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**How nations fall**

Somewhere deep down in our being, we realise that the election to the Senate seat from Islamabad was a disaster. Somewhere deep down in our being, we realise that this was neither elevating for our moral fibre, nor for the promotion of democracy. Somewhere deep down in our being, we realise that this malaise is reflective of the decay that our society is so gravely afflicted with. But what we possibly fail to realise is that if we don’t speak about it now, this grave malady may be rendered incurable.

Nations rise and they fall. While it may take centuries for them to wear even pretensions of a civilisation, the fall of nations is far quicker. When, owing to certain factors, a nation is caught in a degenerative spiral, it is well nigh impossible to extricate it from its grievous consequences. It soon becomes history to be remembered with hardly a charitable word.

The situation in Pakistan is no different at this stage. We are victims of a variety of afflictions which have been promoted and nurtured through the years of our creation. This has not been without a motive. It has been done to deprive people of their ethical base and desensitise them to this being a crime. Consequently, along the way, people have lost their ability to discern good from evil. In pursuit of their objectives, they feel they have a license to choose any path that would suit their proclivities. It is immaterial whether such a license would stand up to even the minimal benchmarks of legality and morality. As long as it caters to their lustful fancies, it is accepted as fair.

Take the case of the election to the Senate of Mr Yousaf Raza Gilani. He is a former prime minister who was removed from office when, for over two years running, he refused to obey the court’s instructions to write a letter to the Swiss authorities to initiate proceedings in a corruption case involving Asif Ali Zardari. He did this to ensure that the case would be rendered time-barred after a passage of 10 years so that it could not be reopened again. There are few instances where a sitting prime minister would have acted with such brazen disrespect for law and morality.

That is not all. During a visit to Pakistan by the current Turkish president (he was prime minister then), the Turkish first lady donated an expensive necklace for the 2010 earthquake victims. This necklace disappeared and was later discovered in the custody of Mr. Gilani who confessed. He was ordered by the FIA to return the necklace or face a legal case. He opted for the former.

From being punished for contempt of court to behaving like a petty thief to bringing disrepute to the office of the prime minister and the country, Mr Gilani has now been elected to the Senate by apparently using the lure of money. His son was caught on video doing the bargaining which has now been presented before the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in support of a petition moved to refrain Mr Gilani to be administered the oath as a member of the Senate. The matter has also been moved in a court of law.

This is a test case for the ECP, the judicial system and the people of Pakistan. It is to be seen whether such a person would be able to wade through these barriers to take his tainted place in the Senate of Pakistan. If that happens, it would be a defeat for all the institutions whose principal function is to ensure that the process of elections is not corrupted by use of unfair and foul means. If these institutions were to let him go through, it would become an unholy precedent with everyone tempted to use similar means for attaining their respective objectives.

That is potentially a damning spectacle. If such people were to become part of the houses of our legislature, it would render them criminal, unsuited for defending the interests of the state and its people. This is the twin scourge that looms over the Senate as a consequence of this sordid affair.

As this piece is published, it is likely that Mr Gilani would take oath as a member of the Senate, thus paving the way for others of his ilk to follow the devilish path. We may also not be surprised if a resolution is moved in the Upper House by suchlike people to draft a law that would annul the difference between fair and foul. Everything would be legitimate if it serves the interests of people who are wedded to crime and its resultant gains. As Elbert Einstein once said, “the world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything”. Well, here is the making of a classic case of how nations fall. We are witnessing that happen now.

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