

Criminalization of Politics

The leaders who achieved independence for India spent long years in jail; many a politician today ought to, justly, be in jail. The former were imprisoned for fighting a just cause against an alien rule; the latter is no better than common criminals- petty thieves, gangsters, murderers, and rapists. For politics today has become not the last but the first resort of the scoundrel.

An important reason for the criminalization of politics is the very system of power that operates in India. The state in India wields a great amount of discretionary power. Also, there is little transparency in the exercise of power by the state. With the assumption of so much power, the scope for misusing that power also increases.

The economy of India was till recently, and to some extent even now is, controlled by the state, often arbitrarily. Anyone wanting to start a business or run an industry or be gainfully licensed and permits as well as protection from official harassment. Politicians of a sort found a lucrative opportunity in brokering that state patronage. Not for them the area of politics that deals with the genuine needs and interests of the populace.

Brokering state patronage by necessity creates a set of favorites around a politician; permits are awarded to such people irrespective of merit, even as illegal activities are allowed to flourish by keeping the police clear of them. Official authority is misused in both cases. And once such corrupt practices mar the political field, the way is clear for the entry of criminals. To buy votes, to force people to vote for a certain person or party, to ensure submission- unscrupulous politicians engage gangsters and 'goondas' who gradually enter our legislatures legitimately, democratically, and make the law of the land. What an irony!

Misuse of state power and criminalization of politics can be reduced and eliminated only if people participate on a larger scale in running the affairs of the state. Power must be decentralized, rules and regulations must be transparent, and there must be greater involvement of people in the running of the government through citizens' committees, cooperatives, etc. the state must not interfere in every economic activity.

Essay No. 2

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Neither Gandhi nor Dr. Ambedkar had dreamt that a day would come when India's governance would pass into the hands of anti-social elements wearing a political dress. They would not only become members of sacred chambers but also become lawmakers- Minister to break the law. Mr. T.N. Seshan tried his best to cleanse the system. His successor Mr. M.S. Gill faced the same problem in elections in 1998. He tried his best to implement section 8 of the Election Law which debars the convicted persons. At the same time, the Election Commission was helpless in preventing those criminals who have not been tried or convicted. India has no such law that can prevent such persons. Consequently, the 12th Lok Sabha too has a few M.P.'s, notorious law breakers who will join others in making laws for the country. It is a pity for the parties who have given tickets to such candidates. Such candidates get the votes through terrorizing the local voters. – if not voted to be killed theory.

Thus, crime has become a way of life because such people have the blessings of senior politicians – Ministers and even Chief Ministers and Union Cabinet Ministers. Criminals enter politics to become politicians and then in turn they patronize other criminals resulting in dreaded criminals elected and appointed to the position of power. A helpless police officer confesses that once a criminal gets the ticket from a party, neither the district administration nor the police can do anything against him. His power command and hold over the people is so strong that local people do not inform the police about his movements.

Corruption has caught our public life from top to bottom. Now it appears that almost every agency had limb of administration has been suffering by the poison of corruption from massive defense to animal fodder. The root of corruption is growing from top to bottom. Simple living and high thinking are growing from top to bottom. Simple living and high thinking was the idea of freedom fighters. They were ready to sacrifice everything for the country. But at present, corruption has been rooted deeply in the social, political, economic, and religious life of the nation. It is from Prime Minister down to the ordinary clerk in the office. Criminalization of social and political life has been in every walk of life. In India, a parallel economy of black money operates, controlled, and regulated by the dons of the underworld.

There is no remedy to this problem until the effective law is formed or the parties consider the future of the country to bar such candidates. Then the local criminals would not get the undue favor of party leaders. They could not terrorize the voters to be elected. Thus, a law-breaker could not be a lawmaker. A nationwide movement for moral regeneration should be launched out urgently. There is a need of creating an alert public- opinion. The government should set up watchdog committees of respectable citizens drawn from all walks of life. The rules and regulations to ensure better public accountability are to be framed. A massive program of public education in moral and spiritual values is to be planned. It needs

urgent attention, governmental, non- governmental organizations, academic institutions, and the mass media should take part to make it successful.

The honest income tax officers and police officers should be encouraged. Political parties have to neglect such criminal persons. To bar the criminals in politics law reformation in the Act is necessary. Social opinion against corrupted persons is to be made. Punishment should be very strict from at least ten years to twenty years. The need of the hour is to have the firm political will to fight and root out the growing cancer of corruption.

Essay No. 3

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Before Independence, our leaders had neat and clean images. They believed in high social, moral, and ethical values. They worked hard and made great sacrifices for the country's freedom and for the uplift of the common man. At that time, leaders were servants of the people. Thus, it was in all sincerity that Lala Lajpat Rai started the Servants of People Society.

This spirit continued partially after the attainment of Independence but soon began to get eroded with every passing day. At present, we have a big percentage of legislators who have had a criminal past. A good number of them have got cases registered against them and many of them have even been indicted by the courts. Thus, we have rulers, some of them, have been murderers, kidnappers, and terrorists.

The real picture of our politicians comes to the fore at election time when they move along with an army of gun-toting goondas and other antisocial elements. If you ask them about this naked show of muscle power, they would invariably answer that they have to do all this in self-defense in order to protect themselves from the rival candidates.

During the election's times, we see and hear frequently about the honest citizens being terrorized, guns being shot and booths being captured. Those on election duty are intimidated and even the honest policemen on duty, are brought into submission through several means and tactics.

There has grown such an impregnable nexus between the politicians and criminals. It is done with help of the bureaucrats, and industrialists roped in for common benefit. In this way, the common man feels helpless. He is just cheated out of his voting right which virtually exists in name only. Thus, the criminalization of politics seems to be the greatest danger to the existence of democracy. It is

because the common man who is the bedrock of the democratic set up is getting fed up and disenchanted with such a state of affairs.

Still, everything must not be considered gone. Hectic efforts are being made by the judiciary and the Election Commission to restore the confidence of people in the democratic system. The Supreme Court and the Election Commission have started taking steps to make the indicted politicians unable to stand for elections. However, there is a great need for bringing about an awakening among the common people so that they stop voting for criminals turned politicians.

Sometime back, President APJ Abdul Kalam suggested that- all information about candidates contesting elections should be made available to the public through a multipurpose identity card. This way, according to him, malcontents could be turned out from politics. It is, indeed, a very useful suggestion for purifying politics from criminalization. Mr. Kalam also advised politicians to give attention to “developmental politics” after getting elected.