**Where White is Black**

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It was during the 1971 India-Pakistan war. Hostilities were in full swing in East Pakistan and air war had started on the Western front. I was living in Punjab University, New Campus; at that time and was President of Students Union. Trenches were dug around hostels to protect them from air raids for students. An army major was deployed to coordinate with University security staff and educate residents on how to react during an attack. Our Union worked closely with them. We set up a volunteer student organization to assist. Since the class routine was disturbed, we spent most of our time in the Union’s office, cafeteria and my quarters in the Student Teachers Center. We love rumour-mongering and concocting conspiracy theories. One such story making the rounds was that Indian spies had infiltrated and were assisting Indian pilots with their target selection from the ground. So our volunteers were on high alert against suspicious persons or activities. When the warning sirens went off everyone would run to the trenches or other secure areas. A fellow student, whose name I forget, would dash into the open space with a book in hand and kneel moving back and forth. Volunteers found this suspicious and started to watch him closely. Our supervisor theorized that the book was a transmitter to direct the enemy planes to bomb the University.

On the next occasion, they pounced upon him, tied his hands and brought him in. The poor chap was badly thrashed on the way, yet he clutched onto his book. He was badly bruised, bleeding with his clothes torn. Our team leader kept yelling at him to accept that he was a spy. I presided over this kangaroo court. I started by bringing the temperature down; and offered him a chair and a glass of water. He calmed down and overcame his fear. I asked him if I could see the book he was clutching onto. He handed it over rather reluctantly. We expected it to be some kind of electronic gadget. To our complete surprise, it was the Holy Quran.

Everybody felt sheepish. I asked him what was he up to. He could have been blown to bits if a bomb fell or could have suffered serious injuries as a suspected spy. His reply still rings in my memory. “Allah’s book is divine thus indestructible; I was reciting the Quran for everyone’s safety.”

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This level of belief makes me reflect. We are good people and a nation of believers. We have been misled and are suffering at the hands of poor leadership. For 75 years, we have been unable to determine our national identity or agree on the form of governance. We have been swinging like a pendulum between pure dictatorship, impure democracy and small sprinklings of democratic rule. The masses want to believe in something or someone. Each time they have been deceived and taken advantage of, for personal gains or glory.

This cruel drama is being enacted once again these days. Our power-hungry and corrupt ruling elite refuses to learn any lessons; blinded by the glitter of gold or power. As the present term of ruling fraudsters is coming to an end, the knives are out to go for a power grab. Who are the contenders? PML(N), PPP and the PTI; with Fazal and smaller parties struggling to stay relevant. Presently, the levers of power are in an unholy alliance with Nawaz Sharif.

They are all bonded together against a common enemy, Imran Khan. This regime has unleashed a reign of terror against PTI. They have spun a huge web of cases against IK. His leadership and party faithful are in jail suffering inhuman treatment. The weak ones have fled; true faithful like Omar Cheema, Mian Mehmood ur Rashid, Ijaz Chaudhry, Shahryar Afridi, Ali Mohammad Khan, Dr Yasmin Rashid, Chaudhry Pervez Ellahi and thousands of others are rotting in indignity. Imran Riaz Khan, arguably the most popular journalist in Pakistan, has disappeared into a black hole. Al Qadir Trust, Tosha Khana and hundreds of false FIRs are keeping IK engaged to prevent him from politicking. His ticket holders have gone underground or fled the country.

The real intent appears to install an obedient interim setup and prolong the rule through a superior judiciary. One of the favourites will be in the position in September. The voters are to be made irrelevant.

Sharifs and Zardari have enough skeletons in their cupboards. At the end of it all, there is the path of the righteous seeking Allah’s blessings. Fasten your seatbelts; the nation shall not give up.

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