

November 9, 2012

## A Gift to the Nation on Iqbal Day



*By: Madame Farzana Raja*

*Federal Minister and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme*

Today the nation is celebrating the Birth Day of Sir. Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, the poet of the East, a great visionary thinker and the philosopher of Pakistan. He was a dynamic legislature and a politician whose greatest achievement was to create the ideology of Pakistan, which later became the very basis of independence of Pakistan.

Allama Iqbal, as a pragmatist, laid emphasis on the doctrine of self-realization (*Khudi*), which means the realization of divine attributes forming the essence of man's nature and ultimately leading to progress.

The major components of the self realization of Iqbal are one's self respect, dignity, self-understanding and understanding the Greater Being. This realization comes through various sources. It is not a divine knowledge that is bestowed upon the men but it is somewhat derived and adopted from inherited values, societal norms, trainings, education and experiences.

According to the Iqbal's dream of Pakistan, it would be a state which will take care of its citizens in most affectionate manner. It will become a cause of welfare and happiness by giving equal opportunities to its citizens as per the aspirations of Islam.

This state in the centre of South Asia, according to Iqbal, would be a unitary force and all the individuals will assimilate into it in a manner to benefit and love each other. Iqbal gave so much importance to a state that he said:

فرد قائم ربط ملت سے ہے تنہا کچھ نہیں  
موج ہے دریا میں اور بیرون دریا کچھ نہیں

*"Individual exists by virtue of his social contacts. He is nonentity without that association. He is like a wave in the river and has no existence outside it."*

We must realize that Iqbal talked about a state where every citizen should be treated equally and given equal rights in one's pursuit for happiness. Every

citizen must enjoy the fruit of liberty and be provided ample opportunities along with just distribution of wealth. Well being of all its children is the responsibility of the state which should behave indiscriminately with all of them without considering caste, creed, religion, color, ethnicity or political affiliation.

After the independence, over the span of long 65 years, much has been tried to achieve this dream. There have been policies, steps and efforts trying to materialize the aspirations of Iqbal but of little use most of the times.

Thanks God, I must say, this dream of human welfare is heading towards reality by virtue of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). BISP has been a standout endeavor throughout the history for socio-economic upbringing of the deprived people of Pakistan. It is the first step in making Pakistan a welfare state as per the aspirations of Allama Iqbal and has developed into a comprehensive social protection Programme. Along with providing relief to the poor, it is helping them to graduate out of the vicious poverty circle by virtue of the initiatives like Waseela-e-Haq (Interest Free Micro-Financing) and Waseela-e-Rozgar (Demand Driven Vocational and Technical Training). It is providing social safety measures in the form of Health Insurance and Life Insurance to help beneficiary families tackle the catastrophic impacts of health and life hazards. Along with that, transparency has become the hallmark of BISP due to its technology and globally recognized systems. Along with that, it has gained credibility, trust and confidence of the masses within the country and financial institutions and governments around the globe.

I can only humbly say that BISP has taken a step forward in the right direction as per the dream witnessed nearly a century ago. In a short span of 4 years, we have shown the world what we can do with our utmost efforts, dedication and motivation with the cause.

Coming back to Allama Iqbal's concept of 'Khudi' or 'self-realization', one important emphasis he makes is on one educated being. For Iqbal, education is the sole of a human being which creates selflessness and self-reliance at the mean time.

Iqbal while especially emphasizing on youth's education and character building says that:

علم و فن را اے جوان شوخ و شنگ  
مغز می باید نہ ملبوس فرنگ  
اند رہی رہ جز نگہ مطلوب نیست  
ایں کلہ یا آن کلہ مطلوب نیست  
فکر چالا کے اگر داری بس است  
طبع درآ کے اگر داری بس است

*“Arts and sciences O lively and eager youth,  
Requires a keen intellect not Western clothes  
What is needed in this quest is Vision?  
Not this or that particular head-dress.  
If you have a subtle intellect and a discriminating mind they would suffice to  
guarantee success.”*

Education for Iqbal is the primary notion when it comes to building a human personality which in turn builds a great state as the latter is a magnified individual.

Today on this very day, BISP in connection with the vision and knowledge of Iqbal, is launching Waseela-e-Taleem i.e. Co-responsibility Cash Transfer for Primary Education. Through this new initiative, BISP is encouraging its beneficiary families to send and retain their children in primary schools so that they can become literate and economically self-sufficient in the future. Incentive in the form of additional monthly cash transfer will be provided to recipients who send their children to primary school.

Under this initiative, up to three children of each beneficiary family shall be supported and the family shall be provided with an additional monthly benefit of Rs. 200 per child per month subject to at least 70% attendance.

This Programme, no doubt is a great gift to a great nation from Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). Through this programme 3 million children of beneficiary families will be sent to schools for provision of free quality education. This step is taken in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals as set by the United Nations.

BISP can prove to be an ideal platform for providing education throughout the country for various reasons. One, over the years, BISP has developed its reach out to millions of families including those whose children are not going to school and secondly, through nationwide poverty scorecard survey, it has compiled qualitative data to evaluate the problem and present a solution for it. Third, as BISP has been playing significant role in helping millions of poor families, it can put some sort of compulsion and condition for the cash transfer for education of the children of such families.

It is my firm belief that as per the message of Allama Iqbal, no nation can flourish unless and until it takes all segments of society on board. By leaving millions of people families behind, we cannot fulfill the dream of the Pakistan that Iqbal witnessed.

Waseela-e-Taleem (Right to Education) is a programme meant to change the future of Pakistan. By providing basic education to the children from deprived segment of society, we are trying to follow the wisdom of Iqbal. I am quite hopeful that Insha-Allah we will make Pakistan a country, where we can eliminate the difference between have and have-nots, provide all the children their basis right of education and food, provide very citizen the basic health and livelihood facilitates while marching together towards welfare and prosperity.

***Especially written Article on Iqbal Day***