

Business & Entertainment

Politics of Purchasing Power

Is it not ironical that in last five years the purchasing power of the common man has decreased while the purchasing power of political parties, particularly the ruling party has increased? There was a widespread slow down of economy after demonetization. It was worsened by the imposition of GST and finally the pandemic took over the entire world by surprise. The unprecedented series of lockdown made the economy stand still and about a hundred people lost their employment. The common man suffered because of loss of jobs and opportunities of employment. A lot many crocodile tears were shed by the politicians without ushering in of any concrete relief plan.

However, the machinery of seizing power by hook or by crook kept on working. This has been again an unprecedented chain of political upheavals when elected governments were toppled by mass defections. One might say that the MLAs chose to change their loyalties on their own. There is nothing like horse trading. Well, this could be true. But those

who were changing loyalties did not ever say that they were doing so following the "Call of Conscience" or "Atma Ki Awaz". To name just a few states where this happened one can remember what happened in Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Madhya Pradesh and now in Rajasthan. Wholesale shift of loyalties cannot be explained in any other terms than the greed of power and also the greed for money.

This seems to be a political agenda of wiping out opposition by giving positions of power to the dissidents of the major opposition party. The Congress is also not free from blame. How is it that their MLAs get tempted by power? Is there no ideological grounding among its cadre? How easily can they change their loyalties? The structure of the party seems to be getting loose in the hands of a party without a full time President. Rahul Gandhi stepped down from his position as President and did not accept it despite all persuasion. This was good. But in that case some senior leader who could manage things better should have been given the position. Democratic elections would have been the best answer. With Mrs. Sonia Gandhi in Chair again, it seems the central command of the party has become dysfunctional.

The facility with which the movement across BJP and Congress takes place proves that there is little difference between the two at ideological or functional level. Their allegiance to the capitalist and corporate lobbies has been established. Now, the BJP is in Power at the center therefore the corporate support is more tilted towards it. Congress has lost those strong ties. Moreover, the USA also is more inclined towards their right wing ally in India. This has been stated more than once by Donald Trump.

The ultimate effect on the Indian democracy is bad. The fascist tendencies are getting strength and the institutions of democracy including the judiciary, it is reported, are being compromised. Senior democratic right activists are being put in Jail without proper trial for months. Even charge sheets are not filed for long. Dr. Varvar Rao, a veteran Telugu poet is in Jail. He is suffering from serious illness. More than eighty years of age, he is not getting a fair judicial trial. At least on humanitarian grounds, he should be released. There are many more of his type. Difference of opinion cannot be the basis of indiscriminate police action.

- Dr.H.S.Chandalia
Guest Editor

Digital store launched of used cars in Bhilwara

Bhilwara: Notwithstanding the current economic downturn and extended lockdowns in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, Mahindra First Choice Wheels Ltd (MFCWL) — India's leading multi-brand pre-owned cars retailer — digitally launched 34 brand new state-of-the-art used-car stores across Tier II/III cities of 13 Indian states. All these stores were inaugurated simultaneously in an industry-first online ceremony that was live streamed on YouTube and was attended by industry stalwarts, existing dealer partners and the top brass of the Mahindra Group. The grand digital launch featured various interactions between existing dealers and those who've come on board. The newly launched store in Bhilwara, Rajasthan under the name of SR Automobile will offer all the facilities and services that the MFCWL brand represents including used-car sales, 118-point inspection to quote and buy the actual car value for a consumer looking to sell their car, warranty on Mahindra Certified used car, easy finance and hassle-free RTO transfer. "The launch crystallizes MFCWL's reputation when it comes to innovation and its business building credentials. At a time when the prevailing sentiment is that of wait-and-watch, MFCWL is on an aggressive expansion spree through the launch of new stores, business models and technology investments. The company believes that it is only through these actions that the hitherto unorganized industry can be efficiently organized. The next big step for the company is to open 100 dealerships in 100 days and the stage for that has already been set," said Ashutosh Pandey, CEO & MD, Mahindra First Choice Wheels Ltd.

In an extensive survey conducted during the lockdown, MFCWL found that people across the country were now prioritizing their health and safety and hence were willing to invest in a pre-owned car. Moreover, attractive finance offers and reduced disposable income has resulted in a surge in the demand for used or pre-owned cars. An affordable personal vehicle is becoming the need of the hour and MFCWL, with this nationwide dealership launch, has tapped into that demand.

Online "creation dialogue" completed on satire mode

Udaipur: The satire genre was discussed under the online creation dialogue series by Udaipur/Rajasthan Sahitya Akademi. In the discussion, a senior satirist of Bikaner, Bulaki Sharma said that on the satirical scenario of Rajasthan, senior satirists like Gyan Chaturvedi believe that their mind is to call Rajasthan a satire. With this, they give full respect to the creativity of the satirists here, but due to lack of criticism, they are not being evaluated properly. Prabhaskar Upadhyay of Sawai Madhopur said that the work which affects and changes the thinking of the readers is the best, whether it is satire or poetry. The purpose of creation is to be complacent and to give direction to the society. At the beginning of the program, the program in charge of the academy, Ram Dayal Mehar, introduced and welcomed the participants and expressed his gratitude at the end.

"Talented artistes should equally be given their due. If not, then we will only get their support after our death" - Vishwajeet Pradhan

His histrionics are such that he can never escape from his character. His roles always end up being an intrinsic part of his lifetime. When Vishwajeet Pradhan signs a film, he tries to have an inclination for people similar to his on-screen persona. Hence, when the actor felt that the Hindi film industry wasn't offering him a tidy career that he enjoyed, he took a brief hiatus and moved Down Under with his family to explore different avenues. This was five years ago. "I became this other person. My career took off in a different direction," reflects Vishwajeet.

However, theatre and television kept the passion in him alive.

Then came a Red Chillies film offer followed by the role of Sampat in the gangster TV series Aarya on Disney+ Hotstar. "The maker, Ram Madhwani was sensible and I have an instinct to work with such kind of people. It is in me. I just understand them. It was a good role of an entertainer with amazing shades of grey, albeit on the other side. But I knew that in the grand scheme

of things, it would not define my identity. It was not a lead role, no big deal. Yet Sampat, he was the brawn to the brain. He was bad, yet good. He was fearsome, yet comical. And he was humane for a hitman. I have never been the type who poses for a contractually obligated red carpet experience. The call had to be from my heart."

The maker, the production values, the script, the character visualisation and the cast including Sushmita Sen and Chandrachud Singh excited Vishwajeet. "Sampat had a certain intelligence and elegance and the ability to deflect uncomfortable situations with humour. He provided a different hue to the creative spectrum of actors."

Once facing the arclights for Aarya, Vishwajeet reflected on his paths played and lessons learned over 30 years in Bollywood, the pros and cons of mega-fame, and realised an ironic truth: the first photograph that he left at an ad filmmaker's office that is Equinox Films, hoping for a revert as a newbie was that of Ram



Madhwani.

"It was like coming a full circle. It took him 30 years to cast me and I told him that! I decided to go the OTT way with the limited series Aarya." "Quoting George Clooney," Vishwajeet grins, "Every actor wants to be a film actor" But this show was conceived such that it was no less than a film. In that sense, it was a life changer. The show mirrored Ram Madhwani's heart, soul and sentiment, and this creative energy channeled a part of me to see what is in front of me."

Vishwajeet broke the spell of his five-year acting hiatus with Aarya. "It was such a

departure from what I had set out to do with my life. The flip side was that I would not be held responsible for the show itself, and could afford a loofah on myself, something I could not for a long time."

When Vishwajeet basked in the experience of a brilliantly conceived show with Aarya, he made up his mind to stay back and embrace creatively daring passion projects.

It was as though destiny agreed with him, and COVID struck, bringing his family back to India.

"With my family by me, I can take offbeat roles, explore unique characters and expe-

rience the exhilaration of being liberated enough to escape the straitjacket of movie stardom today. Admitted, I have worked with an incredible list of brilliant directors, writers and co-actors. But in Hindi films, you are restricted by what you are offered, and television is like running a factory. It is about churning out maximum episodes in minimal time."

Vishwajeet confesses that he is once again hopeful and hungry for good roles. "The actor in me is a restless, prowling creature. He is a painter who seeks an apocryphal glow with every role. Never mind the size of the canvas!"

Adds he, "Acting, to me, is practice of patience. I want to be the dreamer and stop being affected by the hardness and coldness of having a superficial career in an artificial world. The power of audio-visual media is not just entertaining today. It affects social change. And that is something that we both want and need. And as realisation has sunk in, I have come to understand that it is best to feel things and not bury them.

"From the era of Shakti Kapoor, Amrith Puri to the actors who sprung from Anurag Kashyap camp, Bollywood tells a chilling story of actors not being considered or ousted from films over three decades. Today, my maturity does not let me bask in the success of an unexpected twist of fate or bother to filter myself, and happily work out of the mainstream glare, if that means searching for something deeper."

Shrugs Vishwajeet, "I know these views may not augur well with a lot of people. But I prefer to live my life, peeling away layers of nepotism and shoot straight from the lip.

"Nepotism made it extremely difficult for me to function. Thirty years later, the industry is still riddled with the same flaws, and trying to make oneself heard is like pleading your case to a blind judge leading deaf detractors. The social media following of an actor cannot define his craft. Talented artistes should equally be given their due. If not, then we will only get the audience's appreciation after our death."

When producers slash budgets, Lucifer Circus doubles daily wage workers' pay!

The Producers' Guild of India (Guild) and the Indian Film and Television Producers' Council (IFTPC) may have partnered with the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) to set up a relief fund for daily wagers, but the trying times and the stringent government regulations mandatory due to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to the producers calling for cost cuts to stay afloat. At such times, Gaurav Chanana's production house Lucifer Circus has decided to be a true empath. Given the new guidelines by the government that allow entertainment units to work on alternate days resulting in daily wage labourers getting half their usual salaries, Lucifer Circus has decided to pay these workers for the day lost at their ad shoot starting this July. The reason is to ensure that the daily wage workers do not have to worry about the consequences of a skipped day of work.

Actor-Producer Gaurav Chanana feels that it is the right thing to do. "It is a tough decision, as budgets have been and will continue to be slashed, and an extra sanitization cost has to be added," he admitted.

"It will be difficult for producers to shell out that extra money as all of us will be looking to save costs to prepare for the impending drop in revenue as well as having no work in lock down and less work post lockdown, yet we need to help those who need it more than us."

BN Tiwari, President of FWICE, finds this move unbelievable in this time of cost cuts. "If this is true, then we welcome the gesture. We would like every producer to think about their workers and technicians this way and vice versa moving forward."

We (the industry) welcome producers who strive to making progress in these tough times with love. We laud Gaurav Chanana and Lucifer Circus," says an emotional Tiwari. "The Federation vows to stand with a producer like him whenever needed."

Amit Behl, Jt Secretary, CineAnd TV Artists Association (CINTAA) appreciates the benevolence of Chanana. "On the actors' front, a lot of us have been asked to take pay cuts. The

TV producers have been mentioning that the broadcasters have been asking them to do so.

In such times, if a production house is being extra benevolent, we are very grateful to them. There are a lot of challenges, and the government move is keeping in mind COVID requirements.

Many technicians have not received payments, and at such time, if somebody would be paid double, it is awesome."

Producer Vivek Budakoti of Katha Kottage who, despite his show 'Patiala Babes' going off air continues to pay a stipend to his team to tide them through COVID, is elated at Gaurav Chanana's initiative. He says: "It has been a difficult time for everyone. We took the step to pay our team a stipend to hold our team's hand in tough times though our show Patiala Babes was off air and we are still paying them. It was a personal choice we made."

The choice made by Lucifer Circus is highly commendable, we all much appreciate such noble initiatives. At this time, budgets are slashed and there are restrictions for our safety. It is not easy. But it feels nice to see goodness. We at Katha Kottage believe that goodness begets goodness."

Gaurav Chanana has the last word. "I am not doing this out of generosity. It is simply that I have seen hunger, and would like it if at least the daily wage earners when producers slash budgets, Lucifer Circus doubles daily wage workers' pay!"

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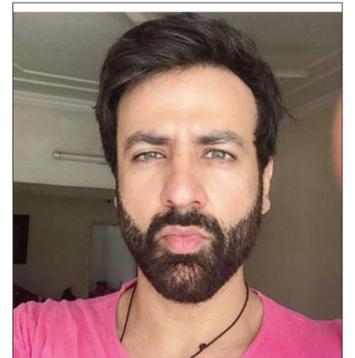
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And of course, a few extra bucks will be the icing on the cake! our industry don't have to go through it. Hence we ask others to follow suit, as it's not impossible. A little empathy, small help and a big smile will help us all to sail through these trying times."

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Airtel launches NEW Prepaid Packs with Premium Content from ZEE5



Udaipur: As part of its strategic alliance with ZEE5, India's Entertainment Super-app, Bharti Airtel ("Airtel") today launched new propositions for its mobile customers in India. These prepaid propositions are designed to deliver an exciting digital entertainment experience to Airtel smartphone customers by unlocking the full ZEE5 premium content catalogue to go with generous high speed data allowance and unlimited calling benefit. The NEW Rs 289 prepaid bundle offers Unlimited Calling, 1.5 GB/day, 100 SMS/day plus full access to the entire ZEE5 catalogue, which includes hits such as Ghoomketu, Chintu Ka Birthday, Rangbaaz Phirse, Lalbazaar to name a few. The bundle comes with a validity of 28 days. In addition, as part of Airtel Thanks benefits the customer also gets access to Airtel Xstream content and Wynk Music subscription [check]. The Rs 79 top-up offers subscription to the entire ZEE5 catalogue for 30 days. The convenient top up will be available to all Airtel customers through the Digital Store Section on Airtel Thanks App. Customers can purchase the new prepaid pack on Airtel Thanks app, www.airtel.in and at all Airtel retail stores across India. Shashwat Sharma, Chief Marketing Officer, Bharti Airtel said: "With massive surge in consumption of digital content on smartphones, Airtel's new prepaid packs make it simpler for millions of customers to access rich content from ZEE5 without having to worry about managing separate subscription charges. Our users can enjoy this exclusive content offering on Airtel 4G, which has been consistently rated as India's top mobile network for video by global experts."

Manpreet Bumrah, Vice President - Business Development & Commercial Head, ZEE5 India said, "During such unprecedented times, we urge all the citizens to stay home and stay calm, while we continue to serve the best of entertainment content across languages, genres, and a spectrum of devices. Our partnership with Airtel enables us to maximise reach by appealing to a large base of Airtel consumers present across the country. With this proposition, we are enhancing our existing relationship and reach through prepaid bundle & top-up plans further democratising access to world class entertainment at consumer's fingertip."