**Stunted Pakistan**

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“In Pakistan38 percent of the children under five years of age” UNICEF reports “are stunted”. Stunting, a serious threat for the country, impacts not only physical growth but also the cognitive development of the child perpetually. UNDP has projected the percentage to the mind-boggling 55%. Lack of nutrition awareness and poor hygienic conditions are the common causes cited by these agencies.

Pakistani ruling class has thrusted it to be thetenth largest importer of ammunition globally while levying massive taxes on its already over-taxed citizens to gratify the sickening demands of the IMF. To perpetrate such apocalyptical oppression, stunted people with restricted cognitive abilitiesare ideal subjects. “A society founded on free market” Karl Polanyi (an Austro-Hungarian economic historian) says, “promotes conformity and stupidity and renders critical and responsible thinking and acting redundant”. However, in Pakistan, a conscious effort to produce a stunted and mentally sterile, if not deranged generation, took place under the malignant gaze of an Orwellian big brother (a fictional character in George Orwell’s novel Nineteen Eighty Four), the praetorian guards (an elite unit of the Imperial Roman army), and the spiritless spirit of the republic. The test tube generation of patriots and religious fanatics itching to kill anyone holding different beliefs is dancing to the tunes of their trainers.

Insanity has no religion but theinsane may claim to have one. Gathered under the banner of religious paranoia, they have become the authors and actors of people’s tragedy. Insensitive to the lethal affliction of COVID, their favourite pastime is to lynch the minorities, to slaughter people in the name of blasphemy, while distributing the certificates of infidelity to those defying their ideology. They hate others for the hated ones remind them of something that they dislike in themselves.

Assaulting the nurses at Faisalabad is one such example of self-hatred. The girls striving to heal the ailing humanityfell victims toruthless inhumanity. On the pretext of committing blasphemy, a Mujahid impulsively assaulted one of them with his knife for heavenly favours. It was a brazen show of piety meant only for public consumption. “Everywhere the voice of those”as Friedrich Nietzsche (a renowned German philosopher) complains “who preach death is heard”…”their doggish lust begs for a piece of spirit when the piece of flesh is denied to them”. Death and sex, for Albert Camus (a French philosopher) and Wilhelm Reich (a psychoanalyst) are identical, those dying or killing others seek satisfaction of their internal aggression through sexual gratification in this world or in the hereafter.

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Pakistani ruling class created a permanent enemy after partition. To maintain an enemy, one needs to have an ideology with or without having link with reality and an army to defend the state and the adapted ideology, a fantasy. The Objective Resolution passed by an unelected assembly became the cornerstone of this fantasy. The economic woes, the power struggle in the ruling class and the emergence of state-backed bourgeoisie aggravated the situation. Bonapartism – a political movement associated chiefly with authoritarian rule- became the only solution. It overpowered the class struggle by oppressing the subaltern classes through coercion and depoliticisation using the religious ideology, to colonise Bengal and smaller provinces and the feminine gender.

“The ideology of today’s local elites” Igor Stiks (a novelist from Sarajevo) says, “is neither nationalism nor religious fanaticism but a home-grown combination of Social Darwinism [the belief that the life of humans in society is a struggle for existence ruled by “survival of the fittest”] and neoliberalism [market-oriented reform policies]”. For imposing their beliefs, they require violence that needs a pretext. The element of corruption, inherent in capitalism, has been intentionally isolated from the system, as a curse an aberration of market. Anyone not defying the power structure is deemed corrupt, not that he is not corrupt, but he is considered more culpable than those supporting the power.

For the dominant primitive social relations, women objectified and possessedbut not commodified, became the collective guilt of the ruling class, for she knew man’s reality or the hidden truth of his faith in the words of SlavojZizek, a Slovenian philosopher. She was obscene, an invitation to the man’s erotic impulses, hence she had to be confined to the household slavery as she could not find her place as an integral factor in the productive process. The collective guilt of the ruling class has its roots in the social conditions.

To break the fetters of oppression, women are striving to educate and emancipate themselves but it challenges the patriarchy hence they have caught the eye of the storm. Her physical framework, a biological fact transformed into ethical and cultural value, has become source of her repression as a mother/wife/daughter. For being beautiful, she is exploited twice; first by the market that compels her to buy expensive cosmetics to maintain spurious standards of beauty created by men and then by the medieval laws enforced bythe religious imposters. They are the victims of the lusty eyes of males who instead of covering their lewd eyes force them to cover their bodies, and ironically not the clergy but the ruling class including allegedly “playboy” premier finding women dressing obsceneendorsestheir molestation. The Freudian guilt never stops haunting the guilty.

The percentage of people under poverty in Pakistanis predicted to jump to 40%. According to Business Recorder, “The number of the poor will increase from 69 million to 87 million by the end of 2020”. COVID is killing nearly 100 people a day and the state is indecisive about the vaccine import policy. The unemployment rate has risen to 4.47% and massive inflation is persecuting the people. Does the premierinthis dismal picture see obscenity, or he is too busy in consolidating his personal power and that of his class by kneeling before the mentors, passing abhorrent laws to stymie criticism directed to those holding a pistol at people’s temple?

If the workers robbed of their value lodge protest to increase their wages or the students demand their right to free education or the relatives of the missing persons inquire of the whereabouts of their missing loved ones, the state shamelessly unleashes its bullies on the wounded ones groaning under itsoppression. But for its self-created SS (paramilitary organisation under Adolf Hitler) like thugs, it holds back its coercive tactics, and sheepishly yields to the demons of ignorance. If this sheepish surrender is not obscenity, the expulsion of the French ambassador, will essentially become one.

People are watching the drama quietly, but they know the author of its script. “Overawed by the enormity of their task”, Karl Marx says “people do not act until a situation is created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves call out: Here is the rose, here dance”. Ironically, not the people, but the demons are dancing instead. The old is dying, and the new has not yet born, Gramsci is succinct it is time for the monsters.

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