

## Maldives - Demise of Democracy...

Written by Arnav ANJARIA

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Island nations have at times witnessed simmering political crisis that at times threatens the democratic apparatus. Fiji in 2000 witnessed a political crisis surrounding the then Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhary. The crisis had generated strong reactions from the international community wherein Mahendra Chaudhary was ousted from the office under controversial circumstances.

Similarly Maldives was home to a grumbling political crisis in the past few weeks following the controversial ouster of incumbent President Mohammed Nasheed. Maldives a tiny archipelago in the Indian ocean had witnessed decades of autocratic rule under the Presidency of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. He had been ruling single handedly for almost two decades. Apparently thereafter the island nation's tryst with democracy came about when Mohammed Nasheed led a resolute struggle against Gayoom's autocratic regime.

The peculiarity of Nasheed's emergence was his mode of propagation. If one attributes the success of the Arab spring to Twitter and Facebook then one should also not be ignorant of the fact that Nasheed in 2008 itself had embraced the online medium which resulted in his historic electoral victory.

Nasheed's victory in Maldives brought an end to the decades long servitude of the Maldivian people under the Gayoom regime but also the recognition of the impact that online political engineering can generate in a south Asian nation. It was an epoch marking event Nasheed, because of his online political innovation was seen by many as the new stallion of change. The

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change that had embraced the contemporaneous cyber reality and set new paradigms in cyber activism.

Masses in India too applauded Nasheed's feat, not just as a political one but rather as one that stood the test of time by being in tandem with the tools of the time itself.

The present scenario within Maldives reflects a grim reality of democracy being tampered by itself. Nasheed has accused of gruesome coercion being responsible for his resignation. He was quoted as saying that at the Gunpoint he was made to resign. Following his resignation, the vice president Mohamed Waheed Hassan took over and since then a provisional government has been in place, consisting of all political parties except the Maldivian Democratic Party, supporting Nasheed.

### **India's role:-**

This was another moment in South Asia's history where other nations would have accused India of a Big Brother like attitude towards its South Asian neighbors. But this time around, India maintained utmost degree of neutrality in dealing with the crisis and refused to intervene into the crisis. Yet the changing political situation in Maldives should be of India's concern. As a regional super power, the unfolding of events in Maldives seem to indicate the volatile political reality of India's neighborhood. The growing Chinese presence in South Asian, even in Maldives is a worrying factor for the Indian establishment which should not be unnoticed. The ploy unleashed by China to completely encircle India by building naval establishment in the Indian ocean and the Arabian sea also takes into account the growing ties between China and Maldives. Nasheed was seen as a pro-India political figure within Maldives.

Thus though the situation in Maldives has calmed down with a provisional government in place but Maldivian democracy should be put to a test with immediate elections. Nasheed's role in lighting the splinter of democracy shall never be forgotten and every single time one log into one of those online social network shall remember that one fine day, only after logging in, a brave man made a difference to his nation.

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