

## Rethinking the Perceptions of Issue Politicization



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The wrestlers’ protests in Delhi and the APPSC paper leakage scam in Arunachal have one thing in common- constant protest by the affected individuals and the public discrediting the core issue blaming it for being “politicized” or “politically motivated”.

Yes, the issues have been politicized, it needed to be and not every politics for the public's interests are bad to begin with. But, there are some people who are themselves engaging in politics by delegitimizing the subject matter and labeling others of "politicizing" the issue. This has led a certain group of people distancing or shying away from issues that are of critical importance for the greater good of all.

The "politicization" of both the wrestlers' protest and APPSC paper leakage case did not happen overnight. It was a long, lonely and tiring struggle against the influential and powerful authority.

Initially, the group of wrestlers' sexual assault allegations should have been a simple case. If not an open and shut case, at least an FIR should have been registered, not to forget, one of the complainant is a 15-year-old girl which should by default be registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. But, for months there was no FIR against the complainant, because he is an MP from the ruling party ticket and the current President of Wrestling Federation of India (WFI). It required the SC intervention just to register a case against him. They are nationally and internationally recognized sportspeople. Imagine the plight of ordinary girls.

Similarly, the Pan Arunachal Joint Steering Committee (PAJSC) members' 13-point charter of demands against the paper leakages by the authority of the APPSC was not an outcome of overnight effort. It took months of consultations, meetings with the government officials, different stakeholders, crying out on the streets, protesting outside the secretariat, the Court complex etc. Sadly, they were just aspirants seeking for a free and fair examination process; punish the culprits and recommend "null and void" and re-conduct for exams that are found to be compromised. It seemed like the State govt became numb to their pleas.

From my understanding of these cases: the wrestler's protest and APPSC paper leakage case were genuine matters up until they started receiving support from different interest groups, stakeholders, opposition political leaders etc. From then on, the one who echoed their voices for the common good were trolled, shamed, belittled, character assassinated and questioned upon on their sincerity of talking about the issues. Their concerns on behalf of the victims and against the culprits were blamed for being "politically motivated". Not surprisingly, people became more concerned about the issues being "politicized" rather than the validity of the problem itself.

So what if it was politicized? There is a level of politics: healthy politics and excessive politics. In good politics, there is a constructive dialogue; the issues are addressed based on facts and evidence. And the people who have come out to support the burning issues have mostly engaged in healthy politics. They did not try to distort the facts or deviate away from the issues at hand. They aided in engaging with the government, the public, seeking constructive solutions and to check the authority for their wrongdoing. There's nothing wrong in it even if it was "politicized".

It is a common knowledge; there is politics in every sphere of life beginning at home, schools, temples, churches etc. One cannot run away from getting into politics, even the so-called apolitical people are indirectly or directly participating in politics by maintaining their silence on issues big or small.

There, however, is another level of excessive politics which tries to intentionally delegitimize the problem by using diversionary tactics from the main subject matter, distorts facts, and creates a narrative that fits their story even if it completely overshadows objective analysis and evidence-based decision-making. For instance, polarizing, applying the tactics of intimation, harassment, and character assassination of the stakeholders including the whistleblower.

**I believe people can have doubts and also question the motives of certain groups or individuals especially when it comes to addressing serious matters related to injustice, high profile sexual assault accused, murder, criminal conspiracy and corruption. It is natural, and it would also help in building transparency and trust among us. I, however, also believe that rather than being overly concerned about issues being politicized, one should focus on the merits of the issues being raised and the actions needed to address them. Additionally, we should be more concerned about what if those people are silenced and stop questioning the State official's wrongdoings and allow them to have unchecked power. How will the wrongdoers ever be held accountable?**

In case of the issue in Arunachal Pradesh, I understand that it is no longer just a paper leakage problem. Although it started with that, but, it has evolved beyond the initial crime, becoming a larger fight against a system that appears to protect wrongdoers while targeting those who raise questions and seek accountability.

Arunachal is an extremely young state, if its' citizen don't speak on things that matter then we are willingly choosing for the injustice to persist, corruption to thrive and accountability to be undermined. For the people and the state to grow it's extremely important that we are allowed to have a fair and transparent system.

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