**What did Pakistan Lose?**

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As an average common Pakistani my heart is bleeding and I am in pain. This is not because there is inflation and price hike on daily basis (although an economic meltdown fast approaching is also a grave point of concern). Rather, I have a feeling of being violated as a free human being. Basic human rights include your right to independence, right to self-determination, right to respect, right to free speech, right to information, right to equal opportunities and right to peaceful protest. As an educated person I could already feel the deep-rooted hypocrisy and double standards in almost all departments and spheres of life. Police favoured the rich and punished the poor. Our judiciary being on such a low rank internationally in providing justice, past interferences of establishment in political processes, our political leadership being mostly corrupt, education sector divisions, health system double standards so much so that even in our daily lives social inclusion parameter is very questionable. However, there was still a delusion of some degree of self-control. In the past few weeks, Pakistan has faced an unprecedented violation of all these rights. That is why my heart bleeds and for the first time in my life, I feel a degree of helplessness like never before.

This is unfortunate that it is a routine in Pakistan not to let any elected government complete their tenure. Globally we stand at the forefront of the list with the maximum number of prolonged martial laws. The political process has never been given a chance of maturity. If a government is incapable, tenure completion would be like facing political death. Politicians would know the consequences and give output accordingly. Plus, if a government is capable, policies take some time to show results. In both ways, a government should complete their tenures. But this is an ideal scenario which demands all the pillars of governance to stay well within their constitutional limits and also for justice to prevail.

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Unfortunately for Pakistan, a culture of a “mafia” setting has emerged. As justice does not prevail, being above the law is a common practice. A politician, if his party is in power, can break any law, do any extent of plundering, can get people killed and rape as many women. If stopped at a road for a violation, he may run over the constable, and kill the poor chap, but would not be punished. Media is a weapon of mass distortion–building and breaking narratives in whichever direction it wants. Lawyers form gangs and even beat up judges they disagree with. Innocent prisoners sometimes do not get justice even after they die, but the judicial system is busy taking suo-moto notice of unconcerned issues. It is protected through contempt-of-court power. The establishment is seen as involved in activities beyond their line of duty, be it drought management, floods, emergency management in other disasters, internal political decision making or even international non-military decisions. Although there is a deep respect for their extraordinary help to the nation, there still are strong repercussions of their every move, internally or externally. Bureaucracy is another demi-god in Pakistan. The untouchables and mighty. Those who actually run the country are never seen on the screen. Parliament, judiciary, army, bureaucracy and media are the five main pillars in Pakistan. There is always a debate in common people about who out of these has more power. Some believe the judiciary comes first. Others say Army comes first, while others point towards media, bureaucracy or parliament. My question is: When will Pakistan come first? In the fight of the giants, the common people of Pakistan, who actually are Pakistan and have a constitution to guide them, lose the race. All my life, I have respected my institutions and expected better from them. Alas, my hopes were dashed many a time. So much so that it started to become a very rare and pleasant surprise to see a common Pakistani treated with respect and dignity.

In almost four years of Imran Khan’s PM-ship, I, for once, felt respected, heard, safe and meaningful. Despite corona and the price hike, I was happy because I felt he was representing me and my thoughts. Someone was there in those higher lobbies who understood me and other commoners like me. Someone who represented my feeling as a Muslim; who could complete more than two full sentences in English without stuttering; who cared for Pakistan and Pakistani people more than his own family. He strived for the economic betterment of my people. He was trying to get our economic sovereignty back slow and steady.

Imran Khan was not perfect. There were a lot of policies upon which there could be arguments and debates. There were still some opportunist politicians in his team we were sick of. But Khan spoke out in favour of humanity, international human rights parity and self-respect and against maligning any particular religion as a terrorist, especially Islam. He took it upon himself to explain to the western world what Islam really is. Since the time I had started developing an understanding of the international power scenario, it was very hard for me to see my country being treated as a third-degree citizen of the globe. During all these years, our so-called leaders representing us on international forums were unable to say two sentences properly even with written material for support, during few minutes speeches there was only lip service to ordinary issues and no mention of actual heartfelt concerns, there seemed to be no connection between their words and our emotions. I felt so humiliated to see their submissive body language and listen to their entreating words, seeking the pleasure of their masters. As a citizen of an independent country, all my youth I felt like an economic slave of the donors. The only discussion we could hear was about whom to please to get more aid and grants and what not to say and do to save ourselves from the wrath. Therefore, I was so proud to be a Pakistani under the leadership of a person who had the courage to let me live with dignity, to be able to hear someone say what was in the hearts of millions of Pakistanis, those who could only wish someone will represent them and not their own selfish wimps. My question is what was wrong for a leader to demand respect, dignity, honour and equality for his people?

Not only did Imran Khan focus on the international redefinition of Pakistani relations with other countries, including America and India based on independent foreign policy. He also rekindled the concept of one Islam and one Ummah. He stood up for his love of the Prophet (PBUH) and Allah. There was no apologetic attitude involved. His strength of character was very obvious when he was stating in the face of the international community about their atrocities which resulted in blowback. He was able to highlight future consequences of their ill-thought actions and their blind eye turning from human rights violations against Muslims around the globe. For those who are asking what the output was? Let me highlight the two-fold output of Imran Khan

Firstly, this resulted in an eye-opener for the west who thought they could either purchase or bully people into silence. Secondly, it has created a snowball effect of reactions from around the globe showing the world that not only Muslims but people from all religions, races, colours and creeds agreed with him. The world is sick of a few elite ruling the whole world, twisting and turning the events to their favour by hook or by crook.

I, as a common Pakistani, demand my basic human rights. I want our institutions to know that they are not bigger than Pakistan. No one should be the sacred cow. No one should be above the law. No one should cross the line and go beyond their constitutional jurisdiction. If peaceful protests of the public are ignored, results could be catastrophic. Helplessness leads to anger and hatred. That leads to destruction. The only one who loses in that scenario (deeply awaited by our enemies) would be our dear Pakistan.

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