

# Nandini

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## *Voice For The Deprived*

Dedicated to the cause of marginalised and downtrodden

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LAW BREAKERS IN POWER  
ARE THE CAUSE  
FOR LAWLESSNESS

## A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF KANCHI MAHASWAMI

An extraordinary publication in two volumes titled “Divya Darshan of Sri Kanchi Mahaswami” has been published by Sri Sankara Baktha Jana Sabha Trust, No. 70, St. Mary’s Road, Abhiramapuram, Chennai-600 018, Phone :- 044-2499 6823.

The publication contains many photographs of Sri Kanchi Paramacharya with explanatory notes. This publication is a treasure for the devotees.

The Chapter on “Biographical sketch of Sri Kanchi Mahaswami” presented in the above publication is given in the article.

Courtesy:- Sri Sankara Baktha Jana Sabha Trust, Chennai

Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswati Swamigal of Kanchi Mutt reverentially called ‘Maha Periyavaal’, was born on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1894, under the star Anusham according to the Hindu calendar, in a Kannadiga Smartha Brahmin family in Villupuram, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu, as the second son of Subramanya Sastrigal, a District Education Officer. He was named as Swaminathan, after the family deity, Lord Swaminatha of Swamimalai, near Kumbakonam.

Swaminathan had his early education at the Arcot American Mission High School at Tindivanam, where his father was working. Even as a boy, he was an exceptional one and excelled in all subjects he studied. In the school, he won a prize for his proficiency in the recitation of the “Holy Bible”.

In 1905, his parents performed his Upanayanam, a Vedic ceremony which qualifies a Brahmin boy to begin his Vedic studies under an accomplished teacher.

In 1906, the 66<sup>th</sup> Acharya of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam performed the annual Chaturmasyam ( a forty day annual ritual performed by Hindu ascetics while remaining in one place), in a village near Tindivanam in Tamil Nadu. This was Swaminathan’s first exposure to the Kanchi Math and its Acharya. Later, Swaminathan accompanied his father whenever he visited the Math. Needless to add,

the Acharya was deeply impressed by the young Swaminathan.

In the first week of February 1907, the Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt had informed Subramanya Sastrigal that Swaminathan’s first cousin (son of his mother’s sister) was to be installed as the 67<sup>th</sup> Peetathipathi. The presiding Acharya was then suffering from smallpox and had therefore, administered upadesa to his disciple Lakshminathan before he attained Mukti.

Subramanya Sastrigal being away in Tiruchirappalli on duty arranged to send Swaminathan with his mother to Kanchipuram. The boy and his mother started for Kalavai (where Lakshminathan was camping) to console his aunt who, while also being a widow, had just given up her only son to be an ascetic. They travelled by train to Kanchipuram and halted at the Sankara Math. By then, the 67<sup>th</sup> Peetathipathi also had fallen ill.

Kanchi Mahaperiyavaal says in his own words what happened during the eventful days that followed.

“I had a bath at the Kumara Koshta Tirtha. A carriage of the Math had come there from Kalavai with the people to buy articles for the Maha Puja on the tenth day of the passing of the previous 66<sup>th</sup> Acharya. One of them, a



## A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF KANCHI MAHASWAMI

hereditary maistry (mason) of the Math, asked me to accompany him.

A separate cart was engaged for the rest of the family to follow me. During the journey, the maistry hinted to me that I might not return home and that the rest of my life might be spent in the Math itself. At first, I thought that my elder cousin having become the Head of the Math, it was his wish that I should live with him. But the maistry gradually clarified matters as the cart rolled on. The Acharya had fever which developed into delirium and that was why I was being separated from the family to be taken to Kalavai.

I was stunned by this unexpected turn of events. I sat in a kneeling posture in the cart, shocked as I was repeating "Rama.....Rama," the only prayer I knew.

My mother and other children came some time later only to find that instead of her mission of consoling her sister, she herself was placed in the state of having to be consoled". (from *The Sage of Kanchi* by Dr.T.M.P. Mahadevan).

The 67<sup>th</sup> Acharya also attained Mukti, after reigning for a brief period of seven days as the head of the Math.

Swaminathan was immediately installed as the 68<sup>th</sup> head of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam on February 13, 1907, the second day of the Tamil month of Masi, Prabhava year. He was given Sanyasa Asramam at the early age of 13 and was named Chandrasekharendra Saraswati. On May 9, 1907, his "Pattabishegam" as the 68<sup>th</sup> Peetathipathi of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam was performed at the Kumbakonam Math. Devotees including

Maharaja of Thanjavur, government officials and pundits participated in the event.

The administration of the Mutt was under guardianship from 1911 to May, 1915 for the reason that Swamigal did not attain the age, as per legal requirement, to take care of administration of the Mutt. On the day of Sankara Jayanthi in the year 1915, Swamigal took over the administration of the Mutt on the completion of his 21<sup>st</sup> year of age.



Maha Swamigal spent several years in the study of the scriptures and Dharma Shastras and acquainted himself with his role as the Head of the Mutt. He soon gained the reverence and respect of the devotees and people around him. To millions of devotees, he was simply "Periyava" – the revered one or Maha – Periyava. "Periyava" in Tamil means a great person and conveys endearment, reverence and devotion. "Mahaswami" and "Paramacharya" are his other well known appellations.

Maha Periyavaal was the head of the Mutt for eighty seven years. During this period, the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam acquired new strength as an institution that propagated Adi Sankara's teachings. The devotion, fervour and intensity with which the Paramacharya practiced what Adi Sankara had taught are considered unparalleled in the Hindu religious annals.

Throughout his life, the focus of his concern and activities was rejuvenating Veda adhyayana, the Dharma Sasthras and the age old tradition, which had suffered decline. "Veda rakshanam" was his very life breath and he referred to this in most of his talks.

## A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF KANCHI MAHASWAMI

Periyavaa was interested in the happenings in the country. At Nellichery in Palakkad in Kerala, Rajaji and Mahatma Gandhi met the Acharya in a cow-shed. It was a practice in the Mutt to wear silk robes. But Acharya was the first one to do away with them and shifted to Khadi robes at Rameshwaram. He had requested his devotees to do away with foreign / non natural clothes earlier at Trichy.

The day India became politically independent, Mahaswami composed the song, Maithreem Bhajata, which was later sung at the UN by M S Subbulakshmi. He gave a speech on the significance of our national flag and the Dharma Chakra in it on the day of independence. This speech is considered the finest ever on freedom made by a saintly person.

Remaining active throughout his life, the sage of Kanchi twice undertook pilgrimage on foot throughout the length and breadth of India.

The yatra on foot undertaken by the Mahaswami had and still have no parallels in the religious history of India.

During his stay on the earth in the human form, he reinvigorated Vedic studies by providing support through Veda Patashalas ( schools teaching Vedic lore) and by honouring Vedic scholars through the Veda Rakshana Nidhi which he found. He organized regular sadhas (conferences) which included discussions on arts and culture; these led to a renewed interest in Vedic religion, Dharma sasthras and the Sanskrit language.

His long tenure as Pitathipathi is considered by many to have been the Golden Era of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam. He attained Mukti on January 8, 1994 and was succeeded by Sri Jayendra Saraswati Swamigal.

All through his life, Periyava stressed the importance of a Guru in one's life. He repeatedly preached about the importance of following the Dharmic path.

Kanchi Mahaswami's charm invited the rich and the poor, the old and the young alike to be his devotees. To the Acharya, the VIPs and the common man were one and the same. There were thousands of personal experiences to lakhs of his devotees, who still revere him and pray to him as a messenger of the Supreme or an ultimate Guru.

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA SPEAKS



The highest ideal of Ishvara which the human mind can grasp is the avatara. Beyond this, there is no relative knowledge. Such knowers of Brahman are rarely born in the world. And very few people can understand them. They alone are the proof of the truths of the scriptures - the towers of light in the ocean of the world. By the company of such avataras and by their grace, the darkness of the mind disappears in a trice and realization flashes immediately in the heart.

\* \* \*

What is meant by renunciation? That there is only one ideal in morality: unselfishness. Be selfless. The ideal is perfect unselfishness.... For it is not only the end, but also the means. To be unselfish, perfectly selfless, is salvation itself; for the man within dies and God alone remains.



## Desperate Calls

**You can enjoy your prosperity  
only if you share your income with the deprived  
and thus discover the satisfaction that it provides.**

### Disabled lady needs sewing machine

Mrs. M. Ratna is a poor disabled lady. She has undergone tailoring course

She is living with her mother along with her two girl children.

Mrs. M. Ratna requests kind hearted persons for donation of sewing machine to self employ herself

Contact address:

Mrs. M. Ratna  
W/o. Sri. Marimuthu  
108, Chellamuthu Compound  
R.V. Nagar, Dindigul-1, Tamilnadu

\*\*\*\*\*

### Needs support for medical treatment

The following persons are suffering from congenital disease and they need to undergo open / closed heart surgery

Name	Age	Estimated cost of the surgery
Master Rajesh,	5 years .	Rs.1,50,000/-
Ms. Dilruba	15 years.	Rs.1,25,000/-
Master Alen Saju	4 years	Rs.1,50,000/-
Baby Subra(Closed heart)	1 year	Rs.75,000/-
Baby Bhavana,	6 months	Rs.1,50,000/-
Baby Rashmi,	3 months	Rs.1,50,000/-
Miss Shamitha,	6 years	Rs.1,50,000/-
Master. Darshith,	3 months	Rs.1,50,000/-
Ms. Kamal, S,	5 years	Rs.1,50,000/-
Baby Irfan Khan,	4 months	Rs.1,50,000/-
Ms. Yasmin,	18 years	Rs.1,50,000/-

The cheque may be drawn in favour of Wockhardt Hospitals, Bangalore and sent to the following address:

Secretary,  
Save Poor Lives  
No.22, Perumal Koil Street,  
Aminjikarai, Chennai-600 029

\*\*\*\*\*

### Needs sewing machines

Vanavil Blind Trust is a trust rendering services to the visually impaired / disabled persons.

The trust requests kind hearted persons and philanthropists for donation of five number of sewing machines to employ the inmates to earn for the trust and provide them job opportunity.

Contact address:

Vanavil Blind Trust  
2/331, Keelathippampatti  
Kasavanampatty (PO), Athoor (Tk)  
Kannivadi (via), Dindigul-624 705  
Phone: 9344299301

\*\*\*\*\*

### Poor student needs support for education

Sri. R. Aravinth is studying first year Diploma Course in Printing Technology in Siga Polytechnic College, Chennai.

His mother Mrs. Alphonsemary is a poor widow. She is having two more children other than Sri Aravinth.

Mrs. Alphonsemary requests kind hearted persons for financial help for a sum of Rs.34,500/- towards 1<sup>st</sup> year college fee and tuition fee.

The cheque may be drawn in favour of Siga Polytechnic College, Chennai and sent to the following address:

Sri. R. Aravinth  
S/o. Mrs. Alphonsemary, A  
K. K. Puthoor (PO), Karunguzhi (via)  
Kanchipuram District, Pin: 603 303

\*\*\*\*\*

### School children need support for education

Following school children are studying in Padma Subramaniam Bala Bhavan Matriculation

Hr.Sec. School, Mangadu, Chennai. Their educational performances are good but they have applied for transfer certificate to discontinue their education due to poverty conditions of their families.

The school management requests the kind hearted persons and philanthropists to help the poor children to continue their education.

Name of the student	Class	Rank In class	Whole year fees Rs.
Master Vishnu Priyan	UKG	I	10,000
Master M.Rishi	UKG	I	10,000
Master V.Gokulash	LKG	I	9,640
Selvi S.Arthi	III	II	11,100
Master S.S.Lokesh	VII	II	13,060
Master B.Vasanth Kumar	VIII	I	13,060
Selvi T.Indhu	VIII	I	13,060
Selvi R.Sahwini	VIII	I	13,060
Master M Babu	VIII	II	13,060
Selvi Reena Moorthy	VIII	II	13,060
Selvi G Ramyagerthika	VIII	II	13,060
Selvi T.Roshini	II	I	11,000

For further details, please contact:

Principal  
Padma Subramaniam Bala Bhavan Matriculation  
Hr.Sec. School  
No.13, Bagavathy Road, Sri Chakra Nagar,  
Mangadu, Chennai-602 101  
Phone: 26274070 /65288307

\* \* \*

**Poor student needs support for education**

Master S.Balaji, age 12 years is studying VIIth std. in Sri Vishwa Vidyalaya Matric.Hr.Sec.School, Vandalur, Chennai.

His mother is a widow. She and her two sons are living with her in laws . She is working as a teacher in the same school where her son is studying. Her salary is Rs.2,200/- per month.

The family is running with her income and her father in law's pension.

The mother requests kind hearted persons for financial help to continue her son's education for a sum of Rs.7,150/- towards fees and books for the forthcoming academic year.

The cheque may be drawn in favour of Sri Vishwa Vidyalaya Matric.Hr.Sec.School, Vandalur, Chennai and sent to Editor, Nandini Voice For The Deprived.

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# Readers' forum

Readers' forum provides space for the enlightened readers to give expression to their views on a variety of socio economic issues that is of relevance to the society.

Further enrichment of the journal with your thoughtful inputs would certainly go a long way in promoting the cause that the journal seeks to espouse.



## **Kayamkulam Kochunni and corrupt politicians**

Dear Sir,

I read with interest the article on "Kayamkulam Kochunni and corrupt politicians" contributed by Sri.K.N.Narayana Pillai in your February 2010 issue.

While I do agree with him and resent the attitude and actions of the present day politicians amassing wealth by plundering the country's resources and cheating the public by illicit means. I do not subscribe to his views that they should utilise such ill gotten money for serving the poor masses.

There is a story in Tamil that a Great Pandian King served food to many poor brahmins with the grains stored in his granary. The brahmins who consumed the food had severe stomach ache and so he ordered for an inquiry. Later, it was found that the rice they used for feeding the brahmins were actually from the stocks they had recovered from robbers who had plundered the poor peasants.

We have also heard about Baktha Ramadoss who built a temple with the money he had collected as taxes from the people and how he had to suffer in prison during the Moghal's regime. So, it is clear from our Puranas that any money earned or spent must be through fair means.

Both Gandhiji and Rajaji emphasized the importance of hard and honest work and advised that we should shun any income derived other than by means of our sweat, hard and honest work. Saint Thiruvalluvar has gone one step further by saying that even accepting freebies, gratis or charity would bring dishonour.

If even accepting freebies gratuitously is a dishonour, one can just imagine the fate and plight of those who amass wealth by looting the

government and even temple and other public properties.

We can only pray and hope that these unscrupulous politicians will one day or other realize their misdeeds and would reform themselves.

Chennai

K.R.Krishnan

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## **Identity for disabled people**

Dear Sir,

Government of India has already issued National Identity Card for disabled people across the country. The card says that all concessions and benefits available for disabled persons can be had by showing the National Identity Card.

However, when disabled persons go to railway counter for reservation, they have to produce a separate concession form issued by Railways. Getting this form is a torture for disabled persons. National Identity Card is not accepted across the counter.

This matter has been taken up from time to time with ministers concerned.

Chennai

S.R.Rajagopal

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## **Good deeds should be publicised**

Dear Sir,

Recently, an octogenarian was knocked down by a cyclist in V.M.Street in Mylapore in Chennai. His belongings got scattered all over the place. The kind hearted passers by at the bus stop nearby rushed to his rescue, got him lifted, collected his belongings and returned the same to him. A noble passenger accompanied him to his residence in the next street.

Such good things are also happening in India. But, such good deeds are not highlighted.

Chennai

K.N.Narayana Pillai

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### Languishing talented poor students

Dear Sir,

The back cover of the March 2010 issue of Nandini Voice For The Deprived carries a fervent appeal to help the poor students to uplift their status and this appeal should not go in vain or fall into deaf ears. Although the governments asserts that they have taken up several measures to improve the lot of poor, in reality there is no basis for the claim. The efforts remain largely inadequate.

The capitation fee and the tuition fee are so exorbitant, that the poor students can not afford to pay them. Though the banks are instructed to give loan to deserving students, it is seldom done. Only the property owners get study loans readily from banks. The banks hesitate to give loan to poor students.

Under such circumstances, the corporates, industrialists and philanthropists should come forward to adopt bright poor students and help them complete their desired educational course.

Coimbatore

M.R.Pillai

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### Hazardous Bill

Dear Sir,

Our government is churning out one hazardous bill after another. This time it is a bill called the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and it is coming up for a vote shortly in Parliament.

The bill lets U.S.Corporations off the hook for any nuclear accidents they cause on Indian soil. They only have to pay a meager amount and Indian tax payers would be stuck paying crores of rupees for the nuclear clean up and to compensate the victims.

Without any public debate, the Prime Minister is appeasing American interests and ignoring our safety.

Greenpeace is launching a petition asking the Prime Minister to hold a public consultation before introducing the bill.

I have already signed this petition. Can you join me?

Chennai

M.Sundaraman

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## Views on Visually impaired meet

Dear Sir,

I must compliment you on highlighting the problems of the visually impaired women. during the round table discussions organised by you.

The round table conference brought out many issues. This awareness is likely to help those who intend to help them, although the government's support is only marginal if all there is any. I shall subscribe to the noble cause you have undertaken

Tirupati

V.Rajagopal,  
Retd Director, CPCRI

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Dear Sir,

Thanks for mailing me the proceedings of the round table discussion on the problems of visually impaired women. Those who can see may sometimes not realise the significance of this valuable gift of God. You deserve all appreciation for arranging such programme.

We too have one student in the institute. She is visually impaired but very talented and we are all taking care to nurture her talents and provide her all possible support in a way that may add to her confidence.

Best wishes to you and to your foundation for all your future endeavours.

Parimala Mani.

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Dear Sir,

We are in receipt of your e mail message. Clear guidelines have already been issued by Reserve Bank of India regarding visually impaired. These are under implimentation at our Branches. However, the contents will be brought to the notice of the concerned.

Thanks and regards,  
DGM, Customer Services,  
State Bank of India, Corporate centre, Mumbai  
022 - 22029456, 22740432, Fax 22742431

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS AMONGST VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN ON

## THE PROBLEMS AND ASPIRATIONS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN

Nandini Voice For The Deprived organized a meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2010 at Perungudi, Chennai, amongst the visually impaired women on the problems and aspirations of visually impaired women.

The problems of the visually impaired women appear to be largely similar all over the world. The response of the governments about helping the visually impaired women may vary from one country to another.

However, rarely opportunities are given to the visually impaired women to express their thoughts in meetings, since most of the meetings are addressed by the authorities and others, with the visually impaired women simply remaining as listeners.

The problems of the visually impaired women expressed in the meeting at Chennai can be considered as a case study and have to be viewed with great compassion and understanding.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

The objective of organising the discussion was to know the views of the visually impaired women on their problems and expectations and bring them to the notice of the society and the government. This would enable the government and the society to formulate and implement suitable action plans to help visually impaired women.

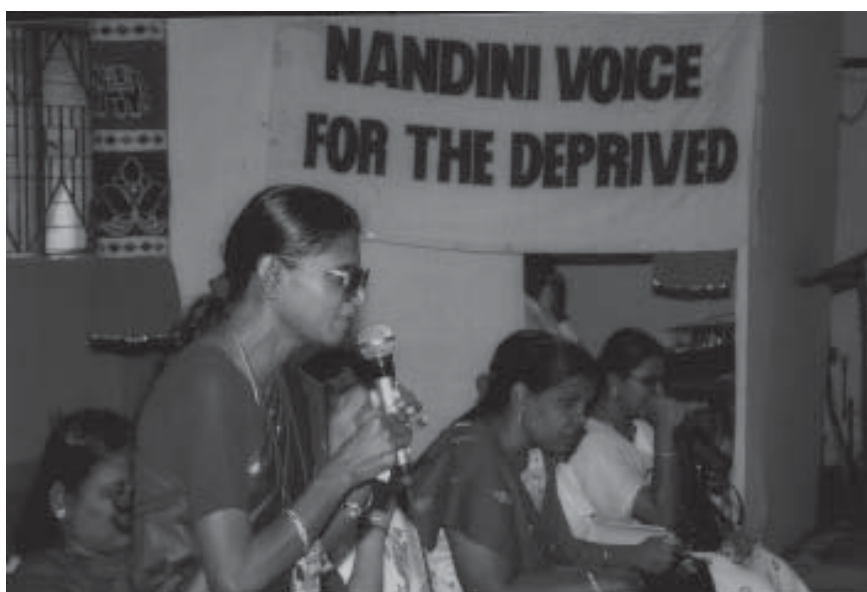
### PARTICIPANTS

30 visually impaired women from different economic background, age group and educational level from all over Tamil Nadu participated in the round table discussion.

The discussion was co-ordinated by Mr.N.S.Venkataraman, Trustee, Nandini Voice For The Deprived.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Highlights of the views expressed by the visually impaired women on different problems and their aspirations are given below.



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS AMONGST VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN ON THE PROBLEMS AND ASPIRATIONS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN**

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**\* Pension scheme of the government :**

Ms. Asha Mary of Chennai and Ms. Indirani of Dindigul said that they were not getting any pension from the government, inspite of the fact that they have applied more than three years back.

20% of the visually impaired women who participated in the discussions confirmed that they were yet to get the pension from the Government .

All the participants confirmed that the pension is sent only once in three or four months and for some months the pension is not sent at all.

The officials often give the explanation that funds have not been provided for a particular area. The participants wondered as to how the fund could be allotted for one area and not for another area under the same scheme.

Further, it was said that the post men often take upto Rs.20 for themselves, while disbursing the pension money order.

**\* Unemployment scenario:**

Several visually impaired women pointed out that they have not got even one interview call, even after fifteen years of registration with employment exchange.

In one case, job was offered to a visually impaired woman in a ration shop where she has to measure the commodity supplied which she cannot do by herself since she has no vision. When she expressed her inability to take up this job, she was unofficially advised to take up the help of a person with vision and share her income with the person !

Ms. Mini said that the government is giving jobs mostly only for visually impaired B.Ed. graduates as school teachers and in the case of less qualified or qualified in some other fields, the government's support to provide them jobs is at negligible level for all practical purposes.

The private sector rarely give jobs to visually impaired women. Even if they do so in some very few cases, visually impaired women are often paid less salary for the similar job done by persons with vision.

It was said that the Government does not monitor such conditions at all and the unemployment scenario amongst the visually impaired women is extremely severe and with no indication that the conditions would improve in the immediate future. .



**\* Self employment pursuits**

To keep themselves above poverty conditions, visually impaired women desperately try to self employ themselves. They face problems such as in skill acquisition, finding investment money and marketing the products.

Ms. G. Vanitha said that it has become extremely difficult to get loans from the banks though the government talks about liberal loan assistance programme for the disabled persons. Getting loans depends on the whims and fancies of the bank manager who often do not even care to discuss the details. It was said that there is great need to sensitise the bank staff, so that the government's policies can be implemented in letter and spirit.

Even in the case of self help group schemes, the visually impaired women are driven from pillar to post and several whimsical conditions are put and in one case insisting that all the visually impaired women in the self help group should come from the same locality to get the bank loans.

Marketing their products have become an herculean task for the visually impaired women. It was suggested that the government should open several shops in various places to exclusively sell the products made by visually impaired women similar to Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan schemes.

The visually impaired women trying to sell in running trains, bus stops and platforms and other public places are often harassed by the rowdy elements and driven out by the police men.

**\* Personal safety issues**

All the participants pointed out that they feel extremely unsafe to move around and often face instances of molestation, misbehaviour and assaults by drunken men. It was suggested that Karate should be taught to every visually impaired woman by the government and NGOs to protect themselves.

Ms. Rukmini said that many visually impaired women are virtually made to go out of their house after the death of their parents and they face desperate conditions without proper protected place to stay. It is extremely important that the government should build atleast two exclusive hostels for visually impaired women in every town.

Some hostels are now being run by NGOs and the conditions remain inadequate. The government is not monitoring such institutions at all.

Perhaps, the government can also think of encouraging NGOs to run such hostels under stringent conditions and with some financial support.

**\* Transport**

Several visually impaired women including Ms. G. Vanitha, Ms. Thilakam pointed out several problems in moving from one place to another.

In one case, when eleven of them sought to get into a transport bus, the driver refused entry saying that only two persons can get in at a time, as it would be difficult for him "to handle many visually impaired women" at the same time.

Ms. Karpagam said that she gets an impression that the bus crew hate the visually impaired people getting into the bus and often would stop at a distance from the bus stop, if they would see three or four visually impaired women waiting to get into the bus. The reserved seat in the bus is often occupied by normal people and the bus conductor rarely ask them to vacate to give place to the disabled people.

In the case of trains, the handicapped coach is no more serving the purpose, since it is insisted that the disabled persons can get into the coach only with prior reservation. Further, there is no separate queue in the reservation counter for the visually impaired persons which make it very difficult for them.

The reserved coach in the train is attached anywhere and there appear to be no standing rule in this regard, sometimes in the middle, or first or last. These are all simple matters that can be easily sorted out with proper application of mind by the officials.

In crossing the roads, the traffic police men should be given firm instructions that it is their duty to help the visually impaired women to cross the roads safely. At present, while a few police men help, many do not do so.

**\* Marriage**

Ms. Kalyani said that normal people rarely marry visually impaired woman. Even in the case

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS AMONGST VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN ON THE PROBLEMS AND ASPIRATIONS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN**

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of visually impaired man marrying a visually impaired woman, the breakages in the marriage have become frequent.

Visually impaired mothers living alone have a tortuous existence as they have to support themselves and their children with their meager income. Educational support for such children in quality schools would greatly help them.

Unfortunately, the quality of the free education provided by the government in government owned and government aided schools particularly in rural areas are very poor and in many cases the children of the visually impaired woman often become indisciplined, creating more problem for them.

Such social issues are yet to be taken for detailed analysis by the government and the society.

**\* Others**

While the government announces number of schemes for the disabled and visually impaired persons from time to time and necessary

machinery has been created to implement such measures, in actual practice, the quality of implementation of the government schemes are far less than the desirable level. Obviously, the government's words are not matched by actions.

It was acknowledged by Ms. Rukmini and Ms. Kalyani who are visually impaired women and with their meager income now run a trust to help the visually impaired people, that there are several kind hearted persons in the society who readily come forward to help the visually impaired women.

But, such efforts by the individuals and NGOs cannot be substitute for the efforts of the government.

If one were to live as a visually impaired woman and that too at below poverty level, there cannot be a more severe condition. The government should realize that it has great responsibility and such responsibility can be adequately discharged only by sensitive, committed and responsive government machinery.

## **WHERE WOULD THE WOMEN RESERVATION BILL TAKE INDIAN WOMEN?**

After considerable controversies, Women Reservation Bill has been passed in Rajya Sabha. More hurdles remain. However, with pressure of public opinion and expectation of women, it is likely that the Women Reservation Bill would ultimately become law and would be enforced in Parliament and Assemblies.

Traditionally, from historical times, the Indian society has given special status for women, particularly as mother in social and family life. The Indian scriptures repeatedly talk about the great attributes of womanhood. The place of Sita in Ramayana and Dhraupathi in Mahabharatha clearly point out the respect that the traditional Indian society have been providing for women.

In spite of such past trend, the living conditions of average woman in India are despicable to say the least.

It is true that there are number of women holding good jobs and positions in life. But, they are small in number, compared to the women population in India, large segment of which is suffering from poor education and male domination.

Media have made it a point to depict woman as a sensuous and sexy object and publish the photographs of half dressed woman and all sorts of writings on woman as a marketing strategy for multiplying the circulation and increasing the business. Even reputed national newspapers like Times of India, Deccan Chronicle and New Indian Express are not exception to this situation.

The instances of molestation of women and eve teasing are now increasing in a huge way and Indian media, cinemas and the TV shows are largely responsible for this.

The media is too keen to publicise the incidents of rape but not good deeds done to women. Such approach of the media only give an impression that incidents of rape and molestation are too frequent and therefore, normal.

One wonders whether providing reservation for women in Assemblies and Parliament would solve such basic issues. Time alone will prove this.

## WILL SMALLER STATES BE GOVERNED BETTER THAN BIGGER STATES?

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Are the smaller states in India governed better than bigger states? Can we believe that the movement for splitting the big states into small states is based on the rational grounds of efficiency, development and effective implementations? Doubtful.

Movements (popular!!) for separate states are based on narrow populist grounds than based on true vision. Personal ambitions of individuals and political interests are the major reasons for triggering the movement for separate smaller states. Loyalties to issues like language, caste and religion are merely the excuses, on which the interested parties bank to raise issues and make it appear as popular movements.

The newly created smaller states expect that they would attract investment, but it seldom happens, as the investors, both in India and global, are wary of politically unsettled conditions and short sighted policies of the political leaders of the smaller states.

The advantages of smaller states would be lost, unless they would get good governance. Regional pride alone will not lead to good governance and socio economic development.

Poor infrastructure, poor supply of developed human resource and low capital will turn Telengana into another Jharkhand or Chattisgarh.

It is difficult to envisage a Hyderabad-Secunderabad twin city with it's glory , after the formation of separate Telangana State. It may become the capital of a poor and backward Telengana state, marked by frustration and breeding the Naxalite movement, than a prosperous capital city of a developed state.

Hyderabad is not Chandigarh, a brand new city built artificially after the partition. It is an old city with its history and cosmopolitan culture. The 1956 state Reorganization caused a lot of dent in its culture, but it managed to survive and even move forward, thanks to the capital inflow from Rayalaseema and coastal regions. A narrow chauvinistic poor quality of leadership will ruin its reputation as a world class city.

Without the emergence of an articulate leader with strong commitment for doing good, narrow chauvinism would only help to galvanize the feelings of frustration and anger amongst suffering population. This is bad by itself and will thus necessarily not lead to the betterment of the future of the smaller state but will only lead it into an abyss.

Every state in India has a geographical stretch that are backward and requires urgent and enormous attention. Some of these regions may be backward because of natural factors like drought areas lacking rain or other sources of water for irrigation with no proper agriculture and with all around scarcity. Such conditions in turn would lead to unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and unrest.

The problems of these backward regions can be solved only by being part of a large state, where the resources can be ploughed from the prosperous regions. Splitting the backward regions into a separate state would only make them more weak and helpless.

## UNRULY PARLIAMENTARIANS

It is disturbing to see the unruly behaviour of some members of Parliament in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. They behave like hooligans. It is sad to see the speaker watching the scene helplessly and repeatedly adjourning the house.

It is necessary that in the interest of parliamentary democracy , the speaker should assert herself and insist on decorum. She should expel and suspend the unruly members with firm hand. Otherwise, she would be letting down the parliamentary democratic process.

One wonders as to why the Rajya sabha Chairman kept silent when the unruly members pulled the papers from his table. By not expelling them immediately, he has given an impression that the indiscipline would gain upper hand. It certainly does not enhance the prestige of the Indian democracy deserves better.

# INDIAN ECONOMY BEING BUILT FOR 15% OF THE POPULATION

Vast segment of the Indian population do not understand when the economist Prime Minister says that Indian economy is growing at 7 to 8% GDP.

They are equally confused when the other economists and the ministers in the government and some media personnel claim that Indian economy is now steadily progressing to become a super power.

While certainly the vast segment of the population see large number of cars on the road and huge buildings being built, they also see that essential commodities, house rents, educational expense for their children, medical expenses etc. have gone beyond their purchasing power and their savings have been virtually wiped out.

The news papers and TV media report about the sky rocketing salary being given to several employees in the government and private sector organizations and the vast segment of the Indian population is wondering as to why are these people getting so much paid and what is it that they do to deserve such huge pay. Even the amount of corrupt money being unearthed from the corrupt ministers, bureaucrats and government officials have now skyrocketed with crores of rupees in cash, jewels and assets being "discovered" by the investigating agencies becoming a routine matter.

Obviously, some people are becoming richer and richer who may be constituting about 15% of the national population. Their luxurious living style exhibiting pomp and show give a false and exaggerated impression that the country is prospering. Unfortunately, 85% of the national population who are not part of this group becoming richer and richer, are left high and dry and they wonder as to what position they belong to in the national economic scale.

When dhal reaches the price of more than Rs.100 per kilogram and sugar is priced at Rs. 60/- per Kg. and farmers commit suicide due to debt and poverty,

the economists in the government go for "scholarly discussions" on economic theories in the media, sitting in comfortable airconditioned rooms and enjoying themselves in the discussions. There is nobody to represent 85% of the population in such discussions and debates. Possibly, the economic pundits who are thrilled to see the increasing stock market prices, think that this 85% of the population are ignorant lot and they do not matter.

Certainly, the politicians in the government know that the economic situation is explosive and may lead to uncontrollable social tensions before long if allowed to go unchecked. To buy peace with the poor and downtrodden, freebies are extended to hoodwink the gullible public, who are impressed with the free gifts when the economy of their families is so gloomy. Further, the rapid spread of liquor consumption habit amongst the poor people have become a big boon for the politicians in the government, as it not only provides them revenue but also numb the poor people into intoxication and leave them without energy to fight for their rights and their share of national income.

One would not know as to how long such conditions can continue but the politicians and bureaucrats in the government seem to think that they can get away with such conditions for all time to come, with their changing and appropriate tactics and strategies to deal with the poor and downtrodden from time to time.

Now, the politicians are building their families and empires and they seem to remain unconcerned as to what the "ignorant"85% of the national population would think about them.

They need to realize that while some segment of the poor people can be kept silent by providing them freebies there may be microscopic minority who would not succumb to such temptations and may revolt. Such microscopic minority may sow the seed for the protests and unrest.

# WHITHER DEMOCRACY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ?

Almost every developing country in the world except a few countries like Myanmar and North Korea claim that theirs is a democratic governance. Obviously, democracy as a concept is viewed as the most desirable form of governance and people of every country would like to jump into this band wagon.

However, in actual practice , in many developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the process of democracy is marked by bitter animosity and quarrel between the different political parties , giving an impression as if these countries are in constant turmoil all the time with one group trying to defeat another group to seize power. Large segment of the population of these countries who are not part of the political groups, remain as mere spectators in this so called democratic process and often feel frustrated and helpless. Such people who are not part of any political group many times wonder whether this sort of democracy has done any overall good to the country at all.

What the discerning common people note is that the difference between the political parties in these countries are not due to any fundamental difference in policies and programmes but only due to the personal ambition of the leaders of the political groups.

Of course, elections do take place in these developing countries at periodical intervals, where ruling group can be dislodged in a smooth manner if desired by the people. But, the problem is that these elections are being contested by different political groups who are bitterly opposed to each other and they conduct themselves during the electioneering and thereafter as if they are in the midst of a warfare. They give an impression that they are sworn personal enemies exhibiting sort of hatred towards each other and may go to any extent to destroy each other in their bid to capture power and enjoy the benefits of power thereafter.

In recent times, there have been even more deterioration in the quality of democracy practiced in the developing countries, in that several political groups (political parties) are now controlled by families of the political leaders that would inevitably lead to family rule

and sort of feudalism . In the process, the political groups become outfits sans any ideology , with the party cadre pledging loyalty to one political family or the other.

With the family members getting stranglehold of the political parties to achieve their ambitions of seizing power, the philosophy , principles and ideology do not have any significant place any more. What becomes priority to the politicians is only the upliftment of their family members and achievement of their ambitions to seize power and for this they "skillfully" work out schemes to outdo others. In the process, a few political groups (political families) align between themselves to outdo another aligned force and this is what is now known as coalition politics.

Each political group in its anxiety to defeat the other often go to the extent of maintaining thugs and rowdies in their groups to indulge in violence, settle scores with the opponents, indulge in malpractices in election including bribing the voters etc. Due to this approach, the law and order machinery virtually collapses.

When personal ambitions of the political leaders and the needs of their families become the most important factors , the progress of the country inevitably suffers and the democracy becomes a counter productive movement. Several developing countries seem to be rapidly moving towards this condition.

In such scenario, the democracy loses its purpose and significance and people become disillusioned. The people may then probably think that the rule by a dictator and his family could be even less harmful than this sort of several political groups and their family members spread all over the country and ruling the nation.

In such situation, democracy as a concept appear to have failed in many developing countries. This is certainly a very unfortunate condition since the developing countries have millions of citizens living below poverty line and they desperately need meaningful and progressive programmes of the government. Such expectations of the people will not be met by ambitious and self serving politicians who have emerged in the democratic system that are now being practiced in the developing countries.

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