

ONLY SOME OF THE TRUTHS

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1. During India's Independence Day Celebrations, two things caught the sight:

The first was that the India's Prime Minister came to the Red Fort to preside over the Flag hoisting ceremony in a small and ugly looking indigenous car, and that others of lesser consequence in company, were in occupation of similar cars.

2. The equality in the matter of cars, inter alia, signified that the emphasis was not on form but substance. Everybody came to the function in the same type of car, but the Prime Minister distinguished himself by hoisting the national flag and then making that address to the nation. He became prominent and was identified with reference to his functions as Prime Minister and not the car he came by along with others of lower station; and it can be anybody's guess that he must have put his heart and soul in his speech to demonstrate his efficiency and eloquence, in an attempt to neutralize the effect of coming in an ordinary car. Given the same kind of facility and put into a similar situation, everybody will produce his best to be more efficacious than others similarly placed, to show his excellence. This is the avowed dictate of human nature. It conveyed a lesson to the nation that the emphasis is on competency and efficiency, whatever the outward appearance.

3. Further, the use of that car was clearly indicative of the fact that the Prime Minister is not suffering from any complex. It was suggestive of a consciousness that he is known by the office he is holding and that quality of the car in his use is altogether an immaterial circumstance. There was a visible nonchalance to this aspect of the matter.

4. Then, it was demonstrative of the fact that because of financial stringency they could not deliver themselves up to the luxury of big imported cars. It involved a tacit acknowledgment of the reality that their economy is too fragile and unsound to allow the wastage of foreign exchange on the import of big and glamorous cars at public expense. Incidentally, it implied a message to the nation that it is the demand of stringent circumstances that they must live within their means and save money and foreign exchange to be diverted to productive purposes.

5. What with the fact that the use of these cars by the Prime Minister and others manifested a pride in the home made cars. It not only encouraged but positively invited others to use these cars; which is bound to augment and flourish the local industry, resulting amongst other things, in availability of more jobs and prosperity. It involved an implicit exponece of a difference of attitude, outlook, values and priority.

6. On the other hand, we here in Pakistan are suffering from Toyota culture for the last so many years. The emphasis is on ostentatious living. The substance has been relegated to the secondary position and so much importance is being attached to outward appearance. The Bureaucrats and others concerned, exceptions aside, are clamouring for bigger cars and still bigger furnished houses, all at public expense.

7. Values have undergone a radical change. Hard work, integrity, dedication, ingenuity, and efficiency are no longer symbolic of the worth and importance of a public servant. His status is known by the car he possesses and the house he occupies. Its obvious result is that he makes no attempt to be efficacious, or for that matter, honest, industrious, dedicated—qualities which are so badly needed to put the country on the road to progress and prosperity. In the wake of this Toyota culture have come all the ills, like extravagance, hypocrisy, indolence and incompetency, which our neighbours at least appear to have been striving to avoid by the use of simple home made cars.

8. It is not possible to comprehend why the use of a big car at public expense is indispensable. Can't we survive by using smaller cars with lesser consumption of fuel, so as to save our resources to be diverted to the construction of schools, roads and hospitals, which are direly needed for our enlightenment and welfare. To say nothing of the considerations, such as complex of inferiority; of development of local car manufacturing industry resulting in availability of more jobs; of candid admission of the reality that our financial circumstances are too stringent to allow us the luxury of big imported cars and of the fact that we would be sparing ourselves of the ordeal of a mad, purposeless and frivolous race in getting the better of others in a false and prodigal living.

9. In Juneju's time, it was decided to replace bigger cars of 1600 cc and 1300 cc by smaller 1000 cc imported and 800 cc Suzuki Cars. The ceiling of petrol consumption in their cars by the Additional Secretaries entitled to free use of official transport and that of Secretaries was also accordingly revised and brought down to a considerable extent. The avowed purpose to be served was economy in expenditure of public funds and control in the use of government transport.

10. But this policy decision suffered from certain intrinsic defects. About the Federal Ministers it was decided that they will be provided with 1300 cc cars. An allowance for the use of such cars by the Ministers was probably not as much with reference to their status, as on account of the nature of their duties and functions. Whether the use of bigger cars of 1300 cc in their case was justified, is debatable. However, the fact remains that an exception was made, if it be conceded that even the Ministers could do with smaller cars. Then, this decision was not made to apply to the Judges of the superior courts, even though the excuse regarding nature of duties was not available in their cases. The details of what weighed with the government in making this exception are irrelevant. What, however, is mentionable, was the fact that the honourable Judges remained in use of 1600 cc and 1300 cc imported cars.

11. Now if the main goal to be achieved was economy in expenditure, as people were given to understand, there was absolutely no reason whatever why the decision should not have been made to apply to everybody concerned. We were knee deep in the midst of a financial crisis which even justified a declaration of emergency, in so far as the adoption of economy measures was concerned. The situation being what it was, the use of 1000 cc cars by all concerned would not have made the heavens fall, more so when it would still have been possible to recognize them by the functions they performed and the powers they exercised.

12. This aspect of the matter apart, this could, under the circumstances, be hardly called a policy decision, for the simple reason that such decisions do not admit an exception. In addition, in so far as my humble opinion goes, no provision can earn the nomenclature 'rule' or 'law' unless it is uniform in its application. It has to be all embracing to be entitled to go by this name.

13. At least during the last twenty years, those at the helm of affairs, have been crying themselves hoarse, in an attempt to make the nation believe that our economy is in the doldrums; that we are in the quagmire of a financial crisis of the worst order and that foreign loans are so enormous that our meager resources cannot sustain even the payment of interest. They have all along been telling us that we have got to be as frugal as possible and that extravagance may lead us even to a holocaust. If this is the case, as it certainly is, then why in the name of God we cannot make a start for economy drive as to avoid unnecessary expenditure of public money and so precious foreign exchange on import of big cars, on redundant and self promoting lunches, 'Asranas' and dinners and on frivolous unnecessary official tours within and without the country; which is being incurred almost ever since the inception of Pakistan and which amounts to corruption against masses.

14. If survival is sincerely intended, why can't we get rid of this post budget lunches and dinners syndrome. Try as you might, it is not possible to appreciate why the passage of a budget has to be celebrated at public expense by those who are committed to do it in the performance of their functions as members of the Assemblies. Nor, for that matter, it is possible to understand why the passage of a budget should justify a festivity and that too after so much pain having been taken during the budget session to convince the public that our resources are not enough to sustain the burden of our commitments.

15. The other thing which attracted notice during the course of ceremony was that few of the chairs meant for the guests were empty and that the Television camera taking in the ceremony did not make an exception in the case of those chairs, so that they were exposed to public view, as much as the other spectacle. This was equally a significant situation. Those in charge must not have bothered to get those seats occupied by others before the arrival of the Prime Minister, to cause an impression that the attendance was full.

16. The sight was impressive in that it reflected the truth, a situation which obtained in reality. There was no concealment and the people were made to see the things as they existed. No misrepresentation was made and there was no hypocrisy. If it be taken to have amounted to something amiss, the obvious advantage was that no misconception was caused and those concerned were enabled to make their own assessment.

17. The lesson is that it is our moral duty to reveal the correct situation and the true shape of things to those who have been entrusted with the job of running the country; those who have to make assessments on

the basis of facts and the situations presented to them. The importance of true representation lies in the fact that those assessments in turn have to constitute a basis for policy decisions, so vital for statecraft. Therefore, it hardly requires an emphasis that misrepresentation or concealment of facts can lead to disastrous results.

18. I remember an instance of a press conference having been 'arranged' by the district administration on the occasion of a visit of the head of State, during a martial law regime. The questions with easy answers were allocated to different persons who were then made to sit at different places in the congregation to cause an impression as if it was a genuine affair. By this contrivance, the guest of honour was made to go with the euphoria of a successful press conference. It is difficult to understand why he should not have been made to face questions freely asked by the pressmen. Even if an embarrassment would have been caused in the bargain, it could stand in good stead by enabling him to prepare for the next occasion. There is no reason why he should have been kept in the dark.

19. Although it is certainly not so in every case, this kind of thing may some times come about, when those in charge are not there in their own right. The result is that they do things which they are ordinarily not supposed to do, in a bid to earn the pleasure of their superiors. They are sycophants who are not conversant with the requirements of their own job. They know the things, which are alien to their duties and the positions they hold. Their ostensible success obliges others to attain the same qualities for a successful career. In this manner, the whole system is being subjected to perversion.

20. Those at the helm of affairs are equally responsible for exposing the correct state of affairs to public view, for misrepresentation in this case amounts to fraud on the nation. Almost ever since the time of its birth, the malady of our country is that people are being made to live on hallucinations. They are made to believe a thing which does not exist; and something which in fact is there, is not shown. The result is that the areas requiring their attention for a critical appraisal are camouflaged, leaving no chance for building up the public opinion on correct lines, so essential and vital for development of healthy democratic system of Government and ultimate amelioration. Therefore, bad is becoming worse and worse is fast turning into worst and the chances of getting out of this mess are becoming remote and obscure with the passage of each day.

21. The Great Decade of Late President Muhammad Ayub Khan's era may be mentioned as a case in point. The 28th of October 1967 saw the beginning of tenth year of his regime. It was decided to celebrate it as a Great Decade of Development and Reforms. The period of rejoicing was to continue till October 1968. In his book "From Crisis to Crisis" Herbert Feldman described the affair in the following words:

"While all this trumpeting was in progress, other less agreeable things were in train. I have referred elsewhere to the impact of steadily rising prices upon the life of the people. This process continued during 1968 when the Great Decade campaign was promoting the claim that Pakistan had made great economic progress. It had long been apparent that the steady advance in the cost of ordinary consumer goods, particularly foods, was bearing with ever-increasing weight on the ordinary man's budget and was a source of much discontent. Nor was there the least indication that this inexorably rising graph would ever change direction."

"Thus, whatever the quality of the Great Decade campaign, whatever the objective truth on which it relied, there was plenty to diminish its impact. There were long nurtured discontents springing from genuine public grievance born of the conduct of a Bureaucracy, intoxicated with the exercise of more power than it had ever known; from the growing sense, especially among the educated classes, of political exclusion; and from the brazen parade of relations and favourites who made money and flouted the law. None of these could be dispelled by the sorcery of an advertising campaign which had rather unimaginatively declaimed the virtues and achievements of President Ayub Khan.".....

"The Great Decade ended with a widely felt sense of optimism among Ayub Khan's supporters, but for careful observers there were other portents not quite so satisfactory. Two days before the Great Decade came to its close, it was announced that on 15th November, statutory sugar rationing would be introduced throughout West Pakistan"

22. An agitation was set afoot in the wake of these celebrations. It was evidently the result of subreption and feigning a situation of all well, which in reality was not there. The President was forced to realize that he

could no longer withstand the pressure of popular upsurge and that he would have to come to terms with the people, now openly in revolt against his system and method of Government. Eventually, on the 25th of March 1969, he abdicated and gave up the reins of the Government to General Yahya Khan in a letter which said: "I am left with no option but to step aside and leave it to the Defence Forces of Pakistan, which today represent the only effective and legal instrument to take over full control of the affairs of the country." In consequence, Martial Law was declared on the evening of that day.

23. Let us learn from our mistakes made in the past. We are in dire need to bring about a total, fundamental change in our outlook and attitudes. Let us re-arrange them and put our house in order. Let us address ourselves, with all earnestness, to the ailments arising out of pretentious and extravagant living, which are eroding the very foundations of the State, before it is too late in the day and people raise their arms in supplication to God, which is a euphemism for revolution.