

## **PEACE AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

It is axiomatic that the democratic system and democratic institutions have the potential to negotiate the peaceful settlements of conflicting interests and maintain peace and tranquility in societies. It equally provides gratification to individuals and groups as partners in the governance and development. The collective thinking and decision making checkmate the nefarious trends and the actions that are detrimental to larger interests of the society. From a broader perspective, democracy provides the means to safeguard and ensure the effective realization of human rights. It is in this context that the human rights regime is always vigilant in monitoring the functioning of democratic institutions in societies. The international human rights organizations and groups regularly report the institutional deficit, if detected, on account of democratic functioning in societies and bring pressure in ensuring the smooth and unhindered functioning of democratic order.

In the aftermath of demise of colonialism and imperialism the world has moved far ahead in strengthening and nurturing the democratic order in most parts of the world. However, a new challenge to democracy is emerging in the form of a new fascist and totalitarian ideology in which adherence to democratic order is rejected. This ideology has the dangerous potential to push the societies back to dark ages; hence to be resisted forcefully.

The forthcoming elections to the Indian parliament and the state assemblies have generated a great fervor across the board in the entire country. India, a multi-cultural and pluri-linguistic state provides a fascinating spectacle during the elections in which millions of people enthusiastically participate in the elections and exercise their right to vote. The new political permutations and combinations indicate the recognition of the changing perceptions of the electorate. These developments equally indicate the strength of the electorate in exercising their judgment on the basis of the audit of performance of governance on the part of the political parties. It is equally important to mention that election commission in India introduced an innovation

by providing the voter with the option of NOTA (none of the above) thereby providing the voter the choice to reject all the candidates contesting the election. The younger generation which is taking part for the first time in the elections has the responsibility to strengthen and nourish the democratic traditions in the country.

## **KHUSHWANT SINGH**

*(In lieu of an Obituary)*

The eminent historian, author and the most popular journalist Khushwant Singh passed away in the third week of March, 2014. Khushwant Singh was the patron of International Centre of Peace Studies and headed its Advisory Council as well as Editorial Advisory Board of Journal of Peace Studies for the last 18 years. I came in his contact in the year 1970 when I had started teaching law at the University of Jammu (J&K). He was always available to young writers and authors and encouraged them in their intellectual pursuits. He was a unique personality who, in spite of rubbing shoulders with high and mighty, would never show off the political and social clout he wielded. He was genuinely a creative person seeking creativity wherever available. I have seen dozens and scores of struggling and aspiring young writers and journalists who were molded by him and became prominent names in the field of literature and journalism.

Khushwant Singh spent a disciplined life to live up to the age of 99 years. He maintained a strict daily schedule of life and adhered to it meticulously. We will miss him always. I can offer a couplet of famous Urdu poet Mir Taqi Mir to Khushwant who was a connoisseur of Urdu poetry :

***Paida Kahan hain Aisey Pragandah Taba Laug  
Afsos Tum Ko Mir say Suhbat Naheen Rahi.***

*(Such multi dimensional personalities are rarely born;  
Alas! You have not enjoyed the company of Mir)*

***Riyaz Punjabi***