**The Myth of Equity**

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“Don’t expect to pull up the weak by pulling down the strong”-Calvin Coolidge

A just society is the dream of every human being who lives on this planet although such terms as equality, equity and fairness are interpreted in different ways by various ideologies. Historical evidence indicates that in every era people are divided into the poor, lower middle class, upper-middle-class, rich and the extremely wealthy. Even when certain realms were described as emblems of high achievement, cultural finesse and relative affluence, these classes continued to exist. When the rich African and Asian countries were being plundered by outsiders and their treasures helped the invading nations to emerge from their economic hardships and perpetual darkness so as to exert their permanent influence around the globe, the caste system in the Indian Sub-continent was present in full force. Despite its Hindu origin, this social discrimination managed to seep its way even within other beliefs that thrive on considering all humans as equal and in one way or the other, our Pakistani society too became emphatically influenced by separating humans into social categories depending upon their incomes and wealth.

Just like death, one thing is quite certain. All persons living in a social setup cannot claim to have an absolutely equal amount of income and assets. This is an impossibility, as not everyone can become king or queen or prime minister at the same time. These distinctions will persist along with dissimilar proportions in living standards except that where there is equity, there would be opportunities available to those who intend on removing their shackles of poverty and ignorance. DeRay Mckesson, a young American civil rights activist, beautifully sums up in these words: “The difference between equity and equality is that equality is everyone get the same thing and equity is everyone get the things they deserve”. On a slightly divergent note, another American writer Rick Riordan opines: “Fairness does not mean everyone gets the same. Fairness means everyone gets what they need”. Jodi Picoult, another young writer seems to have a more logical explanation when she says: “Equality is treating everyone the same. But equity is taking differences into account, so everyone has a chance to succeed.”

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In these instances, all of them seem to concur that equality and equity have positively different connotations and implications.

One of the main purposes of imposing direct taxes is to achieve the goal of equitable distribution of wealth. Of course, this does not suggest that every bit of wealth belonging to persons should be confiscated by the government and then redistributed among all the citizens equally. Robin Hood type of leaders who intend to and profess to, fleecing the rich to benefit the poor in their endeavour to gain cheap popularity, are highly mistaken. The truth is that such jargon is meant to befool innocent electorates into believing that their destinies would be turned overnight if they were to vote these liars into power. This has never been and can never be the case no matter how socialist, some leaders may be in their outlook. No evidence exists that can prove that robbing the wealthy would enrich the poor. Countries known for their excellent social services have failed to blur the gap between the rich and the poor. However, what they have actually achieved is a decent life for those who are not financially well off while simultaneously, providing those who want to improve their lot, ample opportunities in terms of education and skill development and of course not ignoring the real contributors who deservedly partake in government evolved benefits.

Fairness demands that laws should not be made so as to strip the rich of their wealth and render them poor but to increase the capacity of the poor to enable them to reach a higher level in terms of financial independence. Governments intending to promote equitable distribution of wealth usually go for a progressive tax system whereby the more someone earns, the higher amount of tax one is subjected to; they provide educational grants, subsidies and low-interest loans; they provide welfare and income support for low-income earners and they also impose taxes on wealth, especially that which is diverted to unproductive sectors.

Interestingly, Pakistan has tried out all these measures but has consistently failed to achieve this prime objective. Among the many reasons for the fiasco are the continuous offers for tax amnesties to those who are originally supposed to fall in the highest bracket of taxes. For them, the cost of paying taxes is far greater than the cost of evasion, courtesy complex and impracticable laws, antiquated approaches and definitely intense corrupt practices; due to which the requisite amount of revenue can never find its way into the government’s treasury. Consequently, goals for equitable distribution of wealth remain unattainable stunting true economic growth and landing an overwhelming population of this country below the poverty line, depriving them of their fair share in income, wealth and opportunities to better their lives.

Even after so many economic debacles, the Pakistani governments have failed to learn their lessons. Rather than turning towards their own people to seek assistance in breaking the manacles of debt by enabling them to participate in a substantial increase in revenue through a workable, pragmatic and acceptable system instead of unleashing hungry wolves on them, they look for external deliverance that does nothing other than enhancing economic afflictions of the country. Under the circumstances when international donor agencies in one-sided moves force a sovereign nation to abide by their harsh conditions, any hopes for establishing an equitable society are bound to crash on the precipice of bad governance, imprudence and most definitely, the insincerity of purpose.

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