

The EC way out



Even by semi-official estimates, the slush cash used to bribe the voters of RK Nagar is around Rs 89 crs. Press freedom, previous experience and priority access to 'sources that do not want to be identified' allow us to round that off to Rs 100 crs. Indeed, last Friday was quite auspicious for IT kitty, if not for democracy.

And that is from just one faction of the rulers, and the amount, a fraction, considering the number of AIADMK groups and other parties in fray. Of course, it was not a level-fooling field since abundant prosperity and absolute power were not accessible to all. Still, the pots and kettles in this junk shop of a State (no racist slur intended) did their best on the principle of what 'their' traffic can bear. So the gross turnover of RK Nagar, the past few weeks, was pretty steep, by any recent buy-poll standard.

Alas, we will never know the voter turnout that such a tall turnover would have really elicited, the EC as it turned out, having turned its back on the poll itself. That's a very disappointing turn of events for the givers, takers, left-outs, distributors, agents, lackeys, candidates, party leaders, ministers, media, political pundits et al. There was so much at stake for so many and all that is now short circuited, thanks to EC, Escape Commission!

The biggest stake holder, and hence the biggest suspect naturally, is TTV. And the biggest loser too, having invested so much and ending up not just with a nought but in tricky knots also. His candidature, that sullied the pollscape, was a bid to grab the gaddi at Fort, upstaging the incumbent EPS, the prospect OPS and the now defunct UPS (udan pirava sahodhari) for the remaining 4 plush years of power. His malpractices are so manifestly magnetic to draw the needle of suspicion but tracing the transaction trail to him is no mean task. Money not only talks, but can silence as well.

My mental jury is split on whether it was right to call off the polls. True, the decision has called the lie of a deemed but damned democratic exercise. But having already incurred expense and much effort, allowing the poll would have been a very enlightening experiment; RK Nagar could have been the rat in the rocket. Also, like many soulless, sceptical, saturated scribes of my tribe, I longed to see the short but spirited drama unfold to its logical climax!

It would have been fun working out poll percentages, ROI for candidates, deposits lost and sundry other arithmetic. And the cash on parade, particularly. Demand usually peaks on voting day, with dicey top-up offers to ensure 'pre-paid' loyalties. And we journoes would have netted a cool Rs 200 crs, rounded off of course, in print and primetime. Aah, best laid plans of media and mice! Too bad, can't 'count' on EC too anymore!

RK Nagar, the ill-fated constituency that bears the name of the illustrious teacher, Dr Radhakrishnan, could have imparted some valuable lessons. The national knowledge pool would have been nourished by the novel and nuanced methods of rigging, EVM tampering, erasing the (nothing racial, again) black mark on the index finger, post-siesta bulk punching, booth manipulations, etc., that our crooked geniuses had, er, hid up in their folded sleeves or karai veshtis for this Amma of all polls. Also, a great op to catch the masters of the game red-handed has been missed.

The 'targets' were so absorbed in their honourable vocation that they threw all caution to winds. The biggest fish of them all could

have been hooked real time and debarred for electoral fraud. Instead, the 'silenced' benamis can now just pay their way through the porous laws and morally-neutral Income Tax Act which only taxes and not axes wrongdoers. The looters may now actually get a refund from public funds minus the 'dues' to public funds. Of course, I am not losing hope totally. But TTV need not either! That sucks.

This upstart usurper from J's lethal legacy wanted to fill her vacancy. Maybe he can still be obliged. He could be sent to the slot where the SC wanted to put J had she been around. Anyway, the sinister sister Sasi is stewing in prison for a paltry Rs 64 crs, rather a fourth of it, her 'legitimate' share, made over five years in the distant past. TTV and team have displayed many times more in just a few days now. We hope the official hounds work the math, stick to the scent and complete the clean up fast.

TN desperately needs a respite from the fatal antics of this foul family. There are more vital things begging our attention, like for instance, the Tamil new year movie releases. Rajini cancelled his fan club meet and Kamal's house caught fire. Yeah, he is fine, no worry. And Baahubali 2 beckons.

RK Nagar is already history.