

17th Informal Discussion Group Session by Mr. Yogendra Yadav and Mr. Avik Saha.

Topic- Role of Law and Policy in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections.

On January 25, 2019 the Informal Discussion Group of NLU, Odisha organised a guest lecture on role of law and policy in 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The lecture was given by Mr. Yogendra Yadav and Mr. Avik Saha who are the founding members of Swaraj Abhiyan and Jai Kisan Andolan. The lecture commenced at 11 am and continued for about 2 hours, with one hour each reserved for the lecture and the question-answer session.

The session started with Mr. Avik Saha telling that elections should be fought on issues on which the people want their representatives to work. The upcoming 2019 election's prime contention seems to be the Rafael issue, but that according to him isn't the issue that concerns the general public. In his mind the two major issues are, (1.) hovering joblessness; (2.) raging agrarian crisis. But these two things haven't received attention from the political groups and media houses, unemployment is totally being ignored and the agrarian crisis has been reduced to a term called loan waiver.

He described policy as something that one wants to do with one's life and law as the vehicle on which the policy travels. He states that a clear headed policy is all one needs, and the presence of a sound law for intricate execution of the same. Reflecting upon the indifferent attitude of the political parties towards the agrarian crisis, Mr. Saha cited example of how two private member bills regarding debt reduction and remunerative prices are still pending, without any chances of being taken up, in the Lok Sabha and Rajya respectively. Henceforth, he asserts that the upcoming election is going to be a battle of rhetorics and nonsensical talks.

Alluding to the drought of 2015, Mr. Saha expressed his grief on the fact that in a country governed by rule of law, there were almost 50 crore people who had no explicit law to support them and sustain them. He concludes by saying that he wants issues like aggravating farm crisis and increasing unemployment rate to be addressed by the BJP and the Congress in their campaigns.

The second speaker for the day Mr. Yogendra Yadav started his speech by referring to the agrarian problem and the three "E's" of crisis it involves, namely, Economic, Ecological and Existential. He described the Economic crisis as the lack of proper remuneration for the crops, Ecological as the problem of irrigation since natural sources are no more reliable because of environment deterioration and Existential as the exodus of farmers from farming. He also mentioned how real problems like agrarian crisis, unemployment and drought do not attract public and media attention until something glamorous as an IPL cricket match gets cancelled because of it, hinting to the 2016 IPL matches being cancelled in Mumbai because of lack of water.

Thereafter, Mr. Yadav offered probable solutions to the problem that farmers face today. He said that declaration of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for 24 crops is nothing more than an empty promise which one can keep it in his pocket and be happy about it. Next he mentioned that if re capitalization of banks can take place for cutting of NPA's without any furore then why the farmers loans can't be waived off completely without attracting the amount of contemplation and delay it already has.

Thereupon, he talked about the how the Prime Minister announced doubling farmers income without having any idea of what the present income of farmers is. He jokingly compared it to a hypothetical situation where one starts running in a relay and in the middle of it realises that he needs a coach to teach him how to run. He says how three years have passed since then without any substantial work being done on that to realise that promise. He said in order to better the growth of development in India and address the present set of issues we have, the government needs to change the policy of replicating the American model of modernity since structurally we are very different from them. He explained that modernity is not about being imitative but rather being original.

Towards the end of his lecture he told the reason behind the sudden change in government's attitude towards the agrarian crisis is because of the results in the recently concluded assembly elections. He concluded by amusingly referring that when the ruling regime is at the danger of ruling power then everything of concern starts being addressed.

After this, the audience asked questions to the panellists on multiple issues concerning Indian politics especially in context to the 2019 general elections. Initially the questions asked were mainly on what narrative will take away the upcoming elections, co-relation between MSP and inflation and the panellists views on the citizenship bill and the Universal Basic Income. The second and third round of questions were majorly upon the new constitutional amendment made with regards to inclusion of economic backwards class in the reservation system and the methods that can be adopted to address the rising unemployment and agricultural issues. The panellists answered all the questions with utmost wit and sagacity and at times with a pinch of pun and humour as well. To answer the questions the panellists referred to the significance of lowering the input costs incurred by farmers in order to improve their conditions, how an alternative vision can change the narrative of Indian politics and explaining how the reservation introduced for economically backward class is nothing more than a hoax. Mr. Yadav even answered the repeatedly asked question on the reasons behind his termination from the Aam Aadmi Party by saying that he entered to change the rule of politics not to succumb to them and jokingly said that he usually refrains from talking about his erstwhile political affiliation because there are many issues in the world to discuss other than a foregone love interest.

The session culminated with handing over the token of gratitude to the esteemed guests by our Vice-Chancellor Prof. (Dr.) Srikrishna Deva Rao and Chairperson of Academic Coordination Committee Dr. A. Aruna Sri Lakshmi.