

In grip of demonocracy

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THREE cheers for the strident manner in which "Demonocracy" is finding its way into the country's political fabric. Benazir proclaims it with a "hurrah" asserting it is all in the game and name of the people's rule. Nawaz Sharif in a fit of anger shouts "to hell with the Constitution if this is what it is leading to" (he was alluding to Sabir Shah's imminent ouster). Both, the lady and the gentleman, are throwing themselves into a most enjoyable furore with a gusto and zeal not witnessed since the decapitation of Charles I and Louis XVI.

The fact is, that there is perhaps, no greater controversial system of human management than the "people's will". It fails right back in the domestic environment where men and women quarrel ever so often. It fails again when growing up children refuse to be disciplined. It fails further on the school's doorstep and in the classroom where anything but order prevails. It goes on failing through college and the sportsground where free recourse to invective and fisticuffs proves a point more effectively than *la politesse*". In short, nothing fails like good old failure.

You only have to take your mind back to the father of all mischief — the devil, demon or satan, whatever name you want to give it, depending on the category to which you belong as a person asserting the public will. You are devil if you play politics, a demon if you do your opponent in the eye and a satan if you take the country down with you. Happily, our folks at home fall only in the first two categories, shunning the third like a hot potato. It is uncharitable of those who try and accuse their opponents of being traitors when all they really mean is the fellow is a treacherous enemy of so and so.

The anatomy of politics in our country calls for a probe into the malpractices connected with political behaviour. The behaviour is not always political though it takes root from politics. It is more materialistic and money grabbing while the sun shines enough to make hay. The sun shines a lot, of course, in Pakistan, and there is

no dearth of hay — enough for all concerned to take truckloads of it home. So what are we quarrelling about? May be on where to stack so much of it?

Think back again and you may recall some abusive words in the financial dictionary used or not used for each other by the hay consumers. "Smuggler", "tax evader", "bribe-taker", "misappropriator", "palm-greaser", "mis-spender of public money", "bank looter", are some of the more commonplace ones. What follows or flows from this name calling is kalashnikov bullets fired at 100 rounds per minute. What is seen as evidence of the deserved titles are Pajeros, Villas, apartment, houses, plazas, factories, lands, palaces and what have you.

The thing always noted with un-understandable pride about "demonocracy" is that it signifies brutal force of the majority over "how dare do you protest" minority, as if the latter has no right to existence. At the governing level the majority itself shrinks to a coterie of near dictators. Drunk with power and perquisites of fantastic facilities the coterie even forgets majority that brought it to office. The majority then becomes a minority and the coterie minority becomes the majority by virtue of its demoniac power as the ruling elite.

Once in power the *dramatis personae* proclaim their mandatory right to do good by the people and for the people which includes themselves. Consequently, there is no such word as "corruption" in the annals of government. If a minister benefits from a public welfare project who is the public to say that the minister (he is after all a member of the public) has no right to benefit from the scheme? Much greater beneficiaries against whom not a word can be said are the direct representatives of the people's will, namely the legislators. They are quite capable, let the people be warned, of declaring the public *persona non grata*, traitors, treacherous and lecherous pignies who dare to question the integrity of the God-fearing legislators. As a corollary to the latter's greed and anger, the intelligence agencies are alerted and

directed to make life hell for the complainants.

Watching the fun from the sidelines, the great and invincible bureaucracy decides to jump into the fray and take things more seriously, matters often start off with the grade-22 Secretary asserting his position as "the government" to whom Ministers ("what a presumptuous lot trying to tell me what to do") can only make a request and not "order." The Secretary likes it better for the Minister to drop in for a cup of tea to discuss a particular matter rather than desire the Secretary to go to the Minister's room.

The mother of all battles rages constantly between the Secretary and his "Additional", almost as highly placed as the Secretary himself, with the difference that the Secretary can do his "Additional" in the eye more effectively than vice-versa. Unless, of course, the Minister, jealous of his arrogant Secretary has conspiratorial sessions with the "Additional" designed to do the Secretary in the eye. In such a congenial atmosphere the "Additional" pals up with his "Joins" and "Deputies", telling them they are all sufferers at the hands of a "know-nothing" Secretary and can perform better without him. Loyalties shift dramatically with covert ministerial backing until all gang up and hand an ultimatum to the Secretary. What the Secretary does in response, is recorded in the secret *dossiers* of the Establishment Division.

"Government in the making" as the "Opposition" in Pakistan loves to describe itself, although constitutionally, the "wait" should last five years, is meant to carry a psychological impact on the people's will-power to make people feel they have cut their own hands by electing such and such government. If the impact is played up by the media effectively, it can carry the same corruptive influence with the people as the government in power. Ours being the land of incorrigible feudals, can be turned round this way or that according to the whims and caprices of *feudalocracy*. A big landlord family politically committed to a particular party since time began suddenly plays the chameleon and becomes to party's bitterest enemy. What can you do with such people? Resign, of course.