

Today the movement against corruption takes a significant step forward. This movement began by channelizing popular anger against rampant corruption in high places into a positive demand for a new alternative. Last year Anna-ji went on three fasts, including the historic fast at the Ramlila Maidan, to demand a strong, empowered, and independent investigative agency, the Lokpal. The campaign caught popular imagination because people felt that they were no longer helpless. However, despite widespread popular support and parliamentary resolution, the Lokpal was not enacted. We discovered that the ruling parties as well as the opposition lacked political will to create the Lokpal. Yet Anna-ji, Arvind, Manish, Gopal, and hundreds of other krantikaris sat on the current fast in order to appeal to the government one last time. The result was no different. The government stonewalled our demands and showed little interest in bringing those guilty of big scams to book.

This is what brings us to this next step in our struggle. Yesterday 23 eminent citizens called upon us to give up on our expectations from the political establishment and instead focus our energies on creating an alternative political force to address a historic challenge. We asked you all as to whether this proposal is something we should pursue. Your answer was an instant and unequivocal 'Yes'. That is why we decided to call off our fast and move positively towards creating an alternative political force. This latest move is thus a logical culmination of our struggle that began more than a year ago.

This move is not about capturing power but about changing the nature of state power. Our objective is to provide a political alternative that will be realized through an electoral revolution to democratize and decentralize power, and make the power structures more transparent and more accountable to the people. Our existing structures of governance, designed during the British Raj, are meant to exert control on citizens from the top, rather than provide a service and be accountable to the people. This needs to change. We need to accordingly reform and restructure our legislative, executive, administrative, judicial and policing institutions.

At this stage we begin with no more than a broad vision and some guiding principles. Some 2300 years ago Ashokan edicts had called for a moral, social and administrative revolution through respect for all living beings, compassion for the less fortunate and public transparency in government. His call has echoed through the millennia and rings loudest today. The values enshrined in our Constitution and the dream of Swaraj that was nurtured by our freedom struggle encapsulates our vision of India.

Specifically we believe in:

- Democracy, where power is proximate to, consultative with and under the final control of the people;
- Freedom from arbitrary use of state or collective power as well as from fear and basic needs;
- Equality of opportunities and key outcomes, so that anyone's wellbeing is not at the expense of others or nature;
- Social justice, whereby the well being of the last person comes first and life chances are not determined by accidents of birth;

- Secularism, that involves recognition of and respect for social and religious diversity and special needs of minority communities; and
- Peace in internal and external relations.

These are valuable but very general principles. We would like to work these out more fully in terms of concrete policies and positions in the course of the next few months. We need to understand the concerns, needs and aspirations of our citizens and the experience of various movements prior to us before we formulate a comprehensive policy statement.

Realization of this vision requires a new kind of political instrument. Usually this instrument is assumed to be a political party. Yet the prevailing form of a political party is not suited for this purpose. Almost all existing political parties are top-down organisations, claiming monopoly of truth, undemocratic and non-transparent in their functioning, controlled by a family or a clique and dependent on large amounts of illicit funds. An alternative political force has to search for an alternative to this dominant form of a political party. We would strive to learn from the rich experience of social and political movements that have attempted to create alternative politics in the electoral and non-electoral domain.

We realize that we have embarked upon a long, difficult and exciting journey. Since the whole point of the journey is to change the rules of the game, its outcome cannot be measured by conventional yardstick of 'success' and 'failure'. We need to evolve our own measure as we go along.

We plan the following initial steps in this long journey: a nation-wide 'Swaraj yatra', to spread our message, to learn from the people, to connect to our friends and well-wishers and discover new allies; youth dialogues across the country, especially in universities and colleges; and national consultation with other organizations and movements.

If this movement has advanced so far, it is only because of your support. The future of this next phase depends on your participation. This movement needs your ideas, your time, your energy and your resources. Please contact us by email at: indiaagainstcorruption.2010@gmail.com, or by post at: A-119, Kaushambi, Ghaziabad, U.P. - 201010