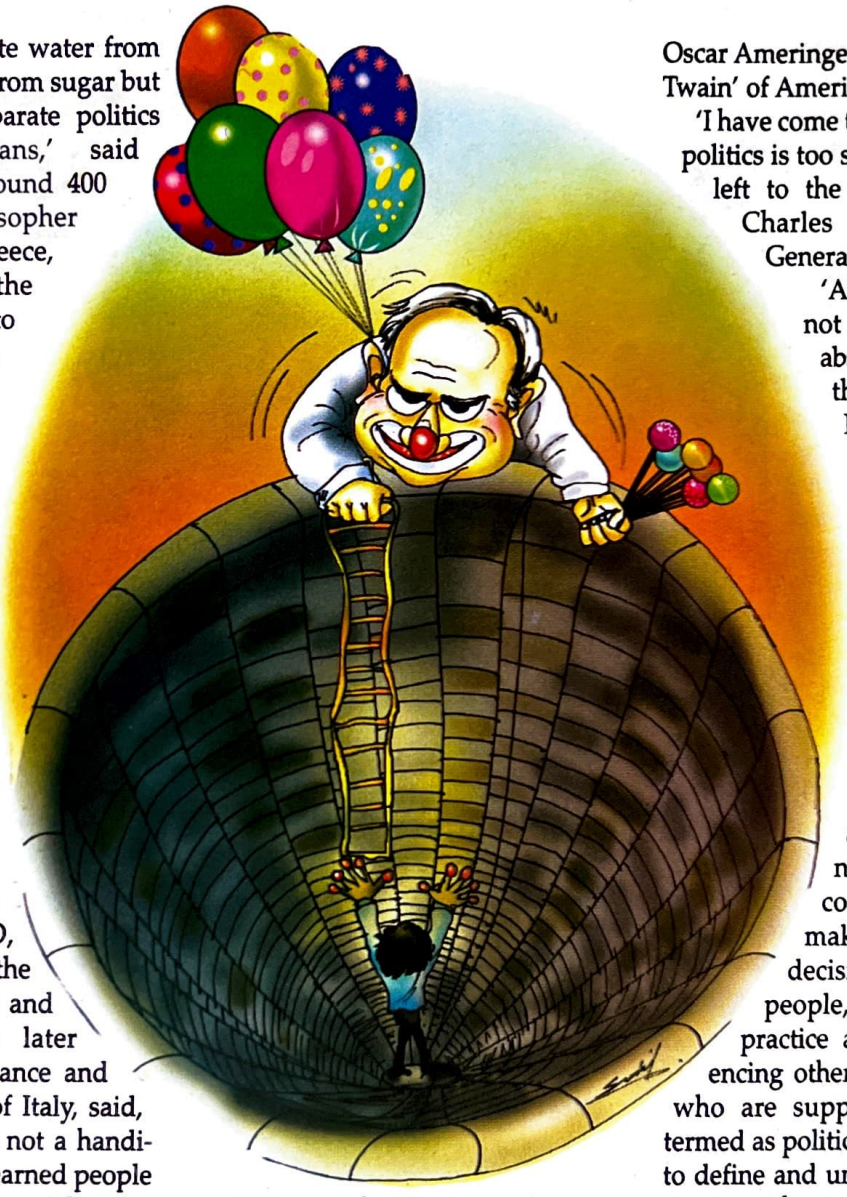
Politics the politicians play: A fine and polished art

It is not right to brush the politicians with a lighter brush, because all of them do have many qualities. Good or bad is not the point here! ■ by Wg Cdr DP Sabharwal



'You can separate water from milk and salt from sugar but you can't separate politics and politicians,' said someone so aptly. Around 400 BC, Plato the philosopher mathematician of Greece, had said, 'One of the penalties of refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors.' It might have been true in those times, but in present day scenario it has undergone a 180 degree U-turn.

Today politicians enter politics so as not to be ruled by intelligent and superior people. The change started a few centuries ago when around 1800 AD, Napoleon Bonaparte, the famous French military and political leader who later became Emperor of France and President of Republic of Italy, said, 'in politics, stupidity is not a handicap'. Thereafter many learned people and men of letters have said many things about politics and the politicians, but the following few are interesting to read and savor.

'Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other,' said Oscar Ameringer, the so called 'Mark Twain' of American Socialism.

'I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians,' opined Charles de Gaulle, French General and politician.

'Absolute power does not corrupt absolutely, absolute power attracts the corruptible,' said Frank Herbert, the critically acclaimed and commercially successful American science fiction author.

Politics and politicians

Politics means the activities associated with the governance of an area or a country. It involves making of a common decision for a group of people, and involves the practice and theory of influencing other people. The people who are supposed to do so are termed as politicians. While it is easy to define and understand what politics is without any ambiguity, it is highly difficult, and in fact impossible to define a politician.

To begin with, the definition of a

politician was simply 'an individual who is actively involved in politics.' The more serious and meticulous ones defined a politician as 'one who is skilled or experienced in the science or administration of the governance.'

Later it got refined to as 'an individual who holds or seeks a political office.' However, presently the most opt description of a politician is 'one who seeks personal or partisan gain, often by scheming and maneuvering'. Going by the trend, well it is definitely going to change for the worse in the years to come.







Politicians and the people who defined them.

Spectacularly negative qualities

To be a leader and on top of that being a politician is not an easy task. It might be easy to reach the top, but staying there is even more difficult. Thus, it is not right to brush the politicians with a lighter brush, because all of them do have many qualities: Good or bad is not the point here! They are able to impress the people, their voters with their most potent weapon the power of speech, effective communication and distorted logic. Few of the negative qualities described by veterans are as follows.

'A politician is a fellow who will lay down your life for his country,' as per Texas Guinean, a 19th century American businessman.

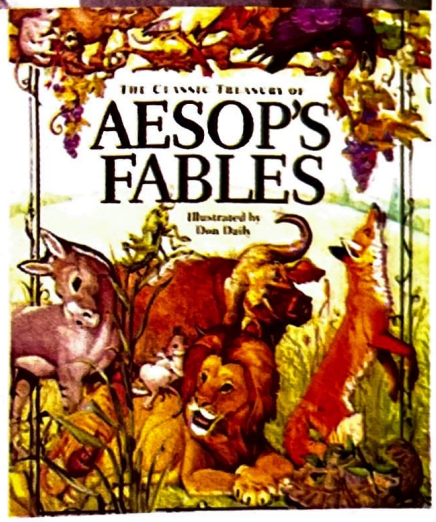
'Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river,' said Nikita Khrushchev, the Ex Soviet politician and Politburo chief.

'Politicians are people who, when they see light at the end of the tunnel, go out and buy some more tunnel,' as per John Quinton, American actor and writer.

'In order to become the master, the politician poses as the servant,' said Charles de Gaulle.

Perception about politicians

Aesop, the Ancient Greek who is believed to have lived around 600 BC and credited with a number of fables now collectively known as Aesop's fables had said, 'We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office.' Things do not seem to have changed since then. Here are few of the select opinions about politicians.



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'Instead of giving a politician the keys to the city, it might be better to change the locks,' said Doug Larson, the English middle-distance runner who won gold medals at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris.

'Politicians are like diapers. They

both need changing regularly and for the same reason,' said an anonymous writer.

'What happens if a politician drowns in a river?' well, that is pollution.

'But what happens if all of them drown? Now, that is solution!'

Making fool of the public

It is very easy to recognise a true politician because other than mere rhetoric they hardly speak anything of substance. Most of them are used to blabber and when caught on the wrong foot, their common statement is 'I did not say that.' However, when confronted with proof in the form of recorded statement, they usually change the stance and come out with, 'I did not mean that.'

Now, whether they were fools to say what they did not mean or they consider the public to be fool, is for you to ponder over and decide, though invariably it is the later.

Most of the politicians look for opportunities to grab attention and are media savvy. They leave no stone unturned to hog the lime-light. However, many times, trying to overdo things, they do not realise that they end-up by putting their feet in their mouth.

A politician was suffering from insomnia and was not able to sleep. He went through elaborate checks but nothing came out of the investigations. Finally, one of the renowned doctor thought he had found the answer to the politician's problem and asked him, 'Are you disturbed by immoral thoughts?'

'No doctor, in fact I enjoy them,' was the cheeky answer.

A secretary was boasting about his boss' qualities, and when asked to tell something that was really extraordinary and spectacular about the politician, the secretary said, 'You know, he can speak five languages.' As if waiting for the cue, another person present blurted out, 'that is absolutely true but the fact is he cannot say a word of sense in any of them.'

Then they look after their common interests, as Adlai Stevenson, the US presidential candidate in 1952, said, 'I offered my opponents a deal: if they stop telling lies about me, I will stop telling the truth about them.'

Spending money

The politicians play real politics when it comes to spending public money. It is supposed to be for public good, but somewhere along the way it gets changed for their personal good and prosperity. A news item sometimes back about how much money US politicians were spending, for right or wrong causes, was put in right perspective by an advertising agency asking the people as to what they thought of the figure 'billion' when it comes to their political leaders spending their tax-money. The comparison given by them was:

A billion seconds ago, it was 1959.

A billion minutes ago, Jesus was alive.

A billion hours ago, our ancestors were living in the Stone Age.

And... a billion dollars is what the government spends in just 8 hours and 20 minutes.

The final words

All said and done, the politicians do fight one another in the elections and try to bring their political opponents and their government down, but when the chips are down they are all united. Then they look after their common interests which can be best summed up in the words of Adlai Stevenson, the US presidential candidate in 1952, 'I offered my opponents a deal: if they stop telling lies about me, I will stop telling the truth about them.'

And as per Groucho Marx, the American comedian, film and television star, 'Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies.' That's the politics, the politicians play, the world over. ■



MY MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT

Humour saved my face

Just a week after my wedding my mother-in-law, who was busy entertaining some visitors, entrusted me with the job of cooking the rice. But I didn't know just how much rice to measure out. Anyway, not wanting the family to go hungry, I took out a good quantity, washed it and put it in the boiling water on the hearth. To my consternation, I found a little later, that the parboiled rice was spurting out of the vessel on all rides, like water from a fountain. I stood there not knowing what to do.

My mother-in-law come in. I apprised her of the situation. She took the vessel down, removed a good quantity of rice into another vessel and kept it back on the hearth. The removed rice was left in the fridge to be served for the family next week.

Her comment to me. "Napoleon believed that an army marched on its stomach. But we don't have an army here. Just the five of us!"

I must grant it to my mother-in-law that she had a sense of humour!

— Priya Manilal

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