

The compromised democracy

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The Nation

Democracy
9/7/04

Pakistan enjoys democracy of its own style where the word democracy is used to get a sitting government recognised by the European Union or the Common Wealth, while considering, at the same time, the people of Pakistan unworthy of consultation except for voting. In reaction, the people are becoming callous and indifferent to the political affairs.

This is what has been witnessed recently on departure of the former Prime Minister, Mir Zafarullah Jamali, under the formula, the odd man out. So, the people neither laughed nor wept – a smooth and peaceful transition tantamount to the acclaimed maturity of the politicians and system alike!

The prevalent system of democracy can be divided into two parts safely. In the first part, the shining aspects are the devolution of executive and political powers, naive educated representation, women emancipation, etc.

In the second part, the prominent aspect is presence of the compromised politicians. That is, they are vulnerable through the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). They possess two pronged advantages. First, they possess the know-how of running the government affairs. Secondly, they have been used as a counter-weight to keep both Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto legacies out of the political arena.

In the existing political system, the aforementioned first part is standing at the back, while the second part is placed at the front. That is how the compromised politicians are the face of the gov-

ernment justifying the origin of the term 'the compromised democracy'. This also explains as to why Mr Shaukat Aziz, a senator, is being pushed to stand at the helm of the affairs. That is, the new faces (from the first part) are not trained enough to be tried, while the old faces (from the second part) are not reliable to be given a chance to be the PM.

A common person in Pakistan may be happy with the first part of the system, while has reservations about the second part. If the present system fails, it will be because of the second part – a common sense prediction. For one politician the criterion was to come out with a clearance certificate from the NAB, while for another, the reverse was the case. That favouritism has not, perhaps, been liked by the masses generally. Hence is one of the reasons of their apathetic attitude towards the political affairs.

One interesting aspect of the prevailing political system is that in spite of legitimising the turncoats, by temporary annulment of the floor-crossing law in the Parliament, the resultant 'dissidents' have been seeking the word Pakistan Muslim League (PML) or Pakistan People's Party (PPP), in one way or another. It seems that the rebellious are fearful of rejection by the people if they opt out or form another political party. The trend, which emerges out of the fear, indicates that the names of the Muslim League and the People's Party are well entrenched in the masses. Everyone has to play one's

political game within that framework. The assemblage of the compromised politicians under the stratified PML and PPP is result of the same process.

Since the restoration of democracy after the death of General Zia, the main theme of the ministers generally remained to get a job, which will never come again. So, 'earn as much as you can' became their motto. Where the People's Party workers demanded a price (in shape of absorption in the government's lucrative departments) of their sacrifices (jails and lashes) that they made in the Zia era, the Muslim League workers started industrialising themselves by getting more and more loans as well as indulging themselves in various corporate scandals to fetch more money for never paying back. Hence, the motto was in full swing. In its wake, it seems that it is less a powerfulness of military establishment but more a hollowness of politicians out of which the prevailing situation of dictation by the military has emerged.

Pakistan's political system is haunted by two factors: corruption and inefficiency. Had this not been the case, formerly the bureaucracy and latterly the military would not have taken hold of the political recourse of the country. Interestingly, owing to the engagement, the bureaucracy also became corrupt and inefficient. To that reference, having been involved, the future role of the military is yet to be seen, especially when it has no

rival now in shape of integrated and powerful bureaucracy.

In fact, an effort to bring non-corrupt politicians and educated ones, besides women representatives, is laudable. However, the compromised politicians have been brought forward. If the politicians in the Cabinet or at the face of the government are the defaulters or their cases are in the NAB, it is a great misfortune to let them come up again to play with the future of Pakistan.

It is equally interesting to consider the four realities. First, for a long time, two powers (COAS and President) cannot concentrate in one person. Secondly, the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan envisages a Parliamentary form of government. Thirdly, the heads of the two major political parties cannot be kept out for a long time. Fourthly, the one who can turncoat once can do it again owing to some other compulsions.

Hence, it seems that the whole existing system has been compromised somehow. It seems more a temporary arrangement than a permanent one. Whenever the two powers are devolved; the political atmosphere will start witnessing change towards the Parliamentary form of government. Moreover, with the repatriation of the leaders of the two main political parties, the change may be witnessed towards emergence of two or three main political parties in transnational dimensions. Further, the moment the war on terror dies down; the aforementioned changes are bound to arrive earlier.

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