

## Understanding Popular Angst Against Politics

Many incidents lately have often resulted in a lot of drama and symbolisms with popular shock and disgust being experienced against politics and politicians. But, it needs no reiteration to say that no country can be run without a leader or many leaders at different levels, howsoever they may be. Whatever political system we may have, the leaders shall always be required and so they shall continue to exist. This is more truthful for a democratic country like ours.

While much of this antipathy and revulsion may be seemingly justified, the same is definitely not wholesome for the health of our polity. After all, it is the political class or leadership from which are elected the peoples' representatives, who finally go on to form our government. A country without acceptable and responsible political leadership is actually an invitation to anarchy and chaos of the worst kind. While this revulsion seemed to be against all kinds of political leaders, this was actually targeted against a particular set of leaders who could practically be changed and replaced by the same people who have taken cudgels against them.

Have not the same people chosen and elected the leaders they are protesting against? The politics of a country is actually the reflection of the character of the larger society as our political class is actually a sub-set of the same. We get what we deserve. So, if we are not pleased with a particular set of leaders, it is well-nigh in our hands to change and replace the same. The issue at hand is not of finding fault and pointing fingers, but that of finding and ferreting out problems and fixing the same.

This outrage against politicians is also an outrage against politics, but here again, some of us are on the wrong foot because we also cannot do without politics. Someone has rightly said, 'whatever we may do or say, we may not be interested in politics, but politics is interested in us'. And politics is not only about all the wrong things that we have come to identify it with, but it is actually about all the positive things we do not associate it with. Etymologically speaking, politics originated from the Greek word 'polis', referring to the 'city-state' of Greece. Hence,

politics means activities or affairs relating to the welfare of the 'city-state'. Now the same has come to be identified with the acts and activities pertaining to the welfare of the modern sovereign state. Ergo, politics is the very basis of our lives and we just cannot do without it. It is just so essential to our living.

In all this, the 'Homo Politicus' or the members of our political class also have to understand the sentiment lying behind these protests and hate campaigns against them. They too have a duty to take their cue and set their house in order. After all, modern liberal democracy is increasingly getting more complex and difficult to handle. Now the means of information and communication have penetrated the civil society so deeply that a citizen even in the remotest village is reasonably informed about the happenings in different corners of the country. Now, s/he is also more capable of culling and processing information and analysing the same to find out the truth in his/her own way. As Abraham Lincoln had said, 'you could fool some people all the time or all the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time'.

So, the time has actually come for our political class to come together to not only change the way things happen but to also change the way they have been doing their politics. The time has come to change the way they have been recruiting members for their organisations. Our politics and political culture still do not encourage young and promising men and women to plump for politics as a career. Politics, which throws up political leaders who eventually lead the country, is still not considered good enough to be taken as a career option. Still, the majority of political recruits are those who fail to make a mark academically or in other fields.

The negative reactions of some members of our political class in the wake of this revulsion and protest by counter-maligning these expressions of protests are also not in order as one would expect them to be much nuanced and sobered than they actually are. After all, being leaders they are supposed to shape and lead from the front rather than coming out with another set of negatives as a counter to publicly-expressed sense of outrage. Politics, like any other thing, comes in a package. If you have loved the popular adulation and admiration, then you ought to be ready for the kind of revulsion and outrage as were noticed in recent times.

The tendency of a section of our political class to build the war hysteria is also not in order as that may not take us anywhere. It is more than true and established that a neighbouring country has been bent on 'bleeding India through thousand cuts'. But the fact also remains that if we can set our own house in order, they could never do anything to us. After all, the terrorists who allegedly come from Pakistan come through our sea lanes, walk our roads, enter our hotels, and finally execute their assigned tasks. And if they could do all these with ease, do not we ourselves have to blame somewhere?

While we need to be cautious all the times, terrorist needs just a single opportunity or one oversight on our part to strike all over again. So, we can never afford to lower our guard. But even with all our resources, it is just not possible to man and police each and every inch of the length and breadth of this country. So more than anything else, we need a conscientious and responsible citizen who needs to be careful and cautious all the times. After all, these are not normal times. We can not only blame our political class or the Government and absolve

ourselves of all our responsibilities that devolve upon us as a citizen of this country. After all, it is the people who are the real leaders in a democracy.

One feels that that concept of 'Neighbourhood Watch' and 'Community Policing' needs to be operationalised more than is done presently. The National Cadet Corps, National Service Scheme and our Civil Defence systems should be further reinforced and be made more broad-based. Their beefing up would mean educating and training common citizens for the purposes of reinforcing our internal security system. Having more watchful and responsible citizens should solve much of our problems. We also need to upgrade the basic security measures. It should be made compulsory for the crowded establishments including markets, malls, hotels, cafeteria, restaurants, hospitals and education centres to put in place basic security measures including installation of security gates, latest metal/explosive detectors, installation of close-circuit cameras and a system of identity check besides building a city surveillance system by the local police.

### Salient Points

- A country without acceptable and responsible political leadership is actually an invitation to anarchy and chaos of the worst kind.
- The politics of a country is actually the reflection of the character of the larger society.
- Politics is not only about all the wrong things that we have come to identify it with, but it is actually about all the positive things we do not associate it with.
- The means of information and communication have penetrated so deeply that a citizen even in the remotest village is reasonably informed.
- Our politics and political culture still do not encourage young and promising men and women to plump for politics as a career.
- Still, the majority of political recruits are those who fail to make a mark academically or in other fields.
- Being a leader, one is supposed to shape and lead from the front rather than coming out with another set of negatives.
- While we need to be cautious all the times, terrorist needs just a single opportunities to strike all over again.
- We can not only blame our political class or the Government and absolve ourselves of all our responsibilities.

### Glossary

**Revulsion:** a strong feeling of distaste

**Cudgels:** thick stick used as a weapon

**Nigh:** near in space, time, or relation