

Crisis Of Leadership



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Nazrul Haque 19 August 2008 8398 views

The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. It's got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. -

Theodore Hesburgh

What ails Assam? This will probably be a foolish question keeping in mind too many problems we are encountering everyday. The vexed infiltration problem from our neighbor - no solution seems to be in sight in the near future and it is actually leading to lots of other socio-economic complications. The insurgency problem- resulting in a security threat to this whole region and also closing almost all paths of development and making us an isolated lot. Problems due to different indigenous tribes coming up with so many demands everyday-vote politics and lack of proper communication are making them more sinister. Unemployment problem- adding to more and more security related problems and also causing a general frustration amongst youths. The yearly problem of flood or/and draught. Everyday rise in the prices of commodities and so on. This list will get so long that after a while it will be quite an effort even to read them, leave alone listing them down!

But, what actually ails Assam? All of the above and some more. And to be a bit more pinpointed it is a sheer lack of leadership in every sphere of our social dynamics. If we see what's happening in and around our

society we can't miss the fact that the whole population is reeling under a tremendous crisis of faith or a sense of mistrust. This is leading to a complete lack of direction for the people and also chaos and anarchy everywhere. And the absence of leadership is causing a general sense of frustration and anger in the youths too. Maybe, that is the reason that lots of insurgent groups are still recruiting cadres from this fertile mass. And, we can feel that a criminal tendency has gradually crept the Assamese youths and of course the negative metro concept is also to be blamed for this. We seem to be imitating our affluent and developed metro cities - not in the work culture or the industrious nature of people but in setting up ill managed shopping malls, discotheque, late night bars

Let us first understand what actually is the concept of a leadership? Leadership can be defined as a process by which an individual or an organization can influence others to accomplish an objective and it also motivates them to be more cohesive and coherent. The basis of any good leadership is selfless service and a remarkably honorable character. It is because of this ethical element involved in any leadership that people tend to follow the leaders. Therefore, any leadership must instill a sense of direction amongst the people by conveying a strong vision for the future.

And what is happening in our beloved Assam? Let us not go very far and take the simple yet vexed issue of insurgency. To make it simpler we can take only one angle of this problem - the ULFA and the peace process! Now, almost all of the peace loving Assamese people feel that this nagging problem which is the root behind lots of other complications for Assam should end soon. And it is also generally accepted that the problem of ULFA can't be solved only by means of military dominance. The nature of the original demands or intention of this group is such that sooner or later we may see some other outfits forming with a

different name and style and causing much more bloodshed. The psychocological and geographical alienation of our people from the mainland India is definitely going to add to the dimension of such problems so it is better that any kind of armed movements should ultimately be dealt with honest political discussions only. The state govt. and our central govt. is also singing in the same line since last few years and lately even ULFA expressed its' desire to sit for a political solution to end the "colonial exploitation of Assam" problem. Whenever any armed forces higher ups are questioned about this thorny issue even they tactically admit that such kind of armed insurgency should finally be ended with political intervention. But, still can we expect to see any kind of discussion between the insurgent group and the Govt. in the near future? The answer will be a big no! As for the "why" we need not go any further and just open any news paper where this peace process issue is coming almost everyday. All the concerned parties - the state and central governments, the ULFA , the mediators - are seem to be in a total darkness about how to proceed and instead taking pleasure in throwing mud's to each other! Neither sides - the Govt. or the militants are very much honest about the whole issue and even if they are, they are at a loss how to at least start a genuine process of negotiation. A leadership crisis is clearly visible as till now we can't hear any rational voice which can stand up and clear the debris so that at least all the parties can see eye to eye and start an honest process of dialogue. Even if some individual or organizations are trying to do that they can't muster enough support or respectability amongst the people so that they can show a path leading to a brighter future for the peace talks. A leader, be it a single or a group of individuals or any social/political organization is needed who can instill a sense of motivation, implementation and direction amongst the masses. Only then we shall be able to see something rational, logical and honest about the whole peace talk process.

Let us now take another very recent example – the Beltola incident of violence, which shocked the whole state for various acts of brutality. THE All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam (AASAA) called for a rally to press for its demand for granting scheduled tribe status to the adivasis of Assam. However, the beltola area almost became like war zone as the rally turned into a brutal clash between the local area residents and the rallyists. Any sane person will admit that it was an administrative failure and a total collapse of law and order! However, we didn't saw any clear stand from any parties involved, which can at best be termed as devoid of any political motives and an impartial, honest leadership! Almost all parties failed to take the whole issue with the seriousness it deserved and ultimately was trying to hoodwink the common citizens. A genuine leadership could have spared us of lots of complications and violence, which erupted later after the incident.

Why actually we are facing such a vacuum in our collective leadership? The answer can be found within our not so distant history itself. For any effective leadership in a socio political set up, there are a few necessary requirements – the general people must have trust and confidence in the leaders and secondly the need for an effective communication system so that the people can be enthused by an overall collective vision. All the information about what's actually happening must be shared with the people involved and not only that they need to be helped to understand how they can contribute to the overall growth of society. Now we all know what our past “leaders” did in the name of creating “sonar Asom”! Assam agitation and the subsequent events in our state are the single most reason, which has led to such a general lack of faith amongst people for any kind of rhetoric. The feeling of betrayal, which developed in the minds of general population, is still very much alive. It left our society in such a mess that it would be awhile to erase this bitter taste and develop a sense of loyalty and faith amongst the general mass.

The solution for such a crisis of leadership is urgently required if we need to go at par with the rest of the country in terms of development and also to end the chaotic socio-political condition where we have landed ourselves. Only a selfless and effective leader can build a stronger and more engaged civic society in Assam. The situation is now such that we as a community is surviving or prospering not because of our political leadership but in spite of it. Can we expect a positive change in the situation of Assam and see a participatory mindset developing in all sections of the society? The sooner it happens the better it is for the whole nation.

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A walk with Saurav Kumar Chaliha

S.K.C. - portrait of a time capturer

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