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India

Corruptions, Scandals and the Charade of Indian Parliamentary Politics

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Recent events in the monsoon parliament session gives lie to the charade of the political democracy in India. Slogans and stunts from the opposition parties have been raining, demanding resignation of the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan, and Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje Scindia for their involvement in corruption scams. Sushma Swaraj purportedly acted in a ‘humanitarian’ interest to help Lalit Modi. All this seems straight out of a comedy skit, but the tragic part is, this is the reality of Indian politics.

The Congress (and some other parties), creating hullabaloo with their demands of investigation into the charges of corruption, and resignations of the people named in them, is itself mired in a number of scams involving crores of rupees. How credible is it going to be to the masses, if Congress raises its voice against corruption and scams?

It needs to be acknowledged that corruption is a real issue that plagues the country, and there is real anger and frustration amongst people concerning the issue. Looking at the meteoric rise of AAP, it should not be hard for us to discern that anyone who tries to tap in to people’s issues, albeit in a populist fashion, will have real purchase amongst the electorate, because the traditional left has ceded space to the right wing parties, by being in alliance with capitalist parties and embracing neoliberal policies wherever they have been in power.

But, we should never lose sight of the fact that the real problems facing Indian society is not corruption or scams—they are symptoms of larger underlying structural issues endemic to capitalism. Congress and BJP have more in common when it comes to corruption, scams or economic policies, than one is led to believe from the acrimonious proceedings in the parliament session. When welfare and social security schemes are cut, farmer’s debt are not pardoned, and indirect taxes hitting the toiling masses far more than the super rich are introduced or raised from their present levels to meet up the budget deficit; capitalists like Adani get loans from nationalised banks to the tune of 5,000 crore, and labour laws to land acquisition laws are all changed to suit the needs of the richest of the rich, all these parties play the same role when in power. In other words, there are battles among the political elite for spoils of the loaves and fishes, but they are united in their basic duty to the ruling class, in exploiting and assisting in the exploitation of the toilers.

Corruption is no more an aberration but an inseparable rule of the game, where swindling of thousands of crores is in the offing every season. May, it be self-styled cricket tournaments like IPL, violation of tender rules by the BJP-Shiv Sena government in Maharashtra, allocation of natural resources like coal, allocating telecom bandwidth, no avenues are wasted in this game of profit. Here, Lalit Modi and Rajeev Shukla, both former IPL chairman’s embezzle money and undue favours and reprieves from governments, establish the clique. Meanwhile, the governments in power try to settle scores with activists like Teesta Setalvad aiding Gujarat pogrom victims get justice, unduly implicating them for receiving foreign funds for running their organisations. Repression is unleashed with sinister motives to muzzle any dissent against the central government.

Revolutionaries fight for every legitimate reform. We welcome real struggles against corruption and scams. But we should not be blind or overlook the spurious nature of such endeavours of the capitalist parties. As the TMC has shown in Parliament, well aware of its own precarious position over the Saradha Scam, its MPs will “agitate” with the other opposition parties, but will not demand resignations, for that demand can come home to roost in West Bengal as well. We therefore cannot present before people the issue as if fighting corruption is in itself enough. For example, we cannot fight merely against corruption in BPL cards, we need to demand the restoration of the full Public Distribution System. When we look at repeated corruption scandals in the finance market, from the 1980s to the present, we need to make toiling people aware that this is also a way in which capital accumulation occurs in the less

developed world.

Not only do we demand the resignation of the ruling corrupt ministers, and due punishment to the perpetrators who have embezzled crores of money; we demand the same of the corrupt politicians who today are in the opposition. We stress the need to build working class struggles with a rainbow of worker's collective, peasants' union, oppressed castes, and gender against the depredations of capitalism which exploit the toiling masses. Corruption is all but a symptom of the capitalist society we live in, and breaking the hegemony of capitalism and replacing it with a just and humane order free of any form of exploitation can only be a viable alternative.