

Ethics and Politics Relationship

Politics has two faces—a smiling face that gives glad tidings of prosperity, power and authority, and a furious one that calls to mind power struggle, power worship, and injustice. It is owing to this that politics is likened to Janus,[329] the first mythological king of Latium.[330]

The gods had bestowed the king with such powers of clairvoyance that he would see the past and the future in unison. It is for this reason that they used to depict him as having two faces, portraying him as terrifying. In reality, politics has also two facets and faces: On the one hand, it is after securing the objectives and demands of the citizens and is a powerful tool for the establishment of public order and welfare—this is the favourable face of politics.

On the other hand, it is the means of rivalry, challenge, power struggle, dealing a blow to the enemy, and outstripping and outsmarting him—this gives a dreadful image of politics.

In our culture the latter face of politics is better known. Usually politics has been equated and associated with fraud, deception, and in slang, ‘chicanery’ [*pedar s^hkh^hteh b^hz^h*].

A deeper analysis of this aspect of politics exists in Arabic and has taken the form of a proverb. It states, “To rule is mule-like (sterile)”[331] [*al-mulk ‘aq^hm*]. It means that it show no mercy to anybody and recognizes no kinship and kinsmen.

History is replete with this attitude to politics. N^hdirsh^h[332] killed his own son merely because of a misunderstanding, and Sh^hraveyeh[333] murdered his own father Khusr^hparv^hz (Khosroe Parvez) in order to gain power.[334] Ferdows^h elegantly depicts the gloomy end of this unlucky king. After Sh^hraveyeh, who was himself a prisoner of his father, is released from the prison through the help of the soldiers, he dethrones his father, puts him behind bars, and goes in search of a person who would kill his father. But he has nobody to help to murder the king as such a deed would be inauspicious. However, he finally finds the person who accepts to shoulder the heavy responsibility.

بامد کُشنده سبک پرشتاب

یکی خنجری تیز دادش چو آب

ورا دید پابند در پیشگاه

چون آن بدکنش رفت نزدیک شاه

سرشکش ز مژگان به رخ برچکید...

بلرزید خسرو چو او را بدید

به زمزم همی توبه کرد از گناه

چو آن جامه‌ها را بپوشید شاه

بدان تا رخ جانستان را ندید

یکی چادر نو به سر درکشید

در خانه پادشا را ببست

بشد مهر هرمزد، خنجر به دست

جگرگاه شاه جهان بردرید

سبک رفت و جامه از او درکشید

He gave him a sharp dagger that shines like water,

And he was hastily directed to kill.

When the wicked person approached the king,

He saw him devoted to God.

When Khosrow saw him, tears flew on his cheek;

When the king wore those garments and repented from his sins.

A new chador he covered himself with

So as not to see his murderous face.

Mehr Hormozd took hold of a dagger

And closed the door of the king's house.

He promptly approached the king and took away the chador from his head

And opened the king's belly. [335]

This patricide does not end here. As a precautionary measure, fifteen other sons of Khusr[ؑ] who are imprisoned are also butchered.

که خسرو بران‌گونه برشد تباه

چو آگاهی آمد به بازار و راه

به ایوان آن مستمندان شدند

همه بدگمانان به زندان شدند

به ایوان شاه آنک در بند بود

گرامی ده و پنج فرزند بود

بدانگه که برگشته شد، بخت شاه

به زندان بکشتندشان بیگناه

When the people of the street and market understood

How Khosrow became corrupted,

All the wicked were imprisoned

While the indigent were in the veranda.

All the fifteen noble sons (of Khosrow)

Were imprisoned in the castle.

They were innocently murdered in prison

As the king's fortune returned.[336]

Sh[ؑ]raveyeh, too, did not remain unpunished for this patricide [and fratricide] for he was also murdered by others.

Well, the story of politics from this perspective is a tragic one and replete with patricides, fratricides and filicides. If politics is such, what will its relation to ethics be? Is it possible to build a bridge between the two? This question has occupied and challenged the minds of thinkers for the past two thousand years. Some believe that politics is a mixture of fraudulence and violence, and, as such, it cannot be rid of its abominations. This is while others do assert that politics can be ethical. But we are after finding out the place of politics in the ideological system of Im[ؑ]m Khomein[ؑ] and what connection it could have with ethics. In a bid to answer this question, we have no alternative but to discuss first the fundamental views on the subject under consideration. Then, we will examine the viewpoint of the Im[ؑ]m in this context.

Concerning the relationship between ethics and politics, there are four main views and they are as follow:

- View on the separation of ethics and politics;
- View on the subservience of ethics to politics;
- View on the duality of ethics and politics; and
- View on the oneness of ethics and politics.

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