

Who is the champion of democracy?



Senior lawyer and activist Shanti Bhushan, left, and Gandhian social activist Anna Hazare arrive to attend a session of the drafting committee of Lokpal bill, an anti-corruption watchdog, in New Delhi, India, Wednesday June 15, 2011. Hazare staged a four-day hunger strike in April to demand the government take immediate steps to fight an entrenched culture of corruption that has plagued India for decades, ending with the government setting up the committee. The committee, which includes Hazare and other nonelected activists, has met regularly since then. (AP)

By Dr Sandeep Pandey – CNS

(CNS): Manish Tiwari, Congress spokesperson, has said democracy faces greatest peril from the tyranny of unelected and unelectable. He said that the Centre was running out of patience with 'irrational expectations and attitudes.' Earlier Pranab Mukherjee said that there is growing trend of undermining the democratic process and extra-constitutional authority might lead to complete collapse of democracy. Mani Shankar Aiyar said that he would have not paid any heed to the fasts undertaken as part of anti-corruption movements and dismissed them as circuses. Digvijaya Singh has been aggressive all along and had demanded enquiry into the expenditure incurred during Anna Hazare's fast right in the beginning. Kapil Sibal had also ridiculed the process of drafting of Lokpal bill asking how it would help educate every child and provide drinking water to all.

Even though the government is jointly drafting the Lokpal bill with members of civil society yet it is clear that it is not very serious about it. Senior members of the ruling Congress Party are very bitter about the participation of the civil society in drafting the bill. What is the reason of their exasperation? These leaders represent the elite ruling class of our country. The fact of the matter is that all mainstream political parties thrive on money from corruption. It would become impossible for them if they abandoned corrupt practices that they adopt to win elections. Manish Tiwari would become unelectable if he did not have the support of corrupt apparatus of his party. It would be interesting to simply ask how many of Congress party, or for that matter of any party, MPs have won their last elections by spending within the Rs. 25 lakhs limit set by Election Commission during campaigning. Congress party is known to give more money than this to its promising candidates. When the foundation is laid on corruption how do we expect the MP to remain honest once he is elected?

This government has been responsible for price rise and the Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission says that an income of Rs. 20 per person per day in urban areas and Rs. 16 in rural areas should be considered the cut off for Below Poverty Line. So, somebody earning Rs. 21 per day in a city and Rs. 16 in a village will not be considered poor. That is an example of one of the many 'irrational expectations and attitudes' of the government. Can Montek Singh Ahluwalia survive in Rs. 21 per day? Pranab Mukherjee should be asked when the government decides to launch Green Hunt in tribal areas should that not be considered a growing trend of undermining democracy and display of extra-constitutional power? Mani Shankar Aiyar should be asked if 2G Spectrum and Commonwealth games would not be considered circuses? Although, to give credit to him he did consider Commonwealth games a circus and left the country as a mark of protest while they were held.

Digvijaya Singh must answer whether enquiry into wealth amassed by politicians and stashed abroad is lower on his priority list than the money spent on Anna Hazare's fast. If only Kapil Sibal had introduced the notion of 'common school system', which is in practice in every developed country, in his Right to Education Act, every child in India would have access to good quality education. But by abd-

ating his responsibility and then expecting Lokpal bill to do his job is being dishonest. We must also remember that upon taking charge of the Communications minister he simply dismissed the 2G Spectrum scam as not being there.

The behaviour of our politicians is appalling. The political class is questioning the locus standi of civil society in forcing the government to do certain things. But the fact is that people have lost faith in their elected representatives. They know that these legislators do not represent their interests but they represent the interests of corrupt capitalist class. Hence most of the policies and programmes formulated are not only not helping the poor but they are increasing the gap between rich and poor.

If the elected representatives had been doing their job properly India would have had a Lokpal long back and there would have been no need for a civil society movement. But given the nature of corrupt politics no political party would favour a strong anti-corruption regime. Hence it was left to the people to force to government to start acting in that direction. Manish Tiwari, Pranab Mukherjee and Mani Shankar Aiyar must realise that people are not extra-constitutional in a democracy. In fact, they are supreme and sovereign. People can dictate to the government and politicians if they do not perform. People's representatives are just what they are called, they are not rulers enjoying special privileges.

Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement has resonated with common people's sentiments, who are the victim of this corrupt system. Right now people are supporting Anna Hazare over their politicians. In that sense for the time being Anna Hazare is a truer people's representative even though he may not be able to win an election like Manish Tiwari.

And sooner or later the question is going to be raised about the track record of our so called politicians. Who has a better track record of public service - Anna Hazare or Manish Tiwari? Even from this standpoint Anna Hazare is a better people's representative than Manish Tiwari. The practice of allowing novices, without having any experience of serving the people, merely because of their right connections or their money power to become politicians would have to be discontinued. The present Lok Sabha, with half its members super rich and with 162 members facing criminal charges cannot be considered as representing the people of India who are mostly poor and are victims of crimes committed by the powerful.

The existence of the class of politicians making most noise against Anna Hazare's campaign is in danger if a strong Lokpal Act is brought into place. It is this fear that is finding expression in their aggressive stance. Aggression is an instrument of fearful and corrupt. (CNS)

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