



## WOODEN OWL

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### ABSTRACT

This essay is a translation of Kanhailal Kapoor satire "Kath ka ullu" written in Urdu language in 1954. The essay presents a satirical account of India Politics. The worthy and educated candidates are not fit for this job. The uneducated and corrupt people dominate the scene. The satire presents succinctly the political scene of our country.

### KEYWORDS:

Now that the news of Seth Kuchu Marmal's has been published in newspapers. It seems appropriate to tell you how he succeed to win the parliamentary elections from our constituency. Seth Kuchu Marmal (age forty-nine) one eye real, one artificial, face oblong appearance, very rude, clothes are usually dirty smelling of garlic, education nil, occupation - coal, lime and brick business.

Seth Sahib had stood as an independent candidate from our constituency. He couldn't stand on a party ticket till now because instead of going to party offices, he was in post offices, railway stations and cinema ticket offices. He believed that the election tickets were received from these places.

At two o'clock in the night of 1st November, when the whole world was asleep, Seth Sahib got an inspiration that he should stand for Parliament elections. The inspiration was so intense that he stood up on the bed on his head and remained standing until he collapsed on the bed from exhaustion.

The next day, he submitted the nomination papers.

At 11 o'clock, on the same day I met him on the way. He looked nervous. I asked: "Seth, what is the matter?"

He was clearly preoccupied and said: "What is this kind of strange problem?"

"Choosing a symbol for the election!"

I replied, "Why are you worried about this election symbol? You can just sell coal with pleasure."

To which he said, "I do sell coal every day, but elections don't come every day.

You are not standing for the election..aren't you?"

Seth said, it is already done. I have just submitted the papers for the same.

"But why do you want to go into politics?" I asked.

Why can't I do.. When herders, robbers and boot polishers can stand for election, why not the coal sellers? Have I committed any crime?

"Well, what you said makes sense. You are right. Congratulations!"

Can you please suggest to me what sign I should choose for the election.

There are dozens of signs. You can choose any like- drums?

The sign was good but it has already been chosen by poor Madari Lal.

What about "Langur (Monkey)?"

"There was a big fight between the two candidates regarding this, after all a decision was made. So, avoid this too."

"Swamp deer (Barasingha)?"

"This is not good enough for me".

"Hyena?"

"It's quite a dreaded sign."

I told Seth Sahib twenty signs but he did not like any of them. Finally, I asked to leave saying that I will think about it in the evening and tell them.

I've suggested from bats to bedbugs to many-tailed squirrels, but none are suitable for him. After much deliberation, I came to the conclusion that I couldn't think any more.

He was very sad and said to me: It is strange. Even an educated man like you could not suggest any sign.

"No sign fits you well."

"How can this be?" he said in a voice that sounded like a Chinese song, and at the same time he tried to stare at me with his real and artificial eye - suddenly I felt for the first time in my life that I'm seeing a live fool in front of me. I shouted with joy and said, "I got it, Seth Sahib."

"Tell me what's that?"

"By God it's the most suitable sign."

"Tell me, please?"

It's a "wooden owl".

"It's an appropriate sign for you."

"You're not kidding?"

Absolutely not. Look how untouched this sign is.

"Untouchable. How is that?"

"Besides being untouchable, No voter will easily forget this sign."

But something is strange about this. You are probably saying that because it is a bit funny, but Seth Sahib! There is no shame in it. Second, it is only Wooden owl, not a real one.

Seth Sahib was not satisfied, after an hour's discussion I got him to agree to adopt this sign.

"Good. Now tell me what has to be done to succeed in the election?" Seth Sahib asked very seriously. "

But first, find a clever propaganda secretary."

" After this?"

"Then earn the trust of the voters."

" How to win trust though?"

"This is a bit of a crooked way."

"Even then"

Somehow you need to convince them that you are the best candidate?

"Victory will be assured then".

So then he jumped into the election with the name of God.

Seth Sahib appointed Munshi Qalam Deen as his Secretary.

This gave him two benefits. First of all, their regular propaganda started in the columns of the newspaper "Kalamdan". The services of excellent writers were devoted only to him. Munshi Qalam Deen Hakam's intelligence can be estimated from the two posters that he made for Seth Sahib. The first ad was titled. Vote for Wooden owl. He is the best candidate because he does not understand politics at all.

Because -

Apart from politics, he does not understand anything.

Because -

If you vote for him, the country will stay where it is now, it will not go into decline.

Because -

I promise that as soon as I become a member of Parliament I will triple the ration of each adult and minor.

I will not allow income tax on any person for five years. I will decrease the price of flour to a very minimal amount.

Even the price of pure ghee will be reduced. I will kill all the rats in houses of my constituency. I will not allow a single stray dog in my circle. I will waive the fee of every student. I will manage to save every wife from her husband's beatings. I will not allow any dirty drain to

remain dirty. "

These advertisements were to be pasted on the walls, causing a stir in the whole city. One of the reasons for the stir was that the advertisement had a picture of Seth Sahib on the right and on the left, Wooden owl. But even the most intelligent man could not distinguish the difference between Seth Sahib and wooden owl. These pictures were made by the famous artist Malloo Singh who belongs to the "Kullu School of Art". Both these advertisements had a great impact on the public. Most of the voters admitted that Seth Sahib has given evidence of high moral courage by admitting his ignorance and unfamiliarity with politics.

"I promise" when compared to the promises of other candidates, all their promises look less. But Seth Sahib did not limit himself to advertisements. In order to gain the public's confidence, he announced the Silver Jubilee celebration of his firm Kuchu Marmal & Sons. Although his firm had barely been established for five years. Voters were invited. At the end of the feast, Seth Sahib announced:

"I announce on this auspicious occasion that I will whitewash every religious place like the Masjid, temples and Gurdwara at my own expense and with pure lime from my firm."

I will provide as much coal as is required for burning in religious places free of cost. As many bricks are required for the construction of the four walls of each, his firm will take care of all the finances. All were shaken by this announcement. And when he indeed gave the coal in the great temple of the city, the priests and devotees who were shivering in the bitter cold of December, began to wear garlands of his name. Every day from December 15th to December 25th, a procession was taken out by Seth. In a jeep whose front seat had a heavy weight Wooden owl. Beside this, Seth Sahib was seated. Thousands of spectators gathered to watch the wooden owl.

The students of five schools in the city were lured by sweets and persuaded to go along with the rally. After every five minutes, a new poem was also recited by Munshi Qalam Deen.

In different parts of the city, rallies were held in favor of the Wooden Owl, and speeches were written by Munshi Qalam Deen. It was told to the public that all the promises will be fulfilled once he gets elected as the Parliament member.

All the speeches emphasized on the fact that Seth doesn't know about the alphabet of politics. He has only a lot of experience in selling coal lime and bricks.

Although he is unable to understand the problems of the people, he should be considered disabled in this matter. Because people's problems are so complex that no one can understand them. He doesn't even know whether Delhi is the capital of India or India belongs to Delhi. He should be forgiven because he has never studied Geography.

These speeches had elevated many who considered Seth Kuchu Marmal to be a mere coal merchant. Many

Politicians began to buy coal from him. There were only two candidates against Seth Kuchu Marmal. A few days before the election, Secretary Qalam Deen was successful to withdraw one in favor of Seth Sahib. The reason for the withdrawal is said to be that Munshi Sahib reminded him that if you win, people will say that you have won against Wooden Owl, and if you loose, people will taunt that Wooden Owl has won.

The second candidate was adamant till the end but he got only five percent of the votes compared to Seth Sahib and the security was also forfeited. It is true that he was educated, maybe he could have served the public, but this poor fellow made a mistake by choosing Phoenix (a fabulous bird of happy omen) as his sign. In our country, who can stand against owl, a bird of ill omen.

### **REFERENCES**

No reference, since the present article is an outcome of Creative Writing.