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**Roots**

Roots can be defined in multiple ways by multiple people. If you ask a botanist, they will tell you that roots are the organs of a plant that constantly provide water and minerals to the stem and leaves. If you ask a mathematician, they will say that roots are the solution to a specific equation.

However, to me, the most important definition of roots is the place where we all come from. It could be where we were born, our native town, the society we live in, or our country.

The significance of our roots started pricking my mind when I went to the United Kingdom at a young age and made a comparison of our own society with the Western world. Over there, I came across a concept given by Kishore Mahbubani, a noble writer and ex-diplomat from Singapore – ‘The Seven Pillars of Western Wisdom’. Those were: education, science & technology, democracy, meritocracy, culture of peace, free market economics and pragmatism. According to him, there’s no democracy which is good or bad, it is rule of law which makes it so. I wondered, having gone through these words of wisdom: what was stopping us from following these key steps?

On our arrival back to Pakistan seven years ago, my father, grandfather, and I became committed to energizing our roots by implementing some of the key areas of Western wisdom in our humble capacity. We looked towards our village in Punjab and the facilities that it lacked, one of which was a library in the high school where my father had studied till matriculation. So along with the collaboration of his friends, he developed a state-of-the-art library with over ten thousand books and a few computer units for e-learning. To inculcate a sense of competition, the idea of an annual prize distribution ceremony amongst the top position holders was introduced.

The fruits of these changes were obvious when we saw that the results of these students were now amongst the best across all of Punjab. Another vital issue was poor families taking their children to work rather than sending them to school due to abject poverty. To address this critical problem, my grandfather along with likeminded people started distributing flour amongst those families. The concept has become so popular that at present, almost four hundred families of seven different villages are being supported, which has increased the overall attendance in the schools.

To keep students away from drugs and the ills of the digital age, a football stadium was built, which now hosts annual tournaments for football and other sports. Having done as much as we could for education, we also knew that the health sector was equally important. So we tried to improve the basic health unit, and a water filtration plant with the capacity to provide clean drinking water for a population of nearly 7000 people was installed. This helped solve one of the greatest issues in the village at the time.

The responsibility of energizing one’s roots is down to every single citizen. Making an efficacious contribution for our own country is essential for its betterment. It would lead to the strengthening of our roots; and if our roots are strong, it will lead to a stronger society and ultimately a stronger country.

Allah has blessed our country with great diversity, ranging from sky-high mountains to lush green valleys. All four seasons in their peak have temperatures ranging from minus 45 to plus 52 at the same time. We have one of the most beautiful capitals in the world, extremely hardworking people with immense resilience to defeat terrorism; we are also surviving well during this time of Covid-19.

Ultimately, we all are the same as perfectly described by Alex Haley in his book, ‘Roots: The Saga of an American Family’ in which he said, “Through this flesh, which is us, we are you, and you are us!” It is my firm belief that if every one of us begins to energize our roots, we will no doubt find ourselves amongst the leading nations in the times to come.

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