

Dear Friends,

The fast changing scenario of Indian politics over last few months is giving sleepless nights not only to political leadership across parties but also to the serious followers of Indian political system. Since independence, the space occupied by the political actors has been increasing leaps and bounds and we had developed a niche of leaving every decision of our social, cultural, economic, political and religious activity to these political masters of different denominations. During the course of time, we found some of them dividing us uselessly. We loved them, adored them, imitated them, followed them, elected them, adopted them, and at times, worshiped them cluelessly. They could cheat us in decision-making; they could befool us in elections; they could deviate us from real issues; they could instigate us on false grounds; they could separate us from each other; they could vitiate us by growing seeds of suspicion for each other; and unfortunately, they could lead us to deep dark future. In the meantime their aura got increased; their wealth got multiplied; their influence got expanded; their contempt for norms got enhanced; their finances got strengthened; and their corrupt behaviour got public acceptance. That way, our political class slowly usurped the space of other institutions of social and cultural relevance. The weakening of socio-cultural apparatus in a society like ours is one of the most unfortunate and worrying developments of post-colonial India. This has seriously damaged the social fabric besides destroying the ever-essential structures of human behaviour-regulations. This dangerous trend has produced frightening results and created insensitive and irresponsible leadership. The avenues provided by the democratic set up to all of us largely proved to be ineffective and superfluous because of the inefficient working of the different organs of the government.

Of late, some of the state assembly election results have predominantly demonstrated the indomitable presence of the felling of increasing expectations of the electorate from the political masters. The diminishing role of ideology in the coalition formation at different levels by various political parties has a lot to convey by means of agreeing to a common minimum programme of development and giving way to greater political accommodation between warring groups. On the one hand, this trend suggests that we are going to witness increased political cooperation among political players for the sake of attaining commonly agreed programmes of development by way of forming unprecedented coalitions, while on the other hand, we may find amusing and interesting shifts in loyalties at all levels for the sake of sheer power which we have seen during last fifteen-twenty years. But another significant by-product of these developments has been the fast growing importance being given to so-termed civil society which has by now occupied a larger space in public domain as a result of inefficient governance. Though there are contestable arguments doing the rounds in Indian academic circles which presumably plead the case for civil society interventions in our democratic functioning to the level of glorifying some selective sections of this apparently non-governmental initiative and demeaning selectively some of them with brilliant choice of idioms and purposively constructed conceptualizations, yet the disturbing absence of critical enquiry and unbiased analysis in the intellectual and academic domain raises serious questions and unavoidable doubts which no body is ready to take on. The little debate, we come across, on the issue in our otherwise pre-occupied, pre-determined and largely prejudiced media, can always be found to be superficial, confusing and unfruitful as it generally skips the real issues and emphasizes upon pre-decided conclusions. In any case no right thinking society aspiring to re-gain the lost ground of global academic excellence and intellectual leadership by way of becoming knowledge super-power of the modern world can afford to leave such serious issues to be settled in the non-serious arena of

infotainment. Serious and scientific studies of the growing new face of our political, semi-political and apolitical super-structure have essentially to be conducted by the institutions of higher learning endowed with the responsibility of critical examination and analytical enquiry.

The fast decreasing faith of people in political set-ups, the growing discontent among larger sections of society, the understandable disappointment and distrust towards all kinds of leadership amongst the masses, and the newly emerging abhorism towards political solutions are considerably significant challenges. Interestingly the puzzle has further been complicated by a substantial growth of non-government actors in public domain on the one hand, while satisfying increase in political participation at different stages throughout the country on the other. The riddle has one more reasonably important dimension to it. We are witnessing a complete rejection of undemocratic behaviour patterns of our political players by the opinion leaders in strongest terms through diverse platforms of debate and discourse which assures of the future strengthening of democratic value system in our society as a whole on one side while emergence of self-righteously stubborn and naturally undemocratic groupings is in no mood either to give way to any dissenting voice or to accept any critical evolution for further improvement; therefore, the whole background makes way for interesting and convincingly explorative reading of Indian polity by impartial followers, unbiased commentators and apolitical intellectuals. The public perceptions generated by media misgivings and sketchy interpretations require to be exploded as early as possible through doubt raising by the academia. While we understand that there are some grave issues of fundamental problems before the process of knowledge production and promotion of intellectual calibre in Indian institutions of higher learning and academic excellence, yet we must equally appreciate the dedication, convictions, commitment, integrity, output and the non-visible potential of our academic community to handle the most difficult issues of our time with great endeavour and unsupportive atmosphere and poor infrastructural facilities. This has been proved by them so many times and in so many fields.

I would want to suggest that the only way we could find solutions to most of our problems is to strengthen our educational system and institutions. The members of the faculty of these institutions along with their fellow learners can confront any difficult questions and put in their minds and heads together to get far sighted answers. For this we will have to re-orient our faculty, re-programme our academic pursuit, re-establish the lost belief in their capacities, re-arrange our priorities and re-structure our syllabi so as to enable them think freely, fearlessly, favourlessly and in a neutral manner. The true pursuit of knowledge greatly depends on the attitude of not only explorers but also the followers as ancient Indian texts proudly pronounce:-

तंविद्धि प्रणिप्रातेन परिप्र नेन सेवया ।

Meerut

(Sanjeev Kumar Sharma)

9-10-2011