

**In Defence of Gobala**  
**Malaysianmirror.com**  
**January 6 , 2011**

More than one month ago, I wrote to express my disgust with the way PKR handled dissent from its own members. Looking at the way it is handling the criticisms from one of its own MPs, YB N. Gobalakrishnan, it seems that in PKR any internal dissent is automatically considered an act of treachery.

Its former deputy president, Dr Syed Husin Ali, has made many accusations about these dissenters. He has labelled them as sampah sarap or rubbish, 'frogs' planning to leave the party and posing as heroes in attacking the party leadership merely to extract the highest bid from BN.

I regret very much that Dr Syed Husin has chosen to make those accusations which are baseless, very deplorable and self-defeating.

The effect is to scare members from criticising the party leadership. What is the point of having 'one member, one vote' to encourage democratic participation of members when participation in the form of honest and legitimate criticisms are condemned as treacherous by the party?

In defence of Gobala and in reply to those who attacked him for airing openly his grouses, many times in private he had expressed his dissatisfaction to the party leadership, only to find out later that his complaints had fallen on deaf ears. And when in frustration he brings everything out in the open, he is accused of being disloyal to the party. What is this, PKR?

Some party leaders like to claim the party has come out of the internal elections stronger than before. Is it really? Why can't the party be more matured in managing criticisms from its members if it is really stronger than before? To me, the recent party elections have only proven that PKR is unfit to issue any kind of criticism to the Elections Commission about the way that body administers the nation's elections.

Gobala's main concerns are over the Sivan Temple in Bukit Gasing and the welfare of the Coalfield Estates workers. As an elected people's representative, he feels that it is his duty to speak out on those issues. And yet the party chooses to vilify him for speaking out.

His other complaints about the many flaws in the party elections and how the party's de facto leader seems to favour the current deputy president before, during and after the elections are meant to open up the eyes of the membership to shortcomings within the party. Is it taboo to criticise the de facto leader? If so, is it because he is a 'God-given' leader, as claimed by the party president?

Gobala also brought up the question of Mr Surendran's membership and it took the party a long time to announce that he has always been a member of the Lembah Pantai cabang. Really? Was his name in the electoral roll of members qualified to vote during the party elections?

It is suspected that a party letter had been forged to sack a certain party member and stop him from contesting the deputy president post during the recent elections. I therefore have

suspicion that Surendran's name could have just been inserted into the membership register simply to deny Gobala's claim. PKR is a party that believes in solving problems expeditiously, it seems.

Many senior members have left the party after being disenchanted with the attitude and stance of the top leadership. Right now, in the way the party handles internal dissent and criticisms, there is a big question mark whether PKR is the Reformasi party that it claims to be.

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Source : <http://www.malaysianmirror.com/media-buzz-detail/6-nation/51431>