

Independence Day: Democracy and Welfare, Hand in Hand



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The 65th anniversary of the independence of Pakistan that we are celebrating today is coinciding with another landmark in the history of Pakistan that the PPP led democratic government in Pakistan is about to complete its constitutionally mandated term of five years. It is a great omen for the future of democracy in the country as it was envisioned by the founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Yes, still there is a lot to be done to translate the true vision of the founder of Pakistan as well as the hopes and aspirations of millions of the people into a reality but the matter of immense satisfaction for us is that in spite of all the odds and the hurdles, a roadmap for a truly democratic, progressive and prosperous society has finally drawn out. Thus, we have strong conviction that all the obstacles in the way of making Pakistan a moderate and progressive polity would be removed with the help of people of Pakistan who have firm belief in democracy and democratic evolution.

Pakistan emerged on world map as an independent state, thanks to an unprecedented democratic struggle led by Quaid-e-Azam and the immense sacrifices of the Muslims of subcontinent. The democracy is the essence of Pakistan as its creation was achieved through a democratic movement and thus the future of the nation also lies in an egalitarian democracy where the social, political and economic rights of every citizen are provided, protected and respected.

In line with the objectives of demand for an independent country and hence, the creation of Pakistan, we must show complete adherence to all the democratic values, supremacy of the will of the people, respect for the constitution as well as respect for human rights and provision of equal opportunities to all the citizens.

It is unfortunate that the people of Pakistan were denied the promised rights, opportunities and freedoms when a bunch of power hungry and undemocratic folks exhibited reversion from the basic principles laid down for the country only to protect their myopic and vested interests. This long subjugation of the people of Pakistan was ended with the emergence of visionary and dynamic leadership of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto gave the people of Pakistan their fundamental rights in accordance with the objectives of the independence and even sacrificed his life for the crime of empowering people of Pakistan. After another dark era of tyranny, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto revived the struggle and advanced the mission of her Shaheed father which was based on the philosophy that the real source of power are the people of Pakistan; hence their rights must be protected.

Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto also sacrificed her life during her struggle for the restoration of the real democracy; hence the rule of the people. She always emphasized on the true democracy so that the objective of emancipation of the poor and downtrodden segments of society could be achieved.

Today, Pakistan is again on the crossroads of the history where the struggle between Bhutto-ism and the anti-democracy and anti-people mindset is going on. However, the present democratic government led by PPP believes that democracy and the people of Pakistan would be ultimate winner as the history of nations suggests that the forces of darkness and tyranny cannot stand before the will of the people for long. Hence, while marking our day of independence today, it is our firm belief that the time has come to force the remnants of wickedness to pack up and leave for good this time around.

As far as the hopes, aspirations and the rights of the people are concerned, the struggle of PPP is actually struggle of every Pakistani including the farmers, laborers traders, teachers, doctors, intellectuals, students besides women and minorities. This struggle is not only to protect democracy but also to safeguard and ensure the dignity of every Pakistani with equal economic opportunities and chances to earn honorable livelihood.

Besides, to confront with various external and internal threats and challenges, the present government under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari has taken courageous steps to ensure greater national reconciliation and to create an environment of socio-political harmony and tolerance in the country. Indeed, this was the unfulfilled mission of Shaheed Bibi who believed in the spirit of forgiveness to evolve the nation as a moderate progressive society. Therefore, at this critical juncture of our history, the efforts of the government need to be augmented by all the genuine political forces of the country so the core national issues could be confronted with a national spirit.

The democratic government, in spite of grave financial challenges due to global financial crisis and militancy at home, did not neglect the economic hardships being faced by the people, especially, the downtrodden segments of society. The launch of comprehensive social safety net such as Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) right after the PPP led government came into power was a clear message that the real democracy is all about people and their aspirations.

Due to its highly transparent and efficient mechanisms, the program has not only attracted global admiration and appreciation but has also been able to achieve significant breakthrough with regard to its various stated objectives i.e. poverty alleviation, women empowerment, health, employment and education. All these interventions of BISP carry

the prime objective of uplifting the lives of the underprivileged as well as to empower the weak and vulnerable of the society especially women.

While marking the Independence Day, we believe that the nation would keep showing its unwavering support to democracy so that the agenda of the empowerment of the people of Pakistan could be continued and the benefits of a social welfare state could be reaped accordingly. On this occasion, we also reaffirm our commitment that the struggle to make our beloved country a moderate progressive and tolerant society in accordance with the vision of Shaheed Bibi would be continued.

***Especially written article in connection with Independence Day**