

THE WAY FORWARD FOR A TRULY INCREDIBLE INDIA!

Dr M.D. Thomas

An Ambassador of a certain country in India, at the completion of his term, was addressing the audience during a programme organized in his honour. He said, 'India is truly an incredible country. But if you allow me to be frank, let me add, it is 'incredible' in the negative sense, as well'. Without doubt, most Indians wouldn't be very comfortable with the second part of the comment. All the same, grown up and responsible Indians should be able to take it with a sense of humour. Obviously, the comment doesn't cancel the great strengths the phrase 'Incredible India' proudly stands for. But, it certainly points towards the 'dark areas' of the country that make it disreputable, not only within but across the countries. To say the least, India has quite 'a long way to go' before it becomes 'truly incredible'.

Rahul Gandhi, in the annual meet of Confederation Indian Industry on 04 April 2013, presented an evocative vision, with the pivotal focus of making an 'empowered India', through partnership with the captains of industry. The salient points in his address were 'the spirit of inclusiveness' and 'a culture of working together'. He advocated for a 'shared vision' and 'participative governance'. He argued that 'alienation of minorities hurts the country's growth' and sows seeds of disharmony'. He evoked a 'bottom-up vision of growth' in contrast to a 'top-down vision', too. He affirmed that 'the country needs a clear vision, more than a leader, for building a good society'. Therefore, 'structural changes for empowering common people', 'change in the quality of the lives of the people' and 'collective growth processes' are to be strategized ('More than a leader, India needs a vision', Arun Maira, The Hindu, New Delhi, 08 April 2013, p. 11). Nevertheless, the strategies and processes for translating the same into action needs further articulation, Rahul needs to be commended for laying down the foundational vision for an inclusive society.

'A Speech for Rahul Gandhi', written by Srivatsa Krishna, (Times Of India, New Delhi, 08 April 2013, p.14) is fairly a complete articulation of the above quoted foundational perspective of Rahul. Srivatsa deserves to be applauded for such an insightful and thought-provoking speech. Having read the same carefully, I couldn't help wishing if this speech were to be really that of Rahul, no doubt, he would have literally proved to be a 'leader, par excellence', by way of being a 'visionary and missionary' at the same time. All the same, it could be admitted that Rahul's real speech had in it the spirit and sketch of the comprehensive and well-expressed speech visualized by Srivatsa. The 'spirit of inclusiveness', 'shared vision', 'participative governance' and a 'culture of working together' collectively is a strong underpinning for the 21st century 'Incredible India', which will certainly be a synonym for a 'good society'. These values can address the shadowy and infamous side of the 'incredible India', as well.

First and foremost, could there be an 'initiative of being inclusive' from the 'corporate sector' to empower the powerless bottom of the Indian pyramid? Could it team up with the government as well as with other power zones within the sector to ensure the disadvantaged sections to secure better opportunities and better quality of lives? Or could the Prime Minister convoke a get-together of the billionaires and millionaires of the country to place on record their exceptional stature as 'enduring symbols of creditability, trust and excellence' in the 'Made in India' brand, in line with the language Srivatsa Krishna expected Rahul to speak?

While recognizing their meritorious contribution to the world as well as to the country, could he invite them to emerge loftier by reaching out to the browbeaten sections of the country with schemes of housing, training, employment and other sources of dignified social living? Such a gesture from the national leaders who team up with the captains of industry to ensure the making of a more 'democratic' and 'inclusive society' will be a rare 'model of development' from a developing country the world is sure to take inspiration from. The country badly requires 'value-based leaders' atop to justify and make 'India shining' imbibing the spirit of the so called idyllic caption 'Incredible India'.

Secondly, could there be a proposal from the leading 'religious establishments' of the country to address the harsh realities of the country, especially those the general public are forced to find themselves in? It is granted that the illiterate, poor and powerless masses are the crucial source of many-sided power of the religious institutions. Well, having become economically and politically powerful, could the religious sector, in return, think of being a 'voice for the voiceless'? By doing so, the religious centres must be afraid of possibly running the risk of cutting their umbilical cord! If, for instance, the religious sector is not inclined to come forward with initiatives for empowering the deprived sections of the society, its religious and ethical fibre is in question, unquestionably so! Now, could there be a Prime Minister or a Chief Minister in this 'secular country', in line with its great Constitution, who would convoke a meeting of the heads of religions and religious shrines to undertake concrete and consolidated schemes for mainstreaming those who are condemned to live in the margins of the society? Religious faith in this country has to shun their exaggerated preoccupation with 'oneself' and with the 'future' and respond to the demands of the present, especially of the other. The exclusive, one-sided and separatist interest in heavenly matters has to give way for sharing in the basic struggles of the humans in the daily lives. Only then, I believe, the 'inordinately rich temples and shrines' of this 'religious country' will have their legitimate right to exist in this land of the 'extremely poor'! 'Religion' in this 'multi-religious' and 'secular' country then, I am sure, will definitely attain a 'new meaning' for the 21st century as well as become 'incredible' with a multi-coloured feather on the cap.

Thirdly, could there emerge an innovative mission from the 'elite of the country' for promoting the 'spirit of being inclusive' and the 'culture of working together'? The predominant tendency in the country today, especially in response to the increasingly globalizing society, is 'self-centredness and cut-throat competition'. 'Thinking for the other' or 'sharing with the other' is a rare thing to be seen and is understood as the business of a handful of detached saadhoos. 'Paralleling', and not 'networking', seems to be the supreme motto that guides the destiny of a considerably large majority of people in India, especially in the educated and affluent section of India. The administrative circles do not seem to be an exception to this phenomenon. The middle and lower classes seem to accept this model and easily fall in line with this drive. Unhealthy competition coupled with an identity crisis or complex makes people land up in communal conflicts. Lack of good governance or weak governance adds fuel to misguided and terrorist engagements, too. Could the responsible people at the national, state and local levels initiate 'interactive processes' among all communities, in order to reduce inter-community frictions and to foster understanding, fellowship and collaboration among the diverse communities? The educated have to ensure that they are 'enlightened and empowered' enough to contribute their mite to building communities that are mutually inclusive and a nation that is more harmonious and progressive. The capable people of all sectors need to assume the role of being facilitators of such a noble

task. The ‘spiritual wisdom and heritage’ of the ancient land and the present ‘composite culture’ of the country together have to accelerate processes of ‘working together’ among all communities and walks of life. The two characteristic maxims of the land ‘unity in diversity’ and ‘vasudhaivkutumbakam’ need to be ‘incarnated’ into a ‘culture of being inclusive and working together’ at all levels. Only then, this great civilization will be really on the track of becoming a ‘truly incredible India’!

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