

PROEM

On the road to the World Social Forum, a glance back reveals many influences — of freedom fighters, labour unions, grassroots groups, anarchists, feminists, students, peace groups and others.

In 1955, leaders of Africa and Asia, in their struggle for independence from colonisers, came together in Bandung, Indonesia and articulated a need for a just and common global system. The Non-Aligned Movement was born. Almost half a century later, is such a system or other systems needed? If yes, what could these be?

In the 21st century, capitalism, the common global system, faces many crises — of legitimacy, overproduction, liberal democracy and overextension. Can international cooperation at the grassroots level be a counterpoise by effectively developing 'globalisation from below'?

In 1996, in Chiapas, Mexico, the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism was held. A historic call was made to build an international movement, which was dramatised at the 1999 Seattle protest. These and other such movements came to be known as the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement, and subsequently — are seen by many as its most organised form — the World Social Forum (WSF).

At the same time, global protests against corporate-dominated globalisation and US sponsored neoliberalism / neo-conservatism and war have resulted in a new wave of radical democratic protest and counter-propositions. These began earlier than the World Social Forums, and were organically endorsed by the 'Call of Social Movements' at the first, second and third World Social Forums.

Can a neoliberal economic order usher in gender equality? As capitalism offers more room for self-determination and self-organisation for people than feudalism, the neoliberal agenda allows women more room to engage in public life and contest with men for power and place. At the same time, it increases demands on women. But, will activists of the global justice movements keep their eyes and ears open to feminist and gender perspectives?

Anarchists believe that their movement has coloured the sensibility of the current 'movement of movements'. And, the ethical paradigm of anarchism represents the basic inspiration of the movement, which is less about seizing State power than about exposing, de-legitimising and dismantling mechanisms of the rule whilst winning ever-wider spaces of autonomy from it.

In Asia, can the Asian Peace Alliance, also an emanation of the GJ&SM, bring together social movements, communities, families, societies and cultures of peace and justice and elimination of exploitative, repressive, patriarchal and exclusive power relationships?

Has 'Empire' generated dangerous by-products such as nationalism, religious bigotry, fascism and terrorism? The contributions would suggest so.

Is a new internationalism taking place, could it be in the plural, or could it be called 'the new global solidarity'?

And, as some suggest, could this globalisation be nudging new internationalisms to take place? □