

Vyakti (individual), vichar (idea), vyavahar (practice) and sanskar (embedded values): a manifesto for new India

Dissent lies at the heart of democracy: Great leaders are judged by the extent to which they brook diversity of views and then try to recognise the value of climbing the four steps of the vision ladder: vyakti (individual), vichar (idea), vyavahar (practice) and sanskar (embedded values).

We will never find a perfect leader, but we can create situations in which imperfections are continually debated and improved upon. There is no doubt that the **Country wants Change**, a change from inertia to action, indifference to engagement, treating people merely as hands, mouth and legs to people with a mind, a purpose; changing a mindset of using natural resources recklessly to saving every drop of water (as tried in Mizoram and many other parts of the country).

We have to ask questions such as why Saurashtra can have more than hundred thousand check-dams and farm ponds through people's participation while Vidharbha has suicides and long dry stretches with hardly any *in situ* water harvesting. Elsewhere, farmers use 60-70 hp engines to pump water from thousands of feet. Non-sustainable use of water is a disease spreading everywhere and worse many industrialists pour untreated waste in underground wells.

Why should education in government and municipal schools be dealt with so much contempt and indifference just because only the children of common people study there? Why should it not be obligatory for children of employees of all central and state departments of education to study in the schools run by them? The quality would improve immediately. How can a service provider say that quality standards for providers and clients be different?

Why are 65 per cent of the people of this country given subsidised food when only about 30 percent of the people need it? Should not we try to remove the absolute level of poverty from the 50 poorest districts by reorganising various programmes.

Why can't people's knowledge, creativity and innovative potential become the fulcrum for evolving policies, institutions and processes of governance? Why can't science and technology be treated with greater respect than having eight cabinet ministers in ten years, Ah!!!

Why do we not have open source multi-media, multi-lingual content made by students in IITs and AIIMS, IIMs and IISERs available in seven lakh villages in one year? This will need the support of the country's youth and not just the government. Why cannot twenty million people traveling by train every day be challenged to think about solutions to the problems of the country and also be exposed to sustainable life style tips? Is not it a shame that for the last one decade the Post and Telegraph Department (engaging 1.6 lakh rural post officers covering seven lakh villages) and the Railway Board have been sitting over proposals to engage with masses in order to involve them in the ideation process for the nation and diffuse socially useful knowledge? Why can we not book digital courses to be completed while buying tickets for a long distance bus or train journey? Won't that make India a learning and knowledge society? People would start thinking about life long learning and divert their mind from meaningless cribbing. Why should not Raj Samadhiya village, which has not collected many fines these days (because nobody throws paper on the roads, or dirties common land or water), become the sanitation capital of

Gujarat? Similarly, why should not the capital of sanitation and roof top water harvesting of the country be shifted to rural Mizoram? Can we aim at making India a clean country by adding more dignity to the work of sanitation and cleaning personnel?

Why can't at least 0.01 per cent area of all infrastructural projects be set aside for *in situ* conservation of biodiversity? After all, we cannot assess the value of such niche specific eco-systems vanishing every day under the onslaught of urbanization and covering of large tracts by concrete and tar. Who knows which useful drugs or dyes or other compounds may be generated from such a resource in future after climate change disrupts conservation cycles in large parts of the country.

Why does not any party claim that within the first hundred days of coming to power, they will make rooftop water harvesting compulsory? That within six months, high quality local language content will be delivered to every school? That radio and TV and mobile systems will primarily be used for educating masses and children? Can we live with unsafe streets for women, children and with delayed court cases forever? Public media does not give space for poetry, art and culture the way it is needed and was actually done earlier. Why not? Can a country survive in the long term without poetry? Can we think of ourselves, our sanity without Kabir and Rahim?

How to ensure that people in places like Dhemaji in Assam will not have to drink high iron containing water and continuously suffer? Why do people in Bastar have to extract oil from non-edible tree seeds using ten thousand year old technology? Why should the priorities of marginal people and regions not be reflected in our national priorities and so called manifestos!!!!

Why should the AYUSH system of medicine not be integrated with allopathic systems as already done in China? Why should not do-it-yourself kits for making water filters be shared with all poor households in the first 250 days of a new government? Why cannot small scale industries and start ups be given prime attention in the policy making system? They provide the most jobs after all. It is time to ask hard questions, but why are we not hearing any of them?

We need a more **impatient** system of governance, a more **empathetic** system of engagement, a more **intimate** system of involvement of knowledge rich-economically poor people in governance along with the educated and wealthy elite. An inclusive and sustainable India is in the interest of the world, not just ourselves.

A society where prayer for any sectarian benefit is prohibited, how can it not pursue amity and cultural pluralism as a credo? In our vedic prayer, we pray not just for believers in Ram or Shiva, not just all human beings, but all living beings, such an embracing philosophy cannot be allowed to wither away. Sarvey bhavantu sukhinah....



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