

COMMENT

MPs are Rubber Stamps

PRESENT PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM is actually party-crazy, not democracy. The MPs are always shivering under the sword of the whip. They cannot vote as per their own thinking or directives of the constituents. They have to dance to the tune of the party leaders in order to obtain party ticket in the next election. When a pro-active MP obtained signatures of about 20 MPs on a statement relating to grant of minimum free amount as demogrant to each voter of the country to enable him meet his basic needs without having to run after the authorities, they were hauled up and bitterly scolded by the leaders for having taken a view on this suggestion without first consulting the leaders. Thus MPs are really rubber stamps for the party leaders. Governance cannot be reformed in this circumstance through the existing MPs. More so because an unwritten agreement has been reached between the top leaders of main parties not to expose or attack the black money or corruption of each other. No Party is today genuinely interested in unraveling black money because all are swimming in it. The initiative taken by the Government to establish a Lokpal is like the pickpocket helping the traveler lift his bags. Concerned citizens have to find a way that controls corruption without depending upon the Government in any way.

One possibility is for such honest persons to contest the elections as Independent candidates. Target should be to get 100 Independents into the Lok Sabha. These candidates must commit not to join any Party or government; and to cast their votes as per their own understanding. Effort must be to force the ruling government-of whatever party-into a minority that is ever dependent upon support of these independents to get a bill passed in the Lok Sabha. It is likely that the vote cast by these Independent MPs will reflect will of the people rather than that of party leaderships.

Problem is that performance of Independent candidates during that last 60 years has been rather dismal. Most MPs fight elections as Independents only because there is some malfunction within the Party. The few truly Independent candidates have no strategy as to what they will do as lone MPs in the parliament. In contrast, the proposed Independent candidates will contest elections on the platform of 'controlling the Government.' Anna Hazare, Baba Ramdev and Kiran Bedi should contest the elections with the avowed objective of controlling the Government and not being part of the Government.

A second level of control system may also be made. A network of spiritual, social and self-employed persons may be made. Thousands of individuals are working for social good in their own small ways. One lawyer is helping the poor fight false cases hoisted upon him; another is helping the affected families face the wrath of land acquisition; third is sincerely guiding research scholars; and fourth is running a school in the slum. The important point is that these persons have not built NGOs, they do not seek funding, they are not answerable to donors, they are not overweighed with the responsibility of arranging for salaries of their huge staff, etc. They neither seek, not get, any financial benefits or even publicity for their works. They work for their own self-satisfaction. Such well-meaning individuals are the true Constructive Workers that were envisaged by Gandhiji.

Governance of the country will be improved by such a two-pronged strategy to invigorate independent politicians and thinkers. In absence of such independent force, the Lokpal will meet the same fate as that of the judiciary, CVC and CBI. □□□ *[contributed]*