**More on good governance**

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**Random thoughts**

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In my last column, I said that the golden principles of good governance can be drawn from our own history and are available for us to follow.

For example, the eras of the caliphs are famous for their excellent conduct of statecraft – praiseworthy and worth emulation.Let us see what more Sheikh Saadi, in his epoch-making book, ‘Bostan-e-Saadi’, has to say on the matter:

“When an indigent and beggarly person grows old, he is unable to do anything but make a hue and cry (to draw attention)”.

“An administrator should be God fearing. If he is not fearful of God, then he is not worthy of trust. He is fearful of you (the ruler) only in the event of his misconduct. It is necessary for a person of trust to be fearful of the Sovereign. A God fearing person does not act in a manner that he has to face accountability.”

“Distribute the material assets of the state to the deserving, maintain accounts and disengage yourself from state wealth. All this so as to live a life of contentment.”

“Do not appoint two persons of the same profession to the same assignment lest they enter into collusion for their personal gains and against the interests of the state. How would you know if the two persons are equal partners in their misdeeds; one may be a thief and the other providing a cover to the thief? When a group of thieves are afraid that their colleagues may report their misdeeds, then the caravan will safely travel to its destination.”

“You will be remembered in history only because of your deeds. The good deeds of monarchs, emperors and kings that you read about should motivate you and present rulers should do good deeds so that they are also remembered.

“The earlier monarchs and emperors had common origins of noble ancestry and had commitments and worthy objectives as rulers, so they continue to be remembered in history. They left a good legacy behind. One person leaves this world with a good name, another person is remembered for his misdeeds. Both are remembered for their respective deeds.”

“If a wrong-doer seeks your pardon, then it is not necessary to punish him on his first mistake.

“If a person has been admonished and advised to not to make mistakes in future, and yet he does not pay attention to the advice, then restrict, reprimand and punish him. If he does not change his conduct despite advice and punishment, then he is a despicable character and should be eliminated.”

“Be very hesitant in punishing somebody when you are in a rage. It is easy to break a jewel from Badakhshan, but it is impossible to mend a broken jewel.”

“A dead person lives forever because of his good deeds. Such a person is one, who leaves behind him a bridge, a water fountain, a lodge for travellers, ie he has carried out public works for public benefit. A ruler who does not leave behind a memorial of public welfare, is like a tree which bears no fruit.

“Prayers of salvation are not deserved by a ruler who is dead and has not carried out good deeds during his rule. If you, as a ruler, wish to be remembered after your death, then do not minimize the good deeds of rulers preceding you. Promote their good deeds emulate them and leave them for those who come after to emulate.”

“A surgeon detoxifies a patient through his surgery and then applies an ointment for soothing and healing of the wound, which requires both firmness and kindness. Both qualities are also necessary for good governance. As sovereign, you should be strong determined, daring and a good-humoured and forgiving person. When you enjoy the support of God Almighty for your rule, then you are obliged to protect your subjects and servants (ie you as a ruler should be as forgiving and as kind as God Almighty).”

“No one lives forever. One has to leave this world sooner or later. Noble deeds of rulers survive forever and they are always remembered. Death catches up with everyone, whether emperor or a slave. For example, it is possible that a courtier of an emperor become immensely wealthy, but it is also quite likely that he be beheaded.”

“People say that monarchs and emperors suffer from variable behaviour and it is best to protect oneself from their indiscretions. Sometimes monarchs get angry when one extends respect, and sometimes they grant endowments when abused! A joker-like conduct and flattery are attributes often found among courtiers, whereas wise people consider such conduct as imperfect and sinful.”

“Whenever you employ someone, first judge him for his knowledge, character and wisdom. Only then should you employ him and raise his status. When an inexperienced person does a job, it puts great stress on his heart because he fears he is not doing it correctly. When you find a person of high standards, appoint him to a high post and do not promote someone on a whim or hearsay of his abilities.”

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