**Pakistan is here to stay**

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In response to my review of the past seventy-five years of Pakistan’s history, he did not seem impressed at all. But the young man had a point!

He: More than seventy-five years have passed since independence and we are still confused as to which form of government would suit us and why?

Me: A State needs an able and honest government to make policies, both domestic and foreign. Policies that are good for the people while adopting the right course of action. In some cases, countries without democracy are progressing and democratic countries are faced with immense challenges. Hence, the form of government in a country does not matter much when it comes to bringing in prosperity through sound economic policies and equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities.

He: I know that Sir. I also know that there is no single proven recipe for success in life. A variety of factors have worked differently for various countries. However, political jurists have made certain deductions in defining the path of a country’s success. Experience has shown that affairs of a State could not be run appropriately unless carefully crafted policies are implemented in letter and spirit. Even then some room needs to be kept to address unforeseen events and emerging variables. Did we act accordingly? Are we a nation? Do we even know what democracy is all about? More importantly, is democracy good for Pakistan?

Me: We were blessed to have a leader like Quaid-e-Azam!

He: Wait a minute Sir. Don’t go there. Come to the point. I know you do not have any plausible answer to my questions. Let us talk in specific terms. Do you think that political stability is the only pre-requisite for economic constancy? To me, that is not the only requirement for success. A number of other factors like strong and independent institutions, fair judiciary, conscientious legislature, honest executives and good governance also are equally important. In fact, if a few of these factors were present in a system, the chances of having political uncertainty would already be minimal. Last but not least, in order to succeed, the people of a county also need to be responsive enough to understand their individual and collective responsibilities. Do we qualify on any of these fronts?

Me: And that proves my point. Pakistan is a strong country with great prospects. We have a nuclear programme that keeps us safe from any outside adventure. The people are resilient and forthcoming. Great potential.

He: But Sir, can you name any of the aforementioned pre-requisites presently available in the socio-political milieu of Pakistan? Not all. Not even three or four. Just try to name one area of policy making and implementation process that is well in place? Seventy-five years have passed since the making of Pakistan. The leaders and policy-makers of this beautiful country have not been able to provide even a sense of direction to the people let alone a certain level of economic stability comparable to countries with the same date of birth or even younger in age? If the answer is no the tell me if there is any chance of our survival as a country in the coming decades? A country that would stand on its own feet without borrowed crutches? I assure you that the majority of Pakistanis would immediately react and say, no way, as the country is seemingly going down the lane and that too with unbelievable velocity.

Me: Wrong. I agree that these are challenging times. But we have the capacity to come out of this messy situation. I have faith in my people, particularly the youth like you. Never say no to hope. This is the time that your country needs you the most. Bear with me. Stay put. We are the victims of extremism and terrorism. The West prefers India over Pakistan in dealing with China. And in any case, seventy-five years is too short a period to judge a country. Let us not cut your head just because you have a headache. Develop a behaviour that will let you see some light at the end of the tunnel.

He: My behaviour is already developed, Sir. I am twenty-five. Cannot change now. In any case, I believe in facts and empirical evidence not fairy tales. Tell me, why the rulers, movers and shakers of this country would invariably follow Sartre’s famous quote when asked about the reasons of the country’s downfall? Hell is other people, so said Sartre. Ask any former or in-service Politician hailing from any Political Party and you will hear a success story of their tenure, followed by blame-gaming. Ask any retired General who ruled the country for several years and you will get some most impressive economic figures of their era. Enquire from any retired Federal Secretary or Senior retired Bureaucrat from Administration and Police Service and you are in for a surprise visit to the best services rendered to the people of Pakistan in their challenging tenures.

Me: We are going off-track. What is your point?

He: Allow me to finish, Sir. So, I was saying that ask any former Judge, former Governor State Bank, former Chief Election Commissioner, any Company’s CEO, Business Tycoon, any former Vice Chancellor of any University, professional doctor or engineer or even a school teacher. The answer will be the same. Ask any former Diplomat and listen to the saga of ‘How the West was won’ in the United Nations. All will come up with an inspiring success story worth publishing. The standard answer will start like ‘when I was at the helm of affairs, I did everything right, to the best of my abilities’. If all of them did well, why the country is in such a huge mess? Let’s face it, Sir. Believe me, the truth will set you free.

Me: The coin has two sides. And it is always difficult to explain the obvious. Now listen to me!

*To be continued.*

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