

OH, WESTERN DEMOCRACY!

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The emergence of Pakistan was undoubtedly an epoch-making event. The nature of the event itself required that the constitution and governance of the state should be of an extraordinary complexion commensurate with the nature of the event. It required that the state be run under a system that is exemplary; that could contribute effectively towards ameliorating the lot of the people and effecting a substantial rise in their standard of living and dignity; that could lead gracefully to the setting up of a model society; that could serve as a good example for other nations to emulate. This system should have been such as would serve equally well the process of governance and development of the society, thus providing both the government and the society the space to grow unhindered towards excellence and bloom.

Now, what could be the device that would be instrumental in converting such a desire into reality? The two major modes of controlling and directing the human will are persuasion and dictation. Persuasion requires dialogue and consultation while dictation necessitates an approach ending in docile submission. In terms of governance, these modes would be democracy on the one hand and autocracy on the other. These are two diametrically opposed concepts of governance. Obviously we will choose the truly democratic rather than the autocratic way because we would want to constitute a commendable society. But democracy, as of today, has developed different colors and shades in the various countries of the world. However, it is basically of two kinds, presidential and parliamentary.

We, in Pakistan, have been trying to practice parliamentary democracy for the last fifty years, but for half the period the nation was subjected to military dictatorship by ambitious generals like Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and Zia-ul-Haq. The one initiated corrupt practices and plunder in the country, the second broke the country, and the third introduced drug mafia and large-scale arms trade in the country, lust for power and wealth and religious hypocrisy. The so

called democratic civilian governments of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, his daughter Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif did not do better either. They together developed the art of deceitful and autocratic governance by the jagirdars and the moneyed elite.

The commitment of Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah that Pakistan will not be made into a theocratic state, was belied by those who followed him. The state of Pakistan, attained by the singular efforts and spectacular guidance of Qaid-e-Azam, was ideologically blurred and weakened by his party, the Pakistan Muslim League, through political infighting and economic mismanagement by its leaders. Later this party gave birth to the Pakistan Peoples Party, which indulged in politics of deceit and intrigue that lead to the country's dismemberment. None of these political parties contributed to solving the problems of the illiterate and poverty stricken masses who had been brought to this state by those in government, whether civilians or army men. Together these elements disarranged and confused the ideological construct of the nation and impaired the social setup and the state apparatus. This state of affairs has confronted us with a challenge and the need to re-determine the very meaning, the ethos of Pakistan. We will have to enter into a thorough clarification and subsequent reconstruction of the ideology before we begin to decide upon the mode of governance of the state. The self of a person also must inculcate and experience a new intellectual and moral ferment before it starts indulging in affairs of governance.

The western powers want to get restored the status quo of sham democracy prevailing during the fifty-two years of Pakistan's existence, and are pressing hard for that. This undue and unjust pressure must be resisted fully because, we have decided in principle that our destiny as a nation has to be a democratic dispensation in all our private and public affairs; that our concept of democracy will have to be a true one and we will adhere to it sincerely and willingly; that good governance is the prerequisite of socioeconomic development in the country. The people of Pakistan have now embarked on discovering that version of democracy which best suits them and their genius. Not only that we should be in a position, sooner or later, to prepare a model of democracy that could also be a guide for others.

But as soon as we commence this journey, we are confronted with the western model of democracy. The West has made this form of democracy the criteria for a standard polity for the present as well the future generations of the world. It is a commendable to the extent that the incredibility of dictatorship and fascism in the modern world has been accepted by the world powers. But the West must also accept that their concept of democracy is yet under its way to full development, and is beset with incongruities. There are yet other criteria than that of the West to judge a democratic government. The basic requirement of democracy, as perceived by an emancipated mind, is that it must lead to the creation of a peaceful, clean, equitable, poverty free, educated and helpful society; that it must go to breed non-exploiting, non-monopolist and non-aggressive nations; that it should rid the society of poverty, ignorance, intolerance, exploitation, suppression and injustices of all sorts; that its edifice should be built upon the foundation of conscientious and free consent of the voters and not derived through financial pressures. There should not be any contradiction between professing democracy and practicing it.

When judged against this criterion, Western Democracy loses its charm for the people of Pakistan. It exposes itself painfully when elections are held in America on the basis of huge money exchanges, when riots erupt in America and England against the black and the brown, when shiploads of wheat are dumped in the seas instead of providing it to the poor nations, when western nations indulge in armed aggression in Vietnam, Cuba, Egypt, Iraq, Bosnia and Chechnia and elsewhere, when the blood of underdeveloped nations is sucked dry by the developed nations through their financial giants, the World Bank and the IMF. The great western powers need sham democracies and military dictatorships in the weak nations so that they may be able to exploit them and deplete their resources with much ease. They are not interested in introducing true democracy in these countries to strengthen the political processm and help them to become self-sustained and capable of developing their societies to their own advantage. They will want these countries to be dependent on them as long as they may want.

The underdeveloped nations certainly need democratic polity to develop themselves. But these countries should develop these polities by themselves according to their own aptitudes and on the principles of true democracy. If we may inumerate and define these principles, they are:

1. The representatives of the people in the assemblies should be elected through a free and transparent election process, and monopolies should not be allowed to influence elections.
2. No monopoly classes (*jagirdars*, *sardars*, capitalists and religious elite) should exist in the society, and the ratio between the high-income and low-income groups should be the least, not more than 1:7.
3. Strong institutions for accountability must be set up on permanent bases so that full accountability of corrupt elements could be held effectively.
4. A small number of well-organized political parties should exist which are formed on the basis of democratically elected 'collective leadership'. The undemocratic concept of charismatic leadership must be done away with forthwith.
5. A foolproof check and balance system must exist in the form of ruling and opposition parties, as well as well organized non-government organizations.
6. The Prime Minister and other ministers should not take any major policy decisions without getting these approved by the provincial and national assemblies and the Senate. On very special issues seminars and referendum should be held to gauge the select national opinion.
7. The assembly members should be made fully accountable before the electorate, so much so that the electorate should be given the right to recall their representatives in the assemblies if they do not perform to their satisfaction.
8. An efficient monitoring system should be established on a continuing basis to monitor the working of government organizations, and their heads, so as to ensure compliance of laws made by the Parliament, and completion of the development projects initiated by the representative government.