***AUDACIOUS MOVE***

Hope has been rekindled by fresh moves on *Swaraj*, two generations after independence. The first generation had dedicated themselves to nation building through hard work and sacrifices -facing trialchallenges of their times of war, famine etc. The second generation continued building on the solid foundations laid, shouldering responsibilities carrying the country to greater heights in most spheres.

Current third generation is at loss as to what to contribute/expect, finding themselves side-lined by reservations from cradle to grave, dynastic politics, crony capitalism marginalising and exploiting them all etc. The whole democratic and political system has been cornered by the few, as if of the few and working for the few with all checks and balances including judiciary kowtowing to those in power. Of late, few at the right places –recently emboldened by RTI- has succeeded in exposing the shenanigans. Let us give credit to CEC, CAG, CBI, CVC etc –belated though they are, taking solemn oath to support whistle-blowers, RTI & Civil Society activists and the catalysts driving change.

Fresh breeze of hope generated by Annaji, had quickly developed gusts kicking up dust in maidans across the nation. A perfect storm ensued descending in Jantar Mantar as the simpleton leader was gaoled; but he outwitted his keepers by refusing to leave and then daringly outpacing them in a sprint.

After being subjected to political accusations, undermining, maligning, vindictiveness etc, the resultant despair and uncertainties has evolved into audacity of hope as a new political movement –not unlike *sampoorna swaraj*- unveiled on Mahatma’s birthday. Instead of suspecting that the new lot will eventually turn scamsters, give them the benefit of doubt and since their avowed focus is anti-corruption, expect them to perform cleanly without nexus at the risk of exposès. Let doubters suspect differences of opinions at leadership level, foreign hand, conspiracy theories, driven by political/communal forces or whatever it be accused of; but let the positives be seen as goals and destination towards the same, binding all to work together in their mission of cleaning up dirty politics with criminal nexus.

Whilst courage of game-changers are eagerly looked up to by many, especially youth –as evidenced on Oct 2nd –though the cynics, commentators, editors have expressed reservations. That it shows the state of flux in society, even amongst the well informed, underscores the pitiable plight we all are in and the hopelessness we are subjugated to, by those who have cornered and captured power. The have-nots –the poor- are helpless, but will rise up violently soon.

The audacious hope is inspiring that political transformations *a la* revolutions can be effected vide Gandhian style without resorting to violence and overthrows. But it is endangered by the reality that should such efforts fail –within a wishful time span- the *aam aadmi* and masses at the suffering and receiving end to who trickle down has not percolated, would be driven to revolt violently. And so it is imperative that one and all –regardless of differences in ideologies and philosophies- come together and put commitment, efforts, funding and all else together to lead/follow in our own sphere of social activities, politics included.

With the two major political parties embroiled in scams with the one in power having larger takes in more opportunities, and the third front unlikely to muster and usher any clean ones to the stage, the theme, play and act are ready for cleaner ones to take centre stage. Dreams are made of these. Given the global political vulnerability to graft, do not ridicule the reinvigorated vision and mission as pious, idealistic, utopian and unworkable. Let us be pragmatically optimistic so as not to be mired down in our own negativism. Only positivity would create the thought process and energy to act decisively.

As a civilisation and culture above par of others for centuries, it is our bounden duty to support, drive, set examples –like Gandhiji brought down the brutal western colonialism with non-violence- with courage, righteousness, commitment etc refining and ringing in a just and fair refined system.

The challenge is to realise India’s immense potential and deliver it sooner than later to serve dream and aspirations of teeming millions. The policies and paths smoothened by corruption is not the one to be taken. Instead, those empowered for public service and paved by integrity are prescriptive.

Dynastic party politics resembling monarchy and oligarchy has been imposed on us over the decades. It has taken deep roots –like caste and feudal systems- and is cornering channels of state aids, funds, distribution to the needy, partnering in public private partnerships and grabbing a larger than fair share of economic activities (by remitting forex through participatory notes) from the bourses, cornering developmental activities by licensing, and parking illicit funds in private ventures. Gross violations of Company Law, Taxation, Audit reporting etc must be unearthed and perpetrators punished. Driven by lure of lucre, exempting dividends from tax and schemes to promote investment in stocks are ploys mainly to generate income and wealth for those in power and in the know; their bespoke benefits of capital generation/formation and trickle down acclaimed too.

Episodes of corruption and questionable deals being aired by activists and unstinting political support by party loyalists against them, is portraying the political class as spineless, highlighting sycophancy. Failure of micro-finance loan schemes, embezzlement of funds allocated for specific projects to help, assist and generate work for the unskilled, handicapped etc must be probed and the looters punished. Once the nexus between dirty politicians and schemes are exposed, they can easily be defeated, sent to penitentiary and retired.

A quick guess-timate puts cost of corruption at about 30% debilitating our purse/living standards. Imagine the positive multiplier effect of its correction, trickle down and taxation gains too! Corruption in corridors of power is denying us opportunity to escape from vicious cycle of poverty, inequality and exploitation, as funds for rural development, employment etc are syphoned off. Justice is being denied to the poor in the name of pity and charity, whilst funds earmarked for their betterment are looted. Sad indeed that farmers are committing suicide, whereas grains procured are rotting and high quantum of PDS is stolen, misdirected and smuggled with the connivance of all in the logistics chain.

Hidden hand of politicians are seen in high-handedness, interference in every contract, employment etc driving costs high, quality down, creating recovery modes for the middlemen. Legendary qualities of the lotus aside, it too has been stained and tainted; so too all icons and symbols in and of politics. Entire civil service system, contracts and jobs are infested with party sympathisers. They all must be coaxed and converted as whistle-blowers.

Scam probes should be monitored by public activists till they are completed, punishments meted out, funds recovered and corrective measures instated. Introducing new glib words like Trust Deficit and Ethics Deficit etc just won’t do. Elasticity of patience and tolerance has been breached. The inflexion point for drastic change is upon us and we better act speedily, lest revolution of violent kind erupts. For, the losers and underprivileged are impatient, daring, demanding, become obstructionist and turning violent. They cannot be appeased by promises that are invariably ignored after elections.

Political correction with societal and social urgency as a social work is the need of the times. All social activists and movements need to come together onto one platform regardless of the focused important causes and sectors they have been addressing and serving. Whilst such efforts must be goaded, they need not remain isolated from mainstream politics. Socio-Politico work to preserve our freedom and ensure fair and equitable economic development must be the priority. Otherwise, the BPL numbers to be served through social work for the losers/disadvantaged etc will keep swelling. The have-nots are growing in geometric progression, while the haves are increasing in small steps.

Writing, discussing, analysing, prophesising etc would not suffice. Those who have ideas for championing the cause and changing the political system must work together under a national coalition banner espousing a practical dictum: **LEAD, FOLLOW or MOVE!** Airing strategies aren’t enough. We must take initiatives to get workable ones executed to get desired results. Those with clean slates willing to have their public and private lives put under scrutiny of public glare must join the movement. They must be ready to accept *sua sponte* trial by media, judgment of informed people, perception of populace and bias of ordinary folk. We are fortunate to have few crusaders and so, let us whole-heartedly support our common goals, without fearing that having embraced politics they too may turn corrupt. Many would like to be in their shoes, but must be estopped for various reasons. This is the historical opportunity to come out of closets and support every which way. Let us march on and take the nation forward with cleaner agenda.

Clarion call into elections is to get into and clean up the political system. It is after all a continuous evolution and we get what we deserve. It is our duty to refine it every once a while with the demands of the changing times through smooth paradigm shifts. What we have learned by experience in half a century must be used to cure the system of its ills. The tipping point is long past for gradual and peaceful changes. Therefore, let us all channelize our energies and Good Samaritan attitudes and work dedicatedly. One’s duties to societies is not complete by doing good karma; Dharma demands that we part-take in political activities for improving the system on a continuous basis also.

Whilst unflinching social work deserves admiration, assistance and the highest priority, it is apt and opportune time for social activists from all fields –poverty, medical, environment etc- to hold hands, focus, network and work together on political fronts too. IT IS TIME FOR CREATIVE THINKING.

True, politics is the art of getting things done, imposing policies exploiting discretionary opportunities etc even when they seem unpopular, partisan etc. Yes, civil servants/administrators are to certain extend under the orders of their political masters –empowered by citizens through ballot boxes- but the formers’ failings is what has given rise to the unsavoury demands of the latter. It is not surprising that Amendment to the Representation of the People Act has been pending for more than two decades.

The rotten system saturated with malfeasance due to indiscriminate use of discretionary powers can be cleansed by preventing those with criminal background/records from contesting/winning. Given nuances of appeals, delays and favourable court decisions that are not difficult to obtain- it may be impossible to curtail them, as all parties have been putting them up and supporting their candidatures. The way we have let and the parties have converted themselves to private, family and fiefdoms, clean politics has no hope in the immediate future unless we bring in drastic measures as game changers. Paid news episodes aside, the media’s newfound altruistic approach as fourth estate must be well and timeously utilised to arouse interest, spread it like wild fire and be ready for impact by next elections.

Thus new idioms through lateral thinking have to be evolved with alacrity. **Citizens ombudsmen *must be formed at all levels – panchayat, municipal, district, state, national- to conduct suo motto enquiries –assisted and monitored by the media- on the background of candidates to grade them and announce/advice the voters, so that undesirables can be isolated, ignored and rejected.***

It can be comprised of eleven wise men drawn from all walks of life: one each from all participating political parties, judiciary, academia, sports, media, scientists, social activists, women’s rightists, environmentalists, disadvantaged & challenged groups, etc. Once it is set up, tested, improved & refined, it can be institutionalised and constitutionalised to impart it the necessary powers as a new overseeing body. ***As law has failed to serve us, let us take natural justice into our own hands.*** Please note that Laws are made by those in power to suit themselves, though ostensibly for welfare of the people and hence the stalemate on Lokpal Bill.

Caveat but: Nonviolence, disobedience and non-coperation as effective measures that Gandhiji embedded in us has become a bane with *hartals, bandhs and gherao* inflicted on us for the smallest reasons derailing normal life many a times; this on top of the many avoidable holidays. Nevertheless, why not we use it against our ***political masters by locking them up in parliament and gheraoing them till a proper and effective Lokpal Bill is enacted.***

***If well-known notorious politicians and big guns with corruption/criminal records –history sheeters- are selectively targeted through well drawn up manifesto highlighting their nefarious activities and defeated at the hustings, it would be a good beginning and augur well for the FREE INDIA AGAIN movement***. ***Its ripple effects will cascade like long waves as a tsunami across the subcontinent. It should be started at all opportunistic levels –embedding such anti-incumbency in the process- and eventually for elections to the parliament. Its domino effect it will have would suffice to sow the seeds to cause desired changes speedily across the broad political spectrum.***

The overthrows of Shah of Iran, Marcos, Suharto, Mubarak etc evicting dynasties, despots and dictatorial systems thrust upon the people are forewarnings of the last few decades. A million mutinees are fermenting, and once brewed, spirits will be rekindled. Learning from the lessons so far on usurping and misuse of power/funds, credible alternatives to the systems in place must be quickly drawn up to take the promises and thrust of the new found movement forward.

Politics has become so filthy that it is crying for clean-up creating virtuous space for cleaner ones to evolve. Flouting law, lack of accountability, covering up misdeeds, misusing the system and venality resulting in cesspools causing miasma must be exposed one by one till the culprits are identified and brought down. Recent exposes is a new beginning and courageous citizens must be encouraged to continue the same at all levels. INTEGRITY must be the buzz word to serve and preserve hard won independence and freedom of liberty, fraternity and equality. Without it, the other three are not deliverable.

India is her villages; any change at macro level would have to be more bottom up than top down -realistically with frequent reality checks, the anxieties of the middles class in urban areas notwithstanding. Government employees must be converted to civil servants to serve the public and not overlord over them. Their numbers should be reduced with one time retrenchment settlement without pensions to save on funds too, to bring in accountability and efficacy.

Youth is the eternal source of hope and power. They have to be guided and led by those who have courage and see beyond the horizon. Their energy, zest and drive must be tapped. They are ready, willing and waiting. The onus is on us capables. We may be accused by next generations & not forgiven for the mess we have precipitated due to inaction.

Impacts of governments ceding power to market forces –despite capitalism’s failure writ large across global village, after half a century of unfettered run- due to their inability to govern and manage public corporations, is smouldering and might result in socio-political upheavals. Both the Anglo-Saxon ‘market based’ and continental ‘bank based’ models are not suited for India. In the wake of failure of ideologies to live up to expectations and deliver in the last century, we have to evolve yet newer fairer ones. Therefore let us not pre-conceive or commit on political ideologies, but be driven by the single agenda of eradicating corruption.

Serious limitations of democracies aside, it is by far the best of worst choices unless people are fortunate to be under benevolent monarchs. Chasms and schisms can be deep and wide between fundamental variations –as in spiritual movements- of the democratic processes of *vox populi* (voice of the populace). Traversing and concluding decision making in Majoritarian V Consensus is an art by itself. It becomes a trilemma when the opposition too need be carried for unobstructed implementation speedily for the good of all vote banks without bias. Converting the undecided fence sitters is said to be the eventual winning formula and parties cannot be blamed for targeting those from others too.

Electoral funding, to remove the root cause of all ills must be addressed in due course by new set of clean politicians, lest it be set usurped cunningly by the older ones like so many other schemes for lining pockets. It is premature as yet to fund elections for our democracy. Instead of copying such methods, we might as well leap frog into electronic voting from mobile devices using digital recognition. Yes, UDS (unique identity scheme) shorn of duplication and its possibilities needs to be in place, at first.

Let not extreme ideologies dissuade and divide the activists. It is imperative that we all come together onto one platform ***AGAINST BRIBERY and CORRUPTION,*** with a common minimum programme “Reject, Recall, Referendum” rewriting constitution encapsulating new dreams, aspirations and visions.

 Jai Hind

***Sloganeering***

*Chalo, hadao, ye lok ko; jise chori ki adat hei*

*Vote leke panch sal; hamem nahim dek paye*

***Math*** *mat do enem aur enke party ko*

*Naya party hum banayem ge*

*Janta ka viswas sambalemge*

*Hum honge kamiyab zaroor*

*Come on, come one and all; let us clean up this democratic mess*

*Vote for good ones, reject the bad ones, recall the corrupt, keen eye we must keep*

*We have been careless and not bothered, they have hijacked the system and seats*

*Money, power, network et al; If we don’t our children will suffer and curse*

***Re-energising Democracy***

Oh Oh what shall we do, look at the mess we are in

It’s all our fault, of not voting, keeping an eye and correcting

Let us turn active, vote, watch, isolate, deny

Reject, recall, punish the criminals, crooks, culprits, cronies.

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