**Imran Khan keep at it you only live once**

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It has been many years since I stayed in Lahore for an extended period. I am reminded of the age-old proverb “the proof of the pudding is in the eating.” You really don’t get the dynamics and a realistic assessment of realities on the ground till you interact with a cross section of society. Pakistanis as a nation have taken a downward trajectory in the last many decades on the moral compass. Our value system is a mess. Lying, corruption and ruthless pursuit of personal ambitions, by any means possible, are now the name of the game.

A society devoid of accepted norms of decency and compassion, without a strong justice system is doomed to implode. We have totally forgotten our basic values and why Pakistan was created. It was to provide a separate homeland for Muslims needing a release from the chokehold of Hindu majority dominating all walks of life. The euphoria at independence was great and we paid its price in blood, sweat and tears. Unfortunately our guide, Quaid-e Azam left early before he could put the nation on a proper track. A national tragedy.

The stormy fifties evolved into stable sixties. Seventies saw the disruption of economy and society as it existed. Eighties were locked in the iron jaws of a military dictator with the Russian bear breathing down our necks. The nation was brutalized with onset of Kalashnikov culture. Nineties was a free for all, with the corruption culture taking deep roots. Two parties competed for power grab; outdoing each other for the coveted title of “Most Corrupt.”

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This cycle was interrupted by the next dictator in the first decade of 21st Century, President Musharraf. He started “meaning well” but soon started to enjoy the trappings of unfettered power. He entered into unholy NRO’s to rid himself of political challenges from entrenched corrupt Mafia Dons masquerading as political leaders. This travesty led to sweeping under the carpet corruption scandals like Hodebiya and Surrey Palace. We continue to pay a huge price for such blunders even today.

These disasters were further compounded by another actor on the national scene. The head of judiciary entirely distorted the national scene by taking decisions that could cost Pakistan an arm and a leg. The debacle of Reko Diq decision by Supreme Court, under Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry in Tethyan Copper Company case could be the costliest disaster Pakistan may have ever faced. A six billion liability is looming large on the horizon. Pakistani assets are under threat globally including the Roosevelt Hotel. This came on the heels of Broadsheet fiasco triggered by shortsighted NRO’s entered in Musharraf’s tenure.

The list of wicked legacies of crooked deals during Zardari and Sharif’s rule runs long. This detestable inheritance by PM IK’s government continues to bleed the nation and inflict pain on the common man. It started by a massive fraud by PPP in the shape of Independent Power Producers (IPPs). A massive dagger struck into the heart of the nation. They entered long term contracts, underwritten by sovereign guarantees, at inflated prices on terrible terms compounded by importing over invoiced machinery. These evil acts were repeated multiple times over two decades by PPP and PML(N). The chickens have come home to roost. This led to the curse of circular debt that has sent energy prices soaring with no exit in sight.

Exorbitantly priced long term gas contracts, kickbacks in infrastructure contracts and rampant corruption have hollowed the very foundations of this hapless nation. The bribes were either taken overseas or the ill-gotten gains were moved out of Pakistan through money laundering by the rich and famous. Financial and moral corruption had permeated the soul of the nation at all levels from top to bottom.

The guardians and providers of justice are like a dilapidated building, a public safety hazard rather than providing relief to the common man. The flawed legal system is defaced and mutilated to favor dirty money. Loudest noise is made when a case is registered. Investigators are toothless, prosecution is anemic and judges are uninterested or unmotivated. Thus, criminals walk free raising their middle finger at those who tried to prosecute. Those were the gruesome circumstances in which PTI Government took over.

A pretty depressing scenario but true. These are the formidable challenges that Prime Minister Imran faces. Coming to power after 22 years of democratic struggle, he faced empty coffers and a system teetering on the edge of a breakdown. He faced a defiant bureaucracy, many of whom were compromised by corruption or conflicted loyalties. A creaky and inefficient judicial system. A partially tainted media raised on the largesse of corrupt rulers. Blood-sucking mafias dominate and control all walks of life and an opposition with no principles having a single point agenda to safeguard their loot.

It took PM IK more than two years to saddle the beast of governance. There are still many challenges to improve and deliver relief to the common man. However, we recently witnessed decisive and assertive actions to collar the land grabbers. Their blatant greed and disregard towards the rule of law clearly demonstrates that these redundant breed of politicians are a cancer in our society that need to be exorcised permanently. PM IK this nation is hungry for such bold actions that will boost their sagging morale. They seek results against these barbarians. Stay the course, steer Pakistan away from the fate of destruction charted by PPP and PML(N) combine.

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