

■ SYMBOLS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Many tools & weapons of violence allotted to candidates

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Election symbols like gun, cannon and revolver can be a source of pride for many, but for those who promote peace and tolerance, the allotment of these symbols to political parties goes to show the acceptability of violence tools at general as well as at official level.

The Election Commission allotted total 144 symbols to different political parties for the upcoming general elections. These symbols were allotted in the light of the preferences shown by the parties in their applications.

As per details, Arrow has been allotted to PPP-P, Lion PML-N, Cycle PML-Q, Scale to Jamaat-e-Islami, Lantern to

Awami National Party, Kite to MQM, Flower to Pakistan Muslim League-F, Wheel to Jamhoori Watan Party, Bat to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf and Book has been allotted to JUI-F.

A detailed look at the list of parties and their symbols shows that there are many tools and weapons of violence that are allotted to political parties. The issue has never been raised at any forum, which shows the acceptability of these symbols in the society. Some examples are Revolver for Muslim Movement Pakistan, Axe for Balochistan National Party, Cannon for Afghan Qaumi Movement (Pakistan), Missile for Tehrik-e-Tahafuz Pakistan, Combat Tank for Istehkaam-e-Pakistan Movement, Knife for

Seraiki Sooba Movement Pakistan, Hammer for Tameer-e-Pakistan Party and Two Swords for Pakistan Peoples Party etc. Where there can be some useful side for symbols like Axe and Knife, others like Revolver, Combat Tank and Cannon have no use, but to kill and destroy.

Interestingly, most of the animals that are harmless are among the list of ECP symbols available after final allotment to political parties. These symbols include animals like Ostrich, Hud Hud, Cow, Rabbit etc.

Saima Munir from Aurat Foundation said all such symbols should be rejected at social and official level rather than making them a symbol of a political parties. "If we want to eliminate violence from our society, which we really need to,

every small or big gesture against violence can make a difference," she said.

Assistance Professor of Faculty of Social Sciences in International Islamic University Noreen Seher said that such symbols and images are not just the artefacts, but reflect the complete social discourse. "The choice of these artefacts shows the priorities, values and mindset of the society. Selections of these symbols as the formal sign of the party reflect how normal these critical and violent artefacts are at all social levels. It further normalises and reinforces these object as well as attitude as a very usual part of day to day life," she opined.

Young Social Activist Mina Khan had the same opinion.

She said that as a society, we generally approve violence. "We buy guns and pistols for our kids and enjoy watching them play. We let our kids watch violent cartoons of super heroes, but never tell them that it is wrong to kill. How can we get rid of violence from such society?" she added.

Asif Elahi had a bit sympathetic approach towards ECP and political parties. "Though I do not approve of such symbols but may be the ECP and political parties ran out of ideas for symbols and included weapons in the list," he said. He did not know that there are almost 45 non-violent and non-aggressive symbols remained untouched in the ECP list after all contesting parties selected their election symbols.