

HAWAI GOLE – FALSE PROMISES

(The vast country is the stage for this play. The stage has three levels. The level at the top is the 'Lok Sabha' of the democratic government. Here two actors representing the ruling party and the opposition are demonstrating their theatrics. The second level is a government office where the government and its official works. The lowest level has all the citizens of the country. Before the play starts, a voice comes from behind the curtain –

"The winter session of the 'Lok Sabha' is underway, and it is expected that there will be heated discussions in this session between the ruling party and the opposition". The spot light falls on the lowest level where an ordinary man is seen behaving like a mad person. He addresses the audience.)

Man : Heat in winters... yes yes ... the weather is pleasant but there are heated discussions in the 'Lok Sabha'...heated discussions... you will ask what do I have in my hand? This is a medicine bottle.. my son was ill... I got medicine for him from the market.. but instead of medicine in the bottle, it had poison in it.. poison of black money, poison of corruption, poison of adulteration... and my son died.. yes yes my son died.. *(he laughs like a mad man, now the foolish audience laughs at his laughter but he shouts back)* you are laughing, but rest assured one day you could go through the same ordeal. Your child that is with you today, won't be with you then...

(He goes away and there is silence in the audience. Now the spot light moves to the actors of the 'Lok Sabha' on the top level. Here the opposition (O) and the ruling party (R) are busy in a question-answer session.)

- O: I want to ask a question from the government.
R: The government is ready to give an answer to the opposition.
O: What is the government doing about adulteration?
R: The government is taking necessary actions.
O: What actions?
R: The government has asked its officials to stop adulteration.
O: Then why has adulteration not stopped?
R: Because the people are corrupt.
O: People are corrupt or the government officials seek bribe?
R: The government is taking necessary actions to stop bribing.
O: What actions?
R: The government has set aside five crore rupees in the five year plan to campaign against corruption. Based on the reports, the government is satisfied with the progress. Already three crores have been spent on the campaign.
O: And what is the result?
R: The government does not oversee results but keeps on doing its work.
O: What work is the government doing?
R: See there.

(The spotlight moves to the middle level. A government official is on the phone.)

Officer: Yes sir, I am the publicity officer..What did you ask? What steps have we taken against bribing, yes we have taken many steps.

We have pasted two lakh posters in different towns and cities. A big photo of the minister has been put up in three colours. The visible teeth have been retained white. There is a black spot where the heart is. The hands are coated in blood. The words are in green colour just like the one in green revolution..what did you ask, what are the words? Every type of words, like taking and giving bribe is a sin. Bribe seekers are the biggest enemy of the country..what did you ask? What is the rate we have paid for every poster? Sir, The minister himself had recommended a firm and hence we paid whatever rate that the firm asked. Without doubt I could have got the same work done at half the rate...yes sir you said it right, the minister has to recover the money he spent on his electioneering from somewhere...I have taken out ten percent for our department, don't you worry about that. These ministers come and go, sir we have to remain here only...Jai Hind sir.

(Spot light now moves to the top level where the 'Lok Sabha' is in session. The representatives of the government and opposition are busy in a discussion.)

- O: I want to ask a question from the government.
R: The government is ready to provide an answer.
O: What is the difference between bribe and a ten percent cut?
R: One is a political word and the other is from the religion's code of conduct.
O: Between bribe and a ten percent cut, what does the government believe in?
R: What nonsensical question.
O: We have come here to ask such nonsensical questions.
R: But we are not ready to answer that question.
O: You will have to provide an answer because it relates to the lives of millions of people.
R: What do you mean?
O: The apathy of the government and its officials has caused famine in one part of the country.
R: Where is famine? The opposition is making a mountain of a molehill.
O: See there.

(The spotlight is now on the lowest level. A mother is sitting with a fainted child in her lap. Her husband, who is a poor farmer, comes on stage.)

- Farmer: Radha, how is Chotu now?
Radha: He is lying fainted, he was saying he has a stomach ache. I had cooked some leaves for him but he vomitted on eating it and now lies fainted.
Farmer: The poor child has become listless, probably unconscious.
Radha: Could you arrange for some rice?
Farmer: I could not get even one grain of rice.
Radha: I hear that everything is available in the black market.
Farmer: Yes, everything is available in the black market.
Radha: I fear that if we do not get rice then...
Farmer: You fear that he will also die, just like Lalwa did...we all should die.
Radha: What nonsense are you talking?
Farmer: Why shouldn't I, I have grown tons of rice and today these very hands beg for a morsel of rice! Isn't it better to die!

(Spot light moves back to the 'Lok Sabha').

- O: I want to know what is the government doing to stop the famine?
R: The government is taking necessary steps.
O: What steps?

R: First of all the government has done an aerial survey of the region.
O: What did the government see there?
R: The people there looked like insects.
O: Were the insects really hungry?
R: Yes.
O: So what did the government do?
R: The government ordered its officials to provide food to the hungry people.
O: Did the food reach the people?
R: No.
O: Why?
R: Because the railway is not functioning.
O: Why is the railway not functioning?
R: Because there is shortage of coal.
O: Why is there a shortage of coal?
R: Because the mines are on strike.
O: Why is there a strike?
R: The workers are demanding an increase in salary.
O: Why?
R: They say that there is inflation.
O: Isn't there inflation?
R: The government has set up an inquiry commission to find out.
O: For what?
R: To find out the extent of inflation.
O: Why do you need a commission when the newspapers regularly publish the inflation figures.
R: The government does not depend upon the newspapers, it determines such figures on its own.
O: How?
R: The government first asks the Commissioner of the region, the Commissioner asks the Deputy Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner in turn asks the Tehsildar and the Tehsildar asks the Patwari....
O: And who does the Patwari ask?
R: The government has this method of working only.
O: But how long does it take to determine the figures?
R: It takes time when a method is followed.
O: Doesn't the inflation rise by the time these figures are determine thru this method?
R: Certainly it does.
O: What does the government do then?
R: The government once again collects the figures, once again it writes to the Commissioner.
O: And the Commissioner writes to his Deputy who further writes to the Tehsildar and so on...is this a joke?
R: This is the method of working, if someone things it as a joke then it is their problem!

(There is a loud cry from the lowest level, the child has died.)

R: What was that?
O: A mother's child has died.
R: The government regrets it.
O: He died due to hunger created by the government's negligence.
R: No, he died because he was ill.
O: He was ill because he was hungry.

R: No, he became ill after consuming a meal cooked with leaves.
O: But he consumed a meal of leaves because he was hungry!
R: But technically he died because he was ill.
O: No, he died because of hunger.
R: I can give you many proofs to support my argument.
O: I too can give you many proofs to support my argument.
R: The government is willing to set up a commission to determine whether he died due to illness or hunger.
O: But we demand a judicial enquiry.
R: The government cannot agree to it.
O: The government will have to agree to it otherwise we will be forced to go for an agitation.
R: What kind of agitation?
O: Peaceful agitation.
R: The government will crush that agitation.
O: How?
R: We will arrest the leaders.
O: We are ready to be arrested.
R: The government will fill up the jails.
O: But how long will it last?
R: Till the time you run out of your enthusiasm. Then we will release you from the jails.
O: We will not let it happen.
R: We will make it happen.
O: We are the voice of the people.
R: No, we are the voice of the people.
O: No, we are.
R: No, we are.

(Both of them continue with their shouting match, and then the spot light moves to the mother and his man. They cry and say.)

Mother: Just shut up, you can only discuss.
Man: Mindless discussion.
Mother: For many years life was being tormented and you were busy in your histrionics, Shhh...thhooss.
Man: For many years life was on slow death and you were busy in your discussions.
R: You cannot deny us our right for discussion.
O: We have been elected to ask questions and them to provide answers.
Man: And the issue remained where it was.
R: This is how democracy functions. One asks questions and the other one provides answers.
Mother: Your democracy is a sham!
Man: This game is for the wealthy!
R: We play this game because we have been elected by the majority to govern over you.
Mother: Not the majority but a few!
O: How is that?
Man: Let me tell you.
R: You?
Man: Yes sir, I am a teacher. This arithmetic is straightforward. Only fifty percent of the population can vote. Out of that only fifty percent come forward to vote. The winner usually gets about thirty-five percent of those votes. This way you represent only about eight to nine percent of the population.
Mother: We cannot accept the sovereignty of your democracy.

R: You will have to.
Man: If we don't?
R: Then you will be crushed by our police and army.
Mother: How many will you crush?
R: As many as will rise.
Man: We will see....

(He soon picks up a stone and throws at the government. The mother throws from the other side and very shortly there is a barrage of stones – making the government and the opposition scared.)

O: Friends, do not take law into your hands.
Mother: Which law?
R: The one we have made for you.
Man: The law that gives birth to corruption!
Mother: The law that kills us!
Man: The law that facilitates adulterated medicines!
Mother: The same law that rapes poor people!
Man: The same law that can be bought with money!
Mother: We do not accept this law.

(Once again there is a barrage of stones. The stage on which the leader and opposition are standing slowly starts shaking.)

Man: See their foundation is shaking!
Mother: When did they have any foundation?
Man: They feel strong till the time we are weak...

(The ruling member and the opposition fall down and they try to pick each other up.)

R: Get up friend. I can exist only if you exist.
O: Friend, you get up first. I exist only because of you.

(But the stage is already broken, their illusion is over and they cannot get up.)

R: *(Still fallen)* You have overthrown us but whom would you make your representative?
Man: You don't have to worry about that, we will build a new society.
Mother: Yes, every new structure is built from the earth.

(The leader and the opposition run away. A happy music rings the air. The era of those who play with the lives of people by giving false promises comes to an end and a new era starts.)

(Note : A part of the audience do not like this end, they consider a better end of the play when democracy faces a barrage of stones.)