

National interest vs party interest at election time

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While addressing an election meeting in a Kurukshetra village recently, the BJP candidate and well-known industrialist Naveen Jindal asked the audience rhetorically, “Which is greater – the party or the nation?” to which the unanimous and prompt answer was “Nation.” The intent behind this, as can be guessed, was to explain his change of party. But come to think of it – isn’t it a relevant question to be asked of all voters and also political parties?

The way election campaigning is going on, it seems party interest is overriding national interest in the scheme of most political parties and even voters. In this rather sickening and cynical electioneering process, national interest seems to be fading out. The country may go underwater, but the parties are vying with each other in promising the moon to the voters in the hope to garner votes. Add to it, the abysmally low level of election discourse which is creating disharmony in society, and the mischiefs being created by anti-India forces, both inside and outside the country.

Indeed, every party has to lay before the voters its ideas and plans for the future during elections. But should it not require an element of sobriety and sincerity here? There is no accountability as to how the funds to give the largesse the parties are announcing every day would be made available. Take, for example, the Congress party. President Kharge has hitched the quota of free ration for the poor to the quantity offered by the BJP. The offer is in sync with Rahul Gandhi’s promise of giving one lakh rupees to women over whatever BJP had offered in cash or kind. As to the arrangement of funds, Congress stalwarts have advocated surveying people’s properties and re-distributing wealth. This Marxist utopian ideal is one which even Mao-Tse-Tung could not put into practice! This ‘revolutionary’ idea is being flaunted outside the party manifesto which promises to “support private sector”! Congress visionaries fail to see the suicidal consequences of this idea; all that they can see is to hoodwink the gullible people.

The abusive and shrill political discourse is getting full vent these days. If the elections were not spread over so many days, the public would have been spared the daily dose of this venomous rhetoric. In this tit-for-tat game, hitting below the belt is accepted. If Mamta Banerjee called P.M. Modi, “paapi”, Sharad Pawar used the term “shameless for him. Modi’s ‘shehzada’ and Rahul’s ‘shehanshah’ tags may be a notch glorifying terms but surely the double entendre is not lost on the audience. Reading between the lines and blowing minute faultlines out of proportion is common. So, ‘infiltrators’ and ‘those with many children’ would

be read as referring to a particular community only. Do all non-Muslims have fewer children, one may ask. Fake propaganda is the order of the day, like the CAA/NCR being called anti-Muslim. Where is the concern for the nation here?

Coming to the security situation, while the anti-national elements like the Jihadis or the Maoist insurgents supported by Pakistan and China respectively are ever on the prowl to harm the country, the anti-India lobby outside the country gets active every time there is a semblance of peace and progress here. Notorious players with a history of rocking the governments in many countries, while maintaining the façade of a friend of democracies, become active during the elections. This includes individuals and organizations operating under the innocuous, intellectual camouflage. Then there are the “friendly” countries like America pin-pricking India over an attempt to murder a terrorist who, for unknown reasons is so dear to it, or the Canadian government allowing tableaux on roads featuring the murder of Indira Gandhi, and then lecturing India on democracy and human rights and what not! All these powers are sweet-talking while looking for an opportunity to back-stab. Against such context, if Mani Shankar Aiyar repeats what Parvez Musharraf had said long back at a press conference about Pakistan not wearing bangles, the nation’s interests are not served. Maybe, Aiyar believes this will get some votes for his party, but isn’t that stereotyping the entire Muslim community for a few renegades? Such elements are common to all communities, of course, but our political leaders are supposed to lead people on the path that rightly serves people’s interests and thereby India’s interests. But that seems to be at the bottom of the long list of priorities of our politicians!

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