**The hour of reckoning for Sindhis**

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Sindhi leaders, believing in the pledges made in thePakistan Resolution of March 1940, passed a resolution in the Sindh Assembly in 1943 extending whole hearted support to the creation of Pakistan. They embraced a massive number of Muslims displaced from their ancestral homes in India in 1947; hosted the federal government and constructed sprawling colonies in their capital city to accommodate homeless refugees; accepted the infamous Evacuee Property Scheme acquiescing in the allotment of the properties left behind by Hindus and Sikhs to refugees. Notwithstanding these sacrifices, Sindh was never treated fairly by the federal regimes.

The arbitrary interventions in the political administration of the province never witnessed a relent; elected provincial governments were dismissed at will and unrepresentative administrations imposed, administrative machinery was manipulated through Chief Secretaries and Inspectors General of Police and Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners from the erstwhile Civil Service of Pakistan, the prerogative of whose appointment remained with the Federation, drastic cuts in the allocations of the province from the central pool of resources were arbitrarily applied and leaders intimidated by use of EBDO or the Accountability Courts. The provincial autonomy in terms of the Pakistan Resolution continued to be a distant dream until it was adequately addressed by the 18th Constitutional Amendment in April 2010.

Notwithstanding all these setbacks, Sindh has always staged a spectacular come back and played a lead role in the consolidation of the nation, and the political and constitutional development of the country leaving behind the past grievances. The constitutional history of Pakistan owes a great deal to the patriotic spirit of the Sindhi leaders. The Constitutional Amendment of April 2010, removing distortions from the 1973 Constitution inserted by military dictators, was the achievement of the Sindhi leaders. This landmark amendment has rendered improbable the undemocratic and arbitrary interventions of the Federal authority in the representative political administrations and administrative apparatus of the provinces.

***The corruption, callousness and incompetence overwhelming the provincial administrative machinery since the past one decade appear to be unprecedented in the annals of Sindh***

Simultaneously, it has made an elected provincial government master of the destiny of the people it represents. Now the provincial leaders have no excuse to shift the buck to the federal authority or hide their incompetence behind unsubstantiated claims for intervention by any organ of the state. They have all the powers to marshal their resources and appoint a competent and clean administrative machinery to deliver. If any issue crops up between the federal authority and a province, the Constitutional forum of the Council of Common Interest (CCI) is there to addressit. If it defies resolution in the CCI to the satisfaction of the aggrieved province, the superior courts have always willingly heard the petitions of the federal units against the federation in constitutional and administrative matters.

Since February 2008, Sindh has been ruled by the Pakistan People’s Party. Though the party is through the half of its third term, the problems overwhelming the province have been on the rise instead of showing any decrease. The quantum of the provincial autonomy acquired in the wake of the Constitutional Amendments has not emboldened the Government of Sindh to assert the legal, constitutional and institutional rights of this land as contrasted with the provincial administrations of the other province particularly the Khairber Pakhtun Khwa (KPK) and Punjab.

We used to hold officers from other provinces responsible for our woes. Thus, we were euphoric to have the native sons of the land at the helm of the civil bureaucracy and police as well as in the decision making positions in the Secretariat, divisions and districts. This has proved a mirage and a bitter and despairing experiment. We have the native officers in the decision making positions from Tehsil to the Secretariat with the top slots of Chief Secretary and Inspector General of Police also remaining with Sindhi officers. The corruption, callousness and incompetence overwhelming the provincial administrative machinery since the past one decade appear to be unprecedented in the annals of Sindh. We wonder whomwe should now blame for the misery of our people.We also wonder why it has happened. Have our native sons lost their flavor of patriotism or has the system corrupted their souls and plunged them into the gnawing greed of money making.

No rocket science is needed to fathom the reasons for this spectacular failure on the part of the native officers. The blatant misrule grounded in loot and plunder and the politicization of the administrative machinery is the root cause of this sad situation. The provincial government has been running the province whimsically in utter disregard of the laws, rules and regulations which keep the bureaucracy on right track and guarantee a disciplined, clean and transparent administration.Political interference in postings, transfers and promotionsin violation of meritocracy negatively impacts the initiative and spirit of the officials for honest and efficient performance.

The Ministers aside, the MPAs and MNAs alsoindulge in political interference in the administrative apparatus seeking the postings of the officers of their choice in their fiefdoms. These officers, unsure of their tenure, try to please the political demigods in his jurisdiction deviating from the sound counsels of law and administrative discretion. Even then, they always remain vulnerable to premature transfer or reprimand from above at the behest of the political leaders. We have scores of examples where the vulnerable, pliant and corrupt officers were preferred to honest, disciplined and efficient ones resulting in stunning maladministration.

*(To be concluded)*