

“An enemy can be subdued by political skill
— Chanakya”



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POST ELECTIONS: Winners & Losers



Rival political leaders may well be fierce

competitors, but once elections are over, they need to cooperate to make democracy work.

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN offers sage advice to politicians

Democracy with discipline is a political boon, whereas democracy without discipline may degenerate into anarchy. Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of USA in his Gettysburg Address in 1863, said democracy is: “Government of the people, by the people, for the people.” Theoretically, this seems to be a correct definition of democracy but, from the point of view of practical application, it is perhaps incomplete.

Democracy is not a religious belief; it is a secular concept. It is a political formula that gives us a workable ‘art of difference’ management. In every society, there are differences at every level and democracy is a kind of tightrope walk to maintain the balance between differing groups in society.

If leaders fail to establish this balance, they risk turning the democratic system into anarchy, which may cause



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them to miss the opportunities offered by democracy.

The success of democracy depends at the outset on free and fair elections. Every person has the equal right to present his opinion by casting his vote. This was the point made by Evelyn B Hall echoing Voltaire’s beliefs: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

Democracy spans two periods: the pre-election and post-election period. In the pre-election period, political parties compete with each other to win the election. But after the election, the situation changes, as the time now comes for taking a U-turn. Instead of considering each other as rivals and continuing to fight, both sides must adopt the way of coordination. Political competition before elections is necessary, but confrontation after elections is so disas-

trous that it nullifies all benefits of a democratic system.

In the pre-election period, it is the political right of participating parties to compete with each other. But it is essential for the success of democracy that after elections both parties change their approach and play a constructive role for the progress of the nation. The party that has lost must accept its defeat without any sense of humiliation, while the winning party must take its victory without pride.

Just as sportsmen demonstrate the sporting spirit, leaders in democracy should demonstrate the democratic spirit. Without the sporting spirit, sports would seriously lose in value. Similarly, if the democratic spirit is absent from a democracy, it becomes difficult to avail of the benefits offered by the democratic system.

All parties must adopt the philoso-

phy of adjustment to and respect for each other, rather than take to political fighting or confrontation. All parties should focus on a single goal, that is, national development.

An example worth quoting in this connection is that after the 2008 US elections, when Barack Obama became President, he chose as his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who had been his rival. This was a healthy move meant to guarantee the success of democracy. In the post-election period, parties should in a similar way forget their differences and work together for the best interests of the nation.

Leaders elected in a democratic system are masters of their national affairs for only a limited period. They can do a good job only if they concentrate on the present. If they change their focus and devote all their efforts to ensuring success in the next election, they will lose out, both in the present as well as in the future.

A key pre-requisite for the proper functioning of a democratic system is good education. Education is as important as the democratic framework itself. Without good education, a good democracy cannot be established.

Therefore, the most important agenda for the winning party should be to provide good education to the citizens of the country.

Democracy is a political boon for a nation, but to turn this potential into actuality, we need such masters of democracy who can fulfil their responsibility with complete sincerity and honesty. ■

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POLITICIANS**