excellence.

## **THE CAMPAIGN**

Sanjay Kaul said, "An objective will not achieve itself but a plan has to be devised to achieve it". A movement that seeks to alter government policy will have to project itself as a mass movement in eyes of general public and political audience. This requires perception management and getting maximum media attention.

These protests used various techniques to attract attention of the media. Campaign against power tariff hike used more visible forms of public protest. The water movement was more focussed in getting the World Bank loan withdrawn. According to Right To Water convenor, Madhu Bhaduri, "We never took to the streets but followed a strategy of measured protest and negotiation." A joint resolution was passed by 30-40 RWAs at India International Centre (IIC) to take action against power tariff hike and demand a roll back.

However the movement got fragmented later. People's Action launched an aggressive protest under the banner of Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike (CAPTH). Joint Front (JF) the existing RWA federation refused to support it and tried to solve the crisis through direct negotiation with the government. CAPTH took aggressive measures and asked people not to pay their bills or pay them after deducting the extra 10% levied by the hike. They boycotted meeting with the Chief Minister. Ex-Convenor, URJA, to Rajiv Kakria who attended the meeting said, "Power issue was glossed over and the CM discussed other general issues and thus some of the RWAs decided to support CAPTH." JF and CAPTH held parallel protests against the hike on different platforms.

Rajiv Kakria says we realised the importance of giving one message to the government when the movement was being seen as fragmented. Rallies were organised in different parts of the city by their respective RWAs with the same banners. Kakria tells how the same slogans were used in every protest, "We took the same placards everywhere to speak to the authorities in one voice."

The most effective and coverage generating technique used was telling people not to pay their bills. Parallels were drawn between the Gandhian non-cooperation and non-payment of bills by affected citizens. However how effective it was is questionable as the CM said, "Only 1% people paid their bills after deducting the cut while 99% paid in full". Sanjay Kaul says, " If 1% people can do so much the 99% do not matter". He added paying bills does not mean you support the hike. However it generated media frenzy. Celebrities like Roshan Seth, Pritish Nandy and Shiv Khera supported the media. It kept the movement in news.

Live telecast of GK residents protest march on television according to Rajiv Katria was also a turning point as it gave reinforced the perception of its mass gravity. RWAs called for a 'Blackout' on August 6<sup>th</sup>. It was well reported in the media. According to Rajiv Kakria, "Such techniques are helpful as they allow people to participate with ease."

Apart from this People's Action and JF organised seminars, presentations and press conferences to brief the media, DERC, Discoms and government. According to Sanjay Kaul People's Action organised around 30-35 were held. Three open houses were organised at IIC. They organised 3 press conferences, he adds the media followed our campaign.

The movement also got political support from members of ruling party and the opposition. MLAs did not want to lose favour with their constituencies over the issue so they put pressure on the government to roll back the hike. Opposition leaders organised marches in different parts of the city against the hike. Later on the protests took an anti-Sheila Dikshit colour as Congress leaders like Ajay Maken began demanding resignation of the CM over the issue. DPCC Chairperson Ram Babu Sharma also

accused the CM of following a unilateral agenda when she kept refusing to roll back the hike. Her statement threatening cutting off power connections of residents who refused paying full bills drew a lot of flak from the people and her own party. Congress MLAs petitioned Sonia Gandhi against Sheila Dikshit. She had to face ire of both the people and the party which helped the movement.

The water campaign took off after the news of World Bank (WB) trying to interfere in selection of consultant for implementing the water reforms was revealed to the media by Parivartan. They obtained the correspondence between DJB and WB using Right to Information (RTI). The NGO was campaigning against the reform project before too but this event gave the movement a media high.

Parivartan President Arvind Kejriwal wrote an open letter<sup>9</sup> to World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz and asked him to explain the WB's role. He sent a copy of the letter to the media and it was published and quoted by various newspapers. World Bank's Indian President Michael Carter who refuted refuted his charges. Madhu Bhaduri says, "Writing the letter to the World Bank was not a planned move. The World Bank is not accountable to us we wanted answers from our elected government."

Support of eminent activists like Aruna Roy, Sunita Narayanan and Vanadana Shiva to the cause gave it credibility. Arundhati Roy attended the Jansunwai held by them on October 18<sup>th</sup>. They held made presentations to the government and the Planning Commission to get the loan withdrawn. Parivartan attempted to incorporate the common citizens in to the movement by holding presentations for the RWAs and telling them how the 24X7 water scheme could lead to tariff hike. In the Jansunwai held by Right To Water Campaign on October 18 withdraw the loan they would refuse paying their water bills from November 1<sup>st</sup> emulating the power protest. Suchi Pande, Parivartan says, " It was a desperate move as we wanted to get the loan application withdrawn at any cost."

The water issue was preceded by the power protests which had succeeded in changing a government decision. This proximity helped them as the people were already enraged with the government. Ashish Kundra says, "Unfortunately the timing of the project was bad as the power protests were simultaneously going on and the government was on a weak wicket reluctant to take risks."

## **MASS MOVEMENT VERSUS CLASS MOVEMENT**

These protests were hailed as victory of the common man over the state but were they actually mass movements? Was it a particular section of public which stood up to the government or was it public at large?

Sanjay Kaul says, "Power protest was a representative mass movement as the issue concerned the masses." On contrary Rajiv Kakria says, "It was a class movement." He explains that not numbers but execution led to its success. Mass movements don't succeed today as it is easy to collect the mass through various means. Class movements involving people who are good in planning things have a greater chance of success as they have resources and wherewithal. They sustain over time and get the administration to act. However he also warns that problem with a middle class movement is "they pay you a lot of lip service and are unwilling to take big risks." An example could be huge number of residents participating in the power protests but only 1% of consumers actually responding to the 10% less slogan.

Water is an essential commodity important to all. Yet the protests over water reforms were not led by the masses. Right to Water Campaign Convenor Madhu Bhaduri says, "We never took to the streets, the movement was a civil society initiative and our arguments involved deep analysis." Arvind Kejriwal questions the idea of a mass movement. He says, "Even if a few people are speaking they may be speaking in interest of everyone. It is wrong to classify movements as mass just based on numbers."

It is different to judge whether these protests can be called mass movements without defining it. A definition based on numbers will be too simplistic to go by. One way is to

look at the issue and whether it concerns people at large but again whether the objectives of protests was public interest or vested interests is hard to judge. In case of the water reforms what would have happened if the reforms would have been allowed to happen is a hypothetical question so no answers can be final. Reduction of power tariffs will be welcomed by everybody but the means used and the ends desired can be questioned. It was alleged public sentiment was used for political gains as the movement did take an anti-CM colour. What we can say is these protests were middle class initiatives in to issues which involved everyone. We could call them representative movements.

## **FUTURE IMPLICATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES**

1. These protests were hailed as people's victory over state. This will encourage such initiatives in future. People may get motivated to demand greater accountability from the governing agencies in future
2. RWAs and other such groups will be emboldened. Some of the RWAs in Gurgaon have already registered a political party with the name Gurgaon Residents Party (GRP). GRP may fight councillor elections this year. There are allegations that by joining politics RWAs will lose their mandate. TN Tiku says, " RWAs joining politics will lead to personal agendas being promoted over social causes as in mainstream politics now."
3. Internal feud can prevent the RWAs from becoming too powerful. URJA and Joint Front are espousing the same cause but not working together. Strength of RWAs lie in remaining independent of political affiliations. According to Congress leader S C Vats, " RWAs have established themselves as powerful interest groups. Mainstream political parties and leaders will try to hijack them by showing support. The RWAs will have to defend themselves from such propositions".
4. The RWAs enjoy support of the people and are elected but they have no legal status. Divya Sehgal, Activist says, "This leads to a situation where there is too much of influence and very little accountability." RWAs according to her should be

incorporated in working of ward committees which would regulate their functioning in public interest.

5. The timing of the protests was such that the government already dealing with intensive protests on the power issue was not able to deal with the water issue as it could otherwise have and it was promptly shelved. Ashish Kundra says, "The government was already in the weak wicket so it bowed down." However it may not be repeated in future.
6. Privatisation though never opposed per se by the activists drew a lot of negative perception as the manner it was being implemented was being questioned. It weakens the case for involving private players in service provision in future.
7. It can lead to derailment of any kind of reforms in future specially in case of water where urgent reforms are required. As DJB, Additional CEO, Ashish Kundra says, "The civil society though it claims victory has achieved nothing as status-quo is surviving and will be more difficult to shake now."
8. According to Joint Front, President, V C Tandon, "Techniques like not paying bills may have worked once on sheer novelty if repeated too often they will fall flat on face because such initiatives get very little real support from the people". Secretary, GK-2 RWA, and T N Tiku reaffirms this as he tells that even in a proactive RWA like Greater Kailash only 25% people actually refused to bills or paid them after cutting 10%. People's action is running a campaign asking people not to pay 50% of their bills, as this is a surcharge for theft. However very little public response is seen. There has been almost no mention of it has been made in mainstream media and government discussions. The reason could be the middle class not willing to take an extreme step like not paying bills at potential risk of getting the power supply cut off. V C Tandon further adds, "Such drastic measures once failed damage the credibility of the cause thus should be used sparingly".

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- Interview with Arvind Kejriwal, President, Parivartan on 8 June 2006
- Interview with Suchi Pande from Parivartan on 8 June 2006
- Interview with Ashish Kundra, Addl CEO DJB on 9 June 2006
- Interview with Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action on 13 June 2006
- Interview with T N Tiku, Secretary, GK-1 RWA on 22 June 2006
- Interview with V C Tandon, President, Joint Front on 19 July 2006
- Interview with Richie Sharma over the phone on 23 July 2006
- Interview with Divya Sehgal, Activist over the phone on 19 July 2006
- Interview with Madhu Bhaduri, Right To Water Campaign Convenor on 6 July 2006
- Interview with S C Vats, Public Accounts Committee, Chairperson over the phone on 22 July 2006
- Interview with Rajiv Kakria, Ex-South Delhi Convenor, United Residents Joint Action on 19 July 2006

## Annexure

**Table 1: Reports from The Times Of India's online archive**

<b>Power protests</b>		<b>Online Archives</b>
<b>Times of India</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Content</b>
15-Jul	City	10% hike in tariff announced
24-Jul	City	Cong MLAs put CM on notice, Gehlot calls on her
26-Jul	City	Gehlot summons Sandeep Dikshit on power issue
12-Aug	City	Cong MLAs feel power could make cong lose spark in elections
18-Aug	City	Rajionder Nagar Rwa says no to 10% in bills
20-Aug	City	Place Discoms under RTI demands JF
25-Aug	Front page	Survey by Synovate says 88% say hike not justified, 62% say wont pay bills
26-Aug	Front page/City	Standing committee talks for consumers/DERC proposes subsidy 10% less or nothing
27-Aug	City/Front page	RWAs say they hurt by CM's comments DERC blames Discoms and vice versa
29-Aug	City/Front page	Bhagidars on warpath/coordination committee in CLP meet to decide on power tariff
30-Aug	City	Rollback announced
4-Sep	City	Formation of URJA
<b>Water issue</b>		
<b>TheTimes of India</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Content</b>
28-Aug	City	NGOs demand details of water project

**Table 2: Reports from the The Hindu's online archive**

<b>The Hindu</b>	<b>Power issue</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Content</b>
15-Jul	Delhi	All Delhi RWA conf to oppose hike, People's action
19-Jul	Delhi	Resentment against Sheila regime
20-Jul	Delhi	BJP Mahila Morcha against hike
22-Jul	Delhi	20 BJP MLAs against hike at CM's place
23-Jul	Delhi	Sheila sorry blames feud in Ambani family
24-Jul	Front page	Hike may be rolled back
25-Jul	Delhi	Criticised meter investigation
26-Jul	Delhi	Vijay Goel threatens padyatra 29th july to August 4th July
27-Jul	Delhi	BJP starts pamphlet campaign
28-Jul	Delhi	Demand for auditing Discoms
29-Jul	Delhi	Roshan Seth lashes at Sheila govt
30-Jul	front page	Bhagidari on war path meeting with CM boycotted
31-Jul	Delhi	CM says no roll back/JF calls for black day on 6th
3-Aug	Delhi	Shiv Khera joins movement
5-Aug	Delhi	Dissidents divided
6-Aug	Delhi	Black day
8-Aug	Delhi	Readers mail solve crisis
9-Aug	Delhi	Meter checking needed
12-Aug	Delhi	Interactive session, CM, RWAs, Discoms, DERC
13-Aug	Delhi	Signature campaign launched by BJP
16-Aug	Delhi	RWA meet to discuss strategy
23-Aug	Delhi	Differences in RWAs VC Tandon and PA
25-Aug	Delhi	Harashvardhan writes to Anil Ambani
27-Aug	Delhi	Mukhi demands CBI inquiry on power pvt n
28-Aug	Delhi	Sheila's comment on 1% support for RWA's angers them

29-Aug	Delhi	Sheila warns BSES, called drama by opposition, Sheila avoiding media, DERC blames govt and Discoms/ MLAs accuse sheila of unilateralism
30-Aug	Delhi	CLP meet fr discussing withdrawl
31-Aug	Delhi	discoms given 6 weeks to redress grievances
9/1/05	Delhi	Maken calls for sheils's resignation
9/2/05	Delhi	Sonia petioned against Sheila
9/3/05	Delhi	CVC calls for CBI inquiry in to power privatisation / Differences between Sheila loyalists and dissidents
9/4/05	Delhi	Sheila calls meeting MLAs don't attend
9/5/05	Delhi	Left against subsidy
<b>Water issues</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Content</b>
18-Jul	Delhi	Water privatisation without subsidy to hit poor most
1-Aug	Delhi	Arvind talks of July 13 letter to WB demanding transparency getting no response
2-Aug	Delhi	Aruna Roy informs Sonia on the issue
4-Aug	Delhi	Harshvardhan alleges water privatisation
15-Aug	Front page	Power crisis makes authorities to rethink water privatisation
21-Aug	Delhi	Arvind writes open letter to WB
26-Aug	Delhi	WB rebuttal to Arvind's letter

**Table 3: Reports from the Punjab Kesri**

<b>Punjab Kesri</b>		
<b>Power issue</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Content</b>
16-Jul	City	People unhappy CM's doesn't cares
18-Jul	City	BJP does a public protest

20-Jul	City	BJP mahila morcha protests against hike
21-Jul	City	BJP protests power hike
22-Jul	City	Power secy warns BSES
23-Jul	City	Discoms blamed for not attending to people's grievances
24-Jul	City	Raghunath power secy asked to answer
25-Jul	City	Power protests build up RWAs say no to hike
27-Jul	City	Vijay Goel to go on padyatra to protest against hike
28-Jul	City	Haroon to stop meter terrorism
29-Jul	City	BJP asks for special session to address power problems
31-Jul	City	Bhagidari workshop speaks against the hike/Sheila says no roll back
1-Aug	City	Sheila to take ire from Bhagidars/BJP seeks to mobilise Bhagidars behind itself/BJP rally
2-Aug	City	Harshvardhan appeals to RWAs to spark up protests
4-Aug	City	haroon yusuf says solution on its way
7-Aug	City	Anti meter terrorism rally in Defcol/.Roshan seth anti govt
12-Aug	City	Cong MLAs unhappy with the govt move
22-Aug	City	Bhagidari a problem for sheila now but stays off from BJP
26-Aug	City	Scam in power pvt CVC feels so
27-Aug	City	Sheila says no roll back/Mukhi writes to PM for initiating investigation on Power privatisation
28-Aug	City	MLAs unhappy with sheila's stubbornness, Maken criticises her in open
29-Aug	City	Sheila nervous blame game begins/ current shock to Sheila
30-Aug	City	CLP meet to dedide on action ahead/ Preceded by cabinet meet Mukhi asks her to resign
31-Aug	Front Page/ City	Hike withdrawn
1-Sep	Front page/ City	Maken calls fro Sheila's resignation and opposes subsidy , power politics in Delhi
2-Sep	City	Sheila apologises on a CNBC interview but asserts that issue is power not me

		Opposition alleges Sheila of shortening monsoon session to stay away from criticism
3-Sep	Front page	CVC calls for inquiry
4-Sep	City	Narendra Nath supports power subsidy Bhagidari in danger due to fragmentation
5-Sep	City	High command not happy with Sheila/ National Akali dal burns her effigies
<b>Water Issue</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Content</b>
16-Aug	City	Water privatisation to be opposed, left.