

31ST LALA LAJPAT RAI MEMORIAL LECTURE

On

‘COMMUNALISM & CORRUPTION’

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By

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Prin. Shirahatti, Mrs. Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar, and all the Professors, Vice-Principals on the dias, Mr. Arun from NIROBI. I am extremely proud and happy to have been asked to deliver this memorial lecture. I go to various colleges and talked to the students, because I feel it is very important for youth to know what are the big problems in our country? and what they can do, to fight the evils, that retard our progress. But here it is not only an invitation to talk to the students, but to deliver a memorial lecture and in honour of a very great son of India, the college bears his name, and he was one of the great freedom fighters, as Principal has just explained to you. Along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Pal from West Bengal. Punjab, Bengal and Maharashtra, which produced three great freedom fighters. You know there was a book written by V.S. Nai Pal. He has written many books. But there is one, which I particularly like, it was a very small, like novel. It was titled, “In a Free State” and he was going through a midical country in Africa, which has just become free and he talked about what is saw and what freedom meant to that country and the bottom line was that there can never be any total freedom. Everybody has freedom, everybody is free to do this and that. But freedom has always to be defined by respecting other people’s freedom. For example if you want to make a big noise and talk among yourselves and disturb the audience etc. That is by keeping your mobiles on, etc.

There are also others who want to listen. So this is just a small example, where freedom can never be totally free. I mean you can not be doing whatever you like. You have to define it and limit it to other people's freedom also. So this is in substance the people, who fought for us and gave us freedom, but now we have to use that freedom properly and according to me there are four great evils that this country faces, and which youth must be aware of and must join in the fight against those evils. What are those great evils? One is over-population. I know that you children when you get married you won't have more than two children, I know that. Because this is in urban areas, this is now established fact, but why are there so many children being born in poorer families, in they have nots in the villages etc. Because of lack of education. It is a very important input, as to why we are getting over-populated? and our leaders once who are now the inheritors of this freedom have not paid that attention to education, as they should have. You take a state of Kerala, where there is almost total literacy. You know 20% of the people of Kerala are Muslims, 20% are Scheduled Caste. These are the poorer sections of the community, of society and yet all the women there are educated and when there is women's education, you will find that the population is always controlled. Because they understand the problems that large families create and what are the advantages of not having large families. So we must work for education. I have a feeling, that many of our leaders, particularly in the Bimaro State in the North are not interested in getting their constituents educated. Because they believe in large mobilisation of voters, who do not understand what is what? So hence we have to fight these evils. Today, I am going to talk to you about other two evils, but before that I thought that I would just touch on this one evil of

over-population and the real cause for it, which is adult illiteracy. Illiteracy, particularly of women. Then we have of course casteism, which is another great evil. But it is being fought politically and there are lot of signs that evil is going to be fought. It will take time, but there is a clear move in the fight against that evil. But the once that really should concerned us and where students can get involved are the fight against communalism and the fight against corruption and these are the two evils I am going to talk to you about, today in this memorial lecture. I am involved in Bombay City in these two fights. These two fights are what I feel have to be joined, not only by people like me who have retired and who have time to galvanise, but also by youth and I appeal to college students to join us in these fights. We have two organisations, which we are spear heading, Mr.B.G. Deshmukh, Performer, Cabinet Secretary, is our Chairman for both these institutions. One is called 'The Mohalla Committee Movement Trust' and the other is the PCGT, 'The Public Concern For Governance Trust', which fights for good governance, for moral values in governance and to fight against corruption and I am quite sure that students, if they understand the value of these fights will join us. Prin. Shirahatti mentioned that I was the Police Commissioner of Bombay. Today I don't want that to be mentioned, because the Police Commissioners are getting arrested and some students who are not around, who were probably not born when I was the Police Commissioner may think that I too would be in that category. So I get very worried, when someone calls or tells that I was Police Commissioner of this City. Another thing he said Super Cop. That also worries me, because even criminally inclined officers are today called Super Cops. There are so many Super Cops, and some of them are being arrested also or at least

being investigated. So I think that these should be kept aside and then we should see what is what? What we can do is no problem, no point talking about corruption, talking about communalism, but we should concentrate on what we should do to fight these evils. Now start with communalism. You know this country can never advanced, if we are not united. We will always remain backward and one of the big problems that keeps us backward is this division on religious lines. Now you are all educated, young men and women, we should understand that religion is basically man made. When man first came in this world there was no religion, then man was worried, surprised, what is this? What is thunder? What is lightening? What are floods? What are these different things, that come and where do they come from and then they decided man, women, they all decided that they must have been created by one God? Alright, accept it. Accept that there is a God, but if there is a God, he must have created everybody. He could not have created Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Juels and different religions. He could not have done that. It is man who has interpreted that, God has given you religions. Now you have born in certain religion. Say, e.g. I am born into the Christian Religion, but it mine is not only an accident of birth, also an accident of history, because in Goa, from where my youngsters came. We were all Hindu's and when the Portuguesees came and converted us. Converted my youngsters, not us. 450 years ago, they gave these surnames which are Portuguesees surname. Which are not even people don't understand what these surnames are? And the Portuguesees Godfather's surname given to everybody, converted on one day. So it is an accident not only of birth but an accident of history. But you are born into some religion and you follow that religion. I seriously advocate that you follow your

religion, because those who do not follow religion, there is another down side. I have seen in Albania, where I was Ambassador. I was Ambassador in Romania and I was accredited to Albania. Albania was the Muslim country but the dictator had abolished religion. He was himself a son of Mulla. But he said that religion destroys everybody's progress and he said our country is officially ethics and because it was officially ethics they have forgotten all about religion and I have personally seen the ill effects of that decision. How people has lost all spiritual constraints, which what religion is suppose to give you. But having said that please understand that everybody is created. If there is a God, nobody has seen God, but if there is one, he has created everybody and if you worship God by different names, I do not see any reason why you should looked down on others, looked down on religions, beliefs. Because all beliefs are the same. If you look into religious text of all the religions, you will find that it is the same they advocates the same principles. The same principles of brotherhood and love and they condemned the ill-effects and ill-doings of everybody. You take any religion in the world. Now you have this concept of people saying that one of this religions in particular like Islam, from Christianity or coming from Judaism. Basically it came from Judaism. Thinking that they are the God's chosen one they have got the word of God was given personally by God himself through the Prophet. Well that is their beliefs. Let them remain with that beliefs. But they should respect also everybody elses beliefs and if that happen we could all go together. We in the Mohalla Committee go to the slums. We go to the slums and we talk to the people in the slums. Because they are the poorer sections of society. They are the one's who kill and also get killed, they are the one who suffer. The people who

instigate them for political reason, because they get votes out of divisions and after instigating them, they do not come forward to kill any one. They do not get kill themselves. Their property does not get destroyed. It is only the poor who suffer. So it is very important for us to explain to the poor people that look why are you fighting. After the Gujarat Right I went to Dharavi. There were 600 women as you must be about 600 over here. There were 600 women in a hall and I addressed them and I said some of you come forward. Stand in front of the others and tell them what were your experiences during the 1992-93 Raj in Bombay and two persons, they said that their experiences were very bad. Their children suffer, they got no milk, they couldn't go to school and they were running around. People were not allowed to go out of their house. Their men's got involved in the fights, some of them got involved in the right, and probably the women also encourage them. Then we understood that they didn't helped them at all. I said who benefited from these rights. Tell me who benefited. They didn't know who had benefited. They had not benefited. They had only suffered. I said people who are benefited. They benefited politically. They probably get more votes. They get more supporters, but you have not benefited and it is very important for us to go and make this propaganda, because the politicians will always use divisions for their own purpose. Because politics you can never get read of it. You have to have politics. Politics has started ever since man began organising himself in villages and in commun and there is always somebody who will come up, like to be noted. You can not get read of politics, but you can certainly help in telling people how this benefits them and that does not and any kind of tension that was created after the Gujarat Rights should not be copied in our city, is the message that

we try to give them and I think we succeeded to a very great extent. Perhaps if somebody had given them the signal, they might have taken to the streets. But then how would it benefit them and our concentration is on the women. Because we believe that women have got great power over their men. They have husbands, they have sons, they have brothers, they have fathers and they can influence them.

We have projects like swing classes for girls. Now you will say how does it help communal harmony. Now in all swing classes we insist that there should be girls from all community. They come, because they feel that with this free swing classes they will be able to get a skill, acquire a skill, that will help them to earn. That is their attraction. But after that we propagate our philosophy that people should not fight on the basis of religion, on the basis of caste or creed. These are things that should not matter to them and we show them that here there are Hindu girls, there are Muslim girls, there are Christian girls, there are Scheduled Caste girls. All of them sitting side by side, learning side by side and they are as human, as anybody else. There is no difference between them. These are the ways by which we try to bring about a rapport between them. We have drawing competition for children in schools on the subjects of communal harmony. Every year we do that 1300 to 1500 children, particularly the Municipal Schools they take part, and then we also have another competition for cricket, tennis ball cricket for slums children, police station wise. Because it is very important also for police officers to get involved. There was lot of misunderstanding between the police and the muslim community in particular after the last riot. I was not in this Country. I was not in our Country. I was in Rumania, where I spend 4

years and I read about these rights in my city, when I was in Rumania. I said when I come back to my city I will try to address this problem of communal harmony. There are lot of young people who can get involved. We are particular about people staying in the slum areas, but there are others like you who can help them in getting them together.

Now I will go to corruptions, there is a lot interest in this particular aspect, I find there is more interest in fighting corruption than fighting communalism. Interest in fighting communalism as far as I have experienced in the city is more among the muslims, because they feel insecure and it is important for us to make them feel secure. Because if you have citizens who do not feel secure and they form 11 to 12% of the population, we are in serious trouble. But as far as corruption is concerned, everybody seems to be interested. Particularly the middle class, the class that belong to they have. They have nots, they only know the policeman, small municipal servants, small ticket collectors. They are the one who harass them and then they come and tell me when I go to my Mohalla Committee work in the slums. They said that “Saheb, we didn’t get this, we didn’t get that”. One woman from Worli slum, who was entitle to some colour. You know like in football they show some red card and yellow card. There is such cards in the Ration Cards also. The one below the poverty line, they got another colour, so she went for that. She was below the poverty line and Ration Clerk really laid her a merry dance, sent her from this place to that place. Told her to come on another day, told her to come on the third day and she went there 12 times. Well she might have exaggerated, but must she have gone many times. So I told her, she said “Saheb you phone”. I said “if I phone, that person will

immediately give it to you”. But I think that does not solve any problem. I would suggest that the whole of this committee, Mohalla Committee, there were about 30 of them. I said all of you go now together and they all went together, took my advice and they got the card. Because you will find when people gather together and protest and show their strength, these Govt. who laid you the Merry dance they relayed, they are afraid of show of strength. I think even politicians are afraid of show of strength. I think my friend Nirmalabai will probably tell you that case, they feel that they are not going to get the votes then they worried about it, otherwise they don’t worry. So there is a great problem of corruption, which hits everybody. Now let me tell you an example of how corruption goes down to the lowest level. I will finish it very quickly would be interested. Because Telgi Prakaran. What we call the Telgi Prakaran and the Murder of Satyendra Dube has galvanise civil society. Because of these two things, what are happen, people have got interested and are willing to fight jointly. But when politicians keep transferring people after taking money from officers, those officers have to recover that money. They are not giving that out of their own pocket, from where do they get that money. Please think about it. They take it from the people and because they take it from the people, you are harassed. So please understand that we have to fight these evils together and young people like you can help in a very big way. First of all by understanding the problem and saying that you will not be a part of it, you will oppose it and you show your displeasure to anybody who indulges in it. It is possible. Specially, if you do it together in a group and another thing you can do is, you can joined our movement, you can come, offer your services. The Sophia College girls have offered their services and the Rajdeep

Sardesai's mother , who is a Professor in St. Xavier's College. She had also offered her services along with her students and I think many more students should join this movement. Give their services at least once in a month or once in three months. Just for ½ a day to sort out the various complaints and see where we can go from there. Because unless we do something concrete to fight this, we will not get anywhere. It is very important for civil society to organise, protest and say that is enough is enough. No more and if the Government or whoever runs the Government, which includes the political leaders and the bureaucrats if they do not stop in milking the people, we are not going to tolerate them any further. This is the message we should give to them.

Mrs. Samant Prabhavalkar and I have both being, I have not received the copy of that GR, but the people from the Press phone me that with the Govt. has put us on that right to Information Council. It's a very important tool in the hands of people where the Government officials have to disclose to the people who want to know as to why a certain decision was taken. I asked after Mr. Wagal was arrested. Wagal was one of our very brainy fellows, but he use his brain for different purposes and he had a very bad reputation in the force and yet he was made Jt. Commissioner Incharge of Crime. So I asked under the right to information, who has appointed him in that post, who was the person recommended him. Because Mr. Bhujbal is to always say that it was the DG who recommended and he would only go by it. So the DG's office, I asked and they said that no we have not recommended. We don't have any papers here. So I asked the Home Department and they said you are not entitle to this information. Now I am quiet sure that Mrs. Samant Prabhavalkar and I are going to ensure along with our other members that such information should be disclose. We

are not taking any action on it but atleast let the people know who are the people behind certain decision. Why the decision was taken. We are entitled to know why should Govt. being done in a most hushes manner. It is very important that if these informations are notified and published, lot of mischief's will stop. Unfortunately Govt. is doesn't want to bureaucrats rather or even political leaders do not want this information to be publish and they want to ensure that kept on the raps for the simple reason, they want to expose, and it is our duty to see that this right to information act is properly utilised. Similarly we are going to demand that is of course at the central level we intend to go and see the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and say that the vision law of act should also be passed. They haven't done it as yet. I don't know at what stage, but it is very important that vision law act should be passed because we have seen how Satyendra Dubey was murdered and we do not want a repetition of such things again. Similarly the single directive that also should be taken of Lokayukta Bill. Because single directive exempts officers from the rank of Joint Secretary and above. Now why should they exempted? In the old days Joint Secretary and above were mostly very honest people. We hardly got a case or two of corrupt persons, but now it is not so any more. There are lot of them, who are making merry and why should they not exposed and be subject to the said rules and another Govt. Officials.

So these are the some of the demand that we have to make, we intend to make and young people should understand this and join in the fight against corruption. I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

NIRMALA SAMANT PRABHAVALKAR

The Principal of Lala Lajpat Rai College, Hon'ble Mr. M.G. Shirahatti, just we have heard an excellent address, a key not speech of the Ex-police Commissioner of Mumbai and he held many other.