

## VOTOCRACY

One can not remain oblivious to what is being perpetrated in this state (West Bengal) at present. People, belonging to one political party or others or ordinary persons in cross-fire are being killed wantonly in proxy scuffles for political gains of the selfish, unscrupulous, under the banner of democracy. Interestingly, those who are being used to kill and those being killed belong to the same strata of the society or have-nots. The reason is either to terrorize or to occupy an area to manipulate votes, etc.. This of course a sad commentary on our democracy and governance and that throughout the country.

Harold J. Laski in his 'Reflections on the Revolutions of our Times' has observed.....men can not destroy counter-revolution if some part of them gives allegiance to its principles. Our gravest danger is a very real one - that in the name of democracy and freedom we destroy the democracy and freedom.

Looking at the present form and practice that we now find in our political working only shows now close Prof. Laski was. We now work on a single agenda - winning in election or secure necessary votes not minding about how and who and also through dubious or unethical means or undemocratic methods to ensure this, and thus, for convenience and extract maximum gains vitiated (criminalization) all the arms of good and neutral governance. Abuse and corruption dominate the whole process today and victims are the ordinary persons. We know Commissions like the Shah, the Iyer and the Mudaliar, etc. focused how the whole administrative system has been subverted and even the judiciary has been found harbouring corruption for obvious purposes.

Interestingly, pragmatic as Gandhiji was, realized much early state of things to come - "The politician in me has never dominate a single decision of mine, and if I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircles us today like coil of a snake from which one cannot get out.....I wish therefore to wrestle with the snake".

During our Freedom Movement we fought on two counts - Independence of the country or end of foreign domination and ushering in a political life pure, pristine, selfless and service - oriented (Gopal Krishna Gokhale, 'Public Life in

India', p.2). Thus the motives of the new Indian Revolution of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century stood for truth and justice endeavouring to erase the baser side of man and resist brute force by soul force as Gandhiji tried to moralize the whole socio-political economic system and process. But the Revolution was betrayed and fruits of a good and sane society denied and reactionary and counter-revolutionary forces and aspects dominate the whole scene in our country today.

True, we inherited an exploitative system. But, perhaps, the rot started with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by the forces of counter-revolution, since Gandhiji living would have a disarming effect on their evil designs.

We know that during the Freedom Movement and immediately after the Independence, Gandhiji was talking of a structural change - that threatened the arms of vested interests. For Ministers of the Government Gandhiji said - "Minister ships are avenues to service which those who are called to it should render cheerfully and to the best of the ability. These offices are to be held lightly and tightly. They are or ought to be crowns of thorns, never renown". We observe a different attitude now. We ignored the Gandhian dictum - "Power is also a Trust".

Ushering a counter-culture is a difficult proposition. One wonders whether choosing the Parliamentary Democracy instead of Democratic Socialism, which was the Congress Political creed originally, we made a mistake whether we acted rightly by ignoring Edmond Burke's cautionary note for smooth functioning of Democracy - 'What is right should not only be made known, but made prevalent, that what is evil should not only be detected but defeated (Thoughts on the Cause of Present Discontent, p.78)".

In economic policy, instead of 'Inclusive Growth' and 'Sustainable Economy' the original Congress creed, we introduced certain economic policies that benefited the affluent society and generated a desire for money making and accumulation eroding the moral values.

Presently, so far Good and Sane Society is concerned, the whole situation is certainly distressing. While we have to develop a new public philosophy borrowing from M.N. Roy's and J.P.'s politico - economic thoughts in the long

run, presently watch and depend on the Election Commission's role to tighten measures for a free and fair election by eliminating forces of criminalisation and corruption. The recent incident - free election in Bihar may be a pointer, but could not prevent elections of quite a good number of persons with criminal records and court cases against them.

What is needed is a Second Revolution and raising an awakened and vigilant electorate. Will a violent and counter-violent state as obtained now in the State of West Bengal, awaken people to the futility of violence and show emergence of a constructive polity? We shall have to watch, but meanwhile we urge the Election Commission to ensure bringing back democracy. Let Salvador De Madariage be wrong ('Democracy vs Liberty' pp.81-82) - 'the present system is not represent the demos. i.e. the population taken as a political entity but the loas i.e. the human particles of the mass accumulated without organization or collective consciousness.

*LET INDIAN DEMOCARCY SURVIVE, NOT VOTACRACY.*