**Betraying the Objectives of Independence**

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The emergence of Pakistan on an ideological basis was arguably the most unparalleled event of the 20th century. This miracle, as described by some historians, was made possible by the indomitable leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah against the wishes of the Hindu leadership and the British rulers. It was under his leadership that the Muslims of the sub-continent finally resolved to have a separate homeland, which was expressed through a resolution adopted on March 23, 1940, at Lahore. It was within seven years of the adoption of a resolution that Pakistan became a reality. Consequently, March 23 is celebrated as Pakistan Day every year ostensibly to commemorate that epoch-making development, to express gratitude to the architects of Pakistan for their role in the crystallization of the dream of the Muslims of the sub-continent, apprising the new generation about the sacrifices made for independence and above all renewing our pledge as a nation to work relentlessly for the achievement of the goals of independence and the vision bequeathed by the father of the nation.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah not only created Pakistan but also outlined his vision about the course the country had to traverse to achieve objectives of independence, including social harmony, ensuring justice and rule of law in the country, waging a crusade against the curse of nepotism and corruption, giving top priority to the well-being of the masses and making Pakistan a democratic polity to earn a respectable place in the comity of nations.

The people, who, according to the constitution are sovereign and on whose behalf the governments are formed, have suffered enormously in the process.

Needless to emphasize that the best tribute that a nation can pay to its founding fathers is the implementation of the vision bequeathed by them and following the course envisaged by them. But it is a regrettable reality that Pakistan Day Celebrations have become only a ritualistic undertaking. Pakistan has defaulted on account of all the areas indicated by the founding father to make Pakistan a great nation. Our more than seven decades of history represents a betrayal of the objectives of independence and failure in the consolidating gains of that historic movement.

The responsibility for this state of affairs undoubtedly rests with the political leaders and military dictators who not only worked to perpetuate the archaic colonial system of governance with ingrained avenues of corruption but the perpetual rift in their outlooks also kept the country away from progressing as a democratic entity as envisaged by the Quaid. Corruption has scuttled the moral fabric of the nation which has become an accepted way of life. Consequently, the well-being of the masses has remained as elusive as ever. Not only that the country failed to maintain its territorial integrity due to the shenanigans of the military dictators and politicians.

The regrettable reality is that our politicians and rulers refuse to learn from the self-inflicted tragedies. The country remains a cradle of politics of self-aggrandizement sans morality and respect for the law and the constitution of the country. Though we have a democratic system and a constitution in the country but our credentials as a democratic polity showing respect to constitutional norms, remain abysmally bleak.

The country has successively been ruled by demagogues who have taken the nation for a ride to grind their own axes for building fortunes through corruption and misrule. In the process, the people who according to the constitution are sovereign and on whose behalf the governments are formed, have suffered enormously, particularly those belonging to the lower strata of the society and middle class.

To the chagrin of the poor masses a self-proclaimed revolutionary who barged on the political scene with the pledge for course correction, the introduction of the people-friendly system of governance and ending corruption which has been the bane of our socio-economic development, has also disappointed the nation. He has gone two steps ahead of the traditional politicians in grabbing political power by compromising on his announced political creed. And to retain that power is also inclined to go to any extent showing no respect for internationally recognized democratic norms law and the constitution.

On the eve of celebrating Pakistan Day this year, the country finds itself in yet another burgeoning political turmoil in the backdrop of a no-confidence motion filed by the opposition parties against the Prime Minister. In a democratic polity, it is the constitutional right of the opposition parties to file a no-confidence motion against a sitting Prime Minister. The Constitution has prescribed a procedure in this regard to resolve the issue.

But instead of handling the issue in conformity with the constitution, the government is trying every trick sans respect for law and constitution to thwart that move. It is threatening its dissenting members with dire consequences and has given the nod of approval to its workers to indulge in violence against them. The attack on Balochistan House was a shameful manifestation of violence on the part of the supporters of the ruling party. The Prime Minister and members of his cabinet—through their inflammatory rhetoric— are also enticing their supporters to commit acts of violence against the opposition.

It is not tenable why the Prime Minister instead of focusing on the no-confidence motion in line with the constitution, is running around the country to address public rallies, heaping scorn on the opposition leader. In the current situation, the issue is to be resolved by the votes of the legislators and not the general public. The announcement of a public rally by the Prime Minister in front of the parliament house on 27th March and the decision by the PDM to also hold a matching rally of their own on the same date and venue is an ominous development that promises violence and blood-shed on the streets. I wish that sanity prevails on both sides or some state institution intervenes to save the situation from taking an ugly turn.

The obtaining situation is an outcome of traditional power politics. This will keep happening again and again unless we get rid of the colonial system of governance with in-built avenues of corruption that gives rise to power politics. In my view, the country needs a new social contract to recast our system of governance in consonance with our religious moorings and objectives of independence. Unless that is done, celebrating Pakistan or Independence Day will carry no meaning.

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