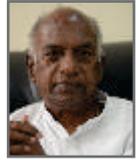


Simplify the tax rules to make it a success



K N Govindacharya

Bimtech had the prestigious opportunity to hear the esteemed Shri K.N Govindacharya give a speech. He is a well-known member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Alongside, he is an environmental activist, a social activist, a political activist and a thinker. During his speech, thereafter in his interview, he spoke about the various aspects of human life, woven with the contemporary economic, political and social scenario of our country. His experience along with his knowledge instigated a thinking element among the audience. Through his words he aimed at developing a better nation free of the present day.

Q. Could you share some of the things that you learnt from your participation in the JP movement? Was emergency the only reason behind this upsurge?

A. The first thing which I learnt during the Bihar agitation was that selfless service, concern for the poor and spirit of nationalism is not the monopoly of any one ideology or organization or leader. I saw students, boys and girls, youth from backgrounds of different ideologies working in the movement with the same dedication and self-respect. This was so moving for me that I cannot forget a few friends of that movement who taught me, by their deeds and actions, the importance and the result giving capacity of what is called 'ahimsa'.

Q. Corruption is a disease that has plagued India and almost every government has launched initiatives to root it out, but with little success. What can the common man do to combat corruption?

A. There are two aspects of corruption. One, the moral standards an individual bears in his/her personality. Second, the system should be such that a person of average moral strength may also be able to lead a clean and prosperous life. So, the system should be so transparent and accountable as to facilitate every individual to be able to move in the right direction if opportunities are there, because, every person cannot be brought to the highest level of moral strength. That also should be attempted, but system change is also needed to be made more accountable and transparent. For that, to some extent these days, I suggested that e-governance can be a better tool to achieve this end for at least minimizing corruption and its effect on the common life of the people of India.

Q. Do you think banning liquor by the state government is a good move? Will this have an impact on consumption by the growing middle class?

A. Again the same thing which I just narrated in the question before that was about corruption, same thing about prohibition also. When ban is there, some people will still quench their thirst with alcoholic drinks but for that they will have to hide their faces. This is the significant change that the law makes. Attitude and internal changes required come from the good *sanskaram* and adequate atmosphere of society are needed as supplementary tools.

Q. Many people in the state of Jammu & Kashmir view India as an oppressor. How can this perception be changed and how can we involve them in the national identity and development?

A. As you know, today is second day of *Durga Puja*. I will just tell you one example from *Durga Shaptashati* itself. When *Raktabeejras* was there, he had the capacity to multiply himself whenever a drop of blood fell on the ground. To defeat him, the only way was to awaken the strength of *Kali* along with *Durga*. *Durga* assassinated the present *Raktabeejas* and *Kali* took all the blood on her tongue so that no drop of blood falls on earth- the prospective breeding ground of new *Raktabeejas*. Similarly, state power should act as *Durga* and societal power and what is called religious/spiritual power, should act as *Kali*, so that need of the common people are adequately dealt with and they are satisfied with the situation and the system. The terrorists and the supporters of terrorism can be isolated or weeded out. Weeding out is the task of *Durga* and people's care is the task of *Kali*. This dual approach is needed to tackle the problem of terrorism and separatism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Q. Do you think eliminating obsolete laws, regulations and bureaucracies would help reduce the fiscal budget deficit by fastening the business process in India?

A. As always it is said, if you simplify the tax, lower the slabs and decrease the number of slabs, revenue collection is always more. This has been the Indian experience. So, simplification of laws for adherence is a must. Similarly, accountability of the people who are in the administration should also be pinned down to avoid the harassment of the common business people in Bharat. For example, now about GST itself, business people are afraid, especially the small traders. The government has given tiers such that for 2 lacs of turnover only GST will apply, but many more steps are needed to simplify the taxation process. GST is one step in that direction which can be appreciated.

Q. What can be the effective methods to recover the black money stashed abroad and how can it be effectively deployed for the nation? Do you think that the current government is doing enough on this front?

A. Government have resorted to voluntary disclosure. That speaks enough of the will power of any establishment. Yes, they could succeed a bit, but they definitely retracted their steps from aggressive advocacy of bringing the illegal funds from abroad. Without formulating the process, they put it as cart before the horse.

But at least from thousands of persons, few crores of rupees can be definitely fetched. In that extent, getting 65 thousand crores of rupees black money into the white account is an achievement that should be appreciated.

Q. How can we bring in changes in the judicial system of India?

A. First and foremost step is what Chief Justice Thakur is also crying for. A few years back, law commission had also recommended that the central government should provide around 7000 crores of rupees for appointment of extra needed judges. In America, for every 1 million population, there are 116 judges while in Bharat for every million of population, we have got 12.5 judges. So increase this 12.5 to 50, the minimum requirement for Bharat, so that the pendency of the cases be tackled, which are around 3.5 crore. So, tackling that should be the first step. Also the executive and judiciary are fighting among themselves to have dominance, collegium on part of judiciary and National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) on the part of the government. My contention is, be it whichever, NJAC or collegium, the basic thing is to pin the accountability factor of the judges right from the time of appointment. So we have suggested a voluntary disclosure affidavit by the judges themselves, when they pass the examination and are supposed to join the service. Under the affidavit, they should disclose on such counts about their assets, about their relations with senior judges, advocates and others in the same profession. Hence, making it transparent and asking them to file the affidavit and putting that affidavit in public domain for three years. Today, judiciary has got all the rights in their hands in the name of contempt of court and any action against a corrupt judge needs impeachment, which is very difficult. In the post-independence era only around three cases have been lodged against the judges. So, to make them more accountable in the initial days of appointment itself, this disclosure affidavit may be of great use.

Q. Do you think it is high time that we replaced the basis of reservation from caste based to economic background based?

A. There are three things. It is a case of positive discrimination for enhancing the spirit of social equality. The main difficulty or problem arose with what is called 'satta, sampatti and sammaan', which means share in political power, share in financial properties and share in dignity or prestige respectively. Since inequality was there on these three counts, the process of reservation was advocated by the constitution makers. There are three ways. One is providing facilities. If there is only financial/ economic disparity, then providing facilities may be a solution. If gender inequality or handicap inequality is there, then priority or giving them preference can be the solution. But the problem is, in this process sometimes people are losing the aspiration of attaining bigger goals. Reservation is there to primarily ameliorate the spirit of psychological backwardness. If vote bank politics comes into picture, that gives rise to what is happening in Maharashtra and other states, where caste tensions are being built up. So, in competitive politics, the basic issue itself and its merit is getting lost, which is the whole tragedy.

Q. Do you think democracy has slowed down the decision making mechanism in India? How can we overcome this?

A. In the beginning itself when we opted for a democratic system of governance, then also it was understood that it may be a slow and cumbersome system. But it has got a self-corrective mechanism in it, which neither dictatorship nor monarchy has. So the spirit of self-corrective mechanism, which is available in democracy, is its most valuable aspect. Therefore it cannot be done away with and has to be protected on all accounts. Only thing is the ills and evils, penetrating the system to pollute it to make it redundant. That is to be combated. In all of this, people's consciousness, their awareness, enlightenment and participation is the only solution to speed up the process.

Q. Although the government has ambitious plans to digitalize India, we still have a significant amount of population living in poverty. How can this gap be addressed?

A. Not only poverty, but my friend, the digital density too is concentrated in about a 100 places whereas Bharat is of about six lakh villages. So that disparity, inequality and the inadequacy of the system is to be taken care of. Otherwise the inclusiveness of the growth will get affected.

Q. India is blessed with a vast linguistic heritage. But globalization seems to be a threat to hundreds of regional dialects. How, in your opinion, can we protect and preserve our heritage?

A. It is very unfortunate, but you are right about the fact that diversities are getting affected by the homogenizing, bulldozing or road rolling capacity of new technology. To counter this there are two steps to be taken. Like China, we also should have and still should evolve and apply the technology to evolve our own Facebook, Yahoo, and Google, which lays emphasis on Indian languages. China has its own versions of all these popular websites, while we do not. We instead preferred to be the '*Computerized mazdoor*' or '*Internet mazdoor*'. This undermines our capacity. The second step to be undertaken is the protection and promotion of languages through creative activities. For the promotion of creative activities, the necessary requirement is adequate livelihood, peace and prosperity. If these three are maintained well, then creativity takes its own roots as evidenced by many civilizations.