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Character of the Pakistani Nation

8th of Oct, 2005 dawned as a completely normal and average day, but was anything but average before it ended. The destruction in life and property is still being calculated with figures of 70,000 dead and many more injured being thrown about. The destruction in property will probably be much higher than USD 5 billion officially being communicated by the government.

These are the statistics!

Moving away from the numbers one sees the death and destruction in hospitals and narrated by people who have been in the disaster zones.

Almost everyone knows of someone whose one or more near and dear ones have been killed in the tragedy.

In time of such adversity the character of a people can be seen. So far, what it has shown of the Pakistani people is interesting.

On the one hand the Pakistani nation has shown the spirit of giving like never seen before in Pakistan and probably not seen in many other parts of the world. People have contributed to the relief effort with passion and a sense of responsibility, like the clerk in my father's office who contributed Rs 200 even though he himself lost his home in his village.

And like the people of Karachi (besides other cities) who contributed in the millions and queued up for hours to contribute. In fact, Karachi collected so much material to send to the affected parts that the logistics system became overloaded and could not cope.

But these acts of selflessness cannot hide the acts of utter shamefulness, where some people cut off the hands of dead ladies in the rubble to steal their gold bangles.

These stories illustrate and reinforce the view that when push comes to shove the Pakistani people can mobilize resources, which most nations can only hope for in spite of some very disgusting people in our midst. But the bad they have done is overwhelmed by the good that so many have done and continue to do.