

WELFARE PARTY: WHY AND HOW?

On the world map, India is a happening place now. Our successful experiment of an independent democratic society has become an exemplary model in itself. Our economic growth is attracting the worldwide attention. The world is in awe of the talents of our scientists, technocrats, and professionals. The Indians are consistently escalating their ratio among the wealthiest individuals in the world.

But the tragedy of this splendid advancement is that its fruits are viciously confined to a tiny section of the society. Despite of this unprecedented growth, the majority of our people are not able to fulfil even their basic needs. We are among the fastest growing economies, but still more than half of the world's poorest, hungriest and the most deprived people live in our country.

We didn't fight the war of independence just to get rid of the British. The objective was not to replace the white masters by black masters. This heroic saga of our proud history was derived by a noble vision. The objective wasn't merely to alter the hands that were ruling. The objective was rather to change the style and way of ruling.

Six decades after achieving independence, this dream is still unfulfilled. Corruption has become such an irrepressible menace that the whole system seems to be helpless before it. Everyone recognises the presence of this fatal disorder, but no one seems to have any cure for it. Political institutions of all levels are totally in its clutch. Its ruinous impact has paralysed the bureaucracy. And now media and judiciary are also getting spoiled.

The last few years have witnessed the emergence of a new institutionalised variety of corruption. This new form, powered by a well-coordinated nexus between the ruling and opposition politicians, corporate leaders, their lobbyists and media tycoons, has the capability to influence the decisions and policy making at the highest levels. This situation can push the country to the worst kind of economic chaos.

A major factor contributing to this situation is the flawed developmental vision of our rulers. Under this vision, the whole focus is on creating the wealth; regardless of the origins and the sources of the new wealth, regardless of its target beneficiaries and regardless of the kind of compromises this wealth creation is demanding on the sovereignty and dignity of the nation. Instead of the interest of a common Indian, the interest of domestic and global capitalists has become the main decisive factor for Policy formulation. The role of the state has confined to providing the opportunities for the growth and development of the businesses of the corporate

houses and to eliminate the hindrances from their path. Agriculture and Agro-economy is in crisis. The opportunities in rural areas are shrinking; the share of agriculture in GDP is fast declining and in rural and urban India a poor man is always under threat of displacement. The economy based on usury and speculation is concentrating the wealth in a few hands. Many rural households are left with no alternative except migrating to a city and living there in extreme sub-human conditions.

The impact of this terrible state of affairs is not confined to poor and downtrodden. Most frustrated is the growing urban middle class. Our professionals find it difficult to fulfil their aspirations in India through fair means. Huge number of our proud engineers, doctors and managers are forced to migrate to foreign lands. Budding entrepreneurs are disheartened by the sturdy traditions of political intervention and corruption at each step. Despite of all the claims of development, the fact remains that, had these evils not prevailed, our progress would have been much faster and the whole country would have benefitted from the fruits of this progress.

Weaker sections of our society and minorities are still struggling for justice. They have reasonable representation neither in the institutions of governance nor in the national wealth and production. Common man is still at the receiving end of the worst kind of atrocities and human rights violation by the very institutions and authorities that were supposed to be his protectors. The morale and powers of the authorities have gained a respect and dignity that is much more superior to that of human lives. In many regions of the country, the poor, the Dalits, the minorities and other disadvantaged sections are forced to live in a constant state of fear and insecurity.

The real test of a democracy is how it treats its minorities. The biggest minority of the country, the Muslims, have gradually become the most backward social group. By all educational, economic and other developmental measures, they went through unprecedented downfall in the last six decades. They couldn't still get rid of the lethal sense of insecurity. The violent communalism always keeps them terrorised. The state excesses, sometimes, in the name of curbing communal conflicts and sometimes in the name of countering terrorism, have not yet stopped.

Emergence of fascist and totalitarian political movements constitutes a great threat to the country. The organised and institutionalised communal massacres, the rising social trends of communal discriminations and boycotts; baseless allegations of terrorism against the pre-identified target communities and exploitation of police, media and even judiciary for promoting such allegations; registering and advancing unsubstantiated criminal cases against the activists working for truth and justice; all such frivolities have not remained aberrations

now. Such despotic currents are indeed a warning bell for any democracy. The independence of democratic institutions and their free functioning within their areas is among the lifelines of a healthy democratic society. The way our institutions have degraded in the last decade is a matter of serious concern.

The most important factor responsible for this situation is the peculiar political culture that has built up in our society. This culture that is grown on the foundations of corruption, nepotism, caste and community favouritism, elitism and dynastic polity can never ensure justice to everyone. Exploitation, oppression, treachery and narrow-minded bigotry are the indispensable and logical outcome of this culture. The biggest casualty of this culture is merit and talent. The worthy and able individuals get detached from the process of leadership and nation-building and the charge of the nation goes in the hands of undeserving mediocres.

The national political parties are fully under the influence of corporate groups. A large number of corrupt politicians have infiltrated in them. The totalitarian leaning and anti-minority bias of a mainstream party is well-known. The parties, who were so far considered the champions of poor and downtrodden, have either succumbed to the capitalist influence or their obsolete ideology and class politics can no longer go with the aspirations of the new India. The small parties that could have become their alternatives are so seized in the narrow circles of their regional and sectarian interests that they also cannot promote real justice and equality. It therefore implies that there is no political force that is capable of providing universal justice and with which every Indian can associate his or her hopes.

The main reason of this situation is the worst kind of materialism that has taken the whole country into its grip. This is greed and gluttony that makes a man unworthy of pursuing any great ideal selflessly. After business, industry and bureaucracy, now politics and public service are also under the grasp of this greed and gluttony.

In creating a passion for selfless service characterized by great ideals, the fear of God and spirituality plays a pivotal role. Unfortunately, in the politics of our country, the religion has always been used to create differences, to polarize the society and to exploit the weak. In a religious society like India, the religious and spiritual values can play a constructive role in bringing about a healthy social change. The secular constitution of India should not be a barrier for this. Because the constitution does not oppose spirituality, it opposes the discrimination between religions. It is necessary to connect the politics with high moral standards on the basis of spiritual and moral values of religions.

The constitution of India has given a concept of democracy that envisages the equality among all strata and sections of the society and the scope for fulfilment of the aspirations of all. But in

effect, our caste and community-based political system has taken such a shape that democracy is being practiced in the sense of majorityism. Despite of constitutional assurances for the full opportunities for all cultures to thrive and develop, practically minority cultures do not get the support they need and deserve.

The million dollar question is how the much-needed political reform can be accomplished. For this, just change of hands is not sufficient. The entry of some new leaders or parties is also not adequate. Any superficial or mechanical change will not either suffice. What our body politic needs is a paradigm shift, a kind of metamorphosis, a change from the deep roots. It requires massive social awakening. It demands alternative political culture; the new political traditions and environment. We need to wear off the connection between politics and capital. We need to make an end to the unhealthy penchant of considering politics a profession and a wealth creation tool. We need to wipe out the tendency of considering politics a weapon in communal, casteist and sectarian conflicts. Politics will have to be cleansed from crimes and criminals. The criminalisation of Politics, the Communalisation of Politics, the Commercialisation of Politics and the Sectarianisation of Politics are the biggest evils of our prevailing political culture. We need to erect a mighty social and public resistance against these evils. This should bring forth and make prevalent such individuals in politics who are driven by high ideals and moral standards and who aim at the justice and welfare of all Indians.

It is with these dreams that a few concerned citizens have come forward to establish Welfare Party. This party will comprise the individuals having record of flawless public service and who are able to fight and offer sacrifices for some values and ideals. The party will include people from all communities, classes and social groups and only those individuals will be allowed an entry into the party who can prove by word and deed, their commitment to the values and vision of the party. This party shall strive for thriving an alternative politics and shall attempt to emerge on the horizon of Indian politics as the voice of voiceless, the hope for justice and as a harbinger of a new India.

This will not be just another party engaged in power politics. This will be rather a movement for reforming the Indian Politics and will try to realise a welfare state based on moral values and governed by the principles of Justice, Freedom, Equality and Fraternity. To achieve this objective, the Party will launch massive public campaigns and will awaken the socio-political public consciousness. It will try to inculcate in common man the self esteem, the self confidence and the ambition and courage to fight the oppression and exploitation. It will try to promote able and virtuous leadership among masses and shall try to advance alternative politics in the country through this social struggle.

VISION AND VALUES

Value base Politics: Party shall try to promote an alternative politics in the country that is firmly rooted in high standards of morality and ethical values and that is free from crimes, corruption, selfishness and all kinds of narrow-minded prejudices. It will require making effective the mechanisms of accountability and transparency at all levels of public life and ensuring that authority and power are always coupled with an equal magnitude of responsibility and answerability, and flawless character become the prime-most prerequisite for political representation.

The Idea of a Welfare State: Party will aim at the establishment of a welfare state. Party believes that sufficient nutritious food, decent clothing, proper shelter, essential healthcare and elementary education are among the fundamental human rights and it is the duty of a welfare state to fulfil these basic needs of each of its citizens.

Development with Justice and Equality: Party envisages speedy growth in industry, trade, commerce and the national economy. But it shall try to reform the economy in a way as to ensure that the processes of development and wealth creation are properly regulated by the obligations of justice and equality. Humanity and human beings get precedence over economy and capital. Concentration of wealth is curbed and all the Indians get benefitted from the fruits of development. Economic development should also uplift the backward and downtrodden sections along with the industrialists and businessmen. Concerns for sustainability and the protection of environment should also formulate an important regulator of the development.

Democracy, Pluralism and Inclusiveness: Party shall promote the true spirit of democracy. Party believes in democracy not in the sense of mere majorityism but in the sense of inclusiveness and pluralism. A true democratic society is one that addresses the needs and demands of every section of the society and that ensures that every section contentedly fulfils its aspirations. The ideal society that party envisages will be founded on the notion of universal human brotherhood. It will make people of India grow above the narrow discriminations based on caste, community, region and language and nourish the spirit of unity in diversity. This notion of universal brotherhood implies that a warm hand of cooperation is raised to the weak and oppressed sections of the society and minorities, they are uplifted through special measures and affirmative actions and it is ensured that they get a dignified place in society and do not lag behind in the race of progress. It also implies that women should get full Growth and development opportunities with full protection to their femininity.

Cultural Federalism: Party envisages a society where all cultures have full opportunities to thrive and develop. The concept of federalism that party believes covers the cultural federalism along with geographic and linguistic federalism. What it means is, in a culturally diverse society like India, all cultural entities should get fullest opportunities, resources and powers to protect and promote their cultural values and identities. The Party proposes a notion of democracy where the rights of cultural groups are also protected along with the rights of individuals.