

COMMENT

Parliament or People?

IN VIEW OF THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS in the country and the statements made by various leaders both from ruling party and also from the opposition, also by both popular leaders of the public namely Sri Anna Hazare and Sri Ramdev, a very important and deep question crops up. Whether in a parliamentary democracy, the people of the country have any role to play in the affairs of the country or not, after they have duly elected and sent their representatives to the parliament. Will the country have to wait for the next five years to become eligible for voicing her opinion or her decision?

The hon'ble home minister who justified the horrific act of the Delhi Police on 4th June in an interview in DD on 8th June did not let any opportunity go to stress upon the word parliamentary democracy and the need to respect the parliamentary process. He emphasized that it is in the parliament that the last decision will be taken. Everybody knows that parliament functions by majority and the ruling UPA has a majority in the parliament. So in effect it will be by the UPA that all decisions of the country will be taken. And in a political structure where there is the party system, party leaders are known to impose their wish on their MP's. Congress has no history of being democratic and if Mr Chidambaram says that Congress speaks in one voice, it is well expressed in the media, whose voice it is. Particularly in a Parliamentary democracy, because the decision of a party is so crucial, no party can claim that its internal affairs are solely its own business. No one knows whether the people of the country have elected the party to power or the MP's to the parliament, and there is a big difference between the two. But in either case, the internal decision making process of a party is a matter of concern for all people. True the party has a constitution and a stated policy framework, but the policy making environment is so dynamic that declaring a constitution and a policy framework, is not sufficient to extract independence from the public after due election. There is a great need for adjustment and calibration all along the time line, and it occurs.

In a parliamentary democracy, even the opposition has little power to affect the policy making process. Thus even more the internal decision making of a party becomes public affair.

As long as the party controls the MP's, parliamentary democracy is a big satire, where the MP's decide but in reality they don't.

The home minister who is so very sensitive to public opinion and also advocates the sanctity of the parliament should bring a legislation for the possibility of Recall of an MP. In this fast changing world, the people should be given a chance to change their mind and call back an MP.

Until that power is given to the people, at least there should be space for Satyagrahas like that of Anna Hazare and Baba Ramdev's followers, where the people can voice their dissent and influence the decision of the parliament.

It should not be forgotten that parliament is elected by the people to look after its welfare and it cannot enjoy unconditional power for all five years without restraint.

So either give the public power to recall an MP or give them the power to overrule the parliament. That will be true spirit of democracy. □□□ *[contributed]*