



January 2010

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Welcome to the February issue of the Lokniti newsletter.

This month the island nation of Sri Lanka witnessed its first round of elections post the downfall of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) resulting in several concerns being raised about the undemocratic nature of the elections.

Discussions on the need for the re-conceptualisation of democracy, especially in the light of unique practices emerging in the global south were discussed in the second round of the Global Conversation on Democracy and Democratisation held in January.

An initiative to take forward the attitudinal study of Indian youth carried out in 2007 by Lokniti in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) was also made this month with a new study "Youth in Indian Politics" being commissioned. Details of the study are given later in the newsletter.

Comments and suggestions maybe sent to vanita.lokniti@gmail.com

Thank you

Vanita Leah Falcao

★ Second Round of Global Conversation on Democracy Held



‘Global Conversation on Democracy and Democratisation’, a project coordinated by Professors Rajeev Bhargava and Yogendra Yadav, an initiative by the CSDS and supported by the Ford Foundation, seeks to pluralise and deepen democratic imagination. The initiative is based on the premise that deepening of democracy requires de-provincialisation of democratic imagination. By now, the base of global experience of democracy is fairly wide. However, the base for conceptions of democracy continues to be rather narrow and largely confined to a handful of Western countries. The intent was to achieve such a conceptualization through initiating the three year long conversation on democracy.

The first round held in June last year, was a largely unstructured exchange of ideas among nearly 30 activists, public intellectuals and scholars from different parts of the world.

The second Global Conversation on Democracy took place at Sohna, near Delhi from January 22nd-24th, 2010. This was attended by activists and scholars from Korea, Mongolia, Thailand, Finland, Czech Republic, South Africa

and UK, apart from India. Bishnu Mohapatra of Ford Foundation, New Delhi and R. Sudarshan of UNDP, Bangkok office, also attended the Conversation.

While many of the participants were attending the Conversation for the first time, a detailed note on the previous Conversation was circulated among all the participants in advance. This enabled them to carry forward the discussion from where the earlier Conversation had left off. Participants shared the concerns and challenges expressed in the course of the first Conversation. It was agreed by all participants that the deliberations need to produce a comprehensive statement about both theorisation and practice of democracy.

The deliberations centered on the theoretical inadequacy of established/received notions of democracy. The Conversation devoted considerable time to a discussion on the factors that impose limits on the functioning of democracy—structural constraints as also constraints emerging from the political practice. This led to a brainstorming session on ‘Alternative Thinking’ on democracy.

It was felt that a critique of the existing practice and theory of democracy implied a search for alternatives with regard to practice, institutions, traditions of thinking and texts—factors on which

such alternative can be built and made viable. The Conversation concluded with a discussion on a possible draft statement titled ‘Rethinking Principles and Practices of Democracy’.

★ Sixth Presidential Elections held in Sri Lanka



Photo by Arthur Rhodes

The sixth Sri Lankan Presidential elections were held on the 26th of January 2010. The contest was between the presidential candidates of the two pre-poll alliances formed. First, the United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA), a coalition of parties dominated by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party that is headed by Rajapaksa. Second, an improbable coalition that emerged last November and invited Gen. Fonseka (a political novice) to contest the election. This alliance consisted of, amongst others, the

United National Party (UNP), the Marxist-Nationalist People’s Liberation Front or JVP, the Tamil National Alliance or TNA and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress.

The incumbent president Mahindra Rajapaksa who contested a second term defeated opposition consensus candidate and former Chief of Army, General Sarath Fonseka by a margin of over 17 per cent. President Rajapaksa obtained 57.88 per cent of the votes and Gen. Fonseka 40.15 per cent.

An average turnout of little over 70 per cent was witnessed, however turnout in the minority strongholds of the North and East were significantly lower. Only 18 per cent of registered voters cast their ballots in Jaffna. In the east, turnout of 50 - 60 per cent was recorded.

Rajapaksa won comfortably in many parts of the Sinhalese-dominated south and central provinces, but Fonseka emerged a clear favourite in the Tamil-dominated north and Muslim- and Tamil-dominated eastern province. Tamils and Muslims account for 25 per cent of the electorate.

These elections called by Rajapaksa, the first since the apparent ousting of the LTTE in May 2009 were held two years ahead of the completion of the previous presidential term. The probable reason for holding early elections is that the euphoria of victory (for which Rajapaksa claimed credit) was still high. In response to a petition filed by Rajapaksa, the Supreme Court has granted him permission to start his new term in November 2010.

For those harbouring hopes of a new beginning several concerns arise. The low voter turnout in the Tamil and Muslim dominated regions indicating that the minorities continue to feel isolated, the broad victory margin being read as the people's approval of Rajapaksa's policies as well as the lack of a steady opposition which would serve as a check on Rajapaksa are some of them.

★ Project on Youth in Indian Politics



We would like to inform you that Lokniti is also beginning a study “Youth in Indian Politics” that is supported by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS). While the above mentioned study examined a wide range of issues in the context of the youth, the new project will in the same context focus on opinions and attitudes towards, perceptions about and engagement of youth with politics. The project will formally begin in April 2010 and is scheduled to be completed by December 2011.

The study aims to assess/identify:

- ❑ The levels of interest and participation of Indian youth in politics,
- ❑ What motivates and guides youth interest and participation in politics
- ❑ Opinion on dynastic politics
- ❑ Issues related to and aspirations of youth in the context of Indian electoral politics and democracy.

★ Update on the Youth Study

‘Indian Youth in a Transforming World – Attitudes and Perceptions’ the publication based on the nationwide attitudinal study of Indian youth conducted by Lokniti, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) along with the KAS and published by Sage last year, has been widely noticed and reported on. Nearly 15 reviews of the book have already appeared till now in various newspaper, journals etc. Find below the link to the latest write up on this book featured in The Economic Times:

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/comments-analysis/Inside-the-mind-of-young-India/articleshow/5418621.cms>

★ **Publications and Other Academic Engagements of Members of the Lokniti Network:**

Sanjay Kumar:

- Delivered a series of six lectures on research methodology to students of Social Science at Mohan Lal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, January 11-12, 2010.
- Delivered a series of three lectures on quantitative research methodology to M.Phil students of Delhi University.
- Presented a paper titled "Disparities in Levels of Educational Attainment in India", at a National Seminar on "Democratic Governance and Human Development: Stocktaking and Future Strategies" organized by Madhya Pradesh Institute of Social Science Research (MPISSR), Ujjain held from January 28-29, 2010.

Sandeep Shastri:

- Shastri, S. 2010. 'Autonomous Kodagu Council is the Answer' in 'Rise and Fall of the Coorg State' edited by P T Bopanna, Rolling Stone Publications, Bengaluru 2010
- Delivered the keynote address at a national seminar on 'Political Process and Governance in India' organized by the Sukumaran Nair Chair for Parliamentary Affairs, University of Kerala at Thiruvananthapuram on 28 January 2010.
- Presented a paper titled 'Campaign Funding : Holding Parties to Account' at a National Seminar 'Electoral Reforms in India' organized by the University Law College, Karnataka University, Dharwad on 17th January 2010.
- Delivered a lecture on 'Does India require another States Reorganization Commission' at the Bangalore Social Science Forum at Bangalore on 11th January 2010.
- Made a presentation on 'Teachers as a Quality Resource' at a panel discussion on 'Resources for Quality Education' at the 'Schoolneedz Expo 2010' organized by Global Education Academy at Bangalore on 9th January 2010.

Mohd. Sanjeer Alam

- Alam, M.S. 2010. 'Social Exclusion of Muslims in India and Deficient Debates about Affirmative Action: Suggestions for a new Approach'. South Asia Research, Vol. 30(1): 43-65.

Summer School on “Analysing Quantitative Data on Indian Politics”

The fourth Summer School on “Analysing Quantitative Data on Indian Politics”, 2010 will be held at Jain International University, Bengaluru from the 14th to the 24th of May, 2010. The last three summer workshops were held at Shimla in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS) Shimla and University of Michigan. The summer school of 2010 is being jointly organized by Lokniti, CSDS, and Jain International University. Details of the summer school can be found at http://www.lokniti.org/summer_workshop_on_quantitative_methods_in_political_science.html.

For further clarifications Banasmita Bora, the program coordinator may be contacted at banasmita@gmail.com.

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