**Deprived**

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If you ask a fresh graduate in this country what he is going to do next, s/he will come up with two options: either planning to go abroad or preparing for the central superior services (CSS) exam. No one is looking between these two things. The fact is that in the middle of these two options, there is deprivation.

This hopelessness is not a consequence of their chosen degree or the fact that their field of study has no scope in the country. But many are pinning their hopes on these two options because Pakistan has nothing to offer to anyone.

Here is one example: my friend has completed his engineering degree and is passionate about space and its discoveries. He watches space documentaries and reads about space missions. When the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) launched its third mission to space, he told me almost the exact date of its landing on the moon and he was right about it.

However, he plans to go to Germany for in-depth studies in cosmology and intends to make the journey without a return ticket. Not that we lack universities offering such courses or research centres that could help him in his pursuits, but these institutions are outdated, much like our obsolete Pakistan Studies textbooks that are still being taught.

I can sees his fascination for space and galaxies. However, it is not just his passion propelling him to seek opportunities abroad; it is the deprivation within our country that compels him to leave his homeland.

This is not the story of one person; it is the reality of everyone who is moving abroad. Some people are leaving for their passion; some are going to earn money, and then there is a third group of people who can earn money in Pakistan easily or have well-performing family businesses for which they are passionate about, but they are still moving abroad. For these people, it is the deprivation of social security and a respectful life that they believe cannot be achieved in this country.

Seventy-six years have passed since the inception of our country, and yet our state institutions have not learned how to effectively govern it. Instead of fighting the real challenges, our institutions are fighting each other for power. During all these fights for the throne, they do not stop taking from the people who are too naive that they have given them almost everything they ask for. But they have left us with deprivation.

Today, while India is on the moon, half of our population is unable to be at the dining table because there is nothing to eat. Both countries struggled with similar initial problems. But there are stark differences between how the two countries perform over the years. For Indian leaders, it is their country and people. But for our leaders, it is a battle for the throne.

In 2022, more than 832,000 Pakistanis left the country, marking the highest emigration number since 2016. When the country fails to help people follow their passion or create opportunities for its people that could help them put two meals on the table for their families and when a country offers nothing but injustice and insecurity, people cannot help themselves but leave. And they are right about their decision.

When people fear those who are constitutionally hired for their protection, it not only enables such abductions but also encourages criminals who kidnap people for ransom. Among the two groups, those who violate their constitutional duties hurt us most.

Leaving is one of the saddest words in English, no matter what the occasion is. Leaving hurts, and it will hurt and haunt our country. We will be left facing the consequences of the migration of our bright minds. It is a worrisome moment for our country that needs to be taken seriously. If people who are capable of running this country better than ‘retired’ people keep leaving, we will be left with nothing but deprivation.

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