**What is PDM Agenda?**

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Baba Bulleh Shah, Kasur’s Sufi Saint’s writings are full of wisdom. His words are a balm when seeking answers for simple yet elusive questions. Recently a close friend sought my advice about a recent upheaval in his life. He narrated how his business partner and childhood companion had let him down. A tough one to negotiate till Bulleh Shah’s verse came to my mind “Oh Bulleya Dosti Sirf Uthe Kariyo, Jithe Dosti Nibhawan Da Dastoor Howay!”

The verse translates “Oh Bulleya, nurse and develop friendship only where there is a tradition of honoring friends.” A universal truth that is sadly dwindling over time. In Pakistan one realizes this noble sentiment has been replaced by selfishness, lies and deceit. Especially amongst our leaders who have adopted it as a way of life and expression.

Every time I travel between continents, the transition is a jolt. Canada is calm and peaceful; politics is generally on the back burner. Only the news channels cover politics when it is newsworthy. Entertainment programs dominate. Enter Pakistani media space and you are inundated with “breaking news.” Politics dominate all the prominent TV channels as it has become our favorite pastime.

November has been noisy. PDM, a collection of eleven parties is on a warpath. This motley crew of discontents and zealots want to stop at nothing short of overthrowing PTI Government. How do they intend to do that? No clear-cut strategy has emerged except they would mobilize the masses and move on Islamabad. Not exactly a democratic solution, but they are so consumed with personal hatred for PM IK that they cannot or will not look beyond.

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The shrill tone adopted by their top brass is obnoxious and outrageous, each one trying to outdo the other. How do they justify their cause célèbre? According to them, PTI Government is “selected” and “incompetent”. Who decides that? Those who lost the elections. They are desperately trying to piggyback on the issue of food inflation impacting the lives of the common man. Will they succeed? The jury is out, however a movement based on selfish reasons is always a hard sell.

Ishaq Dar’s interview could not be better timed. He revived issues that could have receded because public memory is short. It is all over social media, however the most intriguing interpretation was Mr. Dar complaining that he thought he was going on “Tik Tok” instead of “Hard Talk”. For someone claiming that he and his family owned one house, floodgates have opened exposing his multiple properties dotted all over. He stood humiliated, wetting his dry lips nervously before a global audience. He even attempted to distance himself from Nawaz Sharif when pushed onto his back foot by an inquisitorial anchor.

Hard Talk is an enduring BBC TV talk show where only the brave can tread. Ishaq Dar thought he can make it about human rights being trampled by PTI Government where prisoners in NAB’s custody are killed regularly. Lies that were laid bare by a well prepared and well-informed host. Pakistani anchors can learn a thing or two from such programs. They create too much space for lying guests in the name of decency and tradition. They need to sharpen their script and use a more confrontational approach to cut through all the bull being fed to the unsuspecting audience.

Corruption is being glorified in Pakistan. My friend Tahir Chaudhry recently shared a clip showing arrest of a sitting Minister in Indonesia for corruption. There were no slogans, no rose petals and no victory signs. He was made to wear an orange vest required for all accused and taken away with TV channels reporting. Not so in Pakistan where “Noonies” have taken control of the narratives depicting criminals as martyrs or heroes.

PTI needs to recapture the narrative. Cheaters cannot be respectable. A thief is a thief. The nation needs to realize that it is your money these corrupt leaders stole; they are not heroes, they are criminals who burnt your households! The zealots led by Maulana Fazal acquired their wealth starting with Afghan War. Now they want to extract a share in power despite losing elections. The discontents can be split into two categories. Firstly, it is the smaller parties that got on the band wagon to stay relevant. The second category is dominated by PML(N) and PPP. They have been part of the power structure for the last thirty years taking turns. Both of them have looted the country to their hearts content and are being held accountable for the first time.

Orchestrated by NS from London, financed by anti-Pakistan forces, their sole purpose is to escape convictions and secure their stolen billions. This is their real agenda; everything else is fluff to stir people. PTI should counter this narrative to expose these nefarious designs. PDM leaders attack on the armed forces’ leadership is a ploy to put them on the defensive. The purpose is to wean away their support of the accountability process.

PM IK needs to stand firm in his pursuit to cleanse the rotting system of governance. Recent endeavors to bring down food inflation are beginning to bear fruit slowly. These efforts must be pursued relentlessly till the profiteers and hoarders are firmly leashed and defeated. The country is on a path of recovery, if the Government succeeds in controlling food inflation it will defang the PDM movement entirely. They have no other solid grounds to prematurely seek the removal of a legitimate regime.