

Criminalisation of Politics

Essay No. 01

Criminalisation of politics is one of the serious problem affecting the democracy of our country. A large number of criminals are entering the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies. According to the Election Commission, about 700 MLAs and 40 MPs were involved in criminal cases. Out of the 13,952 candidates in the last elections, nearly 1,500 had cases of murder, dacoity, rape and extortion pending against them. It is a matter of serious concern that a large number of MPs and MLAs with criminal records are entering the law-making bodies. How can a 'law breaker' become 'law maker'?

India practices Parliamentary system of government with a territorial representation. There are various constituencies and whoever gets the highest votes in that particular constituency wins the seat and becomes MP or MLA. So the goal is just to get maximum number of votes by any means. There is no provision for securing more than 50% of votes. As a result all sorts of means, some fair and some unfair, are employed to secure the votes. Money and muscle power plays important role here to get to one's side. That is why violence has been increasing during polls in recent years. The violence is not only limited during polls or before polling but can be witnessed within the houses of state assemblies in recent years. The violence which took place on the floor of the house in Uttar Pradesh to prove the majority for BJP government is a latest example to show that to what extent our polity has degenerated.

The reasons for increasing criminalisation of politics can be explored at various levels. The most important is the degeneration of values on the part of politicians. The commitment to serve the people, which is the foundation stone of democracy is declining. The only motive left is to serve themselves along with the near and dear ones. That is why all sorts of unfair means are practiced to secure votes. Caste and religious loyalties are emphasized and populist measures are announced. Above all the influence of money plays an important role. Muscle is used quite often. So booth capturing, bogus voting and ballot boxes replacements have become normal. Various pressure tactics are used to get votes.

Criminalisation of politics has other recent dimensions. Previously, due to nexus between criminals and politicians, politicians were using criminals for malpractices and money and muscle power. But now these criminals are themselves contesting the elections and winning the seats using all sorts of

unfair means. Even the Vohra Committee report on 'criminalisation of politics' came out with the existence of politicians and criminals nexus. But nothing has happened to expose the nexus and on taking actions against them. Every political party gives tickets to criminals and that is why we have reached such a political mess.

The administration whose duty is to execute the laws and prevent the malpractices becomes a party to the whole nexus. The administration is either neutral during these incidents or takes sides. The reason being administration is corrupt. Whichever political party is in power, most of the times administration favours the party in power for its own personal gains. As a result gross violations of laws is witnessed. So the nexus between politicians, criminals and administration has to be broken at all levels in order to ensure smooth and effective functioning of our democracy.

Criminalisation of politics has serious repercussion on our society and polity. The people are left with no choice but to choose between worse candidates. Genuine and good candidates do not contest the elections. Either they do not have money and muscle power or party affiliation. Political parties do not welcome such candidates due to their corrupt and undemocratic systems. As a result the whole social atmosphere is vitiated. The whole system has become so corrupt and undemocratic that strong individuals are not able to fit in the electoral arena. Our educational patterns are not able to instill correct moral values which lead to drop out becoming criminals and entering legislatures.

The quality of debates in the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies has suffered badly. Most of the time the houses are adjourned on trifles and personal matters. Serious discussions on important issues are relegated into background. Important bills remain pending which need nation's greater importance like 'Lok Pal' and 'Women's Representations'. What can criminals discuss? They do not have moral right to legislate and make laws when they have already violated laws. Some times the ability to debate on various issues has been questioned due to specializations on matters of governance. Governance is becoming technical and specialized day by day.

Criminalisation of politics need to be checked on all fronts. Political parties need to take the initiative by not giving tickets to tainted persons, only law to debar the criminals from contesting the elections will not help. The people should not encourage the criminals by making them win. The awareness should increase by imparting proper education with moral education right from the home to the school and college levels. Otherwise the nation will be wasting resources and time for nothing to be achieved. If it is not checked right now, the Parliament and

Assemblies will not be right place to sit and legislate and govern the nation for the betterment of people.

Essay No. 02

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“As per Election Commission works out 1,500 candidates in the 1996 Parliamentary election had criminal records and 40 of them got elected to the 11th Lok Sabha. In the state legislatures, the picture is even more distressing. Out of the 4,072 sitting MLAs in all the states, more than 700 have criminal records.”

Criminals enter politics to become politicians and then patronize other criminals. The dire consequences of this unholy alliance between criminals and politicians is that at every level from bottom, Panch at Panchayat level to Chief Minister or Ministers at State and Centre level, Criminals are being elected and appointed to the positions of power. Politics has now become a shortcut way of earning. Once elected a person can accumulate money sufficient for his few generations. Neither Gandhiji nor the other freedom fighters who sacrificed their all luxuries and comfort for the cause of nation would have ever dreamt that a day would come when India's governance would pass into the hands of criminals and corrupt anti-social elements.

A virtual impression seems have gained ground that you could commit crime and get away with it, if you have political patronage at the proper level. The police dare not to proceed against you or if having initiated an action shall drag away their feet to defeat the ends of justice. With politics and crime intertwined, bureaucracy and the police have also become part of nexus. This unholy affinity is having a malignant effect over the public life and poses a threat to the democratic structure of the country. No one wants to vote for a criminal. And yet for years criminals have been using our electoral system to enter politics with citizens hopelessly looking on. Election officials asking candidates for detailed information about their criminal and financial backgrounds, let alone making this information available to the public before the polls began.

Criminalisation of politics is bad enough, what is happening now is that the criminals are acquiring legitimacy. The fallout of the process on society has been severe. People have lost sense of what is right and wrong, and in the new scheme of things, money has become everything, no matter how it is got. Crime has begun to raise its head among the youth, even from rich families, because crime is no longer considered bad. When even the leaders take recourse to bribery and corruption, who is to set the standards to follow?

No party is free from the influence of criminals. A new element has been added with people who have criminal back-ground actual fighting and winning elections, indicating the hold, they have over Indian democracy. Though there were never any doubts that such a nexus existed. This feature examines the issue of criminalisation of politics and assesses the Vohra Committee Report which the government had kept under wraps for two years.

That the Indian people had not exercised vigilance has become painfully apparent because democracy has been hijacked by the criminal elements. Increasingly, politicians take the help of criminals to fight elections and to retain power. Often, criminals are used for illegal dealings of the leaders either to corner lucrative contracts or to intimidate political or personal adversaries. The system suits the leaders. They can maintain a clean front while the dirty jobs are done by someone else. But there is a price to be paid soon, the criminals have enough information to blackmail the leaders or want slice of political power for themselves. Not only are they protected by politicians but are given that tickets to fight elections. They are no longer behind the scenes.

Criminalisation of politics has had a trickle down effect on the society and almost all institutions along with politics and society, the press and the judiciary have also suffered. The press seldom reports instances of corruption even though it is all around us. It is easy to plant stories by bribing newsmen, as many businessmen and politicians do. According to Kuldip Nayyar, "It is an open secret that stories are often planted for a price." Cases are now common of corrupt judges too who give judgments for a price. The situation has become such that the nexus is not limited to making money or fighting elections, but has come to pose a grave threat to the nation security linkages between criminals and leaders now have trans border ramifications. Pakistan's intelligence wing is known to have links with Indian Mafia. Through this connection, it can have connections with ministers and gain access to state security matters. Seven tons of explosive could come to Maharashtra, in spite of our security agencies. Anything like that can happen again. The crime-politics nexus is, thus, a national risk, but it is clear that our leaders do not feel it or are helpless to do anything about it.

The enormous problem of the nexus between criminals and politicians cannot be ignored any longer. The submission of affidavit may have some deterrent effect but seems as it will also result in a futile exercise as in India, votes are being cast on the basis of caste, creed and religion. The poor illiterate people of this country still vote to their caste man or to the man of fellow religionship, or to the fellow who belong to their region. Moral values and ethics have long been vanished from the political arena of our country, but we cannot have such an indifferent

attitude. We shall have to find a solution to eradicate the menace for which we are ourselves also responsible to a great extent.

In a democratic country, all the powers lies in the hands of the voters that is the general public. An awakening among the general mass can only show the right place to such criminal politicians. If criminalisation of politicians. If criminalisation or politics goes on, the dreams of freedom and prosperity would be shattered. Common man will lose trust in political system of the country. The future of democracy will be in danger. The government should take strong steps to stop this menace.