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The Untouchables (Pakistan Observer)

Shams uz Zaman, Mr.
Pakistan is amongst few of the states where the ruling elite have become so strong and powerful over a period of time that they can do anything with complete impunity. Unchecked corruption, nepotism, violation of merit, dishonesty and fraud etc have just become business as usual across the state. Since last five years, the state of affairs has dramatically deteriorated in every private and public sector across the board. State institutions which once were the backbone of the national economy like Steel Mills, Pakistan Railways and Pakistan International Airlines etc are either crumbling or have crumbled under the weight of state corruption. While these leaders portray to each other as rivals and playing role of opposition, they are in fact so closely interwoven in a complex web of interests and shared values that whenever a situation arise they all unite together to confront it.

The united opposition against the recent long march thus making it a profound failure is just the case in point. Regardless of the personal character of the leader leading the long march, the demands made thereon were indeed the voice of the nation. A nation which was outraged over issues like mega corruption scams, price hike, joblessness, energy crisis, sectarian killings, nepotism, deteriorating law and order situation and state’s inability to cope with the crisis and situations like Osama’s raid and Salala attack. However, the united stand of the “so called” opposition parties whether religious or otherwise clearly demonstrated that all have deeply embedded stakes in this corrupt system and they would go out of their way to protect it.

Interestingly, the newly emerging leader on the political scene promising a tsunami of change was also left dumbfounded and undecided on this critical moment whether to side with these political cartels or to show his support for the ‘voice of the people’. A change promised by him is probably no more on the horizon as he also has joined this group of “untouchables” who remain above the law no matter what they do or how they act. It was also interesting to watch the media anchors and politicians to lecture the masses on the sanctity of the constitution as if all the acts being committed by the government (like corruption, nepotism and bad governance etc) is exactly according to constitution.
The Supreme Court’s order to arrest the accused involved in the rental power corruption and NAB’s inability to arrest them profoundly illustrates that according to the practised law and practised constitutional norms, these powerful political bourgeoisies remain completely above the law and constitution and any attempt to bring them down would put up a united resistance even if these be the people’s demand. This was recently highlighted by Indian writer Arundhati Roy when she said, “All those who have tried to change the system via elections have ended up being changed by it.” This is the true reflection of state of democracies in most Eastern societies where democracy has brought only deprivation and corruption because the political class assumes itself to be untouchables and above the law and any attempt to challenge it, is silenced. The suspicious death of the NAB official just illustrates this trend.

The onus of responsibility of this failure also rests with the people as well as despite experiencing a brutal suffering for almost five years, most elected to remain at the sidelines of the procession refusing to join in. All those deprived of their basic rights and jobs should have joined in the attempt to get rid of the present incompetent and corrupt set up thus setting the course for a future change. What now they await is another brutal reign of possible five years led by the same untouchable political class giving us the same taste of governance which we have experienced so far. But let us have it because this is what we deserve.

— The writer is an MPhil research fellow at NDU.

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