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## Whither The Light of Democracy



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Deepawali is the festival of lights which is celebrated all over India . It marks the advent of the winter season and signifies peace and prosperity and the victory of truth over evil. This year's Diwali (it falls on 28th October) is a bleak one indeed.

As I peer hard through the darkness of hatred and violence, I struggle to find a single ray of bright hope. The atrocities committed by the British Raj on the Indian citizens during its rule in India are now being re enacted by another Raj - the megalomaniac, self styled leader of the Marathas. He seems to be holding the common people to ransom with nary a soul daring to lift a finger against him. The seeds of hatred (between different Hindu communities) so

systematically sown by him in Mumbai, some time ago, are spreading like tenacious weeds throughout the country. His diktats against non-Maharashtrians (perhaps with a view to forging new political alliances) have resulted in large scale arson, stampedes, insensitive rioting mobs and killing of innocents - all in the name of protecting the interests of Maharashtra state.

The recent backlash against him in Bihar has killed more innocents, holding public life and security to ransom. And as trains are being torched, public property being damaged and commoners being attacked in the name of avenging misdeeds of the Maharashtra Nav Nirman Sena, Raj Thackarey is being accorded a hero's welcome by his goons in Mumbai.

Fiery statements by politicians for and against the Mumbaikars are helping in opening a Pandora's box, with 'an eye for an eye' and 'two slaps for one slap'. It is no longer just Hindus versus Muslims or Christians. New battle lines have been drawn now with one Indian state pitched against another; one caste targeting another caste; all in the name of achieving new political objectives. But does anyone care for the moral objectives?

All of us seem to have become impotent in not being able to control the actions of one madman. Neither the judiciary, nor the government, nor the executive has done anything ( sans issuing the bail able warrant of arrest against him) to douse the fire of hatred and violence that started from Mumbai and is now spreading to other states. The chief minister of U.P.recently feared for the safety of Maharashtrians in other states, thereby hinting subtly at more retaliations rather than reconciliations. Our prime minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh seems to be more affected by the current financial crisis (the economist that he is) rather than the human crisis ( the non humanist that he seems) engulfing the nation. Violence is begetting violence and no political party, worth its salt, is opposing it. They are busy planning strategies for the winning the forthcoming elections. Why should they care for the common person on the street who has lost his/her property, job or even life in the senseless mania that seemed to have gripped the powers that be?

Let us pray to God to give us some sanity on this festival of lights so that we can dispel the darkness of ignorance and wayward behaviour of a miniscule

few who are holding humanity to ransom.

- **Shobha Shukla**

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