

~~A few months back,~~

RAJARSHI

People versus the parliament

A few months back, Anna Hazare, in reply to a question that whether he would join politics, replied in the negative. On being asked why, he said that he would never win. He does not have neither the money nor the inclination to bribe voters, get them liquor or feasts — things he considers very vital to win an election.

Anna Hazare is a well known social activist. The integrity of the persons his commitment towards the nation, is beyond doubt. But such statements from him perplexed & many a believer of the democratic system. What he effectively did was question the moral legitimacy of the parliament. If M.P's are winning elections

by ~~or~~ bribing voters, what good can we expect from them? How can they represent us? Anna's movement against corruption was often perceived as a people's uprising against the "fayriyya" of the parliament — the coming together of people war of people vs parliament. statements were made denouncing the composition of the parliament as also the M.P's themselves. The parliament was seen as den of the corrupt, an antipeople institution.

But isn't parliament about the symbol of democracy? — An embodiment of the aspirations of the people in the parliament. Are not M.P's our representatives? Then how come this people vs parliament phenomenon?

To put things in perspective, parliament has always had its critics. The extreme left

considers it to be a sham — a tool
of the bourgeoisie to exploit the masses.
— a smoke screen to gratify the lust
of the rich under the guise of being
the representative of the masses. Lenin
called it ~~the~~ a big stag. The Naxalites
endorse this position
Bismarck considered parliament
a ~~total~~ futile talking shop. Never, he
said, can effective decisions be taken
by discussions. Democracy, for him was putrid

yeast of South Germany, anarchism.
Even Gandhiji was no too cosy
with the idea of the parliament. He
considered to be a foreign idea. True
freedom can't be achieved by parliament.
It can come only when each man
conquers him self — is his own master.

Be it so, this is what we had
fought for — democracy. This was the
overwhelming consensus among the leaders
of the national movement. It seems

to be the consensus even now, and it is for good reasons.

So vast, & so heterogeneous a country like India can't but be ruled by a representative institution. We have the barriers of geography, of caste, class, religion & what not. Even the most well meaning of ruler can't understand the full magnitude of problems, or their all their facets without the help of a representative institution of course we don't & can't have democracy in its Aristotelian form — direct democracy. The country is too huge for that. Also the problems too complex for all to dwell on them. So we have the next best thing — representative democracy. May be problem creep up here — one man can't represent all. However we are always trying to get a taste of the Aristotelian concept by constant devolution of power, by Panchayati

Raj institutions e.t.c. Election reforms also take place (like lowering voting age or declaring assets of M.P.'s).
Too but things in context,
we also have our own share of problems -
bags full of them. We have the problems
of poverty, of corruption, of black money,
of inefficient delivery mechanism, of
M.P.'s who double up as criminals,
of the too powerful who can't be
brought to book, of the ever expanding
populations, of the polluted rivers e.t.c.
We have problems galore. & this irritates
us. ~~We~~ May not always be M.P.'s "representative" in
the full sense ~~of the term~~ - sometimes ^{moving from the office} representing areas
We are a young country. We
want to grow fast. Such things seem to
be putting shackles on our feet. Neighbouring
China on the other hand seems all so
efficient, & this increases our anxiety.
Our parliament seems not working the
most efficiently. Infact some of them
are corrupt, some with criminal records.
They seem to be oblivious to our needs.

as much as we would have liked it to),
~~a once~~ ext people have come out of
the narrow & dark ghettos of caste &
religion, ready to take on the world.
A once shamelessly exploited colony is
now on its path to become what could
be a "super power".

True ~~we~~ our parliament is
a little shaky than the oft cited
Chinese polit bureau. But then, this was
what we "knowledgely" opted
for. It has its own advantages. For
e.g. the Dravidian movement could
be ~~see~~ quelled down without firing
a bullet, just because we were soft &
accomodative at the top. ~~A~~
To cite another example - that
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In the long run however it seems India is the net gainer. The fallout of the coercive policies, it seems will hurt China a lot. Thus her "window of demographic dividend" will close a lot too soon. Thus China will grey before getting rich.

India, allowing nature to face no such predicament. Yet she also has slowed her population growth (though not as fast as China) & she did it by co-opting people. Electoral pressures had forced her to find better ways out.

Yes, in the short term we are a lot more shaky (we here means the parliament) but then ours is a sustainable path. The ex USSR was also, on the surface, quiet efficient, but then it was not sustainable.

Again, to put things in perspective, all such shakiness, for good or bad, is because parliament has to care for the people's wishes.

Things True disillusion has
crept in. Movements decrying parliament
& M.P's gain a lot of sympathy.
But once one sees cares to see the
whole picture he can see that things
are improving, & improving fast. May
be not as fast as the expectations of
people are rising, but fast. And it's
all due to the deliberative parliament
- sometimes slow, but sure.

Infact corruption, the issue
about which Anna's movement is
all about couldn't be hidden thanks
to this very parliament. It was this
very parliament that made crushing
by force any popular movement, impossible
No wonder Anna, to clear things up, said
that he does not wish in any way to
encroach upon the ^{sovereignty} parliament. Infact
his next move would be to persuade

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people to send better representations
to parliament. May be election reforms
are needed, but again that has to
be decided by the parliament. For it
is the parliament that embodies the
wish of the country. ☺

[N.B:- Dear Sir, please send the comments
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