**Cacophonic leadership!**

[Huzaima Bukhari](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/huzaima-bukhari/)

July 17, 2021

“*Great leaders create more leaders, not followers. Great leaders have vision, share vision, and inspire others to create their own*” —Roy T Bennett The Light In the Heart

A review of the last fifteen years of democratic rule in Pakistan reveals quite an interesting scenario. Two major political parties have been taking turns since 1989 until 2018 when the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) emerged as the third most popular one; this entire period interspersed with military takeover between 1999 and 2007.

Before going into details, it would be most appropriate to understand how elections are contested by almost all the leading parties. There could be party manifestoes and a bit of blueprint about intended measures of governance but these hardly form part of discussions. In the crowded rallies there are, however, long lists of promises (of course, not meant to be kept) to attract the electorate. These promises are usually attuned to the type of audience being addressed. Therefore, the so-called religious parties bank on imposing shariah because their voters are mostly fundamentalist in their approach. The ones claiming to be liberal, make promises of gender equality, and such things that would lure the oppressed into their net; and the neo-liberals go a step further to claim that they would provide equal opportunities to one and all so that no section of the society feels left out. It is but natural that those aspiring to take over power need to have a sound foundation (read trap) on which to build their support and the unsuspecting electorates, are easily ensnared to vote for their ‘favourite’ party.

In the crowded rallies there are long lists of promises (of course, not meant to be kept) to attract the electorate

Again, during the election campaigns, other than the pledges there is another weapon that is intensively used and which invokes the greatest amount of heat-bad mouthing opponents. Nothing pleases the crowd more than hearing scurrilous accusations about rivals, acrid criticisms of the way they may have ruled earlier while lauding their own governance (if they were ever in power). Despite knowing that the many claims made are false, there are no counter attacks from the public and the few lukewarm protests that do take place are easily subdued. Even media parleys which appear distinctly divided into pro-certain party and anti-certain party, fail to rebuke lies or provide honest analyses. In fact, they act as conduits to further the cause and elaborate the points of view of their preferred party. Very few media houses can lay claim to neutrality.

An excerpt from Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World Revisited may help to explicitly expound the idea. He writes: “Human beings act in a great variety of irrational ways, but all of them seem to be capable, if given a fair chance, of making a reasonable choice in the light of available evidence. Democratic institutions can be made to work only if all concerned do their best to impart knowledge and to encourage rationality. But today, in the world’s most powerful democracy, the politicians and the propagandists prefer to make nonsense of democratic procedures by appealing almost exclusively to the ignorance and irrationality of the electors.”

Coming to the interesting political scenario, when a particular party comes into power, the citizens begin to look forward to fulfillment of election promises with of course enhanced public facilities and better standard of living for themselves. Despite being aware that meeting such expectations can be instrumental in bagging continuous terms in office, not a single party in power behaves in a manner that can help achieve this aim by pulling in its opponents’ votes. The party that heads the government as well as the opposition, remain stuck in the election campaign mode with one, crticising the opposition for its own failure and the other downplaying whatever little good the one in power maybe doing. In this continued political turmoil, the principal sufferer is the country and its people who are temporarily engaged merely to cast votes to be forgotten, once the game of elections is over.

At the end of the day we find the disillusioned and frustrated public praying and demanding a change of faces and that is what really happens. The earlier ones appear as saints compared to the existing ones and vice versa yet ironically, no one seems happy with the government of the day and this political game, akin to 20-twenty in cricket goes on. Unfortunately, even the next generation of so-called leaders has been trained in the footsteps of their imprudent elders so any hope of witnessing a qualitative change on the political horizon is also shattered on the precipice of verbosity. With such an environment in place, how can the security, economic and progressive situation of this country be salvaged? Amazingly, those who were strong proponents of a humane and forward looking society have themselves become infected with the cacophonic culture because of which, instead of focusing on assigned work and development, they are now surrounded by social scandals, economic mafias, selective accountability with party workers struggling to defend loose volleys of irresponsible statements of their leaders. In short, amid all this commotion, it clearly appears that leaders today have no solutions to any of the multitudinous problems faced by this country and its people.

*The writer, lawyer and author, is an Adjunct Faculty at Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), member Advisory Board and Senior Visiting Fellow of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE).*