

## **Rousing People's Power**

Referring to the recent movement, led by Anna Hazare, which made a significant impact in rousing the public mind against corruption at least for a while, a leading social activist said, 'There were people across caste and class, not readymade cadre. There was so much spontaneity. So many poems, so many slogans were composed. It was an *utsav* of democracy.' Doubtless it created much excitement in the country, especially in the Capital, for a few weeks in August.

Corruption has taken gigantic proportions. Common people are the sufferers, but they are unorganized and rightly blamed for short memory. They resent the kind of governance, or rather the lack of it, they have, but do not know what to do about it. They have become rather used to the inconveniences it causes in their everyday life. When patience is lost at last, they can unite and come forward for a common cause, if they get leaders can command their faith. The recent happenings in Delhi seemed to have some signs of such discontent. But, certainly, it betrayed the longing of the public for an honest leadership, which is scarce today. It was also clear that, due to lack of education, most of them had a vague idea, as expected, of the issues involved.

There are many good people, who work for changing the situation for the better and, for that matter, for putting better systems in place to curb malpractices in public life. There may be differences of opinion regarding the means of achieving it and the finer nuances of the institutions to be created. Yet, there is a broad consensus among social activists that a new monitoring system needs to be added to the already existing and malfunctioning ones. They are getting popular support, as the media have also sprung into action in a big way. The concern is how to cleanse the three columns of democracy – the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary. Nobody talks about how the fourth column, the media, is wreaking havoc on young minds everywhere.

It may be mentioned that the new systems may equally malfunction, if we are unable to 'produce men equal to the system'. However well-intentioned and justified, no movement or institution can solve the problem of immoral tendencies, unless we take enough care of the moral character of citizens. We have the biggest written Constitution of the world and innumerable Acts and Regulations, institutions and systems. Do they solve our problems? Swami Vivekananda said long back, 'No nation is great or good, because Parliament enacts this or that, but because its men are great and good.'

Popular movements are not new in this country. For over a century we have had bouts of people's movements, most of which died down in no time. Our people do not have the kind of political education Europe traditionally had for two thousand five hundred years. Our people, except in the small republics of yore, never had the taste of self-governance. In the past they left their destiny in the hands of kings or an omnipotent being they called God. In the present age, they leave it to their discredited political masters. What can really change the situation? It is education and education alone. True education is the only eye opener. It unleashes the hidden potentials of the people. It enables them to think for themselves, form

opinions, and act confidently. The first President of the Republic of Pakistan rightly said, 'Democracy without education is hypocrisy without limitation.'

In a lecture delivered in Madras in 1897, on his return from the West, Swami Vivekananda explained: 'There is, then, another great consideration. Here in India, we have always been governed by kings; kings have made all our laws. Now the kings are gone, and there is no one left to make a move. The government dares not; it has to fashion its ways according to the growth of public opinion. It takes time, quite a long time, to make a healthy, strong, public opinion which will solve its own problems; and in the interim we shall have to wait. The whole problem of social reform, therefore, resolves itself into this: where are those who want reform? Make them first. Where are the people? The tyranny of a minority is the worst tyranny that the world ever sees. A few men who think that certain things are evil will not make a nation move. Why does not the nation move? First educate the nation, create your legislative body, and then the law will be forthcoming. First create the power, the sanction from which the law will spring. The kings are gone; where is the new sanction, the new power of the people? Bring it up. Therefore, even for social reform, the first duty is to educate the people, and you will have to wait till that time comes. Most of the reforms that have been agitated for during the past century have been ornamental.... You must go down to the basis of the thing, to the very root of the matter. That is what I call radical reform. Put the fire there and let it burn upwards and make an Indian nation. And the solution of the problem is not so easy, as it is a big and vast one. Be not in a hurry, this problem has been known several hundred years.'

It precisely encapsulates the whole problem and its real and lasting solution. If we seriously struggle towards this end, then only we can have a radical reform towards *nityotsava* of democracy – a sustained celebration of people's rule.