



The fast by Anna Hazare at Ramlila Maidan has ended. Before the ceremonial ending of the fast, the anti-graft crusader's close associate Arvind Kejriwal made a thanks giving speech. His speech was followed by that of Hazare. The attempt of both was to kiss and make-up with the powerful. The political class has indicated that they could be accommodative but cannot be dictated beyond a point. Hazare's demand of getting the Jan Lokpal Bill passed by August 30 has been blown to smithereens.

At the end of his speech, Hazare sermonised on the virtues that every participant of his movement should follow. The sermon would have been most welcome during the course of his fast when rampant hooliganism ruled roost on the streets. Those who live and work in Central Delhi areas would vouch that for the past few days there was extraordinary disorder on the roads leading to Ramlila Maidan.

Groups of riders doing stunts on motorcycle zipped past the citizens. These bikers wore a cap made of some kind of polythene by-product with Main Hun Anna printed on them, held flags and kept whizzing past, whistling and shouting. The traffic cops stood mute spectators, allowing them to do whatever they wanted to do lest it be construed as the Government attempt at using force to break an agitation.

Thanks to the third bridge on river Yamuna at Geeta Colony, today Delhi's underbelly stands connected with the heart of the Capital like never before. Hoodlums, urchins and rowdies all had a gala time in the name of fighting corruption. Barely some of them knew that the agitation was for the passage of a Jan Lokpal Bill.

Inside the historic Maidan, the agitators had their appetite for agitation whetted by loads of puree-sabzi, chole-chawal, kadhi-chawal, cartons of biscuits, truck-loads of bananas, crates of soft drinks and nimbu pani. In my two decade long career as reporter, I have not seen such

felicitation for the delegates to any public rally of any political party. We repeatedly raised the question of funding of political rallies, I hope we all gather the courage to audit the expenditure incurred on the jamboree which was witnessed at Ramlila Maidan.

When I talk of audit, I do not mean just auditing the well-kept account books of the organisations run by members of Team Anna, but those organisations which put up the public kitchens etc. It should be explained how come in a nation where crores fail to get two square meals a day, so much money was spent on food to keep an agitation going. Make public the names of these organisations and the names of the people behind them and vouch that the money spent by them was all clean, free of any taint.

Having discussed matters material, I would once again come back to the question of the ideological moorings of this agitation. What change this agitation is going to bring into our social system. At the risk of being ostracised, I would insist that this agitation was the revenge of a section of the intelligentsia on the mass leaders for a variety of reasons.

The pent up frustration of this section of the intelligentsia towards the mass leaders was best reflected in the performance of former cop Kiran Bedi at the Ramlila Maidan on the evening on August 26. Bedi's criticism of Parliament rightly invited sharp criticism with eminent lawyer and civil society supporter Harish Salve "disassociating" himself from the Anna Hazare-led movement. The former additional solicitor general said that after what has been uttered by Bedi, he would not oppose if the Government decided to use force to break this agitation.

And why only accuse Bedi of being arrogant and appalling. The acts of McCarthyism on the part of her colleague Arvind Kejriwal are no less deplorable. We have a very tolerant political class and bureaucracy, which despite strident media criticism, have always upheld the freedom of the Press. Such attributes have been totally lacking in Anna's Team.

All through the agitation, the anchors of the show while at times complimented the media for being them, falling in line with them but on other occasions also held out threat to those who were not falling in line. "We are reading the newspapers very closely," they would proclaim. That they did it in their immaturity is no excuse as on the penultimate day Arvind Kejriwal himself waved a copy of an English daily to a hysterical mob asking the newspaper to get its facts right on disassociation of Justice Santosh Hegde with the progress of the movement.

I may be accused of overlooking the big achievement of the movement led by Anna Hazare. I too want to know what was the achievement — to get Parliament pass a resolution expressing

its determination on passing a Lokpal Bill which would include three issues: (a) Lokayukta in every State; (b) Creation of citizen charter; and (c) Bring the lower bureaucracy under the ambit of Lokpal

Bill. There are States which have Lokayuktas functioning very effectively. In fact, one such functionary was Justice Santosh Hegde, whose report led to the resignation of Chief Minister of Karnataka BS Yeddyurappa, was till recently part of the core committee of Anna Hazare's movement. Regarding citizen's charter, there are several States which Leader of Opposition Sushma Swaraj listed during her speech and Congress MP Sandeep Dikshit supplemented, which have already passed bills to this effect.

The third issue of putting the lower bureaucracy under the ambit of the Lokpal. In my perception, it would be impractical to keep vigilance over officials as diverse from the Prime Minister to a lowly clerk and a peon under one umbrella organisation. It would bog down the organisation as Sitaram Yechury rightly pointed out that there are crores of cases pending in the courts due to insufficient infrastructure and manpower.

To set-up such a gargantuan Lokpal, we would need funds to create infrastructure and pay for the manpower. Where would the funds come from? The Government would pay for it by reducing grants on developmental projects or raise more funds by imposing fresh taxes. Either way, it's going to pay the tax payer dearly.

What's the way out? I have mentioned it in my earlier columns and Pranab Mukherjee, too, pointed towards it calling for greater use of technology to end the inter-face between the lower bureaucracy and the people. We have done it in several sectors and there is scope for its introduction in many more areas. If Team Anna was to raise a movement for greater use of technology in Government functioning, he would have all my support.