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Aristotelian Rhetoric and the Politics of Persuasion: A Study of Imran Khan's Venture into Politics

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Abstract

This paper explores the politics of persuasion with special reference to Imran Khan's venture into politics. Influenced and inspired by Aristotle, he effectively used various methods of persuasion, including ethos, pathos and logos, to convince the audience to come out in large numbers and support his cause. Imran Khan was in a better position to act effectively in accordance with the features announced by Aristotle. This strategy worked effectively because, during the sit-in, Khan was not only able to keep his audience actively engaged and involved, he also did not let their energies exhaust. This is evident from the fact that a number of participants never came down; instead, it kept going up for continuous 126 days. Moreover, Imran Khan broadened his vote bank to such an extent that he was able to form government in the center and other two provinces in the 2018 elections. Data was collected through secondary sources from books, research articles and newspaper writings. Findings suggest that Imran Khan effectively used the strategy of persuasion to change the political opinion of the masses and won the elections in the end.

Key Words: Sit-in, Imran Khan, Ethos, Pathos, Logos, Aristotle

Introduction

Imran Khan, whose cricketing career came to an end with winning the world cup in 1992, decided to actively join politics in 1996 by establishing his own political party, Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (Flamenbaum 2012). While addressing a gathering of young students at the Punjab University, the cricketer turned politician said that he didn't have any mind to join politics, but it was Aristotle's writings and political ideals that motivated him to join politics. According to Khan, Aristotle urged every citizen in a state to actively participate in politics if he aspires his nation to grow and prosper. Aristotle thought human beings to be political animals and said that 'man devoid of politics is animal'. These words of Aristotle, according to

Imran Khan, were the real source of motivation for him to venture into politics (N. Shah 2020).

Imran Khan came to prominence in August 2014 when he announced a sit-in against the government of the Muslim League (N) in the center. The sit-in continued for 126 days uninterruptedly, where Khan used different tactics and methods of persuasion to make a strong appeal to the audience to sell his manifesto and political ambitions. He wanted the federal government to resign for being involved in election rigging, corruption and misuse of authority. Although he was not successful in meeting his stated objective, he no doubt was able to win the attention of the

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masses and change their political viewpoint to a great extent.

Literature Review

There is no denial of the fact that language plays an effective and significant instrumental role in convincing and persuading others to agree to what he refuses to agree earlier. Over the years, it has been used and applied as a tool by politicians and speakers in political rhetoric to persuade people in order to attain certain aims and objectives. There is no doubt that, among others, language is thought to be the most effective type of persuasive communication which can be used to attain both individual and communal goals. Furthermore, when a speaker is able to win the attention of the audience, he simultaneously plays on their sentiments and emotions (Arakelyan and Muradyan 2016). This results in the fact that logic and reasons go into insignificance, and this is what every speaker wants because he wants to be above all reasons.

Aristotle has coined three fundamental principles that can help a speaker persuade the audience to change his political opinion. The following lines throw a detailed light on those basic features.

Ethos

Aristotle suggests ethos to be the basic mode to persuade the audience to agree to what the speaker tries to communicate. For this to work effectively, it is important that the speaker must have credible authority and reputation. Otherwise, even if a speaker has a strong argument to persuade the listeners, but if the listeners don't trust him for one reason or other, it will not make the desired impact. Aristotle put greater stress on the character of the speaker as this helps the speaker to convince the listeners of his fairness and trustworthiness (Ting 2018). There is another way too to persuade the audience in ethos. It suggests that the speaker must exert or emphasize the fact that he is not different from them or, in other words, is very much like them. Moreover, the speaker must establish this fact in the minds of the audience that he would always be there in times of need. One more thing that can help the speaker win the attention of the audience is that he should try to convince them that

he shares the same belief system and values with them (Higgins and Walker 2012).

According to Aristotle, ethos means the different aspects of the character of the speaker visible to the audience. What he suggests is that if the speaker carries a trustworthy character and a good sense of humor, the audience will be naturally attracted to him. It is further suggested that to persuade more and more audiences to join; the speaker must have a strong command or knowledge over the subject matters that he delivers or communicates to the audience (Mshvenieradze 2013). This certainly helps the speaker convince their audience with ease. According to Jeremy Porter, one of the most effective ways to establish ethos is that the audience must understand what the speaker wants to say as well as the speaker says what the audience wants to listen to; they will be persuaded certainly by the argument.

Ethos is about the credibility of the speaker as well as his knowledge of the subject, and all this helps the speaker in the confidence of the listeners. Ethos is divided into two parts; extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic is about the character and experience of the speaker, while intrinsic determines the style of the speaker (Ko, 2015). Ethos, in a nutshell, is about the speaker, his character, reputation and his knowledge of the subject, and all this would determine the trust level of the audience on the speaker.

Pathos

According to Aristotle, the other mode of persuasion is pathos. The word pathos has been derived from pathetic, empathy and sympathy (Triadafilopoulos 1999). It suggests that if a step is taken or a decision made without testing its rationale, including cost-benefit analysis, one can conclude that the audience uses his pathos. Pathos tries to study the mind and psychological state of the audience. If the speaker knows and understands the exact state of mind of the listeners, this greatly helps him as to what to say and how to say it. However, it should be kept in mind that the state of mind keeps on changing, and the speaker must keep a close watch on it. This is important for the speaker because he would twist facts according to the need of the situation so as to attain the desired output.

There is no doubt that in a conflict between emotions and logic, it is the latter that ultimately prevails. The writers further write that if the speaker aims at exploiting the emotions of the listeners, better he starts his speech with some emotional story. Such a story would win the attention of the audience, who may develop a lasting love for the speaker [_\(DEMİRDÖĞEN 2010\)](#).

Anders Toxboe (2010) says that emotions are so powerful that they can influence your judgments too. It can help burst positive arguments or dampen negative arguments. So long as emotions are concerned, Aristotle put much emphasis on emotions, including anger, fear, love and pity. These kinds of emotions are so powerful that they can even challenge your rational decisions. It is an established fact that even at times, our decisions and judgments are motivated and made under the influence of emotions. In order to cash on the emotional state of the audience, the speaker must know three things. First, he must ascertain the mindset of the audience; second, if the listener is angry, whom he is angry on and third, the reason for his anger.

Pathos is related to the emotional aspect of your efforts to persuade the audience and is very important in certain settings. It is important because if someone is able to touch the emotions of the listeners, he can effectively change their political opinion, including his line of action. It is important that the speaker uses emotional language and forceful words with valid examples and must speak with authority and conviction [_\(DEMİRDÖĞEN 2010\)](#).

In sum, it is to pinpoint that pathos is all about the emotional aspects of the speaker and the audience. If the speaker would carefully touch the emotions of the audience, it would be very easy for the speaker to get what he/she wants from the audience.

Logos

The third mode to persuade the audience is logos which suggests using logic and rationale in discussions and persuasion. Logos is one of the strategies to use logic in order to persuade the audience. For this to happen, your stance and claim

need to be supported by valid proof and evidence; otherwise, the appeal may not be effective to persuade the audience [_\(N. Shah 2020\)](#).

Aristotle himself preferred this strategy for the reason that reason and logics always help the speaker win the argument. However, for this strategy to work effectively, the speaker must be educated. But if not, the other two strategies discussed above must be switched over to. It is essential for the speaker to know the skill of linking his arguments and statements to each other. This means that every argument must have a relationship with the proceeding argument (Ho, 2016). In doing so, the speaker must shift his arguments from general to specific and beginning to conclusion. The audience will not be attracted if the arguments are not in a proper sequence.

Other Modes of Persuasion

Michael Lee, in his book 'How To Be An Expert Persuader... In 20 Days or Less (2007) writes that asking for more is a good way to persuade and achieve your target. It means that the speaker should ask for something more from the audience. Lee is supporting his argument with a practical example of children. When the children have planned to watch a movie in the cinema, they ask their parents to take them to visit spots as well. The parents know that visiting spots are expensive and not affordable. That is the reason that parents agreed with their option of watching movies and think that pressure has been reduced.

Michael Lee suggests that coming up with a solution is the next technique to persuade the audience. If the speaker has a solution to the problems of the audience, it is very obvious that the audience would support the speaker in order to get rid of the problems.

Lee's third technique of persuasion is the proper use of body language by the speaker. As indicated by Lee, "using the right gestures is indispensable if you want to create a strong impression". It means that the body language of the speaker must have a relationship with the words coming out from the mouth of the speaker.

The authors in the book, 'Chip Heath and Dan Heath.' (2007), are of the view that why we like some ideas and don't like some of them? There are several reasons behind this. First of all, the authors have defined sticky ideas, which mean that these ideas must be clear, understandable and will be having lasting impacts on the readers. Firstly, simplicity in the ideas makes the ideas sticky. It means that the speaker should communicate the message to the audience in a simpler way. The reason behind this is that people often remember simple ideas for a long time. Secondly, the speaker should generate interest and curiosity. First of all, the interests of the audience should be addressed, and their curiosity should be increased by filling the gap with systematic knowledge. Thirdly, a sticky idea must be concrete because people will remember it for a long time. It is very important for the speaker to be concrete in his statements because the audience will not forget them. Fifthly, emotional appeal is very important because the audience would honor and respect those ideas about which they are feeling something. Finally, telling stories is the last technique for persuading the public. It is very common for human beings to remember stories rather than facts and figures. The speaker, if possible, should make a start by telling a story because it can help the speaker to get the attention of the audience.

- Sticky ideas and persuasion are concomitant because people like those ideas which have lasting longing impacts and can be persuaded with this technique.
- Being a student of this course, the art of persuasion: rhetoric in advertising, I would like to share my personal knowledge on the subject matter, which I have learnt in the class.

First, what comes to my mind is commitment and consistency, which can give enough authority to the speaker in order to persuade the public. If the speaker is committed and the consistent audience would definitely support the speaker because of this quality. It would be nearly impossible for the speaker to expect anything positive from the audience if the speaker is not committed and consistent. Second, politics is the art

of giving and taking; the reciprocation technique is also important to persuade the public. It means that the people are supporting the speaker because of their personal and common interests. If the audience is convinced that the speaker would give what they want, they will extend their every possible support to the speaker. In short, reciprocation is an important technique of persuasion. The enthusiasm of the speaker is another technique to persuade the public. With this, the speaker can touch the emotions of the public and compel them to take action. Lastly, the speaker must know the skill of conclusion. At the end of his speech, the speaker must tell the crux and central theme of the speech so that the audience should remember it for a long time.

Examples of Ethos from the Case Study

The winning of the 1992 Cricket world cup marked the fame of the Khan all over the world. His credibility and reputation were not restricted to the field of cricket, but they also expanded to the arena of politics. He is a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan along with the chairman of the Pakistan Movement for Justice Party. His party holds government in the province of Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa of Pakistan and sits on the opposition benches in the National Assembly of Pakistan.

No doubt Khan justifies the basics of ethos as he is the only national leader who proves to be truly educated in terms of his knowledge of politics because he got his graduate degree in politics and economics from Oxford University, UK.

His pragmatic approach towards problems being faced by the nation of Pakistan compelled him to visit Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (the war-stricken area closed to Afghanistan), where a mini-war is going on between the army of Pakistan and the residents of that area. He advocated the fate of the people with his genuine and deep-rooted public interests statements that the war is actually giving birth to more militants instead of decimating them [\(Aziz 2015\)](#). On 23 November 2014, addressing the National Assembly of Pakistan, Khan called a spade a spade by strongly accusing the government of devouring the funds from the USA and plundering its own country in the name of the war on

terrorism. He further said that there is no denying the fact that the war on terror, in a real sense, is costing Pakistan not only human resources but also great financial loss, which the country can barely afford (80 billion dollars loss and 35,000 arm men martyred) [\(Zakaria, Jun and Ahmed 2019\)](#). The economic and industrial downfall is another bleak side of the picture.

The honesty of Khan is more lucid to his friends than others. Here is a story told by Samar Ali Khan, a sitting member of the Punjab Provincial Assembly, Pakistan, that Khan once called him from Dubai that he wanted to meet him in the airport. After his arrival, he asked Mr. Samar to pay the porter who was carrying his luggage as he did not have money. Upon inquiry latter, by Mr. Samar of the contents of the bag, Khan replied that the bag is full of money of Zakat (donation money for poor) for cancer hospital that his conscience never allows him to use for his personal expenses being a Muslim [\(ZeeTV 2018\)](#).

Examples of Pathos from the Case

Addressing the Islamabad Sit-In (Dharna against the government), Khan shared the heart-wrenching story of a woman who abandoned her paralyzed daughter during a famine crisis in Baluchistan. Upon his asking that why the lady was this crying, the husband of the lady informed him about the situation. Khan accused the government of its insensitivity to such crucial issues of the public. In order to attract the attention of the audience, Khan is always using heart trenching stories so that the people may listen and react.

Addressing a huge gathering at Lahore, Minar-e Pakistan dated 23 March 2014; Khan said that he had joined politics for the sake of the common masses to earn them their rights and prestige. Thongs of people gathered at his address are proof of a call for change. He related this gathering to the one where Ikramullah Khan, his father, questioned Mohammad Ali Jinnah whether he would be able to deliver his promise in the form of a separate homeland or not. Khan requested the public of Pakistan to stand by him firmly and witness a new Pakistan. A Pakistan where you people would be respected and honored. His intentions are pure and transparent. The revolt against the corrupt system

is not to pave the way for Khan's leadership. In fact, it is to ask for the rights of this suppressed and oppressed nation [\(Ahmed 2014\)](#).

It is the call of the day that this uprising against the corrupt ruling system should continue, Khan stressed upon the need of it. He added that no one knows what tomorrow has in store for us, but we can light the dark with our earnest, honest efforts, and prayers can materialize our dreams for a better and bright tomorrow. I am sure if the public of Pakistan extended their support and prayers as they did in the case of winning the only cricket world cup and establishment of a cancer hospital, we would be able to bring positive change in the country.

Khan revised the famous saying that God helps those who help themselves. The state our nation demands is the introduction of immediate reforms, and this duty befalls all of us to hand over comparatively better Pakistan to our next generation. This was his message for the nation from the hospital where he was admitted after his fall from the stage during an address.

Around the country, every loyal Pakistani has been moved by his honest and humble appeals to the nation for change. This is why his words sound persuasive and are logically sound. The result is evident in the form of swarms of people joining in with him from all walks of life, irrespective of age and gender. They have put in their trust in him being capable and competent to strike a positive qualitative change in the existing strangulating system. Change is vital as all the burnt is bore by the poor lower class of nation who are in the majority.

Examples of Logos from the Case

Khan defines democracy which has an important role in the form of an impartial judiciary and must hold free and fair elections. That is the reason that in Pakistan, we don't have true democracy. During the general elections of 2013, five million illegal ballots were published in Punjab. The rigging in elections by the ruling party in Sind and Punjab provinces of Pakistan is best defined by this act, and the case has been filed against this theft of trust and legitimacy in the supreme court of Pakistan is not fruitful to date. Authentic sources suggest that the general elections of 2013 were rigged by the ruling

political party, especially in Punjab and Sind. He disclosed that, according to our findings, 5 million illegal ballot papers had been published in Punjab. This fact has also been recognized by the Election Commission of Pakistan. We have filed a case against the ruling party in the supreme court of Pakistan, but it is still up in the air because the judiciary is also supporting the government. In the end, he said that if elections are not free and fair, our country cannot achieve the task of real democracy [\(The Dawn 2013\)](#).

Speaking at a conference on the forum of Global peace about the correlation between terrorism and Islam, he said that it is very unfortunate to link the two. Khan referred to the Holy Quran that Almighty Allah has sent about 124,000 messengers to this world with the only message of peace. Unfortunately, Islam is misinterpreted by the world, and 1.3 billion Muslims are accused of terrorism which is in a real sense a failure of our religious leaders to communicate the true theme of Islam across the globe. There is no denying the fact that Islam preaches love, peace and above all, humanity. The most vibrant and vivid example of which is the life of our last Prophet (PBUH) and his last sermon Jummatul widah (the last address of Prophet PBUH to a huge gathering), guidelines for us to follow the real teachings of Islam. In the end, Khan said that terrorism has no religion as the modern terrorism started in Sri Lanka by Tamil Tigers, and they are not Muslims at all [\(Pakistan 2015\)](#).

Addressing the Dharna at Islamabad, dated 30th November 2014, Khan explained Pakistan's richness of the soil and its resources of salt, gold, coal, copper, water, oil are found in abundance even then its dependency on International Monetary Fund and the western world is a pity act on the part of Pakistan [\(Khalil 2015\)](#). The reason most probably is the dormant civic society who is ignorant of their own rights and responsibilities, which they are liable to meet in the form of seeking solutions for the burning issues of the nation. It is an insult over the injury that the present public is passing on the legacy of helplessness to the coming

generation, which surely deserves much better than us.

In Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa, where Khan's party is ruling, earlier people were greatly harmed by the corrupt police and revenue departments. The practical steps taken were the initiation of an initial line report, which cannot be tampered with by treacherous officials. Moreover, several complaint cells have been established in order to ensure transparency in the system and curb bribery completely. Moreover, the collapsing education sector was saved by reforms on a war footing. Khan proved his mettle by his services more than mere hollow promises. It is a living reality in Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa that he is worth the trust, blood and sweat which the youth of the country is ready to shed for him

Conclusion

Erected on the principles of Awareness, Interest, Desire and Action (AIDA), advertisement helps sell new ideas and manifestos. The politics of persuasion through the application of Dharna to meet what is demanded from the government of the day has not been something new in Pakistani politics but has been given a new twist and turn by the cricketer turned politician. Khan has successfully captured the imaginations of the masses in general and youngsters in particular. He has effectively and rightly so targeted and exposed the loopholes in the existing political system and dispensation. He has challenged the status quo with extreme courage and stamina. The rhetoric of change that dominated his electioneering campaign back in 2013 has been kept alive by questioning what everyone accepts to be the weak spots in the system that has failed to deliver on a larger and wider spectrum. Although one can raise fingers at the way he has put pressure on the PML (N) Government at the centre, no one can challenge what he demands. The gathering of a reasonable number of people in the Federal Capital for such a long time despite extreme weather conditions speaks volumes of his leadership qualities. Above all, he has advertised in the most effective manner the agenda he has got to sell.

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