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The game of politics and the Campus climate

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WHILE admitting a student in a College or a University we used to ask whether he was involved in some kind of political activity or a member of a certain political party or not. This was a custom during the Pakistan time and even now we do more or less the same in Govt Colleges. This is done only to ascertain whether he is a die-hard follower of any political party or just an amateur. The purpose is ascertain whether his involvement in politics will be detrimental to his academic pursuit.

Most of the students answer in the negative and say that they are not involved in any political activities.

Later on after his admission in a college or a University it is discovered that the same boy is doing work in favour of a party and taking aggressive part in calling strike and other un-academic activities like sticking libellous poster on the wall, forcing other students out of the class, lecturing on the Campus about his favourite party etc.

Now a question for reflection is under whose guidance that student is doing these things? Is he guided by a College teacher to do such things or is he doing these under instruction of a soap box orator. It appears that the student has a dual loyalty.

Again a question arises-what is politics. to throw petrol bomb or to set fire to wath-sid vehicles or throw bomb and brick-bats to the officers on duty or to undress a person going to office on a strike day are something in which he finds great interest and thinks that he is doing a patriotic job. To break established laws seems to be an important feat of this kind of student activities now a days.

A simple minded village boy who comes to the city and falls into the grip of some frustrated agent and thus the boy considers lawlessness is the other name of politics and to break law is a part of patriotism. He has not learnt it in the class room. He learns it out side being guided by a class of people who go by the name of politician in our country. Thus he starts his career as one who always sees the negative side of everything. In short he becomes a virulent oppositionist in every thing. It does not matter good or bad, fair or unfair, he opposes everything which confronts him. This he becomes a person with a definite outlook and thinks that any settled Govt is a bad Govt as it stands on his way of lawlessness. In short, he fights without a cause or a goal either.

In the early twenties or thirties what was the goal of the terrorists like Bina Das, Khudhi Ram, Suryasen, Ananta sing and others? They had a definite goal and that was to drive away the British from the soil of India as the Britishers were colonialist and were sucking the blood of the Natives. Their lawlessness had a meaning

from the village who is taught to throw petrol bomb at a passing car? He does it only at the instruction of a person (in most cases a demagogue) and gets some benefit in return.

This is the general picture. Violence and opposition mindedness have become the rule in the name of politics.

The elder politicians for their own interest do not divulge the significance of these. They are safe and sound in the upper strata of society and occasionally change their pattern of activity with opportunity. But that simple boy who is once taught the lesson of violence goes astray from the real path of healthy politics and in the long run becomes a misfit in the civilized society.

This is in short the tragic side of student politics in our country. He does not attack in the right place and gives his life without knowing as to why he is giving his life.

It is somewhat like the anger of a village bride, whose anger against her mother-in-law is reflected in breaking an earthen pitcher. Because she cannot strike her mother in law physically.

The result of this is that a new kind of political activity is being born. Call it by any name, it is true that agitational politics is at the root. Any Governmental activity is defined as anti-people and the students are instructed to oppose it. A rickshaw puller is accidentally dead or a resident in a slum is murdered, there arises an attack on the govt as if Govt is doing all these. On such a matter a strike is called.

Now what about the significance of such strike? You do not move out of your house, the shop keeper does not open this shop, you do not send your child to the school, you do not bring out your car. These are not because you support the cause of the strike; you simply do it for the reason of security. And what do you see next day in the news. The prostrikers declare that the strike was a great success, equally the antistrikers claim that was a great success. The ridiculous thing that comes out of it is that both the strikers and the non-strikers are of the same opinion that activity was really a success.

In this way the present state of things is like a "Boomerang" hitting back the person who throws it. The ideal is absent, independent thinking is equally absent, only the students are forcibly drawn to a goalless destination.

In Alice in Wonderland, Alice is asked to run and when she asked about the destination, the madhatter angrily said "What is destination"? you run and that's all".

Our students are only running without any destination. They don't know where they will go nor do they know as to why they are running. Thus in the long run they become misfit in the society.

In this way how many potential good citizens are ruined. The boys have no

ideal, no example before them. Had there been some good example before them they could have framed their lives according to that pattern. They have before them only examples of violence. In the absence of these they are only sinking in the abysmal depth of irrelevencies spoiling their bright future.

Our student community is now in great dilemma. They do not know as to which course they are to follow.

Sometimes I feel perhaps there is deliberate attempt to crush our student strength by these kinds of things. Most often foreign made arms and ammunition are discovered in the student halls and hostels. How these things come, no one knows, but the supply is there.

The pity of it is that no one wants to take the responsibility of these delinquent boys and girls. Their so called surrogate father claims that they are on the right track. In my opinion only a change in value about the current political ethos can change the suicidal thing which is now polluting the academic atmosphere of the Campus.

The climate in the Campus will only change when the leaders will come forward to explain the real ethos of the existing situation. Teachers inside class room cannot do it for reasons known to everybody that the students are more guided by the outsiders than by the teachers.

So in the ultimate analysis it can be said that climate in the Campus is created by the forces from outside and it is the duty of a sensible and patriotic govt to tackle with judicious handling of events. In a matter of great national interest both Govt and the opposition must join hands to irradiate the seeds of lawlessness from the young people of College and University. They could take vow whatever may happen out side the Campus it should not be in any way reflected in the placid academic atmosphere of the Campus.

Incidentally I can say that during Suez crisis in 1956, I was in London at that National political storm the academic atmosphere in the Campus was not disturbed at all. The students of Cambridge and Oxford would hardly care as to what was happening, but they obeyed the regulation set by the Govt in the use of Gasol in their cars. I saw many students left their cars in the garage and were using bus because those were the days of petrol rationing.

This is a lesson to learn. Violence, politics and peace in the campus cannot go together. One must be rejected for the sake of the other. It is only then that the climate in the Campus will be suitable for academic discipline.