**[Truth and reconciliation is the way forward](https://nation.com.pk/10-Mar-2020/truth-and-reconciliation-is-the-way-forward%22%20%5Ct%20%22_new)**

Dr Farid A Malik March 10, 2020

While addressing a group of journalists the Prime Minister (PM) indicated that the intelligence agencies have collected reliable date on the activities of all-important functionaries of the state. When the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) presented a ten volume report on the corruption of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif to the Supreme Court of Pakistan (CP), PML-N was baffled ‘they called it Jinn Investigation Report’. Air Marshal Asghar Khan who brought back honesty to politics always said that the agencies know more about us than we ourselves.

There are multiple agencies out there (ISI, IB, MI, FIA etc.) The information collected is kept secret to be used at the appropriate time. One of the retired Judges of SCP revealed on interesting story about the exploits of former a Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) who was deposed and then restored. While travelling on the Motorway from Islamabad to Lahore he was stopped for speeding. Instead of paying the fine he ordered his squad to abduct the officer to be released after crossing the toll plaza. The incident went unnoticed except for the ISI operative who was tracking him. This gross misuse of authority was never released to the public or press.

Unless the truth comes out, Pakistan cannot move forward. Tons of data is available in the files, secretly hidden from public knowledge. There are stories of corruption, kickbacks, extortion, misuse of authority, conflict of interests, nepotism, harassment, illicit relations, fraud, hoarding, land grabbing, illegal activities, money laundering, tax evasion, in some cases even murder and abduction of opponents have been observed and duly documented.

Convictions through common law are almost impossible. There has to be a mechanism to reveal the truth. During their years of exile, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif signed Charter of Democracy (May 2006). Amongst several reforms they agreed on the formation of Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the lines of South Africa. It was the government of Nelson Mandela who implemented the concept while in Pakistan it has been overlooked. After the assassination of Benazir in Dec 2007, instead of democracy a new mechanism of loot through friendly opposition was introduced, it thus turned into “Charter of Dacoity”.

The commission in South Africa worked for five years (1995 to 2000) with 1003 hearings. The victims of apartheid filed complaints. Accused persons were given amnesty only after full disclosure of their crime. It proved to be a restorative justice body. In Pakistan almost every method of containment of corruption has been employed with no success. The first self-proclaimed Viceroy of Pakistan (Ghulam Muhammad) dissolved the elected assembly on the grounds of corruption, though there was hardly any political corruption at that time. Ayub Khan the first military dictator also imposed martial law to combat this menace but instead introduced corrupt political leadership. Zia the third usurper followed the same course.

Ghulam Ishaq Khan as President dismissed two governments using the draconian article (58(2b). When Farooq Leghari sent the government of his own party home, he promised political cleansing. Ehtesab Bureau was formed under Justice ® Mujaddid Mirza. He was very upbeat to contain this menace but soon realized the weaknesses of the system to prosecute the corrupt. Leghari Sahib then compromised with the unscrupulous politicians, despite corruption cases and loan defaults they were allowed to contest the elections. Musharraf after the takeover in 1999 promised to contain corruption. National Accountability Bureau (NAB) came into being which started off well but decided to compromise in order to muster political support. Through his NRO (National Reconciliation Ordinance) the corrupt were allowed to make a comeback with disastrous consequences.

Like Asghar Khan, Prime Minister Imran Khan is a rare freed of honest politicians. Corruption control is high on his agenda. Despite the lapse of 18 months convictions have been limited mainly because of the weaknesses of the system. Expensive lawyers and common law intricacies make it difficult followed by the process of appeals results in unnecessary delays.

Our intelligence agencies have done their job in tracking the activities of people in important positions. This important resource has now to be put to the nations good use. The archives have to opened for the public to know the truth. Just one JIT created enough tremors to be called ‘Jinn IT’ by PML(N), another JIT has already been presented covering the money laundering activities of Ex-President Asif Zardari. Both the political leaders are on bail, while Mian Sb is in London, Zardari Sb is in Karachi.

Where NAB, EB and ACE (Anti Corruption Establishment) Assembly dissolutions and four martial laws have failed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission combined with the data collected by the agencies for over seven decades may succeed. For the sake of common good of the people of Pakistan and our coming generations truth is the only way forward. The era of loot and plunder has to finally come to an end. Corruption has weakened the foundations of the republic. As apartheid was dismantled in South Africa this menace can be contained in the land of the pure through a well thought out framework like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

According to the Adviser on Finance today the debt of the country stands at Rs. 30,000B of which $100B is foreign. In the first 60 years of our existence it stood at Rs. 700B (1947 to 2007) in the next five years it increased to Rs. 15,000B (2007 to 2013) and then doubled in the next five (2013-2018). Pakistan is in a ‘Debt Trap’ from which it has to be liberated with minimum load on the common man who has suffered enough already. Unfortunately this national debt has not been used for nation building. The truth about the misuse of borrowed money also needs to come out. Trade and budget deficits could be balanced by enhanced revenue collection but how will the debt be retired and by whom. How has this project debt turned into national debt? Only after Truth and Reconciliation revelations we will be able to rise as a republic instead of a ‘Fiefdom of Mafias’. After over 72 years of our existence it is time to taper off the ‘Opium of Corruption’ and the ‘Insulin of Debt’ but it cannot be done overnight. A start can be made with the formation of an independent Truth and Reconciliation Commission.