**The Marauding Elite**

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Notwithstanding the complexion of the pre-partition All India Muslim League dominated by dynastic elite–knighted landlords, feudal chiefs, sardars, nawabs, sajadahnashins–led singlehandedly by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and whatever the rationale behind the creation of Pakistan, the common people of this part of India and East Bengal played the central role in forcing the All India Congress leaders and the departing British imperialists to agree to the partition of the subcontinent into two independent states. The creation of Pakistan was made possible by the all-out public support of the movement for Pakistan rather than the cluster of the elite in the AIML.

The All India Muslim League was almost decimated in the elections of 1937. Within the next 7-8 years under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, it became a formidable force claiming to be the sole representative of the Muslims in India. However, the arrogant All India Congress leaders didn’t take AIML seriously until its stunning victory in the general elections of December 1945. The party, reorganized and reinvigorated by Jinnah, won hands down all the Muslim constituencies in the Central Legislative Assembly. Again, the party registered an equally impressive victory in the provincial elections. This unstinted electoral support by the Muslim populace strengthened the hands of Mr Jinnah to negotiate the subcontinent’s partition.

The elite knew their political and economic vulnerability in a democratic Pakistan. The uphill task of leading the movement for independence to success against all odds had already consumed the health of Mr Jinnah. Unfortunately, the sick Jinnah could not lead the country into political, economic and constitutional reforms laying the foundation of a stable democracy and bid goodbye to his dreamland and distraught people on 11 September 1948. His death was a 9/11 catastrophe for Pakistan. The Quaid knew the worth of some members of his team and had died as a frustrated, worried and depressed leader if we believe what Fatima Jinnah, his sole companion and confidant, has noted in her book.

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His handpicked Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan presided over the country until his assassination in October 1951. Despite all his human faults and mistakes as the new leader of the country, Liaquat Ali Khan was a consummate patriot and bulwark against the designs of the elite to capture the state of Pakistan. Thus, the bullet of the assassin cleared the deck for the intriguers and conspirators. Many writers believe that while drifting into the soothing embrace of martyrdom, the parting sentence on the lips of Liaquat Ali Khan was a prayer seeking the blessings of Allah for Pakistan. Did he have an inkling of the intrigues going around him for the capture of the state by the elite? After his assassination, the political scenario started getting murkier.

The elite as described above who rode the bandwagon of the All India Muslim League, and whom Moulana Abul Kalam Azad and Syed Abul Ala Maudoodi had contemptuously called ‘false coins’, never looked back sidelining sincere and patriotic Muslim Leaguers and forging ahead in their gradual and obvious bid to capture the levers of power. They provided readymade support to all autocrats and adventurists and proved well adept in switching from one political party to another depending on the chances of grabbing crumbs of power and amassing wealth. They hindered land reforms, a constitutional system of governance, and equitable distribution of state resources among all segments of the populace based on merit, fair play and competition. Over the years, our society grew like a pyramid with a minuscule segment on the top and the teeming middle and lower population at the bottom.

Society has reached a pathetic condition. The ruling class, elite, media houses, writers and intellectuals have been giving scant attention to the miseries of the teeming population including middle and lower classes, hewers of wood and drawers of water, squeaking under the backbreaking burden of poverty, neglect, social injustice and economic inequity. A growing sense of frustration, desperation and helplessness is setting in the country that forces the people to seek ways and means to leave the country risking their lives in voyaging through the ferocious seawaters in decrepit boats filled with humans from the bottom to the top. We can imagine the predicaments of the Syrians and Afghanis to seek green pastures as their countries have been ravaged by wars. The Pakistanis are forced to leave their country because of the social and economic injustice perpetrated by the elite in this country.

Quite recently, we lost hundreds of precious lives in Pakistan in a shipwreck in the Ionian Seawaters. Among the dead, 166 belong to the Kotli district of AJK. The recovery of dead bodies from the sea is going on and the final count would be known only after the end of the recovery campaign and the matching of the DNA tests. This tragedy did not create a stir in the society. The Prime Minister’s House was ‘pleased’ to declare one-day mourning with the National Flag flying half-mast. That is it. The media forgot about the tragedy after a mild coverage. The anti-human smuggling agencies were shaken out of their traditional slumber. They started putting on mock shows to track down and arrest human smugglers. Are the nefarious networks of human smugglers unknown to FIA and other law enforcement agencies? It is impossible.

Among the dead Pakistanis must be educated and skilled youth dreaming of further refurbishing their capacity and skills abroad and acquiring a dignified source of livelihood. We have been losing our best brains including PhDs, professors, medical doctors and surgeons, engineers and technology experts to the West. According to official figures, over 0.8 million Pakistanis migrated from the country in 2021-2022. In the first five months of the current year, some 0.3 million people have bid goodbye to their dear land. The laws adopted over the years by our parliaments filled with elite and dynastic politicians have always disadvantaged the educated and hardworking middle and lower classes of our population.

How long this callous capture of the state resources would persist?

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