**The Quaid’s vision for Pakistan**

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On December 25, the nation celebrated the birth anniversary of the man who fought against all odds, and the severest opposition to the division of the Subcontinent, and created our beloved Pakistan. He had a vision about the future of Pakistan and the challenges that it had to surmount to become a strong, prosperous and respected country among nations.

The birth anniversaries of national heroes and the founding fathers of nations are not only celebrated to pay homage to them, but are also used as an opportunity to renew pledges to follow the course scripted by them and pass on their legacy to the posterity.

Therefore, it is absolutely imperative to transmit the spirit of Independence to our youth and apprise them about Quaid-e-Azam’s vision about Pakistan. There is hardly any debate about the fact that he wanted Pakistan to be a democratic and progressive entity, taking inspiration from the principles of Islam. And within the framework of the newly-independent state – in line with his foregoing vision – he also enumerated the tasks that were at hand to translate the objectives of Independence into reality in his address to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947.

He reminded the legislature and the future government that the first duty of a government was to maintain law and order so that the life, property and religious beliefs of its subjects were fully protected by the state. This is a universally-accepted objective of governance and the most important ingredient of the state’s responsibility without which it is impossible to implement and pursue the objectives of Independence and strengthen our national moorings.

Jinnah also wanted to put an end to bribery and corruption on a priority basis as he viewed it as a poison. He said: “We must put it down with an iron hand and I hope that you will take adequate measures as soon as it is possible for this assembly to do so”. The next thing that he mentioned in order of priority was the evil of nepotism and jobbery. He was intensely aware of the debilitating impact of this menace on our society, which stemmed from the archaic colonial system of governance and had inbuilt avenues of promoting the culture of graft, entitlement

and nepotism – a tool that fomented social injustice.

Quaid-e-Azam also wanted the government to focus on promoting the wellbeing of the people, particularly the poor. He said: “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 wellbeing of the people, and especially of the masses and the poor”. Jinnah reiterated economic justice and the utilisation of state resources for the wellbeing of the underprivileged classes – a basic catalyst for peace in society.

With regard to communal harmony and the rights of minorities, he said: “If you change your past and work together in a spirit that everyone of you, no matter to what community he belongs, no matter what relations he had with you in the past, no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this state with equal rights, privileges, and obligations, there will be no end to the progress you will make. You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has

nothing to do with the business of the state”.

Jinnah was a firm believer in justice and fairness. He highlighted his stance on the matter in the following words: “I shall always be guided by the principles of justice and fair play without any prejudice or ill-will, in other words, partiality or favouritism. My guiding principle will be justice and complete impartiality, and I am sure that with your support and cooperation, I can look forward to Pakistan becoming one of the greatest nations of the world”.

On the basis of what Quaid-e-Azam envisioned and prescribed for Pakistan, and through an incisive look at the course that the country has traversed during the last 71 years as it struggles to rediscover its cherished destiny, it is difficult to say that we are living in Quaid-e-Azam’s Pakistan. It would indeed become Quaid-e-Azam’s Pakistan when the country is governed in the way that Jinnah wanted it to be governed.

The country is at a crossroads at the moment because it has failed to traverse the course charted out by the founding father. The reality is that the realisation of his vision and Iqbal’s dream about Pakistan, as enshrined in the Pakistan Resolution, is only possible through consolidating democracy and ensuring its uninterrupted continuation, and reforms in the system of governance through the collective wisdom of all political forces. For that, all political parties and political leaders would have to abandon the politics of self-aggrandisement and think in terms of promoting the wellbeing of the people by providing a system of governance that has been advocated by the founder of our country.

Unfortunately, the prevailing political atmosphere in the country is not very encouraging as far as efforts to strengthen democracy are concerned. Politicians are still refusing to learn from past mistakes and self-inflicted catastrophes. They need to change their attitudes. Pakistan will go forward once these politicians start thinking in terms of serving national interests, and state institutions stop acting like self-styled saviours of the nation and show the wisdom to operate within their own sphere of constitutional powers.

It is indeed necessary to give serious thought to our past follies as a nation and think about path-correction in conformity with Quaid-e-Azam’s vision. Celebrating his birth anniversary shouldn’t just be a routine yearly ritual.

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