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## Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Great Advocate of Social Justice and Equality

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Today, we are celebrating 135<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Truly, it was the vision of our great Quaid that had laid the basis for the concept of an Islamic Social welfare state, which is a need of hour today.

Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, as a visionary and dynamic leader, a great political thinker and strategist and a believer in democratic values was one of the great nation-builders. He followed a highly disciplined life, had an immaculate character, was bestowed with the ability to forecast the results and had the analytical mind to approach any problem in an objective and solution oriented manner.



The visionary leadership of the great Quaid envisioned an independent country where socio-economic justice and equality was to be the hallmarks of the state. His political acumen could be ascertained by the fact that he not only created a nation out of an amorphous and subjugated minority but also succeeded in establishing a nation-state for them.

It is also imperative to note here that Quaid-e-Azam never resorted to undemocratic or unconstitutional means rather he was a democrat to his very core. At a public meeting in Dacca on 21 March, 1948, he made it clear that the Government's aim and objective should be to serve the people and devise ways and means for their welfare and betterment. He said "it is in the hands of people to put the government in power or remove it from power".

The great visionary leader gave special importance to welfare of the people. In his historic policy speech on August 11, 1947, Quaid said that "there is no other solution. Now what shall we do? Now, if we want to make this great State of Pakistan happy and prosperous, we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well-being of the people, and especially of the masses and the poor." Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah dreamt about Pakistan with equal opportunities and equity in the distribution of resources, for all specially the masses, to live a meaningful life.

This vision of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah is still very much relevant and in fact, there is a dire need to implement his vision in its true spirit. It is worth mentioning here that the first democratically

elected Prime Minister of Pakistan Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his daughter Shaheed Benazir Bhutto sacrificed their lives for realization and practical manifestation of the same vision and aspirations of Quaid-e-Azam Mohamamd Ali Jinnah, transformed into Pakistan Peoples' Party's manifestation of "Roti, Kapra aor Makan – Elm, Roshni, Sab ko kam". Shaheed Benazir Bhutto took this mission forward with full zeal and sacrificed her life for making Pakistan a welfare state as dreamt by Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

However, this pursuit did not end rather it has gain an unprecedented momentum under the unwavering resolve and relentless support of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani. The democratic government believes that the concept of social justice, equal opportunities and wellbeing of the people is the only way forward to become a prosper democratic nation as it was envisioned by the founding father of the nation.

Today, people of Pakistan are confronting with various economic challenges and hardships, which are basically resulted by the deviation from the path that Quaid-e-Azam had suggested for the growth and prosperity of this nation. Due to this deviation, our national economy has crippled down gradually and took worse shape as a result of recent global economic crisis.

Though, the prevailing economic and geo-political atmosphere is not so conducive to launch any concrete socio-economic reforms in the country yet the democratic government of Pakistan while deriving the spirit from the vision of Quaid-e-Azam, has shown tremendous resolve to confront the challenges of rising inflation, mounting unemployment, and diminishing opportunities for the major sections of society who are living below the line of poverty.

The great Quaid also attributed women empowerment as essence of development and progress of any society. Here, I would quote the golden words of Quaid-e-Azam with regard to the status of women in society. He said "I have always maintained that no nation can ever be worthy of its existence that cannot take its women along with the men". The Quaid added further, "No struggle can ever succeed without women participating side by side with men. There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a great competition and rivalry between the two. There is a third power stronger than both, that of the women."

The guiding principles of the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah regarding socio-economic uplift of the downtrodden, women empowerment and an enlightened population had prompted the present democratic regime for an urgent and direct relief for the vulnerable and marginalized segments of society to give them hope and means to live.

From the platform of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), we are striving to translate the vision of the founding father of the nation into reality and to become a long awaited ray of hope for the millions of hopeless of this country. We are rightly feeling pride on gaining support and trust of various prestigious international organizations as transparency, objectivity and impartiality have been the hallmark of this programme.

Keeping in view the notion of equality given to us by Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, BISP followed a fair and impartial selection criterion for all the deserving families to get registered with BISP. To serve the downtrodden segments of society according to dictums of the great Quaid, we have introduced various initiatives like: monthly cash grants, long-term interest free financial assistance and vocational and technical training opportunities for the under-privileged sections of society.

Furthermore, considering education an important instrument of combating poverty, BISP is all set to launch its Waseela-e-Taleem initiative for the children belonging to these deprived segments of society. These initiatives are highly significant to break the myth that people belonging to these helpless strata are not capable enough to initiate and run their business or to acquire the skills to change their fate. Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is striving hard for the fulfillment of the dreams of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

As far as the service to poor masses and making Pakistan a social welfare state is concerned, the birthday of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah provides us an opportunity to reaffirm our resolve and commitment towards these marginalized segments of society and to continue with our struggle to uplift and improve their lives further.

***Especially written in connection with 135<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.***