

## **BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

Since the dawn of independence India has come a long way and has achieved much, especially in the fields of nuclear and Information Technology (Chakravarty, 2008). Alongside these achievements we have also been witnessing growing authoritarian and repressive nature of the state. The developmental model pursued by the country has been largely in favor of the elites. The weaker sections of the society have grown more vulnerable. It could also be argued that the country was never so divided in economic, social, communal, and political fronts as it is today (Teltumbde, 2003).

This mixture of successes and concerns makes sense only when we see it in its global totality. The processes of globalization, primarily led by the United States of America, actively embraced by India since 1991 in the form of New Economic Policy, have contributed in large measure to the anti-democratic and anti-people attitudes, policies and programs. India, as a fast developing country striving to attain its rightful place in this unipolar world order, has been greatly influenced by the neoliberal ideology and the foreign policy of the US (Bhambhri, 1996).

It is not to say that all or most of our problems are caused by factors external to our country and that we had no freedom whatsoever to effectively face them. However, it has to be recognized here that the traditional, domestic powers of domination have found a new lease of life due to the opportunities provided to them by the forces of neoliberal globalization (Aloysius, 1998).

It is also to be accepted at the very outset that the processes of globalization have thrown up certain opportunities along with the challenges we have mentioned. There is a general sense of euphoria in the country

based on certain predictions of India dominating the economic sphere of the world by 2020 (Bidwai, 2006). However, we need to realize that unless we address the multitude of challenges faced by the country the prospects for such a growth would be greatly thwarted. We need to also understand that even if we attain the projected growth targets without attending to these challenges India would remain less of a just and 'developed' country due to the exclusivist and lopsided features of this achievement.

Addressing the numerous challenges faced by the country and realizing the opportunities available for a more inclusive and sustainable development requires the partnership of enlightened and committed social activists (Kothari, 2006). India had no dearth of such activists who even before Independence strove hard to uphold the worthy values of social justice and equality. Along with fighting external bondage and imperialism they also denounced the internal tendencies and practices of injustice and dominance (Aloysius, 1998). We require a strong band of such activists today than ever before to work for the cause of the victimized sections of our society and to strengthen the country in its struggle towards inclusive development.

It has to be noted here that even a social activist in some way is a product of the times (John, 1982). Hence, while studying social action as a response to the present challenges we should also be sensitive to the social, political, economic and ideological factors that form and influence the ethos and praxis of an activist. The waves of globalization and imperialism would have influenced the ideology and practice of social action at least to a certain extent. While reflecting on the nature and extent of this influence it is also imperative that we take a critical look at the kind of analyses and strategies used by social activists and evaluate their relative worth and effectiveness.

As suggested in the title, this study hopes to understand the implications of globalization and US imperialism to social action in India based on Noam Chomsky's discourse on them. The major purpose of this in-

troductory chapter is to present a background and rationale to the study in general, based on which the later chapters will try to take up certain specific aspects for analyses and discussion. First, the definitions and historical evolution of some important concepts forming the core of our study have been discussed. Next, an attempt has been made to present the overall impact of some of these phenomena. Then, a brief profile of Noam Chomsky and his ideas has been given so that their relevance to social action and professional social work is rightly understood. Finally, the chapter is concluded with the presentation of the research questions for which an attempt is made to find suitable answers through this study.

## **Contours of Globalization**

At the very outset it needs to be accepted that the rhetoric of globalization often suppresses more than it expresses (Dasgupta & Kiely, 2006). It is partly because in the unending debates that are raging about globalization, it is often found that people take extreme views. One side supports it to the extent that it is ready to uncritically swallow it as a remedy to all ills. The other side is equally ardent to reject it, considering it the sole perpetuator of all evil. Between these extreme views there are very few balanced analyses trying to understand the multidimensional processes of globalization.

## **Defining Globalization**

Different disciplines such as Sociology, Economics, History, Political Science, etc. employ different criteria for elaborating and defining the concept of globalization. Anthony Giddens' *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) is one of the most important sociological works that attempts to construct a theory of globalization. He defines globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (p. 64).

David Henderson (1999), an economist, views globalization as a model of fully internationally integrated markets meeting the two con-

ditions of i) the free movement of goods, services, labor and capital, resulting in a single market of inputs and outputs, and ii) full national treatment for foreign investors as well as nationals working overseas, so that economically speaking there are no foreigners. For Desai and Said (2004) globalization is the growing reciprocal interdependence and integration of various economies around the globe.

David Held and his coauthors (1999) define it as “the widening, deepening and speeding up of world-wide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual” (p. 2). For Richard O’Brian (1992), globalization essentially refers to a mixture of international, multinational, offshore and global activities and involves a general progression from the domestic to the global. Malcolm Waters (1995) finds globalization as a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding. For him globalization merely implies greater connectedness and de-territorialisation. Scholte (1997) too understands globalization as a process of de-territorialisation and global relations as supra-territorial.

For some others globalization essentially means an intensification of multinational, international and transnational linkages in all spheres of human activity, including trade and commerce, governance and non-government lobbying as a consequence of new communication technology of the contemporary period (Galligan et al, 2001). The International Federation of Social Workers (2002) has described globalization as ‘the process by which all people and communities around the world come to experience an increasingly common economic, social and cultural environment’ (p. 3).

The problem with the definitions presented so far is that while pointing rightly to the expansion of social and economic relations, they do not say much about the form and character of such relations. The capitalist and neoliberal character of globalization is therefore ignored. It is

often either underestimated or supported.

There are some other writers who have inaugurated and justified neo-liberalism and have been profoundly critical of the welfare state. The writings of Robert Nozick (1974), Milton Friedman (1962), and Friedrich Von Hayek (1988) fall within this category. While these writings are helpful to understand the major ‘justifications’ for neo-liberal globalization, they do not do not take into consideration deeper forces shaping the form of the present phase of globalization.

Certain other versions of globalization describe it as a ‘techno-economic, naturalistic, and inevitable force’, which affects the political powers, policy autonomy and public policy role of the state. According to them, governments have been brought under the influence of global capital so much that its institutional allies have no choice but to pursue social and economic policies compatible to the claims of globalization and the requirements of international business classes (Yeates, 2001). This line of argument, however, fails to pay attention to the dynamics of advanced capitalism and the democratic spaces available to citizens and governments to shape alternative forms of globalization. It needs to be remembered here that it is the negative manifestations of the capitalist, neoliberal-globalization that movements for global justice resist and not globalization per se (Dasgupta & Kiely, 2006).

Globalization is often linked to capitalism and imperialism as it is often argued that it has close affinity with imperialism. Immanuel Wallerstein (2003), Samir Amin (1991), David Harvey (2005), Ronald H. Chilcote (1981), and James Petras and Henry Velmeyer (2001) invoke such a stance in their own distinctive ways. Sklair (2002) believes that globalization exports “culture-ideology-consumerism”.

Thus, it could be observed that many processes of globalization are closely linked to the economic and political interests of the advanced industrial world. This ideological dimension is described as ‘globalism’. According to DaSilva (2001) ‘globalism is apparently about the world-

wide sweep of information technology, finance capital markets, trading of consumer goods and services and, of course, the militarisation of the globe for the safe conduct of those under the monopolar hegemony of the U S A. This order is heralded as the harbinger for world peace, just as the Romans once offered peace - on their own terms (*pax romana*)’.

Anand Telumbde (2003) provides a very comprehensive and analytical definition of the present-day globalization. It reads:

Globalization is a euphemism for the imperialist strategy of the capitalism in crisis. It is implemented through the programmes of the IMF and World Bank, viz. Microeconomic Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Programmes in the countries that needed assistance of these institutions to get over their financial crises which were invariably the results of the exploitative strategies of their imperialist patrons. In the unipolar world hegemonised by the USA, globalization has become a ruling creed, a veritable religion of the elites (p. 17).

While agreeing with the definition of Telumbde it is also important to take note of Amartya Sen’s (2002) warning against the dangers of equating globalization with Western imperialism. He opines that ‘to see globalization as merely Western imperialism of ideas and beliefs (as the rhetoric often suggests) would be a serious and costly error’. Sen links issues related to globalization to imperialism. However, he believes that it would be wrong ‘to see globalization primarily as a feature of imperialism. It is much bigger- much greater- than that’.

Also, according to Keller (1997) either equating capitalism and democracy, or simply opposing them, are problematical as sometimes globalizing forces promote democracy and sometimes inhibit it as in the domain of the Internet and the expansion of new realms of technologically – mediated communication information and politics.

From the discussion so far, it can be concluded that there are “multiple globalization processes”. Globalization has business, economic, political, socio-cultural, legal, ideological and civil society dimensions among others. This in itself signifies something of a paradigm shift from

the type of thinking that dominated the first phase of the globalization debate (Dasgupta & Kiely, 2006).

In this connection, it seems appropriate to understand the distinctiveness of the present day processes of globalization from those of the past by placing the entire discourse in its historical context.

### **Historical Progress of Globalization**

Often the discourse on globalization has revolved around the question as to whether it is old or new. The writings of several scholars such as Mathias Finger (1997), Roland Robertson (1992), and Robert Gilpin (2003) trace its roots to historically much earlier phase. However, these scholars primarily look at globalization from a paradigm evolved to explain other developments such as modernity. However, it needs to be emphasized that globalization can never be wholly reduced to perspectives evolved to explain other developments as it has its own distinctive reasons and features.

Anthony Giddens (1990), David Harvey (1989), Gilpin (2003), Hoo-gevelt (1997), and Paul Hirst and Thomson Grahame (1996) consider globalization as a process distinctive, given its supra-territoriality, 'distanciation' and compression of space and time. They see globalization as a distinct phenomenon which is quite recent and that it cannot be reduced to the earlier phases. However, they discuss only the general features and tend to ignore the differential processes of globalization which are caught in the specific histories of discrete societies.

Dasgupta and Kiely (2006) argue that the processes that are usually meant when we speak of globalization are not in fact new at all. They have existed for some 500 years. According to them, we can most fruitfully look at the present situation in two other time frames, one going from 1945 to today, and the other going from circa 1450 to today. The period 1450 to today, marks the life cycle of the capitalist world economy, which has had its period of genesis, its period of normal development, and has now entered into its period of terminal crisis. The period from

1945 to today is of a typical Kondratieff cycle of the capitalist world-economy, which divides into two parts: an A-phase or upward swing or economic expansion that went from 1945 to 1967/1973, and a B-phase or downward swing or economic contraction that has been going from 1967/1973 till today and probably will continue for several more years. Its period of normal development has entered into its period of terminal crisis which coincides with the high point of United States hegemony in the world system (Wallerstein, 2003).

Since the Second World War there has been a deliberate selection of a more market-oriented approach by many countries and increased internationalization of economic activities. This tendency increased significantly in the early 1980s as industrialized countries such as the US and the UK shifted towards greater market coordination of economic activities. Previously socialist countries, bringing their transition to capitalism, followed this trend in the early 1990s. During this period there also has been a widespread adoption of export-oriented development strategy and trade liberalization as a favored path to development all over the world either by choice or under compulsion by the International Financial Institutions like the World Bank and the IMF (Pedersen, 2000). Thus, we can see that the present day globalization is primarily supported by neo-liberal forces spearheaded by the US and its allies.

In one major respect the pattern of globalization is very different from what the world has ever seen before. This is the mobility of finance capital whose flows have acquired giant proportions. Speculative capital today crosses the borders of the world on a scale completely unimaginable earlier. This has led to greed for quick profits despite its high volatility (Bidwai, 2006b).

Corporations have become so powerful that just 200 top companies of the world control nearly one-third of the entire globe's economic activity. Their combined turnover is greater than the entire GDP of the world, barring just 10 countries. Some of these corporations like IBM or Shell are bigger than any of the 100 small countries of the world, roughly

one half of the world (Steger, 2002). All these giant corporations play the money game, the finance capital game, in which their speculative operations are more important than just the production and distribution of industrial goods. So, what we see now is this particular form of globalization, which wants to dismantle all barriers to the entry and exit of capital and countries like India are forced to make investment convertible on the capital account. However, many economic crises in the recent past have shown that only those economies survive and flourish which actually resist capital account convertibility.

Another very important difference is that we have today powerful multilateral bodies like the financial institutions, the World Bank, IMF, and increasingly, WTO, which impose an agenda upon country after country. So, almost 140 countries – about two-third of the world's total number of countries – have been through some form of so-called Structural Adjustment. They were forced to adopt free market policies, a part of what has been called Washington Consensus. In reality, it is not the governments of these countries, but the international financial institutions which make their policies and vital economic decisions. Only two of them are based in Washington, namely the World Bank and the IMF. But they coordinate their activities and policies very closely with the US government. Hence, the ensemble of their policy regime is called the 'Washington Consensus.' This is the formula that country after country has followed, generally speaking, at the cost of causing great harm to the most vulnerable people in their societies (Caroline & Peter, 1997).

The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 directed international attention to the need to control greenhouse gases. The slogan, "Fifty years is enough," etched by the anti-globalization campaigners in 1994 and the anti-globalization campaigns against landmines, Nike shoes, Nestle, Enron, etc. served to articulate the movement's program. The 1999 "Battle in Seattle" against the WTO was the first major victory for the movement. Since these events, the movement has sought to lay the foundation of a global civil society that can derail globalization. So the

neo-globalization initiators changed the track and developed a variety of nomological paradigms like “civil society,” “good governance,” uncorrupted privatization, government’s transparency, etc. (Steger, 2002).

The protesters of anti-globalization movement seek to have a break from capitalist control and dominance and oppose privatization and disinvestment policies of the capitalist government, reject foreign debt and call for unilateral liquidation. The resistant movements stand with the people of Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine that are being crushed under the jack-boots of US-led capitalist or Zionist aggression (Muralidharan, 2003).

The present economic recession caused by the unregulated finance capital, a clear manifestation of the manifold limitations of neoliberal globalization, has further intensified the crisis of advanced capitalism. Hence, scholars like Bello (2007) have argued that neoliberal globalization has already reached its high-water mark and is receding.

### **Impact of Neoliberal Globalization**

No doubt globalization has resulted in many tangible benefits to humanity. However, according to Praful Bidwai (2006b) there are mainly three myths regarding neoliberal globalization which need to be understood in order to be able to fully appreciate the impact of neoliberal globalization. These myths are: i) that it is totally a new brand; ii) that it is irresistible and inevitable; and iii) that it is good for the world’s public.

The first myth, that globalization is totally a new brand, is refuted in the previous section on the historical progress of globalization. Second myth, that it is irresistible and inevitable, is being increasingly attacked by social and political movements which are working effectively towards creating meaningful alternatives to the present form of globalization. The third myth, that it is good for the world’s public, was propagated through the idea of a global village which was predicted on the promises of widespread prosperity and economic globalization. It was also asserted that this prosperity went hand in hand with delivering the fruits of

liberal democracy. The betrayal of these promises, however, is evident in growing inequalities and increased poverty (Callaghy, 1997). Ife (2001, p. 6) has argued that globalization and its effects on the well-being of humanity are 'familiar demons in new clothing', that is, old oppressions are simply being played out in new ways through globalizing forces. It has produced processes that undermine democracy, create cultural homogenization, and lead to increased extinction of natural species and environmental hazards (Dasgupta, 1998). These processes have also been generating new conflicts and spaces for clash and upsurge, distinguishing between globalization from above and globalization from below (Brecher, Costello & Smith, 2000).

When the WTO imposed its agenda of trade liberalization in 1994, its officials predicted very confidently that the Global South, that is the developing countries, would benefit to the extent of \$560 billion. However, the opposite happened. In just five years, between 1995 and 2000, the First World robbed the Third World of something like \$500 billion. By raising protectionist barriers, the First World is denying to the Third World markets access to goods worth like \$500 billion a year. It is roughly nine times higher than the flow of official development assistance which flows as global aid from the First World to the Third World. The total global aid is in the order of just \$60 billion. Thus, what the rich countries give with one hand they take away with the other; or rather nine times more than what they actually give (Bidwai, 2006b).

Even the First World, as a whole, has not gained from this process. The rate of unemployment has been growing. The capital from the First World countries has been fleeing to countries which offer very low rates of taxation, or where there are fewer controls, fewer environmental controls, fewer labor laws, fewer restrictions on what can be produced locally and what can be imported. Only one-third of their population has been doing well while the two-thirds has been living either very close to the poverty line or hovering between the two extremes (Burbach, 2001).

In the Third World only about 12 per cent of the population has been

doing well. In India, for example, the so-called Liberalization has produced perhaps somewhat higher growth, though not very much higher than in the decade of the 80s. However, employment rate has not improved, the disparities between states have not been reduced, and economic inequalities are not done away with. On the contrary, inequalities are growing at an explosive pace in much of the Third World and also in the First World (Nayyar, 1996).

In India today there are about 100,000 millionaires and they control something like 15 per cent of the total wealth of India. At the other end, the agrarian situation is very grim. Today, we have lost whatever we had gained in the 70s and 80s, by way of minimal food security. The government itself has admitted that during the past decade more than one lakh farmers have committed suicide. This model of development has resulted in high environment degradation. It has been contributing to the generation of carbon dioxide and other gases that warm the earth. This has risen to a point which is resulting in a catastrophe. It is not the mass of the population but the elite that is consuming more and more energy and resources. We're all being taken for a huge, huge kind of con game by the Advertising and Sales Promotion Industry. The consumer has become victim of the sales promotion industry which are manufacturing newer needs and wants through free gifts and prizes and 'scratch to win' competitions (Sainath, 2004).

This process of globalization is leading to degradation of democracy by taking out of the economy, and increasingly out of the social processes, very large numbers of poor people who are excluded from the consumer economy and the branded goods economy. This, de-democratization or the shrinking of democratic space of decision-making, has a lot to do with the loss of public control over economic processes. Corporations are being regulated by no rules other than those made by the WTO and other corporate-dominated bodies and thus have remained much above the nation-level controls by Parliament (Nayyar, 2002).

As an illustration of this process it can be remembered here that

India, despite its objections, was made to sign an agreement to accept patents on products in pharmaceuticals. There have been attempt to define services so broadly under globalization as to include even primary education. Water too is no longer considered a basic human need but a 'service'. The same is true of electricity and forests (Sen, 2000).

According to Vinay Lal and Ashis Nandy (2005) globalization processes have made deep inroads even into the thinking patterns of the humankind, killing all creativity and imagination. In their own words:

In this new world of globalization where the manifest expansion of space and time is accompanied by a covert shrinkage of the meanings of space and time, the first casualty is the form of utopian thinking that encrypts alternative visions of desirable societies...the only kind of games that modernity can countenance are those with clear 'winners' and 'losers', the operative terms in much of public discourse (p. xiv).

They further elaborate on the effects of this system on the poor countries in the following words:

In this new world order massive populations of the primitive, the backward and the rebellious continue to be oppressed by the rhetoric of kindness. They struggle towards their graves or funeral pyres listening to the lofty verbiage promising poverty alleviation, the right to work, development, progress, human rights and democracy. Such offers are made at grand international summits, targets are set and the unfed and underfed segments of the world are led to believe that 'leaders' went sleepless for a night or two in the interest of procuring greater amenities for their suffering subjects. However, neither the conventional grammar of political science nor the dictionaries produced by lexical specialists can help us understand the language of selective misanthropy disguised as philanthropy (p. xvi-xvii).

As a consequence of the present crisis of neoliberalism, much of Europe shivers in an economic freeze that has terrorized its politicians and financiers, and in several European countries the public have been angry enough to take to the streets. In France, up to two-and-a-half million people came out recently in nationwide protests against the direction in which the conservative government of Nicolas Sarkozy is taking their society. In Greece, youth protests against high unemployment and po-

lice brutality threatened to topple the government. The Hungarian government, penniless and watching the economy implode, has imposed more tax rises and spending cuts on a population already in trouble. Even in stable, quiet, Scandinavian Iceland, police have used tear gas against citizens for the first time in 60 years, the neoliberal government has collapsed, and a Left-Green alliance is focusing public resentment against capitalism (“Woes of Bandit Capitalism”, 2009).

The processes of globalization have made states redefine their role and create opportunities for the market, new technologies and hitherto unfamiliar interactions and exchanges or face the danger of being left out. Hence there has been a sweep of policy reforms in the developing countries. They have started to emulate the prescriptions of globalization such as the liberalization policy (Sen, 2003).

Privatization and disinvestment policies are gaining importance in the formulation and expansion of public policy. The concept of political sovereignty is also undergoing changes, as states no longer find it easy to control all aspects of their life against external interactions and exchanges (Nayar, 2001).

Examining some of the economical and social traits of neo-liberal globalization, it should be pointed out that as neoliberal globalization has expanded the world economy has grown more sluggishly. Consequently, economic growth promised by the neo-liberal ideology is in actual practice, shrinking. While between 1950 and 1973, the world product grew at an almost 5 per cent, between 1974 and 1980, it dropped down to 3.5 percent; between 1981 and 1989, the growth rate was only 3.3 percent and in more recent years, between 1990 and 1996, the rate was extremely low – only 1.4 percent (Rapley, 2004).

According to Amartya Sen (2002) “the central issue of contention is not globalization itself, nor is it the use of the market as an institution, but the inequality in the overall balance of institutional arrangements.... The question is not just whether the poor, too, gain something from glo-

balization, but whether they get a fair share and a fair opportunity (p.7).”

Thus, the processes of the present day globalization are highly turbulent and lead to anti-globalization movements throughout the world. Entire countries have been destabilized as a consequence of the debt burden, of the collapse of national currencies, often resulting in the outbreak of social strife, ethnic conflict and civil war. Structural reformers promote trade liberalization, whose main result is closure of domestic manufacturing in the Third World countries. The unspoken motive of the trade-liberalization agenda was quick disbursement of loans to the Third World to allow them to continue importing goods and commodities from the international market. This has led to complete economic stagnation, development crisis, and the destruction of entire domestic economies (Power, 1997).

This, in brief, is the overall impact of the present day globalization on individuals and societies all over the world.

### **Contours of United States' Imperialism**

As already seen, the present form of globalization is closely linked to the ideology and the foreign policy of the US which has tried to equate the spread of capitalism with the spread of democracy. Hence, it becomes imperative for us to understand the dynamics of the US imperialism in order to fully study the intricacies of neoliberal globalization.

### **Defining U.S. Imperialism**

Oxford English Dictionary (2001) defines ‘imperialism’ as ‘a policy of extending a country’s power and influence through means such as establishing colonies or by military force’.

The concept of imperialism, in turn, emanates from the concept of ‘empire’. According to Michael Doyle (1986),

Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is

simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire (p. 14).

Imperialism is distinct from colonialism. According to Said (1994) ‘colonialism refers to the implanting of settlements on distant territory’, while ‘imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory’ (p. 8). He opines, however, that both these concepts are related in the sense that ‘colonialism is almost always a consequence of imperialism’ (p. 8).

In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended. Imperialism, however, lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices (Said, 1994, p. 45).

Imperialism like colonialism is not a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. It is supported and even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people ‘require’ and beseech domination (Said 1994, p. 45).

Michael Barratt-Brown (1970) argues that ‘imperialism is still without question a most powerful force in the economic, political and military relations by which the less economically developed lands are subjected to the more economically developed. We may still look forward to its ending.’ (p. viii).

Some scholars argue that there is a close connection between “imperialism” and “globalization”. In fact, they argue, that “imperialism” is mislabeled as “globalization” to suit the designs of the people with capitalist agenda. According to these scholars the term imperialism has much greater descriptive and analytical use for understanding what is going on under the name of globalization. The term had been abandoned by the intellectuals in the wake of the collapse, in 1989, of socialism in the Soviet Union (and Eastern Europe). However, the concept of imperialism is better suited to describe the present conditions than the term globalization (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001).

The US is the most powerful imperialist country today. It differentiates itself from other imperial powers it followed by preferring the notion of 'world responsibility' as a rationale for what it does (Said, 1994, p. 345). Thinkers like Wallerstein (2003) argue that the US is unquestionably the hegemonic power in the world-system possessing a combination of economic, military, political, and cultural advantage over, any and all other states.

Many argue that due to the globalization of capital which has led to 'internationally-united finance capital' has led to the end of 'imperialism' as financial interests belonging to the entire committee of nations move around and act in unison, not necessarily belonging to a particular nation. Thus there is no question of the domination of one country or part of the globe by another. However, as shown by Patnaik (2001) this notion is an erroneous one. For example, despite the collapse of the Bretton Woods arrangement the dollar still remains the fulcrum of the international financial system, which is why the US could run such enormous fiscal deficits with impunity for a whole decade between 1983 and 1993. Today the US dollar holds so much of world's wealth that all countries have a vested interest in protecting its value.

### **Historical Progress of US Imperialism**

The US, as we know, emerged from the Second World War as the only major industrial power whose industries were intact and whose territories had not been badly damaged by wartime destruction. US industries had, of course, been perfecting their efficiencies for over a century. This long-term economic development combined with the literal collapse of the economies of the other major countries gave the US productivity the edge that was enormous and made it easy for the US products to dominate the world market (Van, 1974).

The problem of creating enough world effective demand for the US production was solved by means of the Marshall Plan for Western Europe and equivalent economic assistance to Japan, the latter occurring

particularly after the outbreak of the Korean War and on the excuse of the war. The US took advantage of the Cold War tensions to reinforce these economic links with military ties – NATO plus the US-Japan Defence Pact – which ensured that these zones would follow faithfully the political lead of the US on all major issues in the international arena (Johnson, 2000).

Those left out of benefits of these processes erupted with some regularity, and on occasion with particular force: China in 1945-48, Vietnam, Algeria, Hungary in 1956, Cuba and southern Africa. Though these successive eruptions posed problems for the US-led world order, they were not large enough to create any great damage. The big exception was the Vietnam War, which began to bleed the United States, both in terms of finance and the lives lost, and therefore, in terms of the US national morale (Harshe, 2005).

But the biggest blow to the US, the hardest to absorb, was the economic recovery and the then flourishing of Western Europe and Japan. By the 1960s, the productivity gap between these countries and the US had been more or less eliminated. They began to be competitive not just with the US products in the markets of third world countries but also within the US home market. Thus the US had to begin to work hard politically to maintain the economic advantages it had so easily in the A-phase (Dasgupta & Kiely, 2006).

The world revolution of 1968 was triggered by the discontents of all those who had been left out in the well-organized world order of US hegemony. Along with the obvious 1968 events in the Western world and Japan there was the cultural revolution in China beginning in 1966 and the turn to “socialism with a human face” in Czechoslovakia in 1968, as well as diverse happenings in Mexico, Senegal, Tunisia, India, and many other countries of the Third World. In all of them, however different the local situation, there was a recurrent double theme. The first was opposition to the US hegemony, and to Soviet collusion with that hegemony. And the second was disillusionment with the Old Left in all

its forms (Communist, Social-Democrat, movements of national liberation). Paradoxically, in the period of US hegemony the movements of the Old Left had come to power almost everywhere. Although they had come to power they were perceived to have failed by the revolutionaries of 1968 as having failed to deliver the historic promise of the transformation of society into more just and egalitarian (Ghosh, 1998).

At this point the world-economy entered into its long period of stagnation. As a consequence people with capital shifted from the productive sphere to the financial sphere, loci of production was shifted from higher-wage areas to lower-wage areas, and there was world-wide increase in unemployment. Thus we have had endless escalation of speculative activity, which is, of course, very profitable for a relatively small group of people, at least until the point when the bubble bursts. We have had very large shifts of production from North America, Western Europe, and even Japan to other parts of the world system, which have consequently claimed that they were “industrializing” and therefore developing (Negri & Hardt, 2001).

The fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent termination of the “Cold War,” demolition of the Berlin Wall, and the “Asian Crisis” are some of the major events that accelerated the rejuvenation of the US imperialism at the beginning of the New Millennium (Patnaik, 2001).

The end of the Cold War brought to an end a period referred to by IR specialists as a period of international bipolarity. There were two main views held by academics and social activists regarding the stance of United States after the Cold War. Some held that the US would withdraw from international entanglements since there was no longer any great enemy, no global cause to structure the US foreign policy, nor any clear reason for the US to continue to spend so much money acting as world policeman. The opposite view was that the US would be able to influence world politics like never before: it was a unipolar movement, in which the US was the world’s only remaining super power. And, also, there were those who saw some kind of self-interested combination of

these two positions being the likely outcome, with the US pulling back from international commitments that were not seen as central to its interests while aggressively pursuing other interests through its overwhelming economic, political, cultural and military powers (Parenti, 1998).

When the Cold War ended, some of America's influential policy-makers and shapers saw a unique opportunity in the transient 'unipolar moment' in the world, when for the first time in close to a century, there existed no real competition to the US. Thus, argued the authors of the Project for a New American Century, the US must extend the 'unipolar moment' indefinitely by raising America's military expenditure and increasing its weight within NATO and other Western military institutions to acquire global strategic supremacy or dominance ([www.newamericancentury.org](http://www.newamericancentury.org)).

Washington must then wield its expanded authority to reshape the world as it pleases. Although the authors of the Project – including former Defence Advisory Board chairman Richard Perle, Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz and Jeb Bush (the President's brother) and other luminaries in the Bush administration – were extremely powerful within the Republican Party, and in general, the Pentagon Establishment, their ideas were considered far too ambitious, if not outlandish, by many in the late 1990s (Negri & Hardl, 2001).

Then, George W. Bush came to power and September 11 happened. Suddenly, the Project became 'realistic' and implementable, even in its more extreme components such as the Ballistic Missile Defence programme, which dangerously changes the rules of the nuclear deterrence game. The Project's most important recommendation, even before 9/11, was that the US should invade Iraq and redraw the Middle East's political map. But since September 11, 2001, the dominance of the US over the entire world order is very visible (Parenti, 1998).

Since then, Washington has set an extraordinarily negative precedent

for the rest of the world, which is being followed in the Middle East by its close ally, Israel. Today, the US accounts for one-half of the world's total expenditure of usd800 billion on armaments. America alone has the capacity simultaneously to fight two wars in different parts of the world, patrol the seven seas with its aircraft-carrier-centred armadas, conduct surveillance and espionage over any part of the world from space, and rapidly transport hundreds of thousands of troops over continental distances by day and night. The worst irony, however, of the present situation is that the US policies and conduct have made it less rather than more secure, even as it has weakened the multi-ethnic and plural character of its own society and greatly militarised the state (Gibson, 2006).

The great danger is that there is very little effective resistance to Washington's hegemony even from Western Europe despite the EU's considerable economic, financial and political clout – let alone from the rest of the world. The prospect of genuine reform of the global governance system towards greater democratization and representation, which was much debated during the UN's 50th anniversary celebrations, has definitely receded. If there is any change in the composition and powers of the Security Council, it will be less the result of a democratic impulse to broaden the Council's representative character than of bargaining among the already powerful and the ambitious craving a place at the world's High Table (Bryan, 2004).

### **Impact of US Imperialism**

Participants at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cairo Conference observed that, “the US continues its efforts to strengthen its control over the world, using its increasing control over the world-economy and its major military powers, seeking to prevent the recreation of a multipolar world, which might undermine its increasing influence and powers” (2<sup>nd</sup> Cairo Declaration, 2003, p.3).

As the world is looking for a solution to the global crisis, the focus is on the US, and all eyes are on the Obama recovery package, since direct

or indirect dependence on the exports to the US is so great for most countries that this is seen as the only way for all economies to recover (Ghosh, 2009). This is a clear sign of the dependence of most of the economies of the world on the economy of the US.

2<sup>nd</sup> Cairo Declaration (2003) calls for the international movement against capitalist globalization and US hegemony to challenge its tendency exhibited by:

- 1) The increase and spread of the US military presence in new areas of the world such as the Arab World and middle and Eastern Europe in addition to Afghanistan.
- 2) The use of international capitalist institutions in achieving more control over the world-economy and the reformulation of international economic relations within the framework of free trade agreements, conditional loans and aid and the international financial and monetary policies, the creation of new relations.
- 3) The insistence of the US to launch war against Iraq, despite objection of the UN and its continued use of pressure on the UN to rationalize the war and the obstruction of any Security Council resolution that may condemn the Israeli aggression on Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, thereby falsifying international legitimacy against the interests of the peoples and creating a double standard which contradicts the Charter of the UN.
- 4) To improve an American model for democracy on people and to advocate for false democratic model in the Arab World. For example, the US forced the Arab countries into the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the racist Zionist entity, to accept its leadership role in the region and to submit to the agenda of neoliberal globalization.

Lal and Nandy (2005) delineate the major features of the 'new world order' set in motion by the US imperialism in the following words:

The 'new world order' is no longer framed by explicit contrasts – between the colo-

nizers and the colonized, superior and inferior races, not even perhaps the developed and the underdeveloped – though residues of these distinctions, as well as claims about the moral responsibilities of the advanced countries, are still encountered in the pronouncements of the leaders of the ‘free world’. The new world order is defined by a more nebulous set of contrasts – between those who speak the language of laws and the language of universal human rights, and whose lexicon has found new uses for ‘caring’, and those who would not or cannot subscribe to the new ground rules of universal political conduct. As a consequence, the rights to punish and kill are now drawn from the reidentification and nomination of entire states as ‘rogues’ or ‘outlaws’, invite retribution by allegedly stepping outside the place of the law or by disowning what the North American and West European politicians define as the ‘international community’. These days, the only superpower in the world seeks nominal agreement from other ‘civilized’ nations for its own oftentimes barbarous conduct, and the ‘international community’ remains a sanitized fiction that suggests to recalcitrant ‘rogues’ and ‘outlaws’ that defiance against what is putatively the collective will of humankind will be justly punished (p. xvi-xvii).

An important dimension of US imperialism is the cultural imperialism. It is understood as the practice of promoting or artificially injecting the culture of one nation into another. It is, apparently, a softer aspect of imperialism. But when studied in detail it reveals many hidden dynamics of the present day imperialism. For instance, the popular culture of “McWorld” is of American origin. The late modernized consumer culture experiences hyper commodification (Crook et al, 1992) in which consumption is differentiated on the basis of the signifiers known as “brand names”. It is stimulated having a life of its that is beyond the control of any particular group” (Waters, 1995).

The newly globalized economy has made this process and phenomenon a massive reality through the use of new information technology. The United States dominates the global traffic in information and ideas. American music, American movies, American television, and American software are so visible and dominant that they influence the tastes, lives, and aspirations of virtually every nation. It is due to these reasons that, despite the reality being quite different, the US is thought of as a

nation representing freedom, democracy and human rights. The US has turned out to be the most dominant 'cultural imperialist' of today as it is the sole 'super power' with immense political and economic clout (Ritzer, 1996).

US cultural imperialism has two major goals, one economic and the other political: to capture markets for its cultural commodities and to establish hegemony by shaping popular consciousness. The export of entertainment is one of the most important sources of capital accumulation and global profits displacing manufacturing exports (Robins & Frank, 1999).

In the political sphere, cultural imperialism plays a major role in dissociating people from their cultural roots and traditions of solidarity, replacing them with media created needs which change with every publicity campaign. The political effect is to alienate people from traditional class and community bonds, atomizing and separating individuals from each other (Ritzer, 1996).

The strategies and the impact of the U.S. cultural imperialism coincide. For instance, the segmentation of the working class is used as a strategy of the management and it results in lack of solidarity among the workforce. It de-sensitizes the public; to make mass murder by the Western states routine, acceptable activities. For example, mass bombings in Iraq were presented in the form of video games (Robins & Frank, 1999). It even includes "news" reports in which the weapons of mass destruction are presented with human attributes while the victims in the Third World are faceless "aggressors- terrorists". The strategy of cultural imperialism functions best through colonized intermediaries or cultural collaborators (Sklair, L. 2001).

### **Contours of Social Action**

The understanding and use of social action goes much beyond what is conceptualized and practiced in professional social work. It is because social action many a time is practiced more by those not trained in pro-

fessional social work than those with such a degree. It is also argued, many a time, that professionalization of social work has weakened social action (Jacob, 1965).

On the other hand professional social work considers social action as one of the six methods of social work. Professional social workers have made repeated attempts to define it and debate its scope, strategies and tactics to be used, its status as a method and its relevance to social work practice (Siddiqui, 1984).

### **Defining Social Action**

Several interesting definitions of social action have been provided by both Indian and foreign authors. Some of them are Richmond (1922), Maslin (1947), Baldwin (1966), Community Work Group (1973), Friedlander (1977), and in Indian context Moorthy (1966), and Nanavati (1965) (all cited from Siddiqui 1984, p. 12ff). An analysis of the history of these definitions suggests significant ideological shifts in emphasis.

Mary Richmond (1922, p.23) was the first social worker to use the word 'social action' in 1922. She defines social action as 'mass betterment through propaganda and social legislation'.

Sydney Maslin limits the scope of social action by considering it as a process of social work mainly concerned with securing legislation to meet mass problems. However, Baldwin broadens the scope of social action by emphasizing that any effort to bring about structural changes in the social system falls within the ambit of social action. He defines social action as,

An organized effort to change social and economic institutions as distinguished from social work or social service, the fields which do not characteristically cover essential changes in established institutions. Social action covers movements of political reforms, industrial democracy, social legislation, racial and social justice, religious freedom and civic liberty and its techniques include propaganda, research and lobbying (cited in Siddiqui, 1984).

In the same line Friedlander (1977) defines social action as an individ-

ual, group or community effort within the framework of social work philosophy and practice that aims to achieve social progress, to modify social policies and to improve social legislation and health and welfare services. Similar views are expressed by Lee who says that 'social action seems to suggest efforts directed towards changes in law or social structure or towards the initiation of new movements for the modification of the current social practices' (cited in Siddiqui, 1984).

A definition provided by Khinduka and Coughlin (1975) throws important light on the scope of change visualized by professional social action:

We mean by social action a strategy to obtain limited social change at the intermediate or macro levels of society which is generally used in non-consensus situations and employs both 'norm adhering' and 'norm-testing' modes of intervention. Three concepts are fundamental to this definition: the scope of change, the use of power in effecting and resisting change, and the change strategies employed (p. 5).

According to Coyle social action is the attempt to change the social environment in ways, which will make life more satisfactory. It aims to affect not individuals but social institutions, laws, customs, and communities. Fitch considers social action as legally permissible action by a group (or by an individual trying to promote group action) for the purpose of furthering objectives that are both legal and socially desirable. A broad outlook has also been given by Hill who describes social action as 'organised group effort to solve mass social problems or to further socially desirable objectives by attempting to influence basic social and economic conditions or practices' (cited in Saldanha, 2008, p. 118).

Further, social action is a term applied to that aspect of organized social welfare actively directed towards shaping, modifying or maintaining the social institutions and policies that collectively constitute the social environment. Solender states that social action in the field of social work is a process of individual, group or inter-group endeavour, within the context of social work philosophy, knowledge and skill. Its objective is to enhance the welfare of society through modifying social policy and

the functioning of social structure, working to obtain greater progress and better services (Siddiqui, 1984). It is, therefore, evident that social action has been viewed as a method of bringing about structural changes along with social legislation.

Indian writers too have defined social action from different perspectives. Moorthy (1966) states that the scope of social action includes work during catastrophic situations such as fires, floods, epidemics, famines, etc., besides securing social legislation. Nanavatty (1965) views social action as 'a process of bringing about the desired changes by deliberate group and community effort'. According to him, 'social action does not end with the enactment of social legislation, but the execution of the policies is the real test of success or failure of social action.'

K.K. Jacob (1965) has defined social action as 'essentially an effort at initiating suitable changes and reforms to improve socio-economic conditions and to better the social climate, which objective is shared by the social work profession' (p. 63).

Siddiqui (1997) defines social action as an endeavour to bring about or prevent change in a social institution, social system or society as a whole, through a process of making people aware of the sociopolitical and economic realities conditioning their lives and by mobilising them to organise themselves for bringing about a desired change, or to prevent change that adversely affect them (p. 213).

Similarly, Singh (1984) maintains that social action is a process in which conscious, systematic and organized efforts are made by some elites and/or people themselves to bring about change in the system which is instrumental in solving problems and improving conditions which limit the social functioning of weaker and vulnerable sections. It is, on the practical plane, nearer to social reform than to social revolution, which aims at smashing the entire existing social structure and to build up a new social set-up. It is conflictual in nature but at the same time non-violent.

Britto's (Siddiqui, 1984) relatively contemporary definition emerging from an Indian context is as follows:

Social action is a conflictual process of varying intensity, initiated and conducted by the masses or by a group of elites, with or without the participation of the masses in the action, against the structures or institutions or policies or programmes or procedures of the government and/or relevant agencies/or power groups, to eradicate/control any mass socio-economic political problem with a view to bringing betterment to any section of the under-privileged at a level larger than that of a sociologically defined community (p. 50).

This definition draws attention to the reality that social action is essentially embedded in the conflictual character of social relations where there is a conflict of interests over the distribution of resources, understood in an inclusive, multi-sectoral manner and not necessarily reduced only to economic resources. This is all the more significant if one recognizes that a 'conflict of situation' confronts a large section of Indian society, especially in the more semi-feudal regions, irrespective of their choice and the nature of intervention. This aspect of the definition also opens up the possibility of an engagement with the Marxian conception structured relations within and between institutions within social systems and inequalities of distribution/access emerging from social relations within productive systems (Saldanha, 2008, p. 115).

For many progressive NGOs and civil society organization (CSOs), social action – people's capacity to organize together for a common, social goal – lies at the heart of their understanding of development. Popular mobilization, whether to defend existing rights that are under threat, or to protest against the denial of these rights, is seen to be just as critical to the development process as economic growth – if not more so. Without this kind of mass engagement in promoting and defending these demands, even concrete gains in the form of economic 'development' might remain very fragile and superficial.

## **Historical Progress of Social Action in India**

Beginning with the Ajivikas and Sramanas, nearly 2500 years ago, the subcontinent's history is replete with inadequately researched, anti-hierarchical socio-religious and cultural manifestations. Pan-Indian heterodoxies such as Buddhism, Jainism and Bhakti movement; regional sects, such as Vira-Shaivism, Sikhism, and Kabirpanth, and numerous other local movements, to a greater or lesser degree, were expressions of anti-heirarchical aspirations and value. More tumultus and localized forms of resistance such as social banditry, caste boycotts and peasant-tribal movements against the impositions and excesses of caste-feudalism in pre-modern times still await serious study (Aloysius, 1998).

The movements of the colonial period were marked by rejection of the traditional socio-political order and a desire of the people for self-government, economic betterment, a social status among peers and such other motives. However, traditional dominance in India transformed itself into state power without undergoing any substantial change. The modern European idiom of secularism, liberal democracy, nationalism, etc. were all appropriated to assert what in substance turned out to be just an updated version of the same old principle of ascription (Aloysius, 1998, p. 226-227).

After independence and in 1950s, most of the voluntary organizations 'were either relief (satisfying the immediate needs of the people) or institutionalized programmes sponsored by schools and hospitals' (Fernandes, 1980, p. 14-15). But in the 1960s many realized that this approach fails to reach the neediest and, still more, to make them self-reliant. Efforts were therefore focused on functional literacy and technical education as well as growth-oriented economic and technological inputs.

In the 1970s, this approach was also found wanting. A new type of education, geared to making the weakest sections aware of their situation, to enable them to become active agents of their own development and change in their society, was thus considered essential. Education

and organization of people, especially the disadvantaged, were considered essential ingredients to counteract the better-off from monopolizing the benefits of development (Fernandes, 1980, p. 5-7).

In spite of some chronologists discrepancies, Karat basically agrees with the evolution of Voluntary Organizations (VOs) as put forwarded by Fernandes. According to him, the Voluntary Sector was warmly utilized for relief, charity and rehabilitation-oriented projects. Up to 1975-76, the emphasis 'was on Development Projects: rural development, community development, employment generation, slum improvement, betterment of living conditions, etc.' (Karat, 1984, p. 19-54).

Constraints experienced during 1975-76 led to voluntary organization adopting another approach, that of education and organization of the disadvantaged. And in this process VOs were often renamed as "Social Action Groups" (SAGs) and "Social Workers" of VOs became "Social Activists".

SAGs, known by various names like VOs, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Grassroots Initiatives, Non-Party Political Formations, Semi-Political Formations, Transformative Action Groups, etc. in the 1970s widely spoke of and utilized social action approach. A large number of people, especially middle class youth who got disillusioned, dared to enter into the lives of the poor and the oppressed to raise the voice of the voiceless (Volken, 1985, p.13). The disillusionment due to which action groups came about was the result of the mess that had set in political, social and economic spheres. Political parties had failed to live up to their expectations. They had no time to reach out and handle the problems of the poor and oppressed in remote areas. The poorest of the poor did not benefit from the faulty 'top down' development model, also called the economic growth model that really failed to 'trickle down' (Sheth, 1984, p. 260). This trend continued into the 1980s and early 1990s. However, with the onset of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (popularly referred to as LPG) many NGOs experienced resources crunch and many genuine social activists had to put up with

the repressive approach of the state. This process has negatively impacted the nature and volume of social action in India. With enormous rise in the influence of globalization and the US imperialism (especially since 1991) social action in India has taken a backseat and is struggling to revive itself with new models and strategies of activism.

### **Significance of Chomsky's Discourse**

Avram Noam Chomsky (born on December 7, 1928), who started his public life as a linguist, is better known today for his writings and speeches on world politics, US foreign policy and the media than for his linguistic theories. He started his political writing with the criticism of the Vietnam War in the 1960s. Due to his highly researched writings and speeches Chomsky is described by *The New York Times* as “arguably the most important intellectual alive” (Ram, 2001).

Although Chomsky has written on what seems to be three distinct and unrelated areas – linguistics, philosophy of mind and human nature, and politics - many scholars feel that there is a basic unity in Chomsky's thought. His linguistics and his political views are in fact based on his philosophical/scientific work on the human mind and human nature. Chomsky, like Descartes, thinks of the person as an intellect with a will that freely chooses its course of action: humans are “free agents” who probably have a corresponding “instinct for freedom” (McGilvray, 2005, p. 241).

Chomsky respects “the common man” and he defends democracy – a democracy wherein all individuals are empowered to participate in all matters of concern to them, including economic and market choices. He also believes that individuals survive and thrive best when they live and cooperate with others in communities. This is a premise underlying Chomsky's syndicalism and socialism (Peck, 1987).

Reflecting human beings' need to exercise choice and to associate, Chomsky's ideal form of social organization is based on his view of the individual as a creature that needs to be creative and to freely associate

with others for fulfillment of common aims. Thus, for Chomsky, the ideal form of social organization is that which minimizes external authority (anarchism) and allows for free association of individuals (syndicalism). A combination of these two ideals, which he calls “libertarian socialism” or “anarcho-syndicalism”, aims at maximizing the opportunity to exercise autonomy, freedom and creativity on the one hand, while finding friendship, solidarity and love, on the other (Rai, 1995).

With this concept of the individual, Chomsky analyses the contemporary capitalism which he finds to be resting upon a dangerous ideology, a secular religion supported by a mythology for which there is little or no evidence. According to him neoliberal globalization and US imperialism operate hand in hand for the benefit of each other. We could take as an example Corporate America’s commitment to “free enterprise”. Under this system, “efficient” means obtaining enough power within a particular market through financial profits to become immune from direct competition and to demand substantial government subsidies. The recent trend of merging of big companies demonstrates that there is no limit to corporate efforts to concentrate wealth and power. This helps the titans to coordinate the global markets. Even when the US gives foreign aid it places conditions such that the recipients are forced to purchase American goods. Corporates advocate “corporate welfare” in the form of tax breaks and exception to regulatory principles (Roy, 2003).

The wealthy control the state in various ways both directly and through their corporate institutions. Lobbying and campaign financing are the obvious examples of this. The joining of the state to the corporate brings tremendous benefits to the corporations. So the policies of the states are directed towards the private interests of the corporations. For example, in the “free trade” the powerful seek the protection of the state and powerful nation-states keep the more undeveloped countries in their subordinate position. Western nations maintain their own protective barriers while they demand poorer nations to open their borders to free trade, which allows the invasion of corporate power at the expenses

of the average citizen and the environment (Chomsky, 2003).

According to Chomsky the basic feature of globalization is the marginalization of the majority for the profit of a few. The wealthy have joined with their colleagues throughout the world to form a “de facto world government” to ensure the perpetual triumph of capitalism. The list of institutions promoting this goal grows steadily: the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The government and corporate nexus often has disastrous impact on entire populations, be it Vietnam, Turkey, Palestine, East Timor, Iraq, South, Central or North America or wherever (Fox, 2001).

Chomsky argues that understanding of political systems and political events is within the reach of everyone: “experts” and “managers are not needed for political analysis, criticism and decisions. Given this why is there more interest in sports and films than political analysis and criticism, even in contemporary democracies where - presumably - one can make a difference? Part of the answer lies in the fact that contemporary democracies are largely in the hands of big corporations. Those who own the country should run it is the position of contemporary democracy. While representatives nominally have considerable power and are elected to serve the interests of their constituencies, their decisions in fact serve the interest of private economic powers. In this way, the important decisions – those that are crucial to people’s lives – are made solely by boards of directors of corporations, institutions designed to maximize accumulation (profit) and domination (monopoly), not to “serve people”. Most of the people recognize the fact that the system gives them little control; that is why there is often little interest in the political process. In such a system even the mass media is oriented towards “manufacturing consent” to the designs of the corporate interests (Gendzier, 2005).

Having presented a realistic but not very encouraging picture of the world order Chomsky sets out to suggest possible ways to find solutions to the predicament of globalization and US imperialism. He is a great believer in activism and asserts that no real civil liberty can be enjoyed without popular struggle to gain it first (Rai, 1995).

Chomsky speaks of the responsibility of the intellectuals in his political writings. He views truth and rationality as weapons of the oppressed. Another important issue is honesty. Chomsky points out that simple honesty is not enough. There should be a commitment to discover truth and concentration on what is important. It should lead the intellectuals to act on behalf of the victims of oppression (Edgley, 2000).

Although Chomsky argues that in human affairs nothing can be guaranteed, he asserts that being optimistic and swinging into action is much better than getting discouraged and withdrawing. He invites all intellectuals and the people concerned to become part of an alternative world vision not based purely on accumulation and domination. As Chomsky puts it, “pick your cause and go volunteer for a group that is working on it. Above all, never give up hope – for yourself, your country, your remarkable species, your planet” (McGilvery, 2005, p. 258-59).

Chomsky is not just an “intellectual” but also the great exemplar who has integrated his theory with practice. He has had no hesitation in putting his dazzling academic career on the line for the sake of the intellectual, political and moral principles he has espoused. He has spent time in jail for his role in the demonstrations against the Vietnam War. Asked once why he took such risks, he replied: “It has to do with being able to look yourself in the eye in the morning” (quoted in Ram, 2001)

### **Relevance of Chomsky to Social Action and Social Work**

Contextualizing social work today, Lena Dominelli (2004) in her milestone work, *Social Work: Theory and Practice for a Changing Profession*, says that ‘social work is a troubled and troubling profession. Its role and place in the professional firmament of the twenty-first century are hotly contested’ (p.1).

Explaining this predicament Fred Powell (2001) states that –

The challenges faced by social work at the beginning of the twenty-first century are real and formidable. Social work is being impelled into a new orbit defined by an economic imperative or civic mandate. Social work must choose not simply between positivism and humanism but between marketization, radical resistance or reconstruction if it is to become a vibrant civic force in postmodern society (p.165).

In a globalizing world in which the nation-state is being restructured to promote the interests of global capital and neo-liberal ideologies, social work practitioners find themselves in contradictory position of having to justify their existence as professionals, explicitly charged with improving the quality of people's lives at both individual and collective levels while being subjected to the 'new managerialism' (Clarke & Newman, 1997).

Social work reflects the society that produces it (Dominelli, 2004, p. 249). It is a profession that is conducted within a society riven by inequalities which are both produced and reinforced in and through social work itself. Hence, social workers have to oppose existing structural inequalities and oppression, including those which they perpetuate, if they are to become more inclusive (Ibid, p. 17). To do this, social work has to go beyond the regional and inward-looking approach.

In this context, social action, with its dynamism and passion for pro-people change could be act as a transformative force in the interest of professional social work. It could enable social work to renew its commitment to human rights and justice, and also to effectively face the challenges of neoliberal globalization.

Chomsky's discourse on globalization and the US imperialism provides a strong theoretical framework to understand the challenges and constraints faced by social work in general and social action in particular as it is based on strong methodological and theoretical foundation (Ram, 2001). His writing is moved by political and ethical concerns and has great implications for democracy, human rights and social justice

– the major preoccupations of social work today. Hence, looking at the neoliberal challenges to social work from the perspectives of Chomsky’s discourse would at once make it relevant to our times and also enable it to move beyond the narrow confines of ‘professional’ considerations.

## **Research Questions**

The present research endeavor is an attempt towards studying the relevance of Chomsky to social work education and practice in Indian sub-continent in the context of globalized neoliberal state of affairs.

The specific questions sought to be answered by this study are as follows:

- i. Do the views of Indian social activists on the phenomenon of globalization and the US imperialism have any parallels with that of Noam Chomsky’s?
- ii. What is the general perception of the activists on the supportive environment for social action in India?
- iii. What, in the opinion of the activists, is the general influence of globalization on social action in India?
- iv. What, according to the activists, could be the possible responses to the challenges of globalization?
- v. What could be the ways and means through which Indian social action can be revitalized to face the challenges of globalization?, and
- vi. What could be certain implications of the possible corroborations of Chomsky’s views by the social activists to the social action in India?

## **Structure of The Book**

The researcher has divided his entire theses into six chapters. This, first chapter, has made an attempt to provide a general introduction by way of discussing the theoretical background and rationale for the present study. The remaining chapters are related to review of related literature, exposition of the research methodology, presentation of data analyses

and case descriptions, interpretation and discussion, and finally, summary, implications and conclusion.

The chapter on the review of related literature mainly deals with the literature related to Chomsky's discourse on globalization and US imperialism. It also discusses the writings related to social action with specific focus on India. The chapter on research methodology primarily discusses statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the universe and sampling methods, procedures and tools of data collection, and the strengths and limitations of the study. The chapter on analysis presents quantitative analysis of the perceptions of social activists in keeping with the objectives of the study. The next chapter tries to interpret and discuss the major findings of the study based on the results of the previous chapter. The concluding chapter is an attempt towards delineating the possible implications of the findings to social action and social work profession in India, and suggesting certain measures for their revitalization to counter the challenges of globalization and the US imperialism. It ends with certain recommendations for further research related to the present study.

References are provided at the end of each chapter for the benefit of the readers of this work. Bibliography, presented towards end of the thesis, is organized thematically to help persons interested in further study of any of the related areas. The copy of the questionnaire utilized to gather data from the social activists is given in the form of appendix.

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