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[Come on, liberals: Let's change India!](#)

Wake-up call for citizen-leaders

[Sanjeev Sabhlok](#)

Last month I introduced myself to you and spoke about the need to organize politically. Not having a national liberal party in India is a major gap that must be filled, whether the party wins elections regularly or not.

Each generation has to fight for its freedoms. Gains made by previous generations can be quickly frittered away. For example, as a result of Nehruvian socialism we now have even less freedom than our 1950 Constitution said we would. In addition, our governance is in shambles; but without good governance how can anyone be free? If a business were to perform this badly, it would have been bought out by a competitor long ago, but countries depend on citizen 'shareholders' to keep their governments on leash. If anyone was waiting patiently, so far, for Korea or Japan to bail out India, let me say – that won't happen and is not desirable! The buck stops squarely with us.

We can hark back to ancient Greece for lessons on how to become citizens. These people were natural-born leaders. Actively participating in civic affairs, they ensured that their leaders were accountable to them. Even with their small overall population, these citizen-leaders led to an outpouring of art, philosophy and science that was never to be seen again till the Renaissance. Being a citizen is therefore a very important role in a democracy.

I introduced you last month to the **Freedom Team of India** (FTI: see www.freedom.sabhlokcity.com), a platform started earlier this year. FTI aims to bring together at least 1500 outstanding citizen-leaders who will, upon agreeing on a common strategy, contest elections by 2014. Only those willing to contest elections are being invited to the Team. For others, I have other activities to suggest – which I'll momentarily talk about. FTI's goal is to form governments both at the centre and in the states, thus bringing good governance and freedom to India. But this will remain wishful thinking unless you, India's citizen-leaders, take your country's destiny into your own hands.

Why not have a Food Team?

Why care for liberty at all? Why do we need a Freedom Team and not a Food Team or even an Equality Team: alternative titles which may appeal more to the 'common' man? While *Freedom First* is not the place to preach freedom to the converted, it may still be worthwhile to remind ourselves why liberty is the supreme good.

We care for freedom for many reasons, but particularly because it works. Poverty bothers us a lot. We know it is not good for anyone. Lack of education among poor children hurts our soul even more. We know that by failing to educate our children well we are effectively destroying their future. The good news, of course, is that freedom has done more for the poorest of the poor over the past 250 years than any other system of political organization. Erstwhile poor nations like England, USA, France, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, just to name a few, have become economic giants through free trade, free markets and good governance.

But freedom is also good because it encourages us to take responsibility for our lives. In doing so it leads unerringly to an ethical society. Capitalist countries are the most honest on the Transparency International surveys. On the other hand, socialist India and pseudo-communist China are hopelessly corrupt. Freedom also increases education and hence innovation in society. It reduces the demand for large families as parents spend time and money in educating their fewer children. And last, but not the least, freedom improves the environment.

Ideologies like socialism which put Equality on a pedestal are unnatural. Nature has designed us for great passions and deeds of competition and cooperation. No burden of attaining equality was put upon us. Our soul is built for success. If a 12-year old child were to tell me that his goal is to become only as rich as the average Indian when he grows up, I'd wonder if that child's head was in the right place! We want to see great ambition in our children. We want them to aim for gold medal in every race. Even the thought of equality saps our energy.

Capitalism thus challenges us to be the best we can be. Nothing less is expected of anyone. Freedom sends a shiver of life and excitement coursing through our veins. Only if each of us aims for individual greatness will our nation collectively become great.

For all these reasons and more we must have the Freedom Team of India, not a whimpering, groveling, Food or Equality Team. Freedom is the best. It is the most basic need of our soul. And so let's have it – right now! It is our birthright!

Lessons from July

Two incidents from July stand out for comment: the bomb attacks in Ahmedabad and the no-confidence motion in the Parliament. The 'rupees in Parliament' incident brought great shame to India, confirming India's reputation as a world leader in corruption. And we can also be sure that nothing pleased Pakistan and China more than to see India divided so badly even on a matter as important as obtaining nuclear technology.

The Ahmedabad bombings confirmed that the radicalization of youth by misguided religious fanatics of all denominations has now reached a tipping point. A group calling itself the *Indian Mujahideen* claimed responsibility, citing support from the Koran. Enlightened Muslims always emphasise that the Koran forbids the killing of innocents. Assuming that this is true, surely the great Muslim community of India can do more. Are all young Muslim children being taught the right things? And how about excommunicating terrorists and handing them over to the police?

At the same time, the police and justice systems in India are creaking with the weight of politicization, incompetence, and corruption. These problems are, however, readily fixable by adopting world-best models. Reforms are of the essence now. They will bring equal justice to everyone in India irrespective of religion.

For the medium and long run there is only one solution, though: to have strong, secular leaders, determined to punish those who kill or injure any Indian. That means level-headed liberals must rise and lead. Socialist and communal forces have not only destroyed our freedoms, they have brought India to the brink.

Freedom Families in each home

If you cannot contest elections, you can still do many other useful things. This effort can't go far without editors, organizers, planners, and finance and IT experts. Even the smallest contributions of time and expertise will add up into a formidable movement for freedom. Everyone must get involved.

You should start a **Freedom Family** by inviting a few young people for a cup of tea. Talk to them about the value of freedom and good governance. Aim to multiply these Freedom Families so each house is a node for one such family. Ask these Freedom Families to network with the larger movement for freedom through FTI and its leaders.

I look forward to hearing what you propose to do for your own country.

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