



# SPOTLIGHT

— Argus —

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## By the way, what has democracy given us?

AS I entered a friendly circle someone shouted, "Here comes Argus, he will tell us the connection between democracy and homosexuality." There was a burst of laughter. "What?" enquired I, surprised. "Be seated, you will come to know." The man took out a clipping from a newspaper from his pocket, and passing it on to me said, "We have been discussing this news item. Please read it and solve the riddle of how democracy is related to homosexuality."

I gave the clipping a perusal. It was a Reuter report from Kuala Lumpur, saying that too much democracy leads to homosexuality, moral decay, racial intolerance, economic decline and single-parent families. The statement was attributed to no less a person than Mahathir Muhammad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia. He was reported to have continued in his address to a political gathering, "...We should not be a slave to democracy. ... Democracy has become a religion in the West and has led to gross moral decay."

Although an opposition leader in Malaysia is reported to have remarked about the PM, "He probably does not really understand the concept of democracy," yet the remarks of Mahathir Muhammad deserved thought. "Well friends," said I lightly, "the connection between democracy and homosexuality needs a research paper. Perhaps the 'gays' of America or the homosexual of UK will be able to throw some light on it. Possibly the honourable PM of Malaysia might be talking of homosexuality or one-parent family as corollaries to general moral decline which democracy has certainly brought with it."

"I understand, democracy means rule by majority. It does not take into consideration whether an issue is immoral or irreligious. If the majority votes in its favour, it is okayed. That is how homosexuality has been legalised in the West. That is how extra-marital sex with mutual consent is considered no crime. Thus democracy has indirectly led to homosexuality and one-parent families." "So Mahathir is right?" "Of course."

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"But in our country, democracy has not produced such results." "Where is democracy in our country?" "It is on the lips (not hearts) of the politicians". Again a wave of smiles swept over their faces. "Right from the times of Quaid-i-Azam all shades of politicians have claimed to stand for democracy. But it has evaded us for nearly half a century now." "But most of the governments asserted to being democratic." "By 'democratic' we just mean absence of martial law. We do not bother about characteristic features of a democratic government except the majority vote."

"That is true. Our elders foresaw the weaknesses of Western democracy and declared it unsuitable for our national and socio-cultural set-up. Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan opposed elections based on a simple majority vote as detrimental to Muslim interests in the subcontinent. Allama Iqbal was dead against Western democracy. He decried reliance on the mere counting of heads because 'heads of 200 asses cannot think like one human being'. Instead, he advised following one mature-minded person."

"That amounts to dictatorship," cried someone. "No, Iqbal stressed mutual consultations also. By one man-rule he meant a man of mature-mind, elected by a group of mature minded persons, and not a self-styled mature man." "Yes, the Western definition of democracy as 'Government of the people, by the people, for the people,' in our country, deteriorated into 'Government of the people, by the people, for themselves and their favourites.'" "Right you are. Moreover, democracy in our country brought with it bickering, allegations, mud-slinging, conspiracies, horse-trading, floor-crossing, favouritism, nepotism, abductions. You remember the recent happenings in the Punjab Assembly."

Curiously, in a recent newspaper story a former provincial minister was reported to have observed that "we politicians do not deserve to be members of Assemblies because of our character." He questioned: "What should you call the ministers who, from the cabinet meeting, go to the Opposition camp?" Fed up with such a character he is even reported to have confessed, "we are worse than dogs."

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Of course, politics in our country has become a promising profession. People invest lakhs to gain crores. Thus the craze for fresh elections every 2-3 years creates instability. All the time politicians are thinking of gaining or retaining power. Very little can be done, under the circumstances, for the country or its people."

"No system is entirely good or bad. Merits and demerits are there in monarchy, dictatorship, Communism, and so in a democracy. Western democracy is not suitable for our country where illiteracy and poverty render the masses vulnerable to exploitation. Applying the Arabic formula "Take-up what is clean, leave aside what is dirty," the Western democratic system should be reshaped to suit our ideological and socio-cultural conditions."