

Lokniti

Programme for Comparative Democracy



Lokniti Newsletter
(For Private Circulation only)

May-June 2007



Photo Essay- Democracy and Freedom of Expression (1)
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From the Editor's Desk
Contact Us

UP Elections
Suggested Reading- *Yuganta*

- KAF Youth Study
- Dialogue on Justice
- Textbook Initiative
- Citizen's Audit of the Democratic State
- Seminars/ Lectures
- Visits
- Newspaper Articles
- Journal Articles

From the Editor's Desk-

Namaste!

Welcome to the summer edition of the *Lokniti* newsletter and I apologise for the delay in bringing out the newsletter. It must have appeared like everyone at *Lokniti* took a summer break, though you all know that wasn't the case. The last couple of months have been quite eventful for us in the project room.

The KAF-CSDS Youth Study nationwide field survey was completed in June 2007. We recently set aside some marginals from the data for preliminary analysis. The next survey that we had been busy with was the CSDS-CNN-IBN-*Indian Express* UP state election post-poll survey. The survey consisted of pre-poll, post-poll and exit poll.

CSDS along with the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group organized a discussion on 'Dialogues on Justice' on 18th April 2007. The discussion was held on the report titled 'Dialogues on Justice' compiled by the Calcutta Research Group.

Despite all our efforts to promote a new project on democracy, the 'Citizen's Audit of the Democratic State' essay competition ended in a disappointment with only 13 entries.

Lokniti has started the process of accepting interns from foreign universities. I take this opportunity to welcome Anja Krause from Humboldt University, Berlin, Andrew Schalkwyk from Harvard University, Boston and Laura Van Hyfte from Michigan University, Michigan. Their internship programmes at *Lokniti* are for about 8 weeks each. Under the guidance of Prof. Peter R. deSouza, Anja completed her research on the Young Politicians in India in June 2007, Andrew is currently looking at the Affirmative Action Debate in India and Laura is helping us with the Youth Study.

I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it. –Voltaire.

Use it, misuse it, loathe it or swear by it, freedom of expression remains one of the most essential features of democracy. Freedom of expression means 'to have a right or liberty to express one's own thoughts'. The past months have seen incidents, which attack the freedom of expression in a democratic society. These happenings have seriously annoyed and enraged the proponents of freedom of expression in a democracy.

The arrest of an art student in Baroda sparked off great anger amongst the artist fraternity and NGOs against the initiators of this uproar. This student had allegedly submitted offending artwork as a part of his examination. Offending to whom remains a question yet to be answered. The 'disturbance creators' not only disrupted an exam but also violated the sacredness of the university by bringing the police into the classroom. The arrest of the artist, who had in reality only submitted his work for evaluation by his teacher, is another issue of concern. The submitted work was for an exam and was only between the teacher and student, not for any outside audience.

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Another issue of restricting the Freedom of Expression was the issue of banning TV channels in Pakistan by the government. It was a clear case of power play and autocracy by the President and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. A couple of months ago the airing of a programme was stopped midway; the transmission blacked out for the next few days and the channel office attacked. Other channels also had been under continuous pressure from the government. It is said that media is one of the pillars of democracy

but such an act to block media's freedom of expression could result in an unstable democracy and society.

People have used print and electronic media for a long time to exercise their freedom of speech and expression. The newest addition to this list is the World Wide Web, which is undoubtedly one of the most widely used means of reaching maximum number of people in a short time. It has now become the new arena for people mostly in urban areas to voice their opinions. The third public domain incident with regard to restriction of Freedom of Expression was the recent banning of a social networking website in all cyber cafes in Maharashtra. It all started when a few Shiv Sainiks vandalised a cyber café in Kalyan because the website displayed offensive content. These social networking sites which is a growing trend among the young adults today, gives its users the freedom to stay in touch with their friends and relatives and also to initiate new contacts. Agreed that the ban was due to the objectionable contents being posted on the site by some of its users and not on the use of the website per se. But the ratio of those posting this content is far lesser than those using the site in a harmless manner.

In contemporary times there are a lot of mediums to exercise the right to expression and if we take the cyberspace into consideration, then there is just no stopping the users either to use or abuse this cherished freedom.

For detailed information on Lokniti and the projects mentioned here kindly log onto our website www.lokniti.org

-Best Wishes
Reetika Syal

KAF Youth Study-

The Youth Study team at CSDS has engaged in a lot of activities in the past few months. Before sending the investigators in the field, the questionnaire was discussed thoroughly with the coordination committee members and pre-tested (in Delhi) for any lacunae. Also, a trainer's training workshop was held in Delhi on 9th & 10th April, which was attended by the state supervisors for training the field investigators in their respective states. A nationwide sample of more than 6000 respondents was chosen for the



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survey. After conducting the survey in various stages over the last two months, the fieldwork was finally completed in the first week of June.

Dialogue on Justice-

The Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (now known as the Calcutta Research Group or CRG) along with *Lokniti* (CSDS) organized a discussion on 'Dialogues on Justice' a report by CRG. The discussion was held at CSDS on the 18th of April 2007. This discussion was essentially based on the report 'Dialogues on Justice', which was an amalgamation of a series of dialogues held earlier. Several institutions such as *Lokniti*, Ford Foundation, European Union and International IDEA had assisted in holding these dialogues held during the State of Democracy in South Asia (SDSA) project. The dialogues were held in Kolkata (discussing the face of Justice in West Bengal),

Darjeeling (talking of the epistemic and practical issues that mark the research agenda on social justice) and Bhubaneswar (relationship between justice and democracy in the context of divided societies). These dialogues are also part of the programme 'State of Social Justice in India' of the CRG.

According to CRG, the dialogues have immensely contributed to the collective knowledge on the state of social justice in the country. They have thrown up new ideas and questions and have shed light on the collective struggles for justice that go on in India with or without the help of law. For CRG, the dialogue programme has been an integral part of the research activities as dialogic knowledge is more intense, detailed and helps create a network of interested people which in turn makes research a matter of sharing, collective gain and responsibility.

Dr. Ranabir Samaddar made a presentation on the report while Prof. Peter deSouza was the facilitator for the meeting.



Photo Essay- Democracy and Freedom of Expression (3)
Photo Courtesy- www.images.google.com

Textbook Initiative-

NCERT with *Lokniti* under the leadership of Prof Suhas Palshikar, Prof. Yogendra Yadav and others has completed the task of producing Political Science textbooks for classes IX- XII for the academic year 2007-2008.

The completed textbooks are '*Democratic Politics I*' for class IX, '*Democratic Politics II*' for class X, '*Indian Constitution at Work*' and '*Political Theory*' for class XI, and '*Contemporary World Politics*' and '*Indian Politics Since Independence*' for class XII. The team has also written separate Hindi versions of the textbooks. We congratulate the team for all its efforts in compiling these textbooks and hope that a more robust commitment to constitutional democracy has been initiated.

Citizen's Audit of the Democratic State-

Lokniti had initiated an interesting project titled 'Citizen's Audit of the Democratic State' a few months back. It was an attempt to encourage all young citizens to assess the democratic state in terms of its deficits, distortions and dysfunctionalities, very different from our picture of the ideal democratic state. The project was discussed at the *Lokniti* Bangalore meeting in January this year and our political science experts prepared the concept note with a lot of deliberation. It was carefully designed to explain what we expected the audit accounts to reveal.

We sent out the a poster and a concept note each to about 400 universities and academic institutions along with five posters and concept notes each to Non-Governmental organizations all across India. It was a huge campaign where we even advertised about the project in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, our newsletter and website. The participants had the option of submitting their entry in any Indian language, which they were comfortable in so that scholars from non-urban, non-metropolitan settings could also be

encouraged to contribute. And in order to promote more and more young scholars to write their experiences with the Indian democratic state, we even decided to reward one hundred best entries.

Despite all these efforts, we received only 13 entries from all over India and most of them from urban centers. The response was discouraging and disappointing to say the least. Is this the result of apathy, indifference or just plain incompetence? And if that is so, what does it tell us about the political science community and activists who are engaged with democracy in the country especially since the age limit for participants in the essay competition was below 30 years? Is this the result of apathy, indifference or just plain incompetence? And if that is so, what does it tell us about the political science community and activists who are engaged with democracy in the country especially since the age limit for participants in the essay competition was below 30 years?

UP Elections-

The CSDS-CNN-IBN-*Indian Express* UP post-poll survey (March-May 2007) was conducted from the 8th April to 8th May 2007. We conducted a pre-poll survey in the third week of March before election began in UP. It was followed by a post-poll survey conducted after each phase of election and was concluded with an exit poll for the last phase.

Our pre-poll data suggests that if elections were held in UP in the third week of March, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) would have been front-runners in the race to form a government, with the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) and Congress far behind. According to our survey, as many as 30% of the people said that they would consider the issue of development while casting their votes, 15% mentioned the issue of price-rise and 9% mentioned unemployment. In the 62 constituencies, which were to go to polls in the first phase of UP elections, Mulayam Singh

Yadav appeared to be the strongest candidate among all parties. 39% of the people interviewed wanted him as the Chief Minister, but at the same time a lot of people didn't seem happy with the development work done carried out under the SP leadership in terms of roads, hospitals, power supply, irrigation etc. He fared the worst in the power supply sector with 41% of the people saying that supply of electricity had become more irregular.

After the first three phases of elections were over, our post-poll survey in Doab, Bundelkhand, Ruhelkhand and West UP hinted on BSP emerging as the clear front-runner and the only serious contender in another probable hung assembly. In the first three phases of elections the BSP and SP were neck to neck according to the pre-poll data.

BSP appeared all set to finish first after the 4th and 5th phase of elections. Our survey in Awadh and Northeast UP showed Mayawati to have already bagged more than 100 out of 292 seats that had gone for polls so far in the state. Interestingly, the key issue of price rise and unemployment as the basis of voting in the elections increased to 37% and 15% respectively in the post-poll survey.

When all the phases of our post-poll and exit poll survey were over, BSP with Mayawati as its leader emerged a clear favorite. We projected an overall vote share of about 29% (between 152-168 seats) for BSP, whereas for SP and BJP the projected figures were about 25% and 22% vote share respectively. While BSP showed its dominance over Bundelkhand and Western UP, SP showed a shift towards Eastern UP with a projected second finish (99-111 seats) much below its 2002 performance.

An analysis by Prof. Yogendra Yadav in a national daily explicitly illustrates why there was a difference between the projections and the actual result of the election. He lists three reasons why the polls were off the mark. First there may be a sampling error especially in the exit poll. In an exit poll situation, it is the voter who chooses to be interviewed or not by our investigator outside the polling station.

Secondly, there is a possibility of a response bias. The voter may not disclose his/ her vote to an unknown person, in this case our field investigator. Therefore those who voted for the BSP were less likely to admit it. Even non-Dalits who voted for the BSP may be unwilling to admit it to themselves.

Prof. Yadav states that for every 1% of the votes polled, the BSP won 6.8 seats as opposed to 3.8% for SP and 3% for BJP. So even if it was possible to forecast the vote-share, it was very difficult to forecast the number of seats.

The dilemma was that all the three factors of sampling error, response bias and vote-seat distortion stacked up together in the same direction, which led to an underestimation of BSP and an overestimation for BJP votes. These errors occur during all opinion polls in varying percentages, and pollsters usually hope that they will cancel each other out, but in this case they reinforced each other.

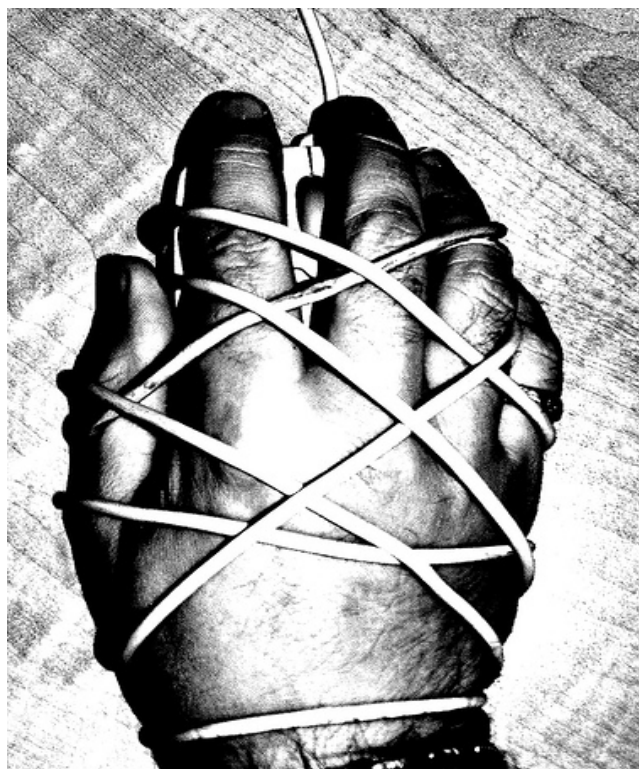


Photo Essay- Democracy and Freedom of Expression (4)

Photo Courtesy- www.flickr.com (Uploaded on [November 25, 2005](#) by [cofano](#))

CSDS observed that all the polls in UP have always underestimate the BSP. That was one of the reasons that CSDS-CNN-IBN-*Indian Express* poll went for a post-poll survey rather than the exit poll.

After choosing our respondents by a lottery method for the post poll survey and correcting the response bias, the CSDS-CNN-IBN-*Indian Express* poll was 78% accurate in projecting the results of the UP elections, which was the highest amongst the various forecasts conducted by other Media channels during this election.

Suggested Reading-

Yuganta: The end of an epoch- Irawati Karve, 1969, Deshmukh Prakashan, Pune

In this edition I bring to you a very old book, a classic truly. The author talks about an epic of Indian literature and history, the *Mahabharata*. The *Mahabharata* is a grand compilation of history along with myth, legend, fable, religious and philosophical writing, legal and a lot of other text. In this book, Irawati Karve studies the humanity of the characters of Mahabharata and none of them emerge as wholly good or wholly bad to her. To quote some of the observations, *Duryodhana*, the arch villain of the work had been humiliated by the *Pandavas* and had cause for resentment; *Bhishma*, the wisest and most respected character in the epic, a peacemaker who tried to heal the factional strife in his family (which is the theme of the work), when under the influence of his own sense of mission, wrought great injustices and had a large share in producing the fatal series of events that finally made the strife incurable; even *Krishna* the reciter of the *Bhagwad Gita* and God incarnate, aided his friends the *Pandavas* with shrewd counsel which was sometimes of dubious morality. The author imaginatively analyses

all the personalities in the book who exhibit a range of emotions and human feelings right from love, chivalry, devotion and bravery to anger, hatred, violence, deceit and cowardice. Is it this kind of Political Science thinking that we need to do?

Seminars/ Lectures-

- ~ Anil K. Verma, *Lokniti*'s U.P coordinator was invited as analyst for several live telecast programmes on Election Analysis on NDTV, Star News and ABC Channel, Kanpur, on 11th and 12th May 2007.
- ~ Prof. Peter deSouza presented a paper titled 'The Indian Commonsense of Democracy: Disturbing the Comfort Zone' in Paris during the two day Indo-French Seminar on the Rediscovery of India on May 31st and June 1st 2007. The Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi and the Foundation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris had organized the seminar.

Visits-

- Prof Yogendra Yadav visited the *Centre for South Asian Studies*, Michigan as a Hughes Fellow in April 2007 and gave a lecture on Democracy and Poverty. He also visited the New School of Social Research in New York and gave a lecture on the State of Democracy in South Asia organized by the India China Institute.
- Prof Yadav also visited Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin, Institute of Advanced Studies. He participated in a seminar on India's Intellectual History and in a panel discussion on Contemporary India, organized by the American Academy, Berlin.

- Prof. Peter R. deSouza and Sanjay Kumar visited Nepal to attend a workshop as faculty members to train Nepali field investigators in survey and dialogue methodology. The *Institute for Transitional Justice* organized the workshop from 8th –10th May 2007.

Newspaper Articles-

- Sanjay Kumar, Rajeeva Karandikar and Yogendra Yadav, Mulayam, Maya neck and neck: BJP trails far behind, Cong farther, *The Indian Express*, March 28, 2007
- Sanjay Kumar and Yogendra Yadav, Lens may be caste but all eyes are on development, *The Indian Express*, March 28, 2007
- Suhas Palshikar, On Social Justice, Let's Begin Again, *The Indian Express*, March 31, 2007
- Sanjay Kumar, Phase I: Mulayam puts S.P ahead, *The Indian Express*, April 5, 2007
- Sanjay Kumar, Phase III: Make or break for Mulayam, *The Indian Express*, April 6, 2007
- Anil K. Verma, Poll promises, UP, UP and Away, *The Indian Express*, April 9, 2007
- Sanjay Kumar, Advantage Maya in phase II's 3 way fight, *The Indian Express*, April 11, 2007
- Peter R. deSouza, What will be Their Nandigram, *The Indian Express*, April 17, 2007

- Sanjay Kumar, Rajeeva Karandikar and Yogendra Yadav, Maya emerging as clear leader, Mulayam slips behind BJP, *The Sunday Express*, April 22, 2007
- Sanjay Kumar, Rajeeva Karandikar and Yogendra Yadav, UP is headed for a Mayawati Plus govt., Watch this space, *The Indian Express*, May 1, 2007
- Anil K. Verma, It's All Maya, *The Indian Express*, May 1, 2007
- Sanjay Kumar, Maya 'class' act has upper castes split, *The Indian Express*, May 2, 2007
- Sanjay Kumar, Rajeeva Karandikar and Yogendra Yadav, B.S.P hi rahegi pehle number par, *Jansatta*, May 2, 2007 (in Hindi)
- Peter R. deSouza, Ours Affectionately, *The Indian Express*, May 3, 2007
- Yogendra Yadav and Sanjay Kumar, The plus and minus of polling in U.P, *The Indian Express*, May 8, 2007
- Sanjay Kumar, Rajeeva Karandikar and Yogendra Yadav, it's all over but the counting and Maya is the clear leader, *The Indian Express*, May 9, 2007
- Yogendra Yadav and Sanjay Kumar, Hawa to is baar B.S.P ki hi, *Jansatta*, May 9, 2007 (in Hindi)
- Sanjay Kumar, Mulayam ke muslim vote bank me sendh, *Nav Bharat Times*, May 13, 2007 (in Hindi)
- Peter R. deSouza, Will They Blow up Khajuraho, *The Indian Express*, May 15, 2007
- Yogendra Yadav and Sanjay Kumar, Beyond the Blue: The untold U.P story (in 6 parts), *The Indian Express*, May 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 2007

Journal Articles-

- Anil K. Verma, 'Correcting the Political Disorientation of the Youth', *Indian Journal of Youth Affairs*, Vol. 11, No.1, January-June 2007, pp.8-11
- Mohd. Sanjeer Alam 'Genesis and Perpetuation of Social Disparities in School Education in India: An Exploratory Analysis' *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*, Vol. XXI, No. 2, April 2007
- Mohd. Sanjeer Alam and Saraswati Raju 'Contextualising Inter, Intra-religious and Gendered Literacy and Educational Disparities in Rural Bihar' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLII, No.18, May 5, 2007
- Dhananjai Joshi 'Bahujan Samaj te Sarvajan Samaj', (in Marathi) *Sadhana*, May 19, 2007, page 5 – 8 (Translated from English)

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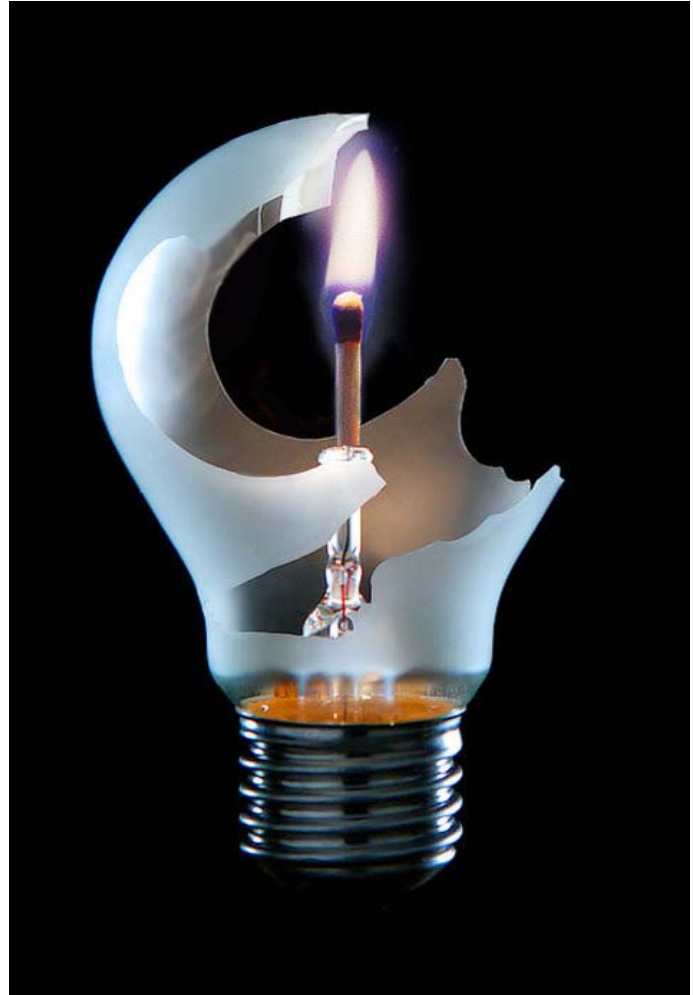


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