**Age of ignorance**

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This truly is the age of ignorance. Rarely does one see even a smidgeon of wisdom. It certainly is the best of times for the thief, the robber, the looter and the plunderer.

Talk about any ill and it is prevalent in Pakistan. I am embarrassed to say so myself. And the real reasons why these ills are prevalent is the absence of proper nurturing by parents that instills good values and ethics in people, because our police and justice system are so poor that culprits get away with impunity; and also because of lack of public dudgeon and outcry so people think it’s open season on anything and everything, especially on women and girls.

The incident in Minar-e-Pakistan where a girl was assaulted and manhandled by about 400 people simply because she was making a TikTok video; the case where a mother and daughter who were raped by a rickshaw driver and his companion; and to top it all, the case of the murder of Noor Muqaddam, have all grabbed the public’s attention.

These are all horrific happenings, and in the case of Noor Muqaddam, it is mostly women of the well-heeled class that have rightly created an outcry. The government and the prime minister are cognizant of this and so some kind of justice is likely to happen. There are, though, thousands of other Noor Muqaddams who go unheard. Landlords who throw young girls in the fields after raping them, parents killing their daughters for ‘honour’ and then creating the real dishonour for themselves. Of the many governors of human behavior, customs and rituals are among the strongest. And honour killing is a terrible custom. This custom cannot be eradicated except through education, which will take at least a generation.

The people who have looted Pakistan and taken it to the brink of being declared a failed state are former prime ministers and their cronies and they are roaming around scot-free after being given bails by our much vaunted judiciary. In a country where laws are incapable, the police are largely complicit and the judiciary and its functions not even understood by the people running it, ignorance then reigns supreme.

Pakistan is a prime victim of ignorance. The opposite of ignorance is knowledge; it has been determined by Muslim scholars that one of the main purposes of life is to gather as much knowledge as one can. Our society militates against that. Knowledge comes mostly from experience and your own thinking, which is why I keep emphasizing thinking, thinking -- and more thinking. People have become so detached from universal morality, natural laws, justice, and the ability to differentiate between right and wrong that they take incidents as theft, grand larceny and rape as opportunities.

The four governors of human behaviour are -- in ascending order -- religion (which is the weakest), the law of the land (which if convenient is universally ignored), customs and rituals and the most powerful: human nature, which you can do very little about. So whilst Mr Imran Khan is busy trying to craft a new education system for us, he should keep these in mind and consult people who know something about these things. He’ll find that it is beyond his education minister.

Until our police pull up their socks and our judiciary is manned by truly educated and enlightened people, I think these bad times are going to persist. The most important thing is justice and when a society is unable to deliver justice that society is well on the way to ruin. So, before our ruination is complete, we should at least do something about justice and certainly not leave it in the hands of clerics.

There is a lot of talk about modesty and what women should or should not wear and how they should or should not behave. Why women only? This should apply equally to men. We have to understand the much overused word ‘hijab.’ As far as I have been able to determine, hijab first descended, yes descended, between two men: the Prophet (pbuh) and one of his followers. After a dinner party hosted by the Prophet (pbuh) at his mosque in Medina, four people stayed behind when it was over and kept talking to him. The Prophet (pbuh) then stood up indicating he wanted to retire for the evening. One man failed to get the hint and kept following him. Finally, when he came to his room and tried to enter it, the man tried to follow, which is when the divine book says that God caused a ‘hijab’ to drop between the two of them and they were separated.

I have thought a lot about this and felt that essentially, ‘hijab’ means ‘space’ and ‘privacy.’ That is hijab.

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