

Three Lessons drawn from an overall analysis of the 2014 Elections

In the LALIT members' assembly held on the Sunday after the Wednesday General Elections, we drew, amongst other things, three political "lessons". So, as well as our own report on our participation (in a separate article), we are sharing this analysis.

Lesson 1: There is a Tensile Strength in Political Coherence

The first lesson for revolutionary socialists like us from this particular general election is as follows:

A *coherent* political campaign (like the one the L'Alliance Lepep ran) was sufficient for them to start from next to nothing (say the MSM had 3% + PMSD 1% + "traces" for Collendavello and his newly formed Muvman Liberater) and to go on to succeed, within 10 weeks from their founding on 25 September, in galvanizing the support of 51% of the population and winning 3/4 of seats, first past the post, by 10 December. And they did this when up against the "2 biggest parties allied together". This shows the importance of *political coherence at a particular moment* in history, even if, as in this case, it was for no more reason than to win an electoral campaign. The L'Alliance Lepep's coherence was built around three simple ideas: the slogan "Vire mam!", the programmatic point "No to the 2nd Republic!" and 12 popular measures mainly of an economic nature, for the broad masses.

- Here's the lesson: We, in LALIT, have a much deeper political coherence than this superficial L'Alliance Lepep coherence cobbled together on the eve of a snap election, with only electoral stakes.

So: LALIT's political coherence is our strength. We know the tasks before us: we seek something much more profound than an electoral victory; we seek to change the social class that reigns; we seek to will organize everyone so that we can together, in turn, organize a new society without different social classes – in particular, one class that gives jobs, and one that goes looking for jobs with the first lot. And we aim at change, together with others, world-wide. We are challenging the world-wide capitalist class-based system.

The lesson is that we should never put our political coherence into jeopardy. And, during the electoral campaign, we did not do that. On the contrary, we nurtured it, and we developed more coherence as the campaign unfolded.

And, it is paradoxically precisely because of our political coherence that, in election times, we find ourselves marginalized. People who defend the status quo – the press, for example – are against our politics for the precise reason that they know that our politics are coherent. They also know the potential danger that this poses for the status quo, which they defend. So, we must know beforehand that they will do all in their power to pretend we are not in the elections at all. Which is what they did do.

This is why our adversaries and enemies (the bosses, their ideologues, the bourgeois press, as well as our direct adversaries in politics) show, at the same time, a profound respect for LALIT – something we saw throughout the campaign – and yet are always watching out in case our political coherence turns into something with forward momentum. They would prefer to crush us before this happens. And it is for this reason that journalists may be "granted permission" by their bosses to approach leading LALIT members for comments and interviews, "as political commentators", even as individuals "with a deep understanding of Mauritian society". But the moment LALIT fields candidates in a general election, any such authorization by the bosses just gets cancelled. Facts cannot even be reported. Never mind the distortion of the truth.

L'Express, for example, has never informed its readers, until now, that LALIT had 28 candidates in the elections. They never said we were standing at all. Let alone who where. They never said we had a program. Nor that we were the 5th largest party, in terms of number of candidates fielded. For all the noise they may on a good day make about "gender equity", they never mentioned that LALIT fielded as many as 43% women candidates. Which would have been a good piece of "news". Whereas, when it comes to the other motley crews of smaller parties, many obviously weaker than LALIT by any

measure, the press may well publish big articles announcing that soon they *will* be bringing out a program. As they indeed did. Or they announce that they will be fielding 60 candidates. (No explanation is even needed when push comes to shove and they field 20 or 19 or, for that matter 4!). This boycotting of LALIT, is because we are coherent and they don't like it. So, it is, in a way, a compliment when they boycott us. And this is what adds to electoral marginalization.

Le Defi boycotts us another way. This press conglomerate sends a reporter, for a typical example, to the launch of our 64-page Program for Elections, and to present copies to the Press. So far, so good. One of our leading members, Shabeela Kalla, gives the main talk, while 10 other members are present, three or four with slightly lesser speaking roles. (We tend to take it in turn.) Rajni Lallah showed short excerpts from our YouTube programmatic clips, a total novelty in electoral politics. Then out comes the press report. It is accompanied by a photograph of another of our leading members, Ram Seegobin, sitting alone, pensive at a very big table. As if he was the only one at the press conference. This is genuine falsification. The article manages to *fail* to mention that the 64-page LALIT Program was actually presented to the press that day, actually launched. Nor to mention the LALIT YouTube channel.

Interestingly, and in case you might think this was a one-off error, LALIT, during the campaign had 4 Press Conferences, each on a key topic or action. Each time between 10 and 28 members were present. *Le Defi* sent three different reporters. So far so good. Two reports were accompanied by the same photograph – years old, by the way – of Ram alone, one was of another leading member, Alain Ah-Vee alone, also a years old photo. And the fourth is even worse. It is of Alain, together with a member who has been out of the country for 6 months, and another member, the late Suresh Ramsewak, who tragically passed away in July, 2009. We need say no more.

A week before the election, the MBC TV team arrived to film the final LALIT Press Conference at a key time. They filmed it. But the footage was never shown to the public. This, we may say, is a regular occurrence that has often led to us not even inviting the MBC, because it seems they film the footage for other archives, not media ones.

All this to say that our adversaries in politics, in all shapes and sizes, do not want us to get stronger. Why? Because they recognize the tensile strength of our political coherence and, quite rightly, their being upholders of the present iniquitous system, fear it. It is a mighty force, once it gets momentum. And they know it.

It is a pattern of sorts, not just that LALIT is boycotted, but that LALIT actually suffers rather drastic political attacks that, it just so happens, occur *just before* general elections. For example, there was the MMM campaign in the run up to the 1987 general elections when Bérenger, de L-Estrac, Gilbert Ahnee, Subash Gobin (what a team!) organized an attack in a specially published edition of a newspaper (see our website article on this). It was when we had made an alliance with Dev Ramano and his OMT-FNAS, and had fielded 60 candidates. The MMM bludgeoned Ramano and his crowd to not just break off the alliance with LALIT, but to use their airtime on MBC to tell people to ... vote for the MMM.

Similarly, one of our leading members Lindsey Collen was accused of “blasphemy” by the then Prime Minister, Aneerood Jugnauth – just before he was due to lose the 1995 elections. That attack helped put us out of that election. In 2004, somewhat out-of-the-blue a then LALIT member, Ashok Subron raised a fight in LALIT and resigned. Again, just before the 2005 elections. Then, of course, he got support from the then Prime Minister Paul Bérenger over his case against declaring a community in that election, support that was to bleed over into the Labour Government later. By the 2010 general elections, Subron and Bizlall managed to fill the “left” space with a hollow challenge supposedly against the Best Loser, in their “Platform for a New Constitution”, with their launching, again seemingly out-of-the-blue the idea of a “2nd Republic”, and their Blok104. With the support of the entire press, and also that of Prime Minister Ramgoolam who even paid their legal costs when they lost, and quickly took over the “2nd Republic” once the “left” had made it look good. Subron's trade union work has been done in tandem with the Labour State for years now. It was so out-in-the-open that Ashok Subron even openly called on workers to give a vote of thanks to Labour MP Nita

Deerpalsing. Subron even announced after the 2010 elections that he would begin his fight against the sugar estates, in the Minister Mohamed's offices! And for years now, Subron always calls off strikes when the then Prime Minister Ramgoolam used to ring him on his mobile phone, and then both Labour and Subron get credit. He has had State support against bosses, and bosses' support against the State (the Blok 104 of Subron-Bizlall included the MCB bank boss, for example), and the two press empires, *L'Express* and *Le Defi*, while boycotting LALIT with alacrity, named Subron "Man of the Year"! Why should the bourgeois press pump up a left leader? Because he and his RA are politically incoherent, and therefore not a threat to the status quo. Nor are they "left politics". At the most, he is an political dare-devil. To give an example of his flagrant incoherence: RA said in public that he was fighting in the Courts to rid the country of the communal best loser system. Fine. But then, in the Courts, he swears under oath, that his litigation will, in no way, affect the workings of the Best Loser System. And then, despite his glorious victories and golden pages of history, on Friday last, 12 December, 2014, the Best Losers are still being named, as if all his victories had never existed. No-one even mentions the absurdity of the "victories". The simple truth is that there never was a victory. And when the Best Losers were named Friday last, the State went and re-classified the entire list of all elected MPs since Independence in all elections, got an average, and named them from that! That was due to the "victory" of the temporary mini-Amendment to the Constitution and the mini-amendment to the mini-amendment.

Now, when the L' Alliance Lepep has just been elected, the new PM Jugnauth and his Finance Minister not yet sworn in, Lutchmeenaraidoo, bring out a communiqué 24 hours after the end of vote-counting – as if there was some electoral agreement on the matter with Subron – calling on the sugar estate bosses not to penalize workers who were in the strike called by Subron over pay. Serge Jauffret, a RA candidate said that this had been agreed during the campaign with the Alliance Lepep! But, in exchange for what? Anyway, Lutchmeenaraidoo has meanwhile adopted the RA slogan: "Riches must be shared out!" This is a typical social-democrat slogan. It has little to do with a socialist program.

All this to say that when you have little or no political coherence, not just RA, but all the others (like the parties of Sheila Bunwaree, Jack Bizlall, Roshni Mooneeram, Georges Ah-Yann, Dr. Madwoo, Percy Yip Tong and so on), you can often get support from the existing State, from the bourgeois Press and even from the bosses.

So, congratulations to all LALIT members and supporters, from all LALIT leading members. We have kept our coherence throughout the campaign. And bad luck if we have paid the price of some electoral marginalization. It was merely *electoral*, remember. Not *political*.

Lesson 2: The Tendency to vote *against* something: "eleksyon koreksyon!"

General elections, and this is true everywhere, tend to end up having people vote against something, rather than for something. Often against the outgoing Government. An "eleksyon koreksyon". And often the "against" vote is on an economic point – like unemployment, price rises, or pensions being too low. The profound importance of this lesson, and it is important for us in LALIT, is that it is difficult, well nigh impossible, to bring about socialism simply through a general election, precisely because it is invariably *against* something. By its very nature. This is why we always put so much emphasis on mobilization of many people around a consciously shared program for the future. It cannot conceivably be sufficient to go into isolation for a minute, and to put three crosses on a piece of paper, in order to change the very nature of society. It is LALIT's political work to create the will for such a change, the will to build socialism. This means preparing for a revolution, not just a general election. But, nonetheless, each general election, being political, can have its importance in the scheme of things.

At the outset, it looked as if the 2014 general elections were going to be an exception. People seemed to be going to vote *in favour* something, and to be breaking the rule of the tendency to vote *against* something.

What in fact happened?

1. Ramgoolam and Bérenger got together, and signed an Agreement to set up a 2nd Republic. Vote for this, they said. Vote for the two biggest parties in the country, now in an alliance! they said. That was the sum total of their program. And given that they represented the entire Government and the entire Opposition, in an alliance, they seemed to cover the entire political space available. They themselves, every fundi in the country, all journalists, and even us in LALIT, thought that 40% + 40% electors = 60-0 election result. Easy as pie. And it was, at the time, true, or nearly. But that was *then*. Politics is something that can move slowly most of the time, but really fast when it gets going. It seemed, anyway, that this political force of the united PT and MMM would last until elections ...

2. ... at least because the campaign was so short: 7 October, Parliament was dissolved, 7 November the Write for Elections came out, 24 November was Nomination Day, and 10 December polling. At once, we in LALIT campaigned against their 2nd Republic. Twice we brought out leaflets of 8,000 copies each. We tore their proposal to pieces in our magazine, Revi LALIT. We wrote articles on our website, held meetings with workers, got interviewed on press and radio, and by September had brought out DVDs and put them on YouTube, as well. But we were convinced of the difficulty of preventing this PT-MMM alliance coming to power.

3. For what other reasons did we think it difficult? The Opposition parties were weak. In the MSM, Sir Aneerood Jugnauth was not yet on the scene. He had been in charge of the defunct "Re-Make 2000". And he is, after all, 84 years old. Pravind Jugnauth has a soft style of leadership. The PMSD had only just left Ramgoolam's Government, while Xavier Duval is also a soft-style leader. Ivan Collendavello had only just resigned from the MMM, and had recruited only Anil Gayan. For one week, he was allied with Sheila Bunwaree. But that alliance ended in disaster. And the disaster seemed to warn of a general collapse in the Opposition parties as they tried to ally themselves.

4. At the same time, the Labour Government "resolved" a number of labour disputes apparently in workers' favour – in the port, transport and the sugar industry – and this seemed to prove how democratic their new industrial legislation, the EREa is, what with secret ballots and legal strikes for the first time in 70 years being trumpeted in the press every day.

5. Outside of the MSM, PMSD and Collendavello's Muvman Liberater, were disparate forces. There was Cehl Meeah's FSM; Jameel Peerally, Jack Bizlall (who had announced fielding 60 candidates), Jose Moirt (who together formed the L'Entente pour Democratie Parlementaire, which has no program); Sheila Bunwaree and her Justice Social (which also announced fielding 60 candidates); Roshni Mooneeram and her Ensam (also announced 60 candidates); PAL and Les Verts Fraternel who were together in an alliance that then exploded and who also announced 60 candidates; Georges Ah Yan and his FCL which had worked together with Bizlall for more than a year, and also announced 60 candidates; Rezistans ek Alternativ (who announced 60 candidates), Reveille des Jeunes around Hurdoyal. All of them with more-or-less centrist programs or, at the most, left-centre. But all were incoherent. To begin with they were incoherent about something as simple as how many candidates they announced. With great pomp, they announce 60, then without a word of explanation, collapse and field 20 (in the case of RA and JS) 19 by Bizlall, and 4 in the case of Roshni Mooneeram's party. Les Verts Fraternel was slightly different, presenting a coherent working class program, much more so than in the past, and fielding if not 60, at least 42, and also giving something of an explanation for the decrease, even though it was less of a drop than all the others.

And, naturally, there was LALIT. We were and still are, in the opposition. But what a difference. Our program came out early. It is coherent, having been prepared over 2-3 months in our branches, and in our weekly national-level program meeting. "Program LALIT" is 64 pages, and was launched a week before Parliament was even dissolved, thus giving people with the interest, the time to study it. Our programmatic YouTubes and DVDs, too, were out before Parliament was dissolved. We announced that we would field 20 candidates + 4 or 6 adding up to 24 or 26. This was one per 3-member constituency in all constituencies, and the full 3 in 2 or 3. That was our precise statement, made on numerous occasions to the Press. In fact, we fielded 28. We decided to field the full 3 candidates in 4 constituencies, 2 rural and 2 urban. We remained coherent. However, in the context of electoral

politics, even though LALIT is coherent, this does not suffice, of course. The class we represent, the working class, is in a time of weakness, at present. This weakness is for objective economic reasons.

All this to say, that we thought the Labour-MMM Alliance, when they launched their campaign with their Agreement on a 2nd Republic, was heading for a major victory, maybe even a 60-0 one. And we thought so, even though we saw and felt the immense ground-swell against the incumbent Ramgoolam, and often even greater antagonism towards his new ally, Berenger, for going into the Alliance at all. We also realized that our campaign against the 2nd Republic had had an effect, and the proposal had become utterly unpopular amongst quite broad masses. But, we thought there would still be a majority of habitual voters for the Labour and MMM.

An alliance of the “2 biggest parties” still seemed unbeatable. And this, even though the tendency to vote *against* something had bitten in, and the slogan of “*eleksyon koreksyon*” had caught on.

It seemed unlikely that there would be time enough in a 3-week campaign to oust the PT-MMM coalition.

But, that is what in fact happened. How did it all unfold?

The Alliance Lepep concluded

SAJ entered the scene, with his history and his 50 years of experience, as a unifying factor, and, without representing any particular class (a true Peronist or Bonapartist). He immediately became the uncontested leader. He launched their campaign at their 12 October public meeting, with a list of 12 measures that were both popular and very carefully designed to appeal to different groups of people. All universal pensions would go up from Rs 3,700 to Rs5,000 immediately. Old age, widows, disabled people. The Alliance, if elected, would destroy the data-base for the new biometric ID cards. They would scrap the present rules for the driving license “points” system. They would lower petrol and diesel prices. They would, more than anything, create employment.

Their satirical YouTube “Vire, mam!” soon had 200,000 hits, calling for people to leave the Ramgoolam and Bérenger alliance, a clever slogan, accepting as it did that the vast majority were “in” it, and had to be called upon to get up and leave! Leave your parties, they called out from the rooftops. The three components of the Alliance Lepep, that is the MSM, PMSD and Muvman Liberater, worked together without undue friction. The content of their campaign developed more and more political coherence. Against favouritism, against the 2nd Republic and for the implementation of their 12 measures.

Communicating chambers between parties came into operation. Electors left the Labour party to join the MSM, left the MMM to join the MSM and ML. This term “communicating chambers” was in fact coined by Dooven Callychurn, when he was in LALIT, at a LALIT seminar. Now it is used as the “theory of communicating chambers” (*vaz kominkant*) by fundis like Lindsay Riviere.

In LALIT, we knew about this massive shift. But, we did not realize just how massive it was, and it took us by surprise. There was, in fact, a surreptition about many people, as they prepared to go and vote. And though bribe money was flying around a lot, it was coming from those who would be the losers. People were, and this is of concern, accepting it. People were happy to be taken to Centre Vivekananda, paid and fed. And the losing side had more posters, banners and flags than the winners, right up to polling day.

The Results that Showed such a Massive Swing

47 – 13 seats after the first past the post, or 51% v/s 40% of all voters. The Alliance Lepep won all three seats in Constituencies number 4-11 plus 15, 16, 17. PT-MMM scraped up its 13 seats in numbers 1,2,3 and 12, 13, 14 and 17, 18, 19. Only in number 14 did the MMM win all three seats. The clustering of voting shows the geographical nature of the swing. Given another week or so, the defeat of PT-MMM may have been even greater, as it bit further into MMM strongholds.

After the naming of the communal Best Losers (the system remains intact now, as the amendment which did not do away with it but only allowed a virtual 5th community, now falls away automatically), it means 51 for Lepep v. 16 for the PT-MMM. And the alliance between the PT and MMM died on the spot. It had to, of course, otherwise there would have been a Labour Opposition Leader when they had only 4 seats, and the MMM 12. President of the Republic Prayag would have had some difficulty, as they usually have to rely for the Queen's vestigial powers on something as bizarre as photographs pasted on poles. The one who was supposed to be Leader of the Opposition, i.e. Prime Ministerial candidate, was not elected at all.

So what we have is:

34 MSM + 10 PMSD + 7 ML v/s 12 MMM, 4 PT, 2 OPR.

Before the Best Loser nominations, it is worth pointing out, the Lepep had a 3/4 majority of seats. Not so, afterwards. They are one short. Similarly, the MSM had an overall majority on its own (without its partners), until the naming of the Best Losers and now it no longer has.

9% of the vote was spread about on other parties. This percentage has continued to fall in the 2014 elections, despite many commentators saying the opposite. However, individual scores of a number of individual "leadership figures" are higher than usual.

Amongst them: Hurdoyal had the highest score in absolute numbers and in percentage terms (No 9 – Reveille des Jeunes) with 10,000 votes, or 24%. The Cehl Meeah's FSM saw 5 of its 60 candidates getting over 10%, thus getting back their deposit money. While Bizlall (EDP) and Dr. Madewoo (The Liberals) as individuals got around 11%, too. Subron, Sheila Bunwaree, Ah-Yann, Roshni Mooneeram, got fairly high scores without getting back their deposits. The FSM and RA were the parties to get the most votes.

And LALIT got about 1%, on average.

Post-electoral conclusions that can be drawn

PT-MMM

PT-MMM began with a 60-0 victory in their sights, i.e. 30 + 30 MP's! They ended up with 4 (PT) + 12 (MMM).

As an Alliance, they disappeared 24-hours after the results.

Their 2nd Republic political project has been totally rejected. And this is at least one victory of the election. The project had been elevated to "referendum status", and people voted against it, and most voted consciously.

PT is in tatters. All its leaders lost dismally. So there are four MP's, but none from the real leadership.

The MMM is also in tatters, as a result mainly of the opportunist, incoherent and frankly bizarre tactics of its leadership. But the MMM does have 12 MPs and its leader, Paul Bérenger is Opposition Leader. The MMM's fall has been almost constant, from very early in its life. According to the analysis of LALIT member, the late Ramesh Khaytoo, the MMM has been falling almost constantly since as early as 1971:

1970 – it won nearly 80% of votes case in a by-election in Triolet.

1971 – it was wildly popular.

1976 – By then, with many programmatic concessions, it was already weakening when it first had 34 MPs elected.

With the 1979-80 general strike movement in the working class, the MMM reaped the victory of 60-0 with its ally the PSM in 1982. But its fall continued fast from 1983 onwards, even then as a result of its increasing incoherence, especially in class terms.

Alliance Lepep (MSM-PMSD-ML)

Despite winning 51% of votes and nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of all seats, despite having experienced men and women as Ministers newly named, despite the MSM and its allies thus having all that seems necessary to “govern” comfortably, the political strength of the Alliance is still no doubt around 5%. Electoral strength is not equal to political strength. So, we will have to wait and see what happens, for example, to the MSM as party. The MSM’s political coherence, and that of the Alliance, was sufficient for the duration of the electoral campaign, and was its strength. But now, it will become clear that that was superficial coherence only. It was enough to get Ramgoolam out. But that mission is now accomplished. Have they got the coherence to build enough strength in Government to face the economic crisis that is continuing? Does the Alliance have any idea of where it is going? Of course, it does not know what classes it represents, so it pretends to represent “the people”? But there is a ruling class within “the people”, which they have not ever said they will challenge, except perhaps for small pay-outs.

Will the PMSD go on getting stronger? Or will the MMM block its way?

What will come of the ML? If Collendavelloo tries to get closer to MMM militants, as he is doing, or even more daringly, does he run the risk of destabilizing the Alliance Lepep?

Clearly, the Rs5,000 pensions are being paid, plus the bonus of Rs 5,000 for this year. The Government will clearly delete all the bad marks from the “permi-a-pwin” system, and devise a new system. The ID Card central data-base is due for destruction, but Xavier Duval has said they will only go ahead after the Court judgements, whatever they are. Will they immediately start preparing a UN General Assembly resolution to get support for a case on Diego and Chagos before the ICJ? Will they have any idea about alternative economic sectors, and job creation? Will they build the promised housing? For all of these, mobilization will be needed.

Will they, as they have said they would, maintain the communal Best Loser System? Will this entail prolongation of the mini-Amendment so that they respect the UN pronouncement? What electoral reform do they intend? Collendavelloo was after all the MMM’s electoral reform man, while the MSM opposed his reform thoroughly. There’s a contradiction within the Alliance. Duval is in favour of some proportional representation. The Alliance has said they want quotas for women, too.

But, they remain 3 quite small parties: they have had a lift from the “SAJ effect”, from the “eleksyon koreksyon” effect and from the rejection of the “2nd Republic”, and most importantly, a lift from an electorate desperate for job creation.

Other parties, after the elections

Rezistans & Alternativ

Electorally, they have come out chuffed relative to LALIT, if disappointed, relative to their immense press blowing up, and their help up from Labour (Ramgoolam, for example, paying their legal costs at the Privy Council), they are clearly disgruntled with their score. Subron has been saying how they would have got more votes if this that and the other thing. They are disappointed to have come 7th in only 10 of the 20 constituencies, and their candidates have been beaten by others like Bizlall, Dr Madewoo, FSM, Hurdoyal, etc. The fact that some of their candidates benefitted from expensive campaigns with colour photos and colour hand-outs, while others did not is shocking. Their program, in order to sweep broadly, has become thoroughly centrist, and includes phrases like “mixed economy” and “share out wealth” and “friendly” police. It mentions “measures”, as though they had intended to run for Government with their 20 candidates.

Politically, they are now in some difficulty on their hobby-horse, the Best Loser. After crying “victory” so often during their 9-year litigation on not declaring one of the four communities on Nomination Papers, and believing that they just had to wait for the PT-MMM Alliance to win and to apply electoral reform in order to concretise it, they found that electoral reform was tied up in a toxic bundle with a 2nd Republic, that the PT-MMM lost, and that they are now back to square one. The best loser is intact. As everyone now knows. The victories were not even Pyrric. They were pure bluff. The Alliance Lepep has said it will keep the Best Loser System, and Xavier Duval has said that, what

with the virulence of the socio-cultural organizations, a system designed to protect “minorities” is indeed not easy to remove, when they seem more threatened than before.

With the Subron Temporary Mini-Amendment having evaporated, they are quite literally not just back to square one, but exposed as having created a 9-year “buzz” or “spin” or something. Their being thus exposed also highlights the faultiness of “single issue” campaigns like this one of theirs: it just fails to look at overall issues *at the same time*, as it has separated a political strategy into little legalistic bits, like the right to stand as candidate, and ultimately left them to be decided by judges, here and abroad, leaving Mauritians in favour of real change in a state of paralysis, as we have waited around for judgements for 9 years. Meanwhile, because of the incoherence of this single issue campaign, they have nurtured confusion and ignorance in the broad masses on the issue, and even amongst journalists, who now write and talk anything and its opposite. By their negligence and carelessness, they have reignited reactionary forces in favour of the Best Loser, and more dangerous, reactionary forces against it.

RA, as we mentioned, announced 60 candidates, and then without any ado fielded 13 RA + 7 other disparate ones (ecologists, unionists, people in renewable energy).

So, from now on, they will either change the subject by putting all sorts of issues into pressure cookers and heating them up, or head for the Courts for another 5-10 years, or both,

Bizlall (and his Muvman Premye Me, dissolved into Muvman Larz, floundering in EDP)

Bizlall ran a proper big electoral campaign in Beau Bassin for himself. He began by announcing his candidature there, weeks before others were placed. And he got lots of votes. His other candidates were left to their own devices, and scored little. He, like many other newer ones, put himself up as a Caudillo.

Bizlall dissolved his own party (which he, in any case, said was not a party), and counting on a massive Ramgoolam-Berenger victory for his strategy, thinking they would be going ahead with their 2nd Republic, he set up an “L’Entente pour la Democratie Parlementaire” to oppose it. He thought we would all be obliged to join him after counting votes was over. But Bizlall was mistaken to bet his strategy on an electoral result. So, he got many votes, individually, but for nothing. His project to oppose the 2nd Republic falls through because there is not going to be one. No doubt he will continue with his talk of a “new Constitution” that he is drafting. He will most certainly not have learnt, as Ramgoolam and Berenger have learnt in their defeat, that you cannot base a political strategy on a “means”, and that new laws and new constitutions are means used for applying a program. It is the program that interests everyone. Different kinds of Parliamentary or Presidential system get set up because of very real things that people mobilize to change, and they are the means. They are not an ideal, in themselves. For example, in LALIT’s program we call for food crops to be planted on sugar estate land. Well, if they refuse, and say the land is theirs, then there are means that will be necessary in order to prevent people in the country from starving, while land owners refuse to plant crops. The laws that need to be changed are a *means*. This Bizlall fails to understand. A new constitution is not of itself of any value. It must be a need that develops while trying to implement a common program that the people are supporting.

Others

Cehl Meeah’s FSM continues to get many votes, especially in Numbers 2 and 3, where they seek their votes. The other 54 candidates are left to their own devices. The FSM has come out weaker. Just the leaders of The Liberals and Georges Ah-Yan’s, Sheila Bunwaree and Roshni Mooneeram’s parties got votes, not the other candidates, similarly to Subron and Bizlall’s scores relative to their co-candidates.

Someone like Percy Yip Tong ran a “commercial ad” type campaign, with empty little slogans, and free music DVDs, all of which is electorally effective in getting votes, but with no political meaning. We do not know what caused Hurdoyal to do so well in Number 9.

And this brings us to lesson three, which is in parenthesis relative to the electoral narrative, and it shows the arithmetical techniques used by old hands at the electoral game. These are often quite

unscrupulous, but it is important to be aware of the tactics, if only to be able to avoid them like the plague, and to be forewarned against the ruses of these clever alecs.

Lesson 3

- Say there are Labour or MMM electors who do not like candidate 3 in the PT-MMM alliance (or MSM or PMSD electors who do not like candidate 3 in the Alliance Lepep team), a candidate of the opposing party (or sometimes an independent or small party) or maybe his agent, says, "Look here, you just discard that candidate that you don't like, vote just the other two and vote for me. In exchange, I'll give you some support." This is very anti-party work. And often, worse than that. It is done through the political agents in different areas, who in turn have contact with patriarchal alpha males, who control votes of their clan.

Here is the arithmetic that attracts electoral opportunists:

Let's just assume there are just 2 Alliances, A and B. Both have 3 candidates each in the Constituency we are looking at.

Agent for Candidate 1 in Alliance B does the following calculation and acts on it:

He notes that:

A should get, say, 20,000 votes for each of its candidates, given the relative strength of the parties.

B should get, say, 19,500 votes for each candidate.

Now if the Candidate No 1's in Alliance B, convinces, say, 300 electors (through the clan chiefs, say), then these 300 votes will be added to his score, and each of the 3 candidates in the other camp will be down, say, 100.

Candidate 1: 19,900

Candidate 2: 19,900

Candidate 3: 19,900

Then, Candidate 1 of B gets just 19,800. He won't be elected.

This is bad enough work to be doing behind the back of your own comrade candidates!

But supposing candidate 1 of B convinces the 300 electors who usually vote A to not just vote for you but for them all to drop the same targetted candidate, say Candidate 3. This way, he will be elected:

Candidate 1: 20,000

Candidate 2: 20,000

Candidate 3: 19,700

And our unscrupulous candidate will be getting his 19,800. Elected! All because the loser was targetted with discipline.

There are individual candidates and small parties that try these and similar jack-trading tricks. And it is here, in this underhand work, that there is scope for very ugly prejudices: "Candidate x is uneducated!" or target a caste or a community, other than that of the participants. Or target a woman candidate. Anything that makes people remember who they are all discarding.

This is why it is important, despite all the propaganda against it, to encourage people to vote a party as a whole, "Vot Blok!" is a good thing.

And this brings us to something we in LALIT have to think about for the future. It is a distinct disadvantage in the struggle against this kind of prejudice, when LALIT fields only one candidate in a Constituency. We used never to do it on principle.

Anyway, in LALIT, we have avoided using any of these dirty tricks, avoided it like the plague. However, we know that Dev Ramano did this kind of horse-trading in a Municipal election in QB, and got lots of votes for the OMT-FNAS by means of this. But the marvellous score did not add to the longevity of this defunct party.

Conclusion

So, electoral strength is not the same thing as political strength.

“Arithmetik”, including the figures for results, does not always have political consequences. Politics is more like chemistry than arithmetic – there are watersheds, tipping points, and so on. There are invisible forces that are nevertheless buiding. Time works on them.

1. We need to maintain our political coherence over time. This is what gives LALIT its strength for when the class we represent becomes more strong.
2. There is a phenomenn, “electoralism”, whereby people believe that through elections one can build socialism. Whereas elections are most often firmly “opposing” something existing.
3. Any number of acts of horse-trading can affect the arithmetic of results.