Party on, Sanna Marin, and ignore the critics

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When last enquired into, dancing with friends at a party was not a criminal offence in Finland, writes Prof. Madhav Das Nalapat

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There are countries that are relaxed about their leaders having a little bit of fun in their tension-filled lives. In France, admitting to a child from a woman not one’s wife is met only by the merest twitch of an eyebrow, while in Britain, the fact that Boris Johnson was a bit less abstemious in sexual matters than the average Catholic priest was no hindrance to his becoming the most popular politician in the UK, a distinction that he still holds despite his somewhat freewheeling ways.

Such behaviour has drawn the ire of Rishi Sunak, who although a believer in Sanatan Dharma, appears to have as Calvinist a view of such habits as his father-in-law, the celebrated Narayana Murthy does. Unlike the Bobby Jindals, Rishi has not run away from the faith of his ancestors, nor shown the lack of courage to own up to such beliefs in public.

Between him and Liz Truss, there is no doubt in any other than those besotted by the admittedly attractive Liz that Rishi has the superior brainpower, and would run the country far more effectively than the candidate favoured by Johnson would. A suspicious mind may say that the reason why Boris wants Liz elected over Rishi is that she would soon show herself to be incompetent at the job, thereby opening the door to the re-entry into 10 Downing Street of the Johnsons.

Next month will show whether Boris has his way and gets his Foreign Secretary elected by the Tory faithful. He might be, given the support that he enjoys within the Conservative Party. As far as India is concerned, whether it be Truss or Sunak, UK relations with India, the country that has the largest English-speaking population in the world, will remain as strong as they were when Johnson was in charge. The Conservatives have been quite sensible where the management of Covid-19 is concerned, especially now that the mild Omicron variant is the dominant infection.

Even unvaccinated visitors from India can breeze through Immigration Control in London without a pause, with hardly anyone being asked to produce the RT-PCR test report taken before the date of departure. In India, similar commonsense has been put in place by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Like Britain, India has neither had a lockdown since 2020 nor ever a vaccine mandate, much to the disapproval of the world’s best salesman of two branded vaccines, Anthony Fauci.

Even in the US, President Joe Biden with his vanishing public support has been unable to implement the tough measures that he had initially put in place for eliminating Covid-19, only to have the Wuhan Institute of Virology’s most known product rage across the US unabated, nowadays in tandem with monkeypox, an affliction that is usually as mild as it is unsightly. Although the WHO and in particular Dr Tedros tried for a while to generate the same panic about monkeypox that he and the PRC authorities succeeded in doing on a worldwide scale with Covid-19, this time around few have taken Xi’s favourite international health expert seriously.

Certainly, Finland could not be in the depleted list of countries that continue to allow the fear of getting infected with Covid-19 to constrain their freedoms and affect their livelihoods, most visibly in the field of tourism. Apart from China, where Xi Jinping is engaged in a battle against the virus his own scientists together with collaborators from the US gifted to humanity, very few countries are allowing the fear that once was ubiquitous around the world to remain. Particularly in a world where the virus seems to be most active in the countries that are resorting to desperate measures to stamp it out, Japan and China being the obvious examples.

Nearly two decades ago, the Ambassador of Finland to India, a very capable and very charming lady, reached out to this columnist to get his views on the politics of the day. Over elaborate multi-course lunches that unfortunately are the staple of diplomatic fare, perspectives were exchanged with the Ambassador, who showed an open and non-judgmental mind, so different from that of too many officious and preachy Anglo-Saxon diplomats.

Those meetings, together with knowledge of the indomitable fight that the Finns under Marshal Mannerheim put up against the Soviet army in the early stages of the 1939-45 war have caused a feeling for that country that is not unmixed with admiration. That emotion was reinforced after reading about rants against Prime Minister Sanna Marin of Finland, who in their view performed a most disgusting and salacious act.

This was to dance at a party with friends, and worse, have someone in their midst who exposed the images on social media for the world to see. Judging by some of the commentary about this supposedly unpardonable act of hers, Prime Minister Marin has shamed Finland and besmirched the glorious civilisation of Europe, a continent that in the past was involved in other continents in much the same manner as Fuehrer Adolf Hitler treated people in the countries that were overrun by the Wehrmacht, beginning with Czechoslovakia in 1938.

All that needs to be said to such critics is that those who have never danced in their lives ought to throw the first stone, and even this would be unjustified. Those who attack her include those who do much more than dance in a private setting, while publicly behaving in the manner of a celibate. Given the challenges of her job, Sanna Marin has the right to occasionally have a bit of fun in whatever manner she chooses, as long as it is not criminal. And when last enquired into, dancing with friends at a party was not a criminal offence in Finland.

Just dancing would not pick up enough interest within even the straitlaced sections of the reading public, so a bit of spice was added by claiming that she danced topless, which was far from true. Even if she had, it was a private party in a continent where nudity is not seen as a crime against humanity the way it is in some other locations, such as in North Africa. There are reports that Prime Minister Marin has apologised for her conduct. If true, this would be a shame, for there is nothing that she did that warrants any kind of apology. Party on, Sanna, and let those who object wallow in their faked sense of shock.