

Institutional failure in
PAKISTAN

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1 Introduction

"Let us now plan to build and reconstruct and regenerate our great nation and our sovereign state of Pakistan which, you know, is not only the biggest Muslim State in the world but the fifth biggest sovereign state in the world."

"...work ceaselessly in the service of our nation and make Pakistan one of the greatest nations of the world. It is in your hands, we have undoubtedly talents, Pakistan is blessed with enormous resources and potentialities. Providence has endowed us with all the wealth of nature and now it lies with man to make the best of it."

M. A. Jinnah, August 31, 1947

After fifty years of independence, Pakistan today, ranks amongst the poorest nations in the world, with a vastly illiterate population and extremely poor health conditions.

Tops in corruption rankings, is "known" for human rights violation¹, lawlessness, and unpredictable socio-economic circumstances.

In five decades, Pakistan has tried "all possible" forms of governments and political systems - arguably, more political experiments in such a short period, than by any other nation in the world. Unfortunately however, despite such lavish political adventurism, Pakistan to date stands undecided about its final political structure and fate.

In sports, it is widely considered as the most unpredictable team(s) in sporting history (on any given day, our chances of beating the best of teams is equal to the chance of losing to the worst).

There is however, another side of the coin.

Pakistan has also produced one of the greatest "idols" in the game(s), "worshipped" all over the world.

Pakistani scientists, physicists, chemists, physicians etc. are performing at the highest levels, in great numbers, in the most advanced nations of the world.

¹ A controversial issue, that calls for reinterpretation, especially in the light of the New World Order, being promoted by the "civilized world"

Pakistani bankers hold a very high reputation in the world's most prestigious institutions, including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank

Is this a coincidence?

This paper seeks to answer the above from an institutional perspective. The premise of this view is based on the power of institutions in framing, functioning and development of a society.

So the main objective of this paper is to look into the cultural and societal problems of Pakistan, through the reflection of our institutional failure.

2 Culture and Society

Society can be defined as "a system of human organizations generating distinctive cultural patterns and institutions and usually providing protection, security, continuity and a national identity for its members" or simply, "a group of people who live within the same territory and share a common culture".

Culture on the other hand is "The total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge, which constitute the shared bases of social action". It is the "social heritage of a people", which includes both material (physical artifacts, and objects) and nonmaterial (values, beliefs, institutional arrangements etc.) elements.

3 The Role of Institutions

Institution is "an organization or establishment founded for a specific purpose". They are "the principal instruments whereby the essential tasks of living are organized, directed and executed" and are created to provide "a standardized solution to a set of problems".

Examples of institutions include, family, government, businesses, media etc. etc.

From the above discussion, we can state that institutions are the instruments that help societies achieve (or perform) their primary functions (protection, security, continuity, national identity etc.).

Institutions also have a rather complex cultural element. They are not only “based” on societal culture, but also “shape” the culture of a society. Consider education and media for example. Both institutions share the cultural values and norms of a society, and yet heavily influence social and cultural change in the modern society.

4 Primary (Social) Institutions

Societies are complex systems and have diverse needs. Societies draw on institutions to fulfill and resolve its needs and problems. Institutions constituting people and resources (material and nonmaterial) perform specific functions, to meet the ends of the society.

Modern society thrives on a very large number of institutions that can be classified under numerous categories, each performing distinct set of functions. However the following section focuses on some of the primary social institutions, whose healthy functioning is critical to the existence and well being of any society.

4.1 Family

“A social group whose members are related by ancestry, marriage, or adoption and live together, cooperate economically, and care for the young”.

The primary functions of a family include: reproduction, socialization, care, protection and emotional support, assignment of status, regulation of sexual behaviour

Family is also referred to as a primary group, and is critical to the socialization of individuals.

4.2 Education

The institution of education involves “transmitting attitudes, knowledge and skills through formal, systematic training”, and is an important component of socialization.

Some of the key functions of education include: socialization, social integration, Screening and selecting (of talent).

4.3 Government (Political System)

Government involves the political processes pertaining to the "authoritative formulating of rules and policies that are binding and pervasive throughout a society".

Key functions of a government may be summarized as: formulation of laws and regulations, maintenance of law and order, provision of justice, public welfare (education, health, economic etc.)

Government however, is a subset of a larger system, called the political system, which involves many other groups and institutions including, general public, political parties, constitution etc. etc.

4.4 Business (Economic)

The economic institution is responsible for the production and distribution of goods and services, needed by the members of a society. These functions are collectively performed by the government, private businesses, and individuals.

Businesses are institutions engaged in economic activities. These institutions are managed and run by people called entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur is "one who engages in enterprise by taking risks, innovating, and organizing production".

Businesses are not merely profit making machines. They make profits by "serving" goods and services to meet the societal needs. Thus the institution of business cannot thrive by definition, without meeting the needs of the society. The more it serves, the more profit it is liable to earn.

The economic institution has a huge impact on the health, growth and development of a society and even its culture.

4.5 Religion

Religion has great influence on individuals and societies. In some societies, it is one of the primary sources of culture (values, norms, knowledge, etc.), and plays a key role in socialization. Some of the functions of religion include: Social integration, social control (through enforcement of norms), source of hope and "healing", etc.

5 Functional vs. dysfunctional

From a functionalists perspective society is a system, comprising interconnected elements that perform specific functions that are essential for the attainment of goal(s) (of the system).

From a functional view, the societal institutions (the components of the system) must perform certain essential functions, in order for the society to survive. If such essential functions are not performed, the system (society) “fails” to maintain itself.

At times however, institutions have negative consequences on the society. This is called a dysfunction, which is simply a malfunction. While “normal” functioning of institutions help societies attain their “goals”, institutional dysfunctions, distance them from their destiny.

6 Pakistan: An Institutional Analysis

The following section analyses the primary social institutions in Pakistan, from a functional (or rather a dysfunctional) perspective. The main purpose is to highlight some major institutional problems that in turn, negatively affect the society at large. Further, some of these institutional problems will be traced back to the culture itself, as these have their roots in the culture and the society itself.

6.1 Family

6.1.1 Joint family and individuality

The average family in Pakistan is mostly based on a joint (or combined) family system. While the system has its social and economic advantages, some of its disadvantages have serious social and psychological consequences, which includes:

Lack of independence:

As decisions are centralized, individuals lose opportunities. Opportunities may be personal (traveling, educational, career etc.), social (marriage, forming groups etc.), economic (investing, risking, initiating). It has a huge social (and economic) consequence on our society. One such consequence is social stagnation. Individuality is a driving force behind social action and social change.

Psychological problems:

When married couples live together, a tussle for “resources” and “domain” is “naturally” initiated, resulting in unnecessary yet persistent social tension and feuds. While the strong dominate, the weak suffer. Consequences include, depression, temper, blood pressure, and in extreme cases, suicide.

Unemployment:

Some individuals may not “feel” the need to work, as their economic needs are fulfilled by other family members.

6.1.2 Marriage

The institution of marriage is strongly influenced by culture. In our society, marriages are generally arranged by parents. It’s not uncommon, to arrange marriages without the consent of the couple (especially the girl). And at times it is done “against” the consent.

This coerced arrangement has its manifestations in the form of family breakup, divorce, suicide and even murder. Another manifestation is the trend of honour killings, which ranges to over 450 per annum.

6.1.3 Power

In the Pakistani culture, power in the family is generally centralized (irrespective of joint family or otherwise). The concept of sharing (especially power), partnership, and equality (even among couples) is not very common. This is especially true regarding man vs. woman relationship. The head of the family is considered to have the “right” to make decisions, even in personal matters. In some cases, even to “judge” between “right” and “wrong”. A perfect example of the abuse of this “power” are cases of forced divorces, made on the demands of the parents. The social consequence of this practice is the very common personal (and social) trait of submissiveness, which lasts from family life, through to other institutions like education, and organizations.

The source of this centrality, is “considered” to be rooted in Islam that stresses extreme respect for elders, especially parents. Unfortunately, this cultural value, is grossly abused in practice. Islam does not give any authority to any role in society, without due responsibility and constraints. I shall further discuss this religious issue in detail under the section of Religion.

6.2 Education

A majority of Pakistanis are illiterate. The case of women is even worse. There is a huge gap in educational conditions in rural and urban population. However, let's consider the status of education from a qualitative perspective.

6.2.1 Unity of purpose

The institution of education can be viewed as a reflection of the future – as it is responsible for the intellectual development of the “future” generation. Education is also a vehicle for change. But both change and advance (to a brighter future) need a goal. What is the aim of education in Pakistan? Do we have a universally accepted, national purpose in education?

The answer is not hard to find. Just look at the number and kind of education systems in place. There seems to be no relation (or harmony) between one system and the other (and certainly they do not seem to have the same “purpose”). i.e. each system has its own objectives, priorities, and framework. These systems differ in numerous ways including:

- Rural vs. urban
- English vs. urdu (or regional)
- Private vs. public
- “Secular” vs. religious
- And interestingly, national vs. “western²”

6.2.2 Medium of Instruction

Language is not merely a means of expression. It's a tool through which man develops abstract ideas, concepts and other mental constructs. Behind each great culture in history, lies the development of a great language. Development of a national (or local) language, cultivates regional literature that is based on regional history, wisdom, values and norms. It not only reflects the culture, but also forms and nurtures it.

The second rate treatment of Urdu in our education and government, has had negative repercussions in a number of ways.

² It is amusing to note the names of many private institutions, schools, colleges and even universities, which are so western, that they seem totally out of place.

Delivering education in the second language (not mother tongue), unnecessarily complicates the learning process. Firstly, the learner's energies are diluted to the deciphering of the message, in addition to the conceptualization of the content itself. Secondly, the possibility of miscommunication, misunderstanding (both on part of the teacher and the learner) is increased. And finally, it is one of the main causes of the social divide.

6.2.3 The social divide

The problems with our education system, has grown the social divide in the country. One of the main causes of this phenomenon is the lack of any standard, uniformity and consistency of policy or system implementation. The disparity of quality of education, made available to the rural and poor communities has been widening. So is the socioeconomic gap between classes in Pakistan.

Private education is inaccessible to the majority of population for a number of reasons. Firstly, due to higher direct costs e.g. registration and tuition fee, cost of books etc. Secondly, quality private institutions are very few in number (in proportion to the population), and are located in a handful of major cities only (Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad etc.). Thus making it "physically" impossible for the majority to obtain quality education. And finally, language forms another barrier for a large segment of the uneducated masses, even if they acquire the material means to pay for the cost of such education. With little or no support from the family, education in a "foreign" language becomes too much of a task for these children.

6.2.4 Social Integration

One of the objectives of education is social integration. A systematic, goal oriented, uniform education, helps integrate communities and societies. Unfortunately, due to the above-mentioned reasons, this crucial function of education is also being undermined.

6.2.5 Other Issues

Lack of purpose and planning, low priority, poor infrastructure and low pays of teachers are some of the factors contributing to the poor quality of education in Pakistan.

The institutional inability to meet the "real" objectives of education, rise in both materialism and joblessness, has diverted the educational focus to an inferior end – employment and material gain. Arguably, the only "uniform" purpose of education today, is the "probable"

economic gain in the future. Ironically, due to the slowing down of the economy and high rate of unemployment, even this end is not guaranteed, which from a sociological perspective, is “discouraging” poor families from “investing” into education.

Our above failures in education, has kept us from developing a national mindset, essential for the intellectual advancement of a people. We have also failed to develop a social/intellectual class in Pakistan, that is capable of confronting the social challenges of today, and building an indigenous solution for the future, based on our own national aspirations, and derived from our own cultural wisdom.

6.3 Government (and Political)

6.3.1 Political Upheavals

Pakistan’s political scene has been a playing field for all kinds of political experimentation. Since inception, no civil government has made a “natural” exit, lasting its constitutional tenure. We have lived almost half of our national lives under the “umbrella” of military rule. Unfortunately, despite half a century of political experimentation, the future of Pakistani politics is as vague as ever before.

The frequent political upheavals, has badly affected the whole fabric of our national lives. The main consequences of these events can be highlighted as:

- ❑ National disintegration, loss of East Pakistan and national humiliation
- ❑ Political, economic, and social uncertainty and unrest
- ❑ Lack of continuity in national policies and initiatives
- ❑ Militarization and “wrong” national priorities
- ❑ Lack of trust in the international community

Uproar in NA over Musharaf’s ‘uncivilised’ jibe

MPs thump desks chanting ‘Go Musharaf Go’, ‘No LFO No’

Islamabad: The Parliament erupted in pandemonium Tuesday over President Pervez Musharaf’s description of MPs as “uncivilised”.

“Musharaf has insulted the entire nation by calling the Parliament uncivilized because both the houses represent the people of Pakistan....

General Musharaf made the offensive statement Monday. “It is not necessary to address the joint session (of parliament’s upper and lower houses),” he was quoted as saying by a local English daily.

“I don’t want to give the perception to the world that we are uncivilized people. I will address a civilized assembly and not an uncivilized one.”

The News, Wednesday, April 23, 2003

- Institutional failure (due to instability), especially of public sector
- Lack of responsibility in the political culture (it is very convenient for the military to blame the politicians and vice versa, for the ills of the society, due to continuous disruptions)

Irrespective of the form of government (civil or military) however, the state public institutions in Pakistan have been far from satisfactory.

6.3.2 Judiciary

Judiciary has been used (or rather abused) as an instrument in the political tussles of civil and military rules since early 50s. Just a couple of years ago, almost half of the Supreme Court Bench, including the then Chief Justice of Pakistan, was "forced" to resign, when the bench refused to take oath under the military code.

Due to inadequacy of the judicial system, ordinary cases take years to settle. In many cases the parties involved are "forced" to enter into settlement due to this unbearable delay in justice.

Lack of education, awareness, unbearable delay and costs of lawsuits, complexity and bureaucratic nature of the system, makes it extremely difficult for the common man to seek justice.

The level of corruption in judiciary and the police is however one of the main causes of judicial (and law and order) failure in Pakistan.

6.3.3 Health

Health is another major issue in Pakistan. The size of the population and the economic conditions make it difficult to manage the public health services. The gravity of the situation can be visualized from the fact that even major cities (Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi etc.) do not have sufficient resources and facilities to provide adequate services to the public. In the city like Lahore, people have to wait in large queues, for their turn and for weeks for an appointment with a specialist.

Another issue that complicates the problems is corruption. It is "customary" for dispensaries to run out of medical supplies, even when they have sufficient budget and inventories.

6.4 Business (Economic)

As mentioned earlier, businesses do not merely exist for profit making. Viewed from another perspective, they are the solution providers in a society and provide effective solutions to individual, institutional and societal needs, thereby earning their revenue.

Let's now discuss some of the core issues concerning our businesses that undermine our potential socioeconomic development.

6.4.1 Lack of Vision

Entrepreneurs are a product of social institutions, especially of education. We have earlier seen, how our educational institution fails to meet the higher purpose of education. This shortcoming is carried forward to businesses in the form of shortsightedness that is contrary to the very spirit of entrepreneurship.

A typical example of shortsightedness is the "treatment" of quality in our exports. Pakistani exporters do not enjoy a great reputation in the international community in this regard. The cases of marked difference in sample quality and the items shipped are not rare. It is for this reason, that some of the Pakistani brands (e.g. basmati rice) are often marketed by Indian businesses because of their far better reliability.

Businesses in Pakistan do not have a very high vision, and thus have a short-term focus. They are more focused on actual profits than potential. That's how most Pakistani businesses "maintain" a generally small size even in decades.

6.4.2 Risk and Initiative

The business in Pakistan is accustomed to "playing safe". It is one of the reasons for business saturation. Our businesses generally follow the trend. Be it in medicine, engineering or more recently, in IT.

Risk, initiative and innovation are integral ingredients of entrepreneurship. Interestingly, these individual traits are also often bound to cultural values. Our culture however (including many other developing countries), scores very low on these values. Let's consider some practical examples.

- While the Americans (from North America) and the Europeans dig oil in the middle east and establish their offshoots in Central Asia, one may ask, how many Pakistani businesses were able to

- expand their market to Central Asia, on the fall of the Soviet Union?
- How many multinationals has Pakistan been able to establish in half a century?
 - Sialkot is the hub of sports (and surgical) goods. It produces the best quality products (football, bats, shoes, sportswear etc. etc.), and is known worldwide for its quality. But how many "brands" have Sialkot "introduced"? Interestingly, most of the quality products that we produce are **FOREIGN BRANDS** – Nike, Adidas, etc. etc. and are often stamped "*Made in France*" etc. once shipped.
 - While Pakistan serves the whole of Europe and North America in Information Technology, to meet their national needs, how many Pakistani software "products" have we launched in the past two decades?
 - While Pakistani physicians hold top positions in the world wide "chains" of hospitals, how many "chains" of hospitals have we established?

While Pakistani businesses may be making millions, they are unfortunately unable to realize their economic potential due to the above-mentioned entrepreneurial weaknesses. The result being, that we are deprived of huge "potential" growth and development, and have a much higher unemployment rate, than we should have, if we had capitalized on the opportunities around us.

6.4.3 Social Responsibility

Economic institutions do not operate in a vacuum. They serve and depend on the society at large. They are part of the "larger" social system. Ideally, being a part of the system, their goals and functions should be "aligned" with that of the system. Unfortunately, as we have seen earlier, the Pakistani society is yet to establish a common national vision and goal(s). This national (systemic) failure makes it hard, if not impossible, for its subsystems (institutions), to perform its functions in a cohesive and harmonious fashion.

Let's examine a few examples, where our businesses have clearly lagged behind in fulfilling their social obligations.

- Tax Evasion – more of an epidemic in Pakistan. While larger businesses tactfully "avoid" taxes, most of the small businesses are "undocumented", and are thus out of the tax net.

- Social Exploitation – Many sectors are known for systematic social exploitation. Examples include brick laying, sports goods, carpet and some textile industry. Exploitation includes, forced labour, sexual abuse and child labour.
- Environmental Pollution – Due to legal loopholes and poor governmental control, many industries have severely damaged the environment. A classical example is the tanneries in Kasur, which is plagued with poisonous chemical wastes from tanneries, causing numerous health hazards including cancer.
- Social Investment – In civilized societies, business institutions play a proactive role in social development. Examples include, research funding to universities and educational institutions, employment programs in coordination with public institutions, and other social contributions like donation and support to social institutions (orphanages, schools, hospitals), promoting social awareness etc.

The social contribution of our businesses in social institutions is wanting. One area that could have heavily benefited from such contribution could be education. Even seen from a purely “economic” perspective, education is a viable “business” in Pakistan. Unfortunately, the economic institution in Pakistan has been unable to avail this “business” opportunity, and has failed to meet the societal needs in this regard, in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

6.5 Religion

Religion (Islam) holds an important position in our social framework, for historic (and cultural) reasons. It is one of the chief sources of our values, norms and national symbols.

Thus religious beliefs have great influence on our institutional (family, education, government, politics etc.) and social behaviour.

Unfortunately however, Islam is widely misrepresented and misinterpreted, in the society, from individual to public affair. Thus many of the so-called “values”, and “norms”, that are supposedly rooted in Islam, are actually an outcome of this misinterpretation. And due to the influence and emotional value attached to Islam in the society, these norms and values are hard to “touch” or change. The natural outcome of this phenomenon is cultural stagnation and religious dysfunction.

Let's now examine some of the issues pertaining to this institution in our society.

6.5.1 Status of Women

Male "superiority" and dominance over females and the subordination and submissiveness of females are commonly practiced social norms in Pakistan. This concept can be witnessed in all segments of society (urban, rural, literate and illiterate), though with slight variations.

Some of the manifestations of this concept include: extremely strict observance of dress code (often against the will), forcibly arranged marriages, submissive attitudes and behaviour, low social participation (education, professions, business etc.).

In rural or illiterate segments of the society however, the concept is carried too far.

The origins of these attitudes, values and norms are often cited in religion, however in reality, it is clearly a non-religious cultural phenomenon rooted in tribal and feudal cultures. But conscious association of such norms with Islam, have made these practices long lasting, and "hard to change".

6.5.2 Political Abuse

Islam has been widely politicized in Pakistan. It is often used as a political shield by both governments and the oppositions, the motive being to exploit the soft corner about Islam that exists among the general public. The consequence (among many others) is nation wide hypocrisy.

6.5.3 Trends in Religious Education

Two centuries ago, the terms *maulvi*, *maulana* and *allama*, were used for great scholars, and learned men. These men were considered learned in both religious and worldly affairs (many of those maulvis and allamas, like Maulana Johar and Allama Mashraqi were in fact Oxford graduates). Today these terms reflect a very narrow view of religion and education. There is an increasing tendency towards extremism in religion and this tendency is also reflected in religious education.

So Islam, a religion (or culture) that initiated an intellectual revolution world wide, and established a "scientific society" 1400 years ago, is widely regarded today as a mark of conservatism and extremism.

6.5.4 Intolerance and Sectarianism

The institution of religion in Pakistan is marred with emotionalism, ignorance and extremism. Add to it, the politicization of religion. This trend has led to religious intolerance, both within Muslim sects, and towards other religions. Many religious groups (that often seek cover under their "political wings") are widely known for violent activities against people of other sects.

Thus Islam, historically a symbol of peace and tolerance, is now a "hot spot" for human rights issues.

The institutions that were historically regarded as "schools of thoughts", in Islam, are today treated as opposing sects, worthy of contempt, hatred, and at times killings.

Thus the primary function of religion, namely social integration, is suffering from an institutional dysfunction in Pakistan.

6.5.5 Morality

A majority of the Pakistanis are religious people (one way or the other), and look upon religion for guidance in moral issues. But Pakistan is ranked among the most corrupt nations in the world, has a very bad reputation in human rights, and does not reflect a great social picture. So despite having deep roots and influence in the society, the religion (Islam) in Pakistan, has failed to perform its moral function. The causes of this dysfunction are however complex and historic in nature, and is beyond the scope of this paper.

7 Common Issues

Having discussed the individual institutional issues, I shall now describe some of the common problems that can be found in our institutions and the society at large.

7.1 Vision

Vision is defined as "the ability to think about or plan the future with great imagination or wisdom". Vision involves goals and farsightedness and requires a proactive attitude rather than reactive and situational. We as a people, along with our institutions, are caught up in a

“firefighting” mode focused on short-term, quick fixes of our social problems. While this mode of thinking is important for survival, it is nevertheless not ideal for thriving. Growth and development (both individual and institutional) requires a different mindset involving foresight, vision, and most importantly, high goals. Any society that manages to systematically inculcate these values into its individuals and institutions has a very bright future ahead.

7.2 Leadership

Institutions are organized groups of people. And Leaders are the driving force behind these groups. Leadership provides vision, sets goals and instills culture and values into institutional life. Good leaders inspire and motivate by setting personal examples. People look up to leaders, in times of crises.

The element of leadership in our institutional life is wanting. This gap is one of the explanations of the visionary void that exists in our society.

This leadership “crisis” is not by accident. While leaders instill culture, cultures also “create” leaders. Thus leadership is also a cultural value that may or may not exist (in relative terms) in a culture.

7.3 Capability

Capability is the ability or power to do something. Some capabilities are inherent. However, most can be acquired, through learning, education, training etc. Our “human” capabilities are unquestionably high, as explained in the introduction of this paper. However the institutional capabilities can (and must) be developed systematically in a national spirit. Two institutions can play a pivotal role in this regard – education and government. However, a well-concerted public-private partnership may deliver the most effective results.

7.4 Maturity

Maturity may be defined as “the state or quality of being fully grown or developed”. From an institutional perspective, the signs of immaturity include:

- Reactionary instead of proactive
- Focused on immediate issues (as against future or long term)

- Institutional performance depends on “heroes”/individuals rather than on a system, and thus is not reliable
- Failures are repeated, without lessons learnt

Just having a glance at the above points and reflecting upon our institutional history (both past and contemporary), it would not be wrong to conclude that our institutions have a long way to go to reach maturity.

As an example, just consider the political game play that is on and on since half a century, with no lessons learnt at all.

7.5 Accountability

Accountability is an essential component of institutional functioning. No institution can function normally without an effective system of accountability. Accountability can be established at various levels, including:

- Personal (conscience)
- Institutional
- Social
- Legal

Let’s consider some common examples of accountability (or lack of) at the institutional level.

Imagine what behavioural impact would it have, if excesses committed by males (of a family) on females, are held accountable at the family or community level?

What impact would it have on bureaucracy, if justice prevails “at the top”, and corrupt officials are brought to justice in public?

Would politics be the same, if the people became socially aware and started holding accountable, their public representatives, for their pronouncements, decisions, and behaviours?

The current social circumstances however, depict a very grim picture. Lack or absence of accountability, seems to systematically (and institutionally) guarded in the social framework. The system instead of holding accountable guards and protects the ones to be accountable.

8 National Perspective

Institutions do not function in a void. They are systems, and work in a broader social environment. Though, institutions affect environment, they are also affected by the environment itself. In this section I shall briefly outline some of the national (cultural) issues that set the context for institutional functioning and can have a macro impact on our national and institutional life.

8.1 Cultural Stagnation

"...partly owing to a misunderstanding of the ultimate motives of Rationalism, and partly owing to the unrestrained thought of particular Rationalism, conservative thinkers regarded this movement as a force of disintegration, and considered it a danger to the stability of Islam as a social polity. Their main purpose, therefore, was to preserve this social integrity of Islam, and to realize this the only course open to them was to utilize the binding force of Shariah...."

*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,
Allama Muhammad Iqbal*

Three hundred years of social decay, and a hundred years of subjugation, left a lasting impact on our culture. The case was further worsened by systematic destruction of Muslim institutions, by the British imperialists, with an effort to hamper any residual vitality among the Muslims polity.

This cultural "invasion" brought about a "natural" reaction, of preservation, resulting, in the long run, as cultural stagnation.

This cultural crisis has been complicated by the influx of new cultural invasions, made possible through communication advancements over the past few decades. As new (western) ideas, thoughts, norms and values enter our social framework, the society finds itself incapable of positively countering the influx, due to its inability to generate its own, original, new ideas, and thoughts in the light of the changing world.

The natural consequence of this social havoc is further cultural decay. To acknowledge the above, just consider:

- What is the "social" value of Urdu vs. English
- What is the status of national literature in Pakistan? Can an average Pakistani today, appreciate (understand) the literary masterpieces of Ghalib and Iqbal?

- Have we been able to preserve our heritage (literature, arts, music, ideals, history etc. etc.)
- Has our society been able to reproduce (after independence) great minds like Ghalib, Mir, Shibli, Hali, Sir Syed, Maududi, Azad, Iqbal, Jinnah, to face the cultural challenge?
- How long can a society “survive” through this cultural dilemma, in the light of momentous global changes?

8.2 Self-image

The self-image of an individual or a society emerges on social (or cultural) interaction. Individuals for example derive a sense of self, through the actions and reactions of others. These actions and reactions are interpreted by individuals as “good” or “bad”, and ultimately generate a feeling, of goodness or badness in the minds of the individual. This feeling about “self” however has a huge behavioural impact on the lives of the individuals.

We can extend this psychological view to a sociological perspective (as it also involves humans and with same psychological limitations). Societies and cultures also have a “self-image”, which they draw through cultural interaction.

From the discussion so far, on our societal and cultural aspects, it may not be wrong to conclude, that the self-image we usually draw through foreign cultural interaction is essentially negative. Some of the “labels” that we get from such interaction include: corrupt, poor, uncivilized, conservative, fundamentalist, extremist, and most recently, terrorist.

Part of this self-imagining depends on our own mental constructs (thinking) – on how we receive or construct the meanings of such labeling.

Constructing a negative self-image (cultural) would have enormous psychological and sociological consequences on our national, institutional and individual behaviour, further deepening our social (and personal) crisis.

8.3 Social Confidence

Confidence is defined as “a feeling of trust or belief in a person or thing”.

It is a psychologically established fact, that human behaviour is a function of belief and perception - and so is social behaviour. If we are to succeed in our national and social life, we must learn to have faith in ourselves, our culture and our future. From a sociological perspective, no society can survive without this social confidence, especially during testing times.

As is clear from the observation in the beginning of this paper, that there are enormous talents and capabilities in our people. This paper however revolved around some of the negative aspects of the society. I chose the subject of institutions, because of their immense influence on society.

The main objective was to realize and accept the existence of our cultural (and institutional) problems, and to reflect upon the nature and possible causes of these problems. Within the text of course, also lie some remedies.

In the concluding lines, I must stress forcefully, that Pakistan has a huge human potential. It has arguably one of the most "untapped" human resources in the world.

We are going through a very sensitive phase in history, and are facing unforeseen challenges all around. With the greatness of our people, and through solemn reflection on our shortcomings, we can undoubtedly rise up to the challenges and enter a new phase of our national history.

Rise we shall, but rise we must, with our own national aspirations, based on our own revitalized cultural values, and with the personal endeavours of our people and our own resources.

9 References

Books and printed reference

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Online Resources

- <http://www.dawn.com>
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