

Controlled enlightened moderation

Islam
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The Nation

BY WASIF SYED

We were taught in our schools that Pakistan came into being through a long and hard political struggle against the British Raj. We also learnt that Pakistan movement had started with the War of Independence in 1957. At the time of War of Independence no one has even thought of a separate state for Indian Muslims but our students are taught that that war was the beginning of Pakistan movement. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who sided with the British is now painted in our schools as one of the leaders who had started the struggle for independence whereas he was one of the most vocal supporters of the British Raj and an advocate of modern education curricula.

It is most unfortunate that the vehicle and process through which Pakistan came into being has been totally ignored and rather victimised. The democratic struggle of independence has been put in the background and only used when there is a need to strengthen power by the power grabbers. The un-elected rulers of this country have always expressed their abhorrence towards democracy and democratic leadership of this country. They forget that they are committing a serious crime and injustice to the Pakistani people. Students are taught that the armed forces are the defenders of the borders of this country but the same observe that the



army is also ruling the country. Political leaders are never mentioned when we talk about our heroes to the students of our educational institutions. No doubt Quaid-e-Azam was the founder of this country as the leader of the political party that struggled for a separate country. It seems that after the founder, no politician was entrusted to run the government and so they need not be mentioned.

In the eighties a new subject by the name of 'Pakistan Studies' was introduced, during the rule of a dictator, in our educational institutions. This subject was made compulsory in our schools and colleges. Now several Pakistani universities have departments of Pakistan Studies granting Masters degrees to the students. Students are taught selected pre-Pakistan history as Pakistan Studies. Fifty-seven years of Pakistan have no place in this subject. It depicts that the political struggle for Pakistan was ceased as the country emerged on the map of the world. This is the reason that democracy is nowhere to be seen in our society as

teacher education, approaches in pedagogy to ensure that they indeed are consistent with the thesis and ideology of enlightened moderation". At the time of introducing the subject "Pakistan Studies", similar claims were made but in a different context. The government at that time did not need "Enlightened Moderation" and it preached "Jihad" against the communist and evil Soviet Union. This is the expediency that we have been adopting to please the dictators for the last fifty-seven years. Pakistan Studies was included in the curriculum of educational institutions without any serious consideration because it suited the un-elected ruler of that time and now once again the change of curriculum is being deliberated upon in keeping with the interests of one individual. It validates the reservations expressed by the politicians in this country that the country is being sacrificed at the altar of the interests of a few power hungry individuals.

Now, what kind of "Enlightened Moderation" would be taught in our schools and colleges? Only a few in this day and age would be opposed to Enlightenment and Moderation but the preaching of these tall ideologies does not suit the people who are at the helm of power now in Pakistan.

Democracy would not be able to assert itself in the country if it is not allowed to take roots in the system and the society.

Democracy is a continuous process with self-correcting mechanism ingrained in it. Democratic norms cannot be put into operation by an order or decree of an individual. Democracy depends on institutions that are established to discuss, formulate, execute and implement policy issues confronted by the society and the governance. These institutions keep traditions, customs and international conventions under considerations while devising any policy necessary for the country in a democratic system. In despotic rules, these institutions become irrelevant and cannot play their part because they are forced to be subservient to one individual and the policy issues do not get a chance to be discussed and deliberated upon. This is what is happening with our institutions for the last fifty-seven years.

Pakistan Studies is a part of the curriculum of schools and colleges and even universities but the process through which Pakistan came into being is not even mentioned anywhere in the text books. We need to teach our children that democratic

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Federal Minister Zubaida Jalal addressing a workshop in Islamabad said "we need to revisit our schemes of work in curricula, curriculum of

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Pakistan Studies is a part of the curriculum of schools and colleges and even universities but the process through which Pakistan came into being is not even mentioned anywhere in the text books. We need to teach our children that democratic process so that the means with which the country was founded should also be used to manage its affairs. That process is democracy and a subject of "Democratic Studies" needs to be introduced in our schools, colleges and universities. Would this suit the present establishment?