

Incompetence all around?

Dear Editor,

I write with regard to an article with the same caption by Mr. Tasneem Siddique printed in Dawn on September 1st, 2008. I feel that the writer is a little harsh in his comments vis a vis the nation as a 'whole', when he says that we are fast becoming a nation of mediocres, a bunch of disorganized, inefficient people, with low productivity level. Coming from an intellectual like Mr. Siddique, a well known personality I was taken a back. If he was addressing the government and semi government machinery, institutions and the 'establishment', (which would not be even 1% of the entire nation) I would have agreed with him without an iota of doubt. But when he sweeps the entire nation with one remark, I beg to differ and offer an opinion.

We all know that Pakistanis can and have become the finest minds (like himself who is a product of the very same peoples he laments). They make the finest doctors, engineers, lawyers, economists, artists, technicians and professionals in various fields. It's just that we as a nation were never provided an even playing field. In fact we were never provided the basic amenities and opportunities that are needed to develop. The people at the helm of affairs or the 'landed aristocracy' have systematically destroyed all the institutions that a country, a nation needs to survive. Majority of the staff of all the institutions, at almost every level do not do justice to the position they hold. With the result there is a lot of injustice leading to discontentment, rebelliousness and lawlessness amongst the people.

Despite all this suffering the nation has survived. They, I think are the most hard working and enduring lot, as they have shown great resilience. I think Pakistanis are a great nation, its just that we have been *had* by the visionless and spineless leaders who keep on maneuvering their way back to the assemblies again and again with their *anti nation* policies meant for self aggrandizement or to please the masters abroad. In the process they kept us disenfranchised, deprived, ignorant, hungry and helpless. We have been the victims of the systems gone wrong.

Even Princess Diana fell for a Pakistani doctor. Agha Hasan Abidi became a banker par excellence. There is Dr. Abdusalaam, Nusrat Fateh Ali, Jehangir Khan, Jansher Khan and Faiz, Edhi, I can quote name after name who have made a mark in the world and they are/were Pakistanis.....There are millions of committed and talented Pakistanis at every level.

To be fair let us look at the body of 'nation'. If we examine closely more than half of it lives in the *rural* setup tilling the land. They are the most innocent lot exploited by the Waderas, Sardars and the feudal Chaudhries. If we look at the urban scene, more than half of its population lives below poverty line and cannot earn one decent meal for their family. Then there are the upper classes, the government-semi government servants and other vested groups who are actually in the driving seat. Remaining are white collar workers, the middle and the lower class that are driven against the wall with lack of electricity, proper roads, infrastructure, transport, housing, health care, education, security and safety, Justice

How can we talk of competence when the population are having sleepless nights sans electricity, and if you do have employment, the work and road to work is hell, and then the wages are snatched by the very LEA that are meant to protect us...and please no more rhetoric on democracy that it is 'us' who vote 'in' the leaders who make our life miserable, and one should give due time to democracy as one day everything will be fine. It is a process that takes time. Do the state and its organs have any responsibility except taxing its population?

By saying all this I am not denying that there is no incompetence, dishonesty, inefficiency and disorganization around, but it would be right if we analyze and identify where? It's the institutions that are ruined. People observe lawlessness and corruption on higher echelons, and then it trickles down progressively. Things have gone from bad to worse. But how did the rot set in? How did we come to this sorry state?

It all started with the first democratic setup in which merit was set aside and hundreds and thousands of political posting were made. It was the quota system and filling up of all departments with loyalist and party workers. The quality of life of the masses went down while the regime and the friends of friends flourished. Every successive government, instead of arresting such a situation kept on repeating the same. National interest was compromised. This brought the downfall of the systems and institutions. There may be other factors but one of the main reasons for the rot was systematic death of merit. It is the concentration of power into a few inept hands that controls the destiny of the nation. Yes, a lot of damage has been done but still all is not lost. The breakdown of the basic character is approaching fast and people in governance and groups who can influence change need to wake up to this situation.

I was relieved that at the end of his article Mr.Siddique did acknowledge that there is no shortage of competent, qualified, and committed people in Pakistan, but it is our ruling oligarchy and their cronies that ...have tried to stop the process of change.

The socio-political conditions of our neighbor India are not very different from ours but there, majority of journalists and writers criticize in a positive atmosphere and write good about India, they take ownership and love their country, they project their country as great a country and despite the shortcomings they show respect to their country unlike some of our commentators. Some of the journalists go as far as to humiliate the nation in front of the entire world. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that the Indians have an edge over us. My suggestion is to be kind to the nation. Give them peace of mind and opportunities and they will prove that they are the best.

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(My suggestion to the editor is to try and not to accommodate articles that belittle our country and our nation.)

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