A time to change

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Let us assume some students do not get a seat in a residential hall for whatever reason; shortage of seats is one. That means we need more halls. Under the present situation that also means that getting someone a seat forcibly will result in someone else being unseated, most often undemocratically.

Will the inability of so-called student groups to uproot a student to grant another the same space in a hall mean that the public support for the party they follow dwindle?

Nay! The reality is quite in the contrary.

By counter argument it will be said that the student already having a seat has been given so by another party when in power. But, are we not talking of 'a time to change' with every breath?

Have we not seen enough times how votes swing AGAINST a party in power due to such foolhardy, uncalled-for, and unwise methodology of persons who swear by the name of a party? The most recent glaring example is the turn of events as they unfolded on 29 December last.

Let us assume that by not getting those seats, that group of students lose control of the hall union.

Will that mean that the party they advocate for will be weaker in the centre? Hah!

Let us assume some students do not get the contract of the construction work (why should they is a basic question we have forgotten to ask) in their hall/university when the party they support is in power.

Will that mean that that party will pull less voters in the next elections? Hah again!

The reality is quite the opposite.

Such pointless thoughts are infantile in the context of the new millennium and laughable at best.

In fact, these are certain vote losers, as the common voters and the new voters assume (even if erroneously so) that the party in power is giving these wrong doers full backing, police protection and all.

The badly behaving 'persons' in educational institutions, perhaps also registered as students, as aged as uncles (aunties) of SSC candidates, have tainted the image of the student community, and for so long that sections of the public in the form of shopkeepers and bus drivers and others, have often been forced to take up violent position against them, something these common citizens would not have imagined in the pre-liberation days, and for a few years after.

The genuine students of this country have time and again sacrificed everything for this nation. 1948...1954...1969...1971...1990... Many have embraced martyrdom. We take this opportunity to salute once again those Shaheeds. Their valiant tales shall be told for eternity.

If the present day students would like to pursue the socio-political stance of those iconic periods of our national history, they should be encouraged to practice student politics.

But, if some youths and older men and women today (as true for yesterday) shall abuse the reputation of the student community, gained in heroic struggles leading to our independence, and create *hungama* on and off the campus for their selfish interest, such as unfair admission, undue earning, unscrupulous behaviour, that sort of politics should be banned. It has already been done in some educational premises. The perpetrators, who have earned *baazees* such as *tenderbaaz, dakhalbaaz* and *chaandabaaz*, should be taken to task. They give a party in power a bad name and cost them popularity. The party not in power is laughing their head off.

Students were the role models of the society. Alas! That image has been tarnished and I fear for good, unless good sense prevails on the student leaders and their mentors. For several years and now, the nation is having to sacrifice everything for the misbehaviour of some so-called students in the name of the broader student community. A fear factor is in operation, and yet gradually the general students are speaking out, as seen on television.

Bad elements everywhere must be dealt with severely and with finality. They have penetrated the very core of so-called unproductive student politics. They are A+ at swinging overnight to the party in power, albeit without the consent of the party in power, such that they can continue to exercise power over tea stalls, photocopiers, vendors... That status gives them the shield to create a law and order situation in a college/university/street/bus/you-name-it at the lamest of excuses. If others of the same party oppose their misdeeds, an internal feud erupts. The activities of the swinging so-called student politicians (read business people) make the opposition laugh their head off, for their unpatriotic purpose too is being served. Needless to say, there are adults (who have not matured) behind both groups in a party and behind all parties. The cycle has been going on for too long. It is time for a change.

That the so-called student wing of a party is vital and essential for a political party to thrive in the present times is no more than a myth, as illusory as the much-hyped Jamaat-i-Islami factor for the four-party alliance in the last elections. In today's elections, young people of a *mahalla*, men and women alike, play the most important role to pull voters, because of the gentle image they hold in their community. They go door to door to seek votes as good young persons, not as stick-wielding, bomb-throwing, sabre-rattling, trigger-happy foul-mouthed 'students'.

The trouble creators are not students. They have assumed the garb of students. They exploit the honour of students to get away with their criminal activities.

Political parties should do away with these so-called students who misuse their so-called party connection and render campuses volatile, and help to shut down institutions, and earn the country a bad name, and waste time of genuinely serious students. Let the political parties be assured that this one step will earn them votes, not lose. Times have changed.

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