

On Value-Based Politics

M. J. Audi

We often hear about Value-based Politics. What is it? Why do we need it? This is an attempt to analyse its contours. Value-based Politics means impact of Morality on Politics.

Morality means values controlling conduct of a person even in times that try men's souls. It is Morality which makes a person a human and want of it a beast. Morality, in true sense of the term, is not and cannot be a prescription of any religion because history tells that everywhere organised religion is a handmaid of the vested interests. Moral man is the seeker of God but his God is not a prisoner of any church, mosque or temple. He worships God by living righteously.

Morality

The elements of true Morality are eternal and transcend time and place. The essence of these elements is also eternal. Their essence is never a matter of opinion nor a product of quibbling. Honesty, Integrity, Purity, Sacrifice, Service, Simplicity and Truth are basic elements of Morality. Each has its own significance. As Thomas Fuller put it "honest man fears neither the light nor the dart". He knows that assassination of character, if one has it, is as impossible as drying of the ocean. Integrity of character is the foundation of fame. Whenever anybody attempts to spit at the sun, he spits upon himself. The sun does not need the protection of law against spitting and men of integrity do not need the law of defamation. According to Sant Kabir only that is the best society where persons with integrity are more than the brave, the learned, the religious and the rich. Purity of conduct purifies the life of moral man and makes his personality serene and sweet.

Self-preservation is the cherished

goal of all creatures. Hence, in the rating of sacrifice, the sacrifice of life is the highest and the greatest. There were many such sacrifices in India between 1857 and 1947. They shine like shining stars in the history of India's Freedom Movement. But for their sacrifice, India would have never become free. Everywhere, service means elimination of poverty. Said Mahatma Gandhi: "Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man... and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it?" Just as decoration repels natural beauty, ostentation repels Morality. Simplicity is the hall-mark of moral man. What is truth? Some call it God and others Reason. Morality identifies truth with good of all. That society is an immoral society where the parasites prosper and where minority enjoys good things of life and majority starves for food, clothes and shelter.

Gandhiji graphically described the grip of Politics on our lives. He said "politics encircles us like the coils of a snake from which one cannot get out." There are many definitions of Politics but none of them praises the politicians. What could be the reason? Primarily, Politics is a struggle for power. Who will get what and when is not decided by ability, merit and work but by the whims of the powers that be. When he was rulling Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah erected his statue and inscribed on its base: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Politics and all else shall be added unto you." Perquisites, Privileges, Power and Wealth are the gifts of Politics. Hence, men and women, young and old, crooked and learned enter Politics. Politicians themselves call Politics the art of possible where possible means profitable. No

wonder, the worst opportunists become the best politicians.

Camouflage

Selfishness is the pole star of Politics but the politicians dare not admit it. Hence, they resort to camouflage. When a politician seeks "office", he speaks of "service". He promotes "private interests" in the name of "public interest". He builds "family fortune" and calls it "nation-building". In this manner, fence eats the crop. With folded hands, politicians fleece people. Like priests, politicians preach sermons. Like priests, their sermons are not meant for themselves and their families. One of our prominent politicians was fond of preaching people that *Aram Haram Hai* while he and his family lived leisured and luxurious life at public expense. Politicians claim that their whole time and energy are devoted to the service of the people. It is, therefore, a mystery how and when they make millions. Politicians profess that prosperity of people is their prime concern. But when they make their wills, their wealth goes only to their children and their "ashes" to the nation, again at public expense. Some of them donate their mansions to the nation in such a way that complete maintenance is charged on the public exchequer but occupancy rights are retained by their children in perpetuity.

Public life, like Caesar's wife, should be above suspicion. Everywhere in the world, public life is full of suspicions. The examples of the holders of the highest offices of State telling white lies are many. Indeed, higher the office, lower is the integrity of its holder. In olden days, Diogenes moved with a lantern in broad daylight in search of a honest person. Since then, science

(Contd. in Col. 7 & 8)

On Value - Based Politics

(Contd. from Col. 5)

has made magnificent strides but all of them are futile so far as search for honesty goes. Hence, politicians contend that legal certificates should be accepted as conclusive proof of honesty. The moralists flatly reject this contention as they find that what is legally honest is factually dishonest.

In India, hypocrisy has reached its zenith. The Establishment ignores valiant sons and daughters of India who smilingly kissed the death in the prime of their life and ruined their families for the sake of their nation. Precious money of a poor country is squandered on the erection of *samadhis* and statues, on the celebration of anniversaries and centenaries of those who skillfully enjoyed the best of both worlds. Nation's media is abused to glorify and trumpet their so-called sacrifices and services. However, as Lincoln found none can fool people all time. Ever since independence, the credibility graph of India's politicians has been moving downwards. A nation which selected *Satyameva Jayate* as its crest finds that truth is murdered in its day-to-day life. The Constitutional provisions which give immunity from public scrutiny to the holders of certain offices of State and the Official Secrets Act have proved to be protective amours for the corrupt.

Scandal

For every scandal that appears on the surface, ten remain submerged. Therefore, people of India refuse to believe that there can be a politician without skeletons in the cupboard. When the skeletons roll out, politician concerned defends himself by pointing an accusing finger at others like him. Alas! Polluted public life does not become pure when the pot calls the kettle black. Swaraj India made a grave mistake in choosing Western Democracy which is basically a *Market Democracy*. Market Democracy means the Rule of Price and *Price-based Politics* where people are bought and sold. The Mahatma grasped real nature of Western Democracy but failed to prevent its adoption by India. After 40 years, we realize that our salvation lies in Value-based Politics. Morality is the bed-rock of a sane and sound society. As Gandhiji perceived "Politics bereft of Morality is absolute dirt."

Only three steps can guarantee Value-based Politics in India. First is strict accountability of the rulers to the ruled. From the Prime Minister of India to the Talathi of Panchayat must be answerable to the people. Second, people must have direct, easy and free access to entire information of all aspects of the working of every institution and

every office in India. Third, the sources and size of wealth of every Indian must be declared and always open for public scrutiny. Without them, the institutions from Parliament to Panchayat are just a mockery of democracy. Democracy which denies to its citizens Right to Know Everything about public affairs is a fraud on the people. People ruin themselves when they accept the thesis that "public interests" are better known only to the politicians and their sycophants in various services of the State. "Power to People" is as empty a slogan as "*Garibi Hatao*". Let it be known that power to any institution is not *ipso facto* power to people. It is definitely not so in the Representative Government where the representatives cheat the represented. People will truly enjoy power only when they are in position to question the holders of administrative, judicial, legislative and political authority and reward or punish them for their performance. Short of it, democracy is a deception.

Achievements of ancient India, convinced Swami Vivekanand that India's destiny is to be the moral teacher of mankind. Swaraj was necessary for this purpose. Ironically, India in Swaraj finds herself morally bankrupt. The difference between ancient India and modern India is the difference between sublime and ridiculous. Only Value-based Politics will enable India to fulfil her mission.

Queen's awards for making flying safer

(Contd. from Col. 6)

blades. Not only has this cut production time from 20 to just four weeks, it has also resulted in better finished blades than possible with the former hand-polishing method.

Other award-winning innovations ranged from a new steelmaking instrument for non-contact measurement of pressure in the human eye. This is used to detect the onset of glaucoma.

Among the record 116 recipients of the sister Queen's Awards for Export Achievement was a British consultancy that specialises in renewable energy and rural development. TI Power of Eversley in Hampshire, Southern England, has completed more than 300 contracts in 50 countries, working on behalf of the World Bank, United Nations agencies, national governments and commercial firms.

Its teams of scientists, engineers and economists have undertaken projects ranging from conservation of wood fuel in Ethiopia to the use of solar refrigerators to store vaccines in Zaire.