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## Attacking the Aam Aadmi's Swabhiman

in [Sudheendra Kulkarni](#)

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by *Sudheendra Kulkarni* In a recent interaction with my party's young campaigners in the coming parliamentary elections, I asked them, "What is the first and foremost expectation of young people like you from the next government?" I was expecting them to say "employment", "better education" and so on. One of them, an alumnus of IIT Delhi who studied and worked abroad and has now taken to political activism, gave a one-word reply: "Swabhiman" (self-respect). My instinctive interpretation of his answer was that he was referring to India's honour and self-respect. "No, I am not talking about desh ka swabhiman and desh ka gaurav. Every patriotic Indian, belonging to any party, wants India to be heard, honoured and respected more by the international community. What I am referring to is the self-respect of ordinary citizens. When the aam aadmi deals with the Government in his own country, why is his self-respect routinely bruised? Why do government officers and employees behave with citizens as if they are our masters and we their subjects? Why do they make us feel that they are doing us a favour when the service or information we are seeking is our right as citizens? And, often, the 'favour' is done to us only after we have met their demand for bribes." The anger in his voice was rising after each sentence he spoke. "I am an entrepreneur. There was a matter in which I was taxed excessively. I contested the claim and, after a long delay, won the case. But the officer who was responsible for making the wrong claim would not give me the refund amount without a cut for himself. It is when I have experiences like these that I feel, with great pain in my heart, that Bharat is not Mahaan. I never had such an experience while working abroad, even though I was a foreigner there." My young friend, who was wearing khadi kurta-pyjama, continued, "You know why I wear this? This is for my self-defence. It makes me look like a political VIP. And those in government offices and police stations behave a little more politely, and sometimes quite submissively, with neta-types. I hate this reality in India." My young colleague, who hails from Rajasthan, was indeed speaking for crores of ordinary Indian citizens. Elections come and go. Governments are formed and defeated. Yet, the way the government machinery deals with citizens doesn't change much. From getting a ration card to registering an FIR, interfaces with the government for most people entail a harrowing experience. In a recent column after 26/11, I had paid tribute to Hanif Shaikh, one of the heroes of the battle with terrorists at Nariman House in Mumbai. After some days, he became a victim of police misbehaviour in a minor traffic incident. He believed that his friend, who was riding the motorcycle, and he, on the pillion, were innocent. But he got a thappad (slap) in full public view for his impertinence in asking the cop what their fault was. The experience was so unsettling for him that he phoned me that night and said, "I decided to tell you about what happened to me because you wrote about me. Seeing my name in print made me feel good, although I didn't do what I did for recognition or reward. After your newspaper mentioned my contribution, the office of the police commissioner informed me that I would be one of the citizens of Mumbai to be given a certification of appreciation at a special function on Republic Day. But I don't feel like going for the function after the humiliation I suffered today." On my next visit to Mumbai, I met Hanif, who works at a small ice-cream parlour in Colaba, and took him to the local police station. The officer on duty was politeness personified. "If this boy and his friend were guilty of breaking the traffic rules," I told him, "they should have been duly penalised under the law. But why was he beaten up? Does it do any good to the image of the police? And Hanif is not an ordinary boy. You surely know about the local citizens' contribution, including Hanif's, to Nariman House's liberation by the NSG commandos." The officer apologised for the misconduct of the traffic cop, patted Hanif on the back, and we left the matter at that. But such assaults on citizens' swabhiman are a daily occurrence in India. What an abominable situation it is that we have created a two-class society in India, of VIPs and non-VIPs, the former receiving special treatment from the officialdom and the latter denied even normal courtesies. Corruption, harassment, systemic apathy, and colossal delays and inefficiency are what law-abiding citizens often encounter in their interface with government. Of course, those who are deficit in honesty and surplus in ill-gotten wealth know how to work the system because they know how to hobnob with the VIP class. Why have we failed to make the system respect the citizens more? It's a complex problem, but some roots of it lie in the fact that the government has two parts—the democratically elected executive that is accountable to the people and has to seek their mandate; and the 'permanent government' of the bureaucracy that is largely unaccountable and remains unchanged even after Party A is voted out and Party B is voted in. It is high time the progressive section of our political class and leaders of civil society paid serious attention to reforming these "permanent rulers" to make them truly citizen-friendly. Good governance is being much talked about in the current election campaign. We can move towards this goal only by introducing radical citizen-centric reforms. *(This column was first published in the Indian Express on Mar 1, 2009. You can write to Sudheendra Kulkarni at [sudheenkulkarni@gmail.com](mailto:sudheenkulkarni@gmail.com).)*

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### Bharat desperately need

Submitted by *Amit Bhadhuri* (not verified) on Wed, 03/18/2009 - 09:09.

Bharat desperately need change. And this is where we need politically not correct but honest and fiercely patriots like Narendra Modi and Varun Gandhi to be given the right opportunities. The Bloody pseudo-secularists and communist scumbags are hell

## Twitter Community

### List


Tweets from a list by Friends of BJP

 **asmakhan pathan** 7m  
@PathanAsmakhan  
Wow...lftaari in Ramzaan is mindblowing...  
[pic.twitter.com/FQDcGhexSI](http://pic.twitter.com/FQDcGhexSI)  
Retweeted by Akhilesh Mishra  
[Show Photo](#)

 **CA Srinivasan Anand** 3h  
@sri709

### Tweets

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@friendsofbjp  
UPA's fall from grace: Prudent decisions overshadowed by populist policies.

In the terminal year of the UPA, or...  
[fb.me/FjJwsFhZ](http://fb.me/FjJwsFhZ)  
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 **Friends of BJP** 7h  
@friendsofbjp  
This is going to be a historic event in Hyderabad on 11Aug. Do attend.  
[fb.me/2tuHr6g3u](http://fb.me/2tuHr6g3u)  
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## Opinion Poll

### Poll

Do you think Congress is serious about ensuring safety for women ?

No  Yes [Vote](#)

## Activities

### Current Political Situation in Karnataka

**Venue:** R C College, Basaveshwara Circle, Palace Road, Bangalore - 560001  
19Apr2013 ; 1800hrs

bent to get Modi and Rahul and we must everything do to stop that.

[reply](#)

**many thanks for putting my**

*Submitted by hemchand (not verified) on Mon, 03/16/2009 - 22:47.*

many thanks for putting my views/comments on your site and a email to me.

Mr. Narendra modi is wanted in U.P for BJP's election campaign, but with a heavy police protection. He can make a big difference there. You know the NO. of seats there.

Mr. Narendra Modi should avoid unnecessary controversies with persons like Sharad Pawar, who fights for 30/35 seats and wants to be the P.M.

BJP should develop the courage to openly say that they welcome the votes of true Indian Nationalists, and donot care for their votes(you understand their votes means?)

When some party, hopefully BJP becomes that party, will win absolute majority.

thanks

[reply](#)

**absolutely true in India only**

*Submitted by kapil (not verified) on Sat, 03/14/2009 - 01:17.*

absolutely true in India only two social division VIP and non VIP. i am expecting respect as a citizen. I think in India govt treat local people as PRAJA not a citizen of the country. This make trouble to live in this great country

[reply](#)

**I am happy to see here all**

*Submitted by Ved Prakash (not verified) on Thu, 03/12/2009 - 19:07.*

I am happy to see here all commnet and its great at list youn people now thinking for INDIA Bright Future..

[reply](#)

**I guess the only trouble is,**

*Submitted by Jerry (not verified) on Thu, 03/12/2009 - 05:33.*

I guess the only trouble is, these horde of people forming the permanent government form a large chunk of voters. So no reform can be expected that can hurt the vote bank :-{

[reply](#)

**Absolutely true. Somehow**

*Submitted by Amit Srivastava (not verified) on Thu, 03/12/2009 - 05:08.*

Absolutely true. Somehow people seem to leave all (whatever they have) their etiquettes at home when coming to office. And the biggest problem is that it has become ingrained in our culture. What does Ram Sene have to say about this degradation of culture?

[reply](#)

**Start a Ministry of**

*Submitted by Ajay (not verified) on Tue, 03/10/2009 - 21:12.*

Start a Ministry of Anti-Corruption as suggested by NaMo, that'll solve half the problems

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**Interactive session with Shri Arun Jaitley in Bengaluru**

**Venue:** Jnana Jyothi Auditorium, Central College Campus, Palace Road, Bengaluru  
20Jan2013 ; 2pm-6pm

**Vijay Diwas Celebrations**

**Venue:** At RBANMS Grounds, Near Ulsoor lake, Ulsoor, Bengaluru  
16 December 2012 | 4:25 pm

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