**[Resistance, not resilience](https://www.dawn.com/news/1738864/resistance-not-resilience)**

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PAKISTAN has always been considered a ‘resilient’ country. The people are resilient, they endure, overcome, come to terms with, after each new round of catastrophe and disaster, whether natural or, as is increasingly the case, self-created and self-inflicted. Pakistan ‘bounces back’ as newspapers report, after yet another terrorist attack or calamitous floods. Or, a ‘return to normalcy’ takes place, as if the ‘normal’ is a place we want to be and wish to celebrate.

At one level, the ‘resilient’ tag for Pakistan indicates a sense that the country and its people have the ability to move on and put aside some adverse incident or condition, shrug off its consequences and carry on with their lives, internalising the personal and public effects of such events.

Clearly, this can be considered a virtue by some to almost accept fate and put it down to a higher power who has willed the destinies of those afflicted. Yet, there is a serious negative side to accepting what has transpired, putting it down to fate, and also accepting the condition and circumstances which exist.

While many would return to the old or new normal, we often do not see the wounds and scars left behind, which so many endure, perhaps forever, even when everyone else consoles them, appreciating them for being ‘resilient’ and failing to see exactly how such people have suffered.

There have been far too many incidents in Pakistan’s history in recent years, and while it may seem that those who have been affected by them have returned to some kind of normalcy, this is not always the case. The suffering and sense of loss continues; it is often concealed.

More importantly, being resilient is considered to be a condition or characteristic which implies the ability to endure existing conditions — and here lies the biggest problem with being labelled a ‘resilient’ nation. What is suggested is that the people can endure and deal with every kind of oppression and that additional burdens can be placed on them since their resilience will allow them to withstand each new round of violence done to them.

No matter how much misery is imposed on the people in the name of austerity, they are expected to carry on.

Take the economy and worsening economic conditions as an example. For the last few years, the people of Pakistan have had to endure a worsening economic situation, an economy which has been performing very poorly only because disastrous choices have been made which favour and protect the elite and certain cronies and vested interests.

Whether it is through the instrument of the IMF with new taxes being imposed, or price increases of essentials such as petrol and electricity, or artificially maintained exchange rates, all such measures are taken by policymakers who ensure that their interests and those whom they represent are protected.

The main consequences are borne by the people who do not have the ability to resist since they have no power or avenue to do so. Those who make decisions of such a nature pile on the misery on an unsuspecting public, which only accentuates the inequality and disparity between those who have power and privilege and those who don’t.

This is a classic case of having to endure, of having to be resilient and trying to survive. No matter how much misery and violence in the name of austerity is imposed on the people, they are expected to carry on, manage, make do, cut their costs and continue their lives — and be resilient.

We are a resilient people, we are told, so we can endure any self-inflicted calamity, even inflation rates of 30 per cent. But why should we? Why should we continue to endure those who make bad decisions, who show bad leadership, make deliberately poor choices, with the consequences debilitating our lives completely?

Resilience here implies endurance, it implies accepting structures of violence, discrimination, bad decisions, injustice and much more. Why should people — individuals, families, collectivities — have to be resilient in cases where it can clearly be seen that certain decisions have been imposed on them because others can get away with them and are protected by their wealth, power and privilege?

All economic decisions have outcomes and consequences which affect different social classes differently. The rich and well-off can endure price rises easily, without having to be resilient, while the poor are crushed under the weight of increasing prices.

Why is it that when we talk about this great virtue called ‘resilience’ we only mention the poor, those who have to endure hardship and suffering? One never hears about the rich and powerful having to be resilient when economic mismanagement causes austerity, inflation or economic collapse.

Importantly, why should people passively end­ure and face what is pushed on to them? We need to do away with being resilient and need to rep­lace such notions with more powerful ones, such as res­i­stance. Why should we suffer more, stoica­lly, and accept what some would consider to be our fate? There is an urgent need to resist such policies, to resist oppression and injustice at every level.

Too many women suffering violent marriages are quietly praised for enduring oppressive patriarchal and familial structures because they are ‘resilient’. Why should they not protest, resist and demand equality and justice? Why be resilient when all it does is to add to further violence and oppression? There is the need to fight back, to resist.

Enough of resilience. Like another false notion called ‘hope’, it takes away any agency from the people to actively change their own destinies and lives, accepting whatever burden is imposed on them.

We need to replace such notions which have false qualities with those such as resistance in order to be able to change, to make things better. Resilience implies a passive, long-suffering condition. We need to resist all structures, institutions and conditions of power, violence and oppression. Otherwise, things will never change.

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