

August 14 and the Need for Greater National Reconciliation

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We are marking the 64th anniversary of the independence of Pakistan today. It is a day that reminds us of the momentous struggle and sacrifices that were made during the independence movement. It is a country that had been created through democracy and hence, we need to evolve and nurture a strong democratic culture in the country.



Pakistan was created as homeland of us wherein we could live in freedom and thus, shape our lives while determining our own destiny. It is a state which was envisioned by Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah as a society based on democratic values, constitutionalism and equality as well as respect for human rights. The Pakistani nation has made tremendous sacrifices to attain the same dream about the Pakistan of its founding father.

As flag-bearer of this struggle and to safeguard the rights of the people, the first directly elected Prime Minister of Pakistan; Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto sacrificed his life. Later, his daughter and the heir of her legacy, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto also laid down her life as continuity of the same struggle.

She sacrificed her life to safeguard the country from the threat of militancy and to restore the real democracy. She knew that only true democracy can be the guarantee for the emancipation of the poor and downtrodden segments of society. Today, the democratic government of Pakistan Peoples Party is striving to complete the mission of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.

The democratic government has some milestone achievements pertaining to this mission and vision. However, it will keep endeavoring to give the people their rights and ensure employment and education for the all.

The struggle of Pakistan Peoples Party is also a struggle of farmers, laborers traders, teachers, doctors, intellectuals, students as well as women and minorities. It is a struggle to protect the dignity of every Pakistani and to provide the opportunities and honorable livelihood.

The great Quaid, during one of his historic speeches, said that “we must work our destiny in our own way and present to the world an economic system based on true Islamic concept of equality of manhood and social justice. We will thereby be fulfilling our mission as Muslims and giving to humanity the message of peace which alone can save it and secure the welfare, happiness and prosperity of mankind”.

These words of the founding father of Pakistan clearly reflect that he envisioned Pakistan as a modern democratic as well as a welfare state established on the basis of principles of fair-play and justice. Today, the same vision needs to be applied at every level to confront the daunting challenges and to combat with external and internal threats as well as the growing militancy and poverty.

Likewise, the nation also needs to comprehend the notion of greater national reconciliation given to us by Shaheed Bibi. As a forward looking leader, she had the realizations of all the issues and challenges that we are combating with today. Indeed, it is high time to revisit her philosophy and the political forces need to sit together on core national issues instead of indulging into petty self serving politics.

As a nation, the Independence Day is an opportunity to pledge to put our heart and soul together and create a greater national harmony so that Pakistan could be turned into a stable and prosper country. There is a need to realize the vision of Quaid e Azam and the mission of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Bibi and to make collective efforts for transform Pakistan into a modern, progressive and forward looking society.

While the nation today is confronting with unprecedented challenges, it is a high time for us to revisit the idea behind the demand and creation of this great nation. Fortunately, the pursuit of materializing this vision in to reality has not forsaken. The present democratic government, under the unwavering resolve of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, is committed to make Pakistan a welfare state as dreamt by Quaid-e-Azam and to stick with the notion of the national reconciliation as it was envisioned by Shaheed Bibi.

The democratic government, with regard to the concept of a nation state and empowering people of Pakistan, has taken numerous significant steps. As a comprehensive social safety net, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has also been established in accordance to same vision of empowering poor and downtrodden segments of the population.

Moreover, as a result of the transparent and efficient mechanisms adopted by the BISP, the programme has emerged as first ever such initiative in the social sector of the country, which has gained support and trust of various prestigious international organizations.

The programme, besides attaining global appreciation for transparent and efficient mechanisms it has adopted, has achieved several milestones i.e. in the arena of poverty alleviation, women empowerment, health, employment and education while all of these, measures are directed to uplift the lives the poorest of the poor of society.

These initiatives are perfectly in line with the vision of Quaid-e-Azam, which is clearly reflective from the policy speech of Quaid-e-Azam delivered on August 11, 1947. He said that “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.”

Gradually, the initiatives taken by BISP to make Pakistan a welfare state, are contributing significantly in materializing the dreams of Quid-e-Azam and the mission of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. However, we need to follow the wisdom of these great leader regarding evolving a more peaceful, harmonized and tolerant society.

A cursory look at the contemporary world also dictates us that the nations that are far ahead of others in all social indicators including the growth rate, development and a strong economy are strongly clung with the modern notions of peaceful co-existence, tolerance, rule of law and equal opportunities to all the citizen without any discrimination of the caste, creed and religion.

The Independence Day provides us an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment with the mission of uplifting the lives of poor and marginalized segments of society including the women and minorities. Moreover, to make our beloved country a modern progressive and tolerant society as well as a great homeland for every Pakistani, the vision of Shaheed Bibi must be revisited in its true spirit.

Especially written article in connection with Independence Day