

## **A Nation without an Identity**

**By Mazhar Mazhar**

During the recent months, mainstream media in Pakistan has asserted strongly that it can be a catalyst for a social and political change. Consequently, the ongoing political crisis in the country has paved way towards rethinking about alternate modes of governance. The idea of a controlled democracy in the guise of military democracy has badly failed in the country. The politicians and generals have played havoc with every institution including judiciary. It seems that present political crisis will further lead the country into chaos and disintegration. Therefore we must seriously consider alternate social and political actors and structural changes in our system of governance. And those changes must be in accordance with the accepted norms of a democratic society.

At the outset, it must be clear that while considering the substitute governmental arrangements, we should be aware of the similar transitional changes at transnational level. In developed societies and welfare states, the administrative practices are much in line with the democratic ways and traditions. However, the civil society organisations and community based entities enjoy greater trust on the part of citizens than the government functionaries or corporate bodies. Here, it must also be considered that the role of civil society in governance is infrequently measured in academic analyses of the social and political change in many vibrant societies. Unfortunately, like many other institutions and instruments, the civil society is not much stronger in Pakistan. We have not developed a culture of community participation in the matters of social and political importance.

However, the massive earthquake in 2005 stressed the need of a responsible and vibrant civil society representation at national level. In past, political and administrative failures of the government have shown us a bleak and depressing picture of our system of governance. Now, the people know that inefficient governments are more dangerous than natural calamities. The recent incidents of violence in cosmopolitan Karachi once again stressed the need of a responsible and a truly effective system of government. Repressive and autocratic approaches to political issues always bring melancholy and anarchy in the society. From Baluchistan to Waziristan and from Kalabagh to Lal Masjid, our national fibre is torn and on the worse for wear.

During the recent happenings, the media as a whole has depicted a true picture of the events. In past, such a straight and vivid depiction of political and social happenings in our society was uncommon. Since the society has learned much through the experimental phases of our national history, a poignant account of our national degeneration has brought goodwill and public acceptance for media. Therefore, now the people tend to trust heavily on impartial comments and lively account of the events. More recently, except a few cases of jaundiced and biased representation of significant events, the journalists and media houses have shown greater responsibility.

Information leads towards decision making. Now days, it seems that media in Pakistan is more educating than informing. Today, the information is processed through much

effective tools and means. Traditional slow-moving journalistic approaches to deal with happenings and events have been replaced by a more efficient and swift information processing technique. After the emergence of information highway, the technology has moved in and conventional flow of news material has marched out. Now one can not be continuously deceived by misleading propaganda.

In past, the viewers and readers heavily depended upon the choice of media houses. Therefore impartial and critical analysis of the information was much difficult. Now any unfair treatment of information and distortion of facts is under one touch of a viewer's finger. You just speak a nonsense word or try to hide something from viewing on a TV channel, you are skipped. When you are skipped, you are killed. So, in order to remain alive and being noticed, media is bound to be fair.

Some attribute this kind of media penetration to the more liberal policies of the regime but credit must go to the changing global environment. The dictum 'sky is the limit' has once again proved its worthiness. In the age of satellites and technological competitiveness, information is the most uncontrollable giant. Therefore, people's access to the information has not remained bound to the state mechanism.

Similarly, during the 60 years of political bickering, our politicians have not learned much, but a layman has gained greater political wisdom. Though our voters are still compelled to vote for feudal politicians, but, it does not mean that they wish to do so. They are bound to be part of this power politics, because they are powerless. But the dynamics of these relationships have now changed. Some kind of unformulated opposition in the masses has a significant appearance.

Now, the people abhor the idea of casting their votes in favour of a stagnant political system where they have never been noticed. But they love to participate in an activity which is helpful to bring a positive change in their lives. It means that a person who is willing to spare much of his time and energies to bring a positive change in the lives of masses can enjoy the relationship of love and affection by his community. This change is entirely due to the changing context created by the dynamics of need and fulfillment. In participatory system of society, the participants of a community development project are not elected. They participate in the matters of human uplift solely on voluntary basis; therefore they are the real agents of a common good. But as they are not the politicians they are not considered to be taken seriously in public policy affairs. Formulation of public policies in our country has always been in privileged hands. Deliberate efforts have been made to protect the interests of the privileged class.

It is interesting to note that being a privileged member of the society has become our national dream. The society which dreams about privileges and concessions may not be called a healthy society.

If civil society builds a relationship of favour and acceptance towards the public policy matters then it must be concerned with providing or replacing government and the opposition. Today, the civil society is well aware of the fact that state is the most important player in allocating resources and in collaborating between various agents of

change and progress. Therefore, the civil society must be able to influence state policies and those agents.

In past, the governments have not been legally or morally bound to consult all concerned groups of society while making legislation. This has created a sense of alienation on part of citizens. But there are many ways in which civil society can be influential and an important agent of change without necessarily being in opposition or tension with the state. Media can play the role of an active collaborator to bring a positive political and institutional change in creating a culture of democratic and just system of governance. Therefore, the media should connect the public spirit of politics by encouraging the people's participation in political decisions. The unflinching struggle by journalists and media as a whole must be encouraged and supported by us all.

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