



A Case for Societism

INDIAN SOCIETY AS A CHANGE MAKER

IMAGE: PIXY CCO

Pranay Kotasthane 06 September 2020

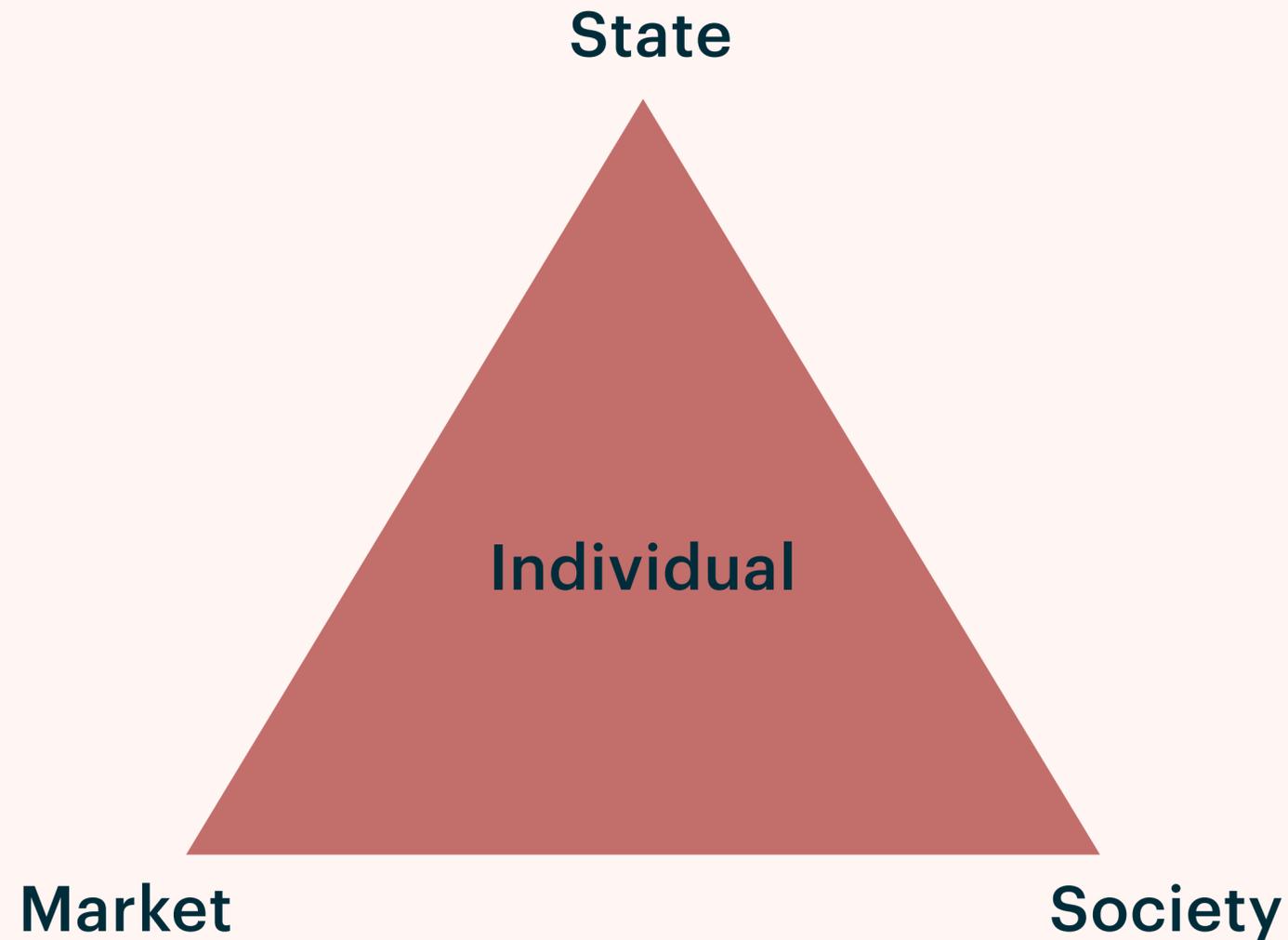
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THE INDIAN SOCIETY CAN SELF-CORRECT. THE STATE AND THE MARKET ARE NOT THE ONLY CHANGE MAKERS.

WHOSE JOB IS IT?

- **Indian languages are being displaced by English; who should protect them from dying?**
 - **Some Indian cities are spatially segregated along religious lines; who should be responsible for desegregating them?**
 - **Our social media feeds are increasingly polarised; who should extricate us from our closed echo chambers?**
 - **Brave Indian two-wheeling commuters prefer injury over wearing ugly helmets; who should be entrusted with ensuring that they do?**
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CIVIL SOCIETY — A PATIENT OR A PARTNER?



- **Conventional view: State vs Market**
 - **The other view:**
 - **Civil society as a partner**
 - **Three institutions of change and continuity: the state, the market, and the society**
 - **Each of the three has comparative strengths and weaknesses**
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WHAT CAN CIVIL SOCIETY DO?

Civil society: An aggregate of non-governmental organisations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens

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- 1. PHILANTHROPY**
 - 2. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**
 - 3. CORRECT MARKET FAILURES**
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WHY IS THE ROLE OF THE SOCIETY UNDERPLAYED IN INDIA?

SOCIAL REVOLUTION BY CONSTITUTION

- **Created in the backdrop of a deeply fractured, poor, and unequal society, the Indian Constitution came hardcoded with a social revolution algorithm.**
 - **This bold experiment forged India together. But like everything else, it also had unintended consequences, this time on the society.**
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UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

➤ **State spread too thin**

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

- **The welfare state became an excuse for societal disengagement.**

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

- **State becomes the mafia lord**
 - **“Welfare states melt people’s consciences, leading them to excuse and minimise the most horrible of crimes ... When organisations that kill people for a living — like crime families or governments — loudly help the needy, we should indeed shudder. Why? Because their perceived philanthropy makes it easy for them to get away with murder. Maybe they’ll use their power over life and death wisely and fairly. But they probably won’t — especially if they’re surrounded by devoted fans eager to excuse their shortcomings.” — Bryan Caplan**
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UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

- **Instead of complementing the state, civil society initiatives started supplemented the state.**

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

- **The nature of social movements changed. Agitations became petitions to the State.**

A WAY FORWARD?

RESTORING THE BALANCE

- **State to do what it must. Let it not add new elements to the project.**
 - **If state is strong, it can counter majoritarian trends in society as well**
 - **Strengthen the societal arm: Increasing social capital, increase in contact, mechanisms for monitoring, conflict-resolutions, graduated sanctions.**
 - **“Inclusive Localism” — Raghuram Rajan, *The Third Pillar***
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THANK YOU
