



Vote for whom?

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Election in India for Lok Sabha and a few State Assemblies is round the corner (April 2019). The TV channels are flooded with election propaganda. Mudslinging is the order of the day. No one knows for sure who speaks the truth and who pours out lies. Unethical practices superabound. So much of time, energy and money is wasted on worthless speeches. Charges and countercharges of politicians make the newspaper headlines. Most of the stuff is nauseating. The poor and the illiterate are cheated. The youth are confused. What is God's message to us Christians at this hour in India?

There are Preachers and Christian leaders who motivate Christians to pray in favour of or against some politicians and parties. The Bible does not endorse such practices. Each political party has its strengths and weaknesses. We must pray for the healing and welfare of the Nation, and God in His wisdom will choose the leadership suitable for the situation. The insight King Nebuchadnezzar received, following the miraculous deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego from the fiery furnace, is profound. He wrote to all peoples, nations and languages, "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men ... And those who walk in pride He is able to humble" (Dan 4:17b,37b).

Let Herod rule or Pilate rule. It matters not to Jesus. Let Felix rule or Agrippa rule. It matters not to Paul. This should be our attitude as Christians. There's hardly any politician or party without corruption and ungodliness. Jesus took the whip not to drive away the Romans but to cleanse the Church (Jn 2:13-17; Lk 19:45,46). There's more corruption and wickedness inside the Church than outside. We the salt are losing our saltiness; we the light are losing our brightness (Mt 5:13-15). Judgment must begin at the House of God (1 Pet 4:17a). God deals first with the Church (Rev 2 & 3), and only then with the nations (Rev 6 onwards). As the Church goes, so goes the world! When the Church repents, the Country will be healed (2 Chr 7:14).

If God in His sovereign wisdom allows an anti-Christian party to come to power, it will be an occasion to show forth His power on a larger scale. If Pharaoh, who crushed God's people, comes to power, the miracle of "dividing of a sea" will happen

(Ex 14:21-29). If Nebuchadnezzar, who took away the articles from the Temple of God to that of idols, comes to power, the miracle of “quenching the violence of fire” will happen (Dan 1:1,2; 3:26; Heb 11:34a). If Darius, who banned prayers to God, comes to power, the miracle of “stopping the mouths of lions” will happen (Dan 6:6-9,18-23; Heb 11:33d). If Romans, who persecuted Christian preachers, come to power, the miracle of “opening of prison doors” will happen (Acts 12:1,6,7; 16:20-26; Heb 11:36). Let’s make the prayer of the persecuted early Church ours (Acts 4:23-31). Then “signs and wonders” shall follow, and we will preach the Gospel with greater “boldness.”

The large sections of evangelical Christians in America prayed against Mr. Barak Obama, but God gave him two consecutive Presidential terms! Let’s not be foolish enough to “advise” God whom He must make our President or Prime Minister (Rom 11:33-35). Let God act according to His “determined counsel” and “foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23).

There are unseen powers behind political leadership. The present crises in the country are a spiritual warfare (Eph 6:12). Pray for all the candidates in the fray. Ask God to touch the nation’s millions of voters. Make your prayers specific by focussing on the following —

(a) Righteousness: We must have leaders who are free from corruption and selfish interests. They must be men and women of sincerity and integrity, free from hypocrisy. This may look too ideal to expect in politics. But God’s Word emphatically declares, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a shame to any people” (Prov 14:34). There’s no other way.

(b) Secularism: The Indian Constitution provides freedom of religion, to practise and propagate one’s faith. But there’s a steady erosion of secular values in the Nation. It’s impossible to be a faithful follower of Christ without obeying His Great Commission: “Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them ... teaching them” (Mt 28:19,20). At the same time, let’s confess to God that we have not taken full advantage of the wind when it was favourable.

(c) Uplift of the Poor: Political instability affects the Nation’s economic development. The multitudes under the poverty line keep swelling. Their cry goes unheard. God blesses a government which has pity on the poor (Dan 4:27). Each Christian must confess to God his failure to feed the poor Lazarus at his doorstep (Lk 16:19-21). Each Christian family must confess its failure to care for the widows and orphans in its street and surroundings (Js 1:27). Each Church must confess its failure to uplift the beggars at its Beautiful Gate (Acts 3:1-8). O God, be merciful to us for our sins of omission!

(d) *National Integration:* Jesus said, “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand” (Mk 3:24). Instead of fighting the cranker of communalism, some politicians are actually flaming communal passion. By hook or crook they want to seize and sustain power. Animosity between the South and the North, between Aryans and Dravidians, is growing. The Christian message propagates “good will toward men” (Lk 2:14). May God give us leaders who will hold the country together. We have had enough of murders and mayhem.

(e) *Social Reforms:* Our Nation is plagued by social evils like untouchability, child marriage, dowry system, sati, devadasi system, atrocities against women, liquor shops and scores of others. We need leaders bold like a lion to crusade against such inhuman practices and lead people out of darkness. Leaders must not sacrifice principles for the lure of office and lucre.

These are some of the basic expectations if a nation is to prosper. Besides these, add to the prayer list whatever comes to your mind and intercede regularly before God. Organize fasting prayers. God is on the Throne!

Pray for the Chief Election Commissioner and all the officials in the election machinery. Pray against rigging, booth-capturing and such malpractices. Pray for a free and fair poll.

Prayer alone is not sufficient. Faith without works is dead. Study the Election Manifesto of each party. Discuss with responsible and mature leaders. Avoid arguments. Don't be pressurised by anyone or carried away by the heady, extravagant and high-sounding promises of irresponsible politicians. You are an individual with rights and responsibilities. Think, pray and exercise your franchise. Keep your choice confidential.

When the election results are announced, whether or not the outcome is as desired by you, thank God that He has answered all our prayers in His own way (Rom 13:1). Start praying regularly for all the newly elected leaders that “we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim 2:1,2). Let me close with the timeless exhortation of Apostle Peter: “Honour all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king” (1 Pet 2:17).

(This article in Tamil is available on the author's website, stanleyonbible.com, as an attachment to his Online Letter 101 of 8 April 2019.)