

ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN BUILDING AN EGALITARIAN SOCIETY

A POSITIVE VIEW

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The main feature of our age-old heritage of the feudal culture is fascist personalities. Tendency to force others to think and behave their way is so common that it has become an accepted norm for the adults in the society, especially those placed in the position of privilege and responsibility. They expect the younger ones or their subordinates to obey them blindly. Difference of opinion, dissent or new ideas are taken as a threat to the honour of an adult or a senior.

Cadres of the political parties too have been nurtured in feudal or semi-feudal milieu. People have strong likes and dislikes; they are either completely for or against something; they are biased or prejudiced; they act hysterically. The situation has deteriorated so much that the most prestigious social and political institutions of the country have fallen victim to hatred, brought about by unbalanced approach and irrational thinking of individuals or sections of society. It is high time we realise that something has to be done to redeem this situation. Our society has to be freed from the evil influences of the feudal culture, economy and politics and given the capability to frame its own destiny, on the other hand. Political sovereignty of the people and equal opportunities of securing benefit from the country's natural resources should be guaranteed. People's participation in the process of governance and development of the country must be assured by devolving power down to the local level. Thus the maturity of the individual and the society at the cultural level will have to be combined with full political awareness and democratic participation of the people in managing and improving the affairs of the country.

The twenty-first century is the dawn of a historic role that our political parties must play in reconstructing the society. Only those will survive in the politics that recognizes the need to raise the consciousness level of the masses as well as to organise the society

on positive, creative and truly democratic lines with the help of enlightened and organized party cadres. The days of populist politics are over. If our political parties continue to rely upon such gimmicks they will not only lead the country towards anarchy but will also be doomed themselves.

The political awareness of the masses is a truly noble cause and political parties, worth the name, must commit themselves to this cause. Political parties must develop the capability of steering the development in the individual of a democratic personality. This is absolutely essential to ensure the future of democracy in Pakistan.

Prerequisites for Political Education

Literacy and Education

Historical experience has shown that the political education of the people is an important factor in the progressive transformation of society, and that political education cannot be successfully imparted unless political parties and their governments systematically create the essential conditions and environment for it.

The first and foremost condition is raising the level of literacy of the people. So long as there is illiteracy in the country, it is difficult to think about imparting political education. An illiterate person stands outside politics. Without first learning the basics of politics one may fall victim to rumours, gossips and prejudices. A new life and a dynamic society could not be built without knowledge.

A nation-wide movement for literacy, education and cultural advancement should be initiated by the government, as well as social organizations, as a means of improving the lives of the people and affording them an opportunity to take their fate into their own hands. Thirst for knowledge grows proportionately to rise in the level of education. The involvement of the people in social and political activities and in the administration of the country heightens their intellectual level.

Libraries and Clubs:

Much attention should be paid to the development of literature for children and youth. Fresh books should be written for them keeping in view the modern requirements of education, and the advancements achieved in the fields of science and technology. High

moral values, that sustain developmental activities, should be inculcated. Libraries should not only loan books but also advise readers on literature and arrange meetings with writers, poets, artists, scientists, and experienced political workers. Libraries and clubs should be opened in every town to feed the people's growing need for information.

Clubs play a big role in educating people and in bringing about their political and cultural maturity. These clubs could conduct numerous activities of educational, ideological and political nature such as evening gatherings devoted to questions and answers on topical subjects, and lectures and discussions on major events in the life of the nation.

The effectiveness of ideological and educational work among the people largely depends on the competence of those who conduct it. They should have the desire to engage in this work not as idle talkers but fighters for the cause. One of the major tasks of political parties is to train such able individuals.

The forms and methods of consciousness-raising work:

Intellectual training of cadres

The process of changing the psyche of the people, who have been under the demoralising influence of an exploitative system, is a very complex matter. The main task is to raise the intellectual level of party members. They should be enabled to understand and analyse national and international events objectively and communicate with people in jargon-free language. Such members will help political parties strengthen and steer the society towards a stable democratic culture, by raising the consciousness level of the party cadre.

Rural travelling schools

Rural travelling schools and mobile photo exhibition, equipped with popular literature, posters and films etc. should be set up. Rural reading rooms should be established in the house of a farmer or the village teacher where the villagers could gather to hear a talk, ask questions or do some reading.

Economic instruction

Economic instruction regarding ways of increasing productivity of crops, of raising one's economic level and understanding of economic

issues, constitute a component part of political education of the people. It also helps people, both urban and rural, to analyse the effectiveness of their labour.

Honesty

An infeasible law of political information and of all ideological activity of a political party is truthfulness and honesty. Tell the people openly and honestly about all the difficulties and hardships which are inevitable in the course of construction of the new life. It is therefore, important that political activists should be trained to participate in dialogues and exchange of views in a way that helps people analyse information correctly. Engaging in direct discussion to prove others wrong and to present oneself as a rightful educator only antagonise people. One has got to be a tactful conversationalist but at the same time a dedicated activist because actions always speak louder than the words.

The main aspects of political education

It is the individuals who shape a society. Therefore, when a political party seeks involvement of the masses in construction of a new society, it must clearly define the qualities to be cultivated among their members.

Work is the backbone of the life of a human being in a society. The main requisite for the success and consolidation of a polity is to create among the people conscious work-discipline and conscientious attitude towards work among people. An exploitative system develops a slave mentality in the workers and destroys their personal dignity. This system leads to anarchy, idleness and disorder. The worker should, therefore, be encouraged to challenge the existing system. A political worker should be educated on a broader concept that includes:

- Fostering genuine interest in work
- Encouraging thriftiness
- Raising the professional skill, organising mutual cooperation, and promoting healthy competition
- Developing in an individual the ability to discover his/her talents and have courage to take initiatives with a creative attitude

- Evolving a rational and balanced sense of patriotism as well as internationalism in order to further the cause of peace and prosperity
- Cultivating the desire to devote all ones energies, abilities and resources to the benefit of the people and the country, enthusiastically and selflessly
- Developing a tolerant and democratic personality - a 'democratic being'

The basis for the formation and development of these qualities is the scientific outlook, an understanding of the world around us and of the laws of development of society. A person who has thoroughly mastered this world outlook is certain to become politically firm and principled on the one hand and emotionally balanced and rational on the other.

These are the basic aspects of the ideological and educational work that should be carried out among the people. These are all closely interrelated and should be carried out by the democratic political parties and the State that must possess modern progressive outlook, and they should work systematically to raise material welfare and cultural level of the people.

Planning and supervising consciousness-raising work among the people:

Once we determine the nature of the tasks before us, decisions about their implementation should be taken up in right earnest. It is always useful to suggest time limits to accomplish a particular task.

Greatest importance must be attached to the work of mass organisations like that of trade unions, women and youth organisations, cooperative societies etc. They should be rendered full support and assistance and, through them, close contacts with the people should be established and maintained.

Decisions of political parties affect the lives of the masses. Therefore, the political parties are under obligation to adopt scientific, logical, explicit and concrete decisions at the right time. While pursuing its goals of political awareness tasks, a political party must keep adding on to it additional reserves of political activists to accomplish one task or another. The causes of current shortcomings

should be analyzed and the ways of eliminating them outlined. This attitude acts as a means of appraising the state of affairs in different sectors of the struggle to build a new society, and regulates the effectiveness of political work. The organisational work should include political education of workers and raising intellectual level of political activists.

Party workers should work both in the urban and rural areas in an attempt to find an opening into the minds and hearts of the people. They and should not be daunted by prejudices, resistance and even insults. They must learn to communicate effectively with members of the society and raise their socio-political consciousness level steadily and patiently.

Planning is the first stage of organisational work and provides the groundwork for gaining and accumulating experience in administration. Planning must meet two basic requirements: it has to be realistic and optimal. Realistic planning means bringing to the fore those tasks that are vitally important today and for the solution of which necessary conditions already exist. Optimal planning is the selection of ways and means that would be most efficient and make it possible to draw effectively on the creative energy of the people. Thus the plans of political and educational work are a practical guide to action.

Principles of organisation

When a political party is in power it must have a firm control over the execution of the decisions, plans and tasks adopted by the party. Party control consists in:

- a. Prompt checking of the implementation of measures and plans.
- b. Delivery of reports by party members on the fulfillment of assignments
- c. Analysing and reviewing the work done
- d. Studying public opinion on certain major political or economic moves made by the party and the government
- e. Ensuring participation of the people in the work of raising the intellectual level of the masses.

While educating the masses, party members must keep a low profile in projecting

themselves. They should not assume the role of self-styled leaders who are supposed to exercise control over the people. They should be well informed, and remain humble, polite and confident during their contact with the masses. Party leaders must keep a close contact with the lower cadres to ensure that they get proper training, receive relevant literature and instruction regularly.

In order to do so political parties should hold regular seminars. They should set up information centers at various places for giving training to the party cadres by providing correct information on current events, exchanging ideas, and refreshing their political knowledge.

The political education of the youth is of utmost importance. Attention should be centered on questions relating to intellectual requirements of the youth. To educate the youth is to create a reliable reserve of workers for political parties, and a generation of builders of new life structure for the nation.

In supervising mass education, contact with the people must be strengthened and the conditions of the people's lives understood properly. To win people's support a political party should explain to them every new move in its policy. The success of a political party lies in its bonds with the people. The party cadre must keep regular contact with the people, understand their problems and learn from their experiences.

Today, there exist diverse forms, methods and media for disseminating political information. It is important to utilise the potentials of each. Efforts should be made to improve the quality of radio and television programmes and make wider use of newsletters and magazines for educating party workers.

It must be remembered that the building of a society based on socioeconomic justice, wherein people are empowered to participate effectively in the governance of their country, would enable the people to reach the height of culture and civilization within the shortest possible period. In order to attain that position, citizens

should be well educated and able to understand the laws of social development, appraise world development from a modern angle, and make the best use of their energies and knowledge for the good of their country. Education, on creative and investigative lines, promotes advancement towards a brighter future.

Let the political parties get rid of their age-old attire and demeanour, change their inherited political culture and acquire the new mode of politics, so as to be instrumental in bringing about a truly democratic order in Pakistan.