

Significance of the Creation of Pakistan

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It is a strange truth that some of the most talked-about things in the world are those which are the least understood. This is so because cliches and commonplaces cease to interest people who – after a while – stop thinking about their inner meaning. There has been a lot of talk in recent times about the ideology of Pakistan but how many people are there who really think about it or know what it implies?

The young people of Pakistan feel a gaping vacuum in their lives. They long for a deep commitment to their country's cause but they cannot involve themselves passionately in a cause which they understand only in a very dim and vague way. They hear voices talking them of the genesis of their country in tones possessing the gravity and finality of the oracle of Delphi but these voices seem very far away and do not touch their hearts and lives. The young people of today have grown up in a world which believes supremely in the spirit of enquiry, which concedes that each generation has the right to find its own answers to its own questions. They are not interested in listening to monologues and sermons. They want to participate in a meaningful dialogue with those who may be wiser than themselves. If the significance of the creation of Pakistan is to be understood aright the way must be opened to this meaningful dialogue, this inter-change of thoughts and feelings, so that some kind of synthesis becomes possible. The young people have had enough of speeches – they just want to do a little plain and simple talking. They do not want to weave webs of sophisticated words which add up to nothing and dream neither of the past nor of the future. It is the present that they are worried about. They know that this is the time for reappraisal, for brutal soul-searching so that they know what they are, where they are, and where they are going. This is the time to think, to think pro-actively and honestly, to get rid of misunderstandings and illusions and false comforts and look squarely at the question – what is the significance of the creation of Pakistan?

When people speak of the significance of the creation of Pakistan they mostly refer to the significance of the creation of Pakistan in an *historical* sense. They repeat the history of what they call the freedom movement which led to the birth of a new country – the home-land of almost a hundred million Muslims. In order

to understand our country, its special character and obligations it is essential to know about the significance of the creation of Pakistan in this above-mentioned *historical* sense but, unfortunately, except for those who saw the bitter struggle which gave us Pakistan there are very few who understand the total meaning of what has so conveniently lumped together as “the freedom movement.” (I take exception to this term “freedom movement” because like all general terms it tends to obscure or minimize the contribution of individuals. It is not movements but individuals who have the power to inspire and since the time we allowed our Quaid and Iqbal and Mohammad Ali Jinnah to get lost in the vastness and vagueness of the freedom movement, we have closed the door on many lights which could have shown us the way to a higher reality.)

To the younger generation the horrors, the heartache, the incredible courage and faith which made Pakistan possible seem a remote reality. The man who makes his money knows its worth but the man who merely inherits it does not. The younger generation of Pakistanis has not made Pakistan, it has only inherited it. It is its great misfortune - and a great failing on the part of the older generation - that the worth of this inheritance was not made clear. History becomes a living force only when it is woven into the very texture of a nation's life. In our case, however, to our great misfortune, it has remained a merely academic thing – a subject to be studied like any other subject – a subject which, in fact, no one seems willing to study unless he is to appear for some competitive examination. The younger generation tends to regard the freedom movement as something akin to the movement of the seas or winds, something inevitable like a cyclone or volcanic eruption – a natural phenomenon for which no human being is responsible. It is forgotten that this movement was the result of conscious effort and dauntless determination involving such stupendous labour and sacrifice that it seems incredible it should all have been forgotten so soon.

A nation does not learn history from history books alone. It learns its history from the very air it breathes, from its streets and its roads, its movements and its cemeteries, its literature and its art. A nation learns its history when its history is everywhere around it, when it wakes and sleeps and lives with it. When a nation confines the lessons of its history to the class-room and even there makes it optional, it can never acquire that inner homogeneity which welds it into an indestructible organism. We are very proud of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and Taxila and have done much to preserve them. What have we done to make the memory of those who made Pakistan possible, a living thing not just a name or a tombstone or even a grand mausoleum? By way of homage to our history we have allocated certain days to certain personalities. This generally means that on one day of the year we pay our tribute mechanically to our Quaid and Iqbal and forget them on all the remaining days of the year. It is strange and tragic to think

how often while we are trying to enshrine, we entomb our great ones. When Iqbal was a voice in the wilderness, when he sang in the darkness of alien oppression, Muslims from one corner of the land to the other heard him and wept and swore to follow his light. Now we put Iqbal's picture in golden frames and his works in golden covers and forget the cause to which he gave his life.

If the younger generation of Pakistan feels lost and bewildered and ignorant, if it is lacking in knowledge and wisdom and faith, if it possesses but a very inadequate grasp of the significance of the creation of their country, it has every right to hold the older generation responsible. It is the duty of the older generation to transmit the legacy of whatever constitutes history to the next generation. If a failure of communication occurs – as is, unfortunately, the case with us – then the younger generation is cut adrift from its past, its culture and its traditions. It is then left to wander in a painful void, trying to figure out its identity and purpose in life. If the young are today so confused and unhappy and know so little of for what they should know, whose fault is it? Each must answer this question according to his own light but this is certainly a question which needs thinking about.

The most obvious - and perhaps the most disastrous effect - of a very inadequate communication of the historical significance of Pakistan to the younger generation is that for many young Pakistanis it has become possible to separate the concept of Pakistan from that of Islam. It is easy enough to accept the principle of secularism, of giving to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God, once one has conveniently forgotten that historically Islam was the only justification for Pakistan. Any effort to relegate Islam to the background or to confine it to a limited domain, would mean a clear repudiation of the very basis of our country. This fact is repeated often enough but its total significance can only be grasped if it is placed in its historical perspective.

Having referred to the historical significance of the creation of Pakistan one would now like to say something about its emotive or emotional significance. The emotive significance of a country – as concept and reality – is simply the sum-total of those values and ideals which the country symbolizes and which are dear to its people. The emotive significance of a country is, of course, derived from, and linked with, the historical significance of that country but as a psychological factor it may be distinguished from it.

The younger generation of Pakistanis faces a cruel dilemma when it tries to square the emotive significance of the creation of Pakistan with actually prevailing conditions. Pakistan is not just the name of a country, it is also an ideal – the ideal which united and inspired the teeming Muslims of the sub-continent to

launch their arduous struggle for independence. The younger generation of Pakistanis may not know fully-well how long and bitter were the hours of trial for our freedom-fighters but it certainly knows that Pakistan was created as a homeland for the Muslims wherein they could thrive materially and spiritually.

When Iqbal had advocated the centralization of Muslim power, the purpose which he had had uppermost in his mind was not the economic well-being but the preservation of the cultural identity of the Muslims. In a letter to the Quaid-e-Azam he had written, "It is absolutely necessary to tell the world both inside and outside India, that the economic problem is not the only problem in this country. From the Muslim point of view, the cultural problem is of much greater consequence to most Indian Muslims." Iqbal had attached so much importance to cultural autonomy because he believed that "Muslim Society, with its remarkable homogeneity and inner unity, has grown to be what it is under the pressure of the laws and institutions associated with the culture of Islam." Iqbal lived and wrote at a time when the cultural entity of Islam had been in serious danger of extinction at the hands of alien elements.

A young Pakistani of today has not seen the days of political subjection. If he cares at all about his culture, he does not think that it is in any jeopardy. He is much more worried about his material prospects. To him the main significance of the creation of Pakistan is that it was meant to be an El Dorado, the Promised Land of plenty wherein all doors shall be open to him and he shall be able to carve out a wonderful future for himself. When confronted with cold reality he sees a gaping disparity between the ideal and the actual and feels bitterly disillusioned. His disappointment is so overwhelming that he considers it tantamount to betrayal. He thinks that the ideal that Pakistan embodied has been achieved and yet circumstances are hostile to his advancement. Obstacles surround him and at times he feels completely alienated from his own soil.

The older generation throws up its hands in despair and says that the younger generation is ungrateful and impossible, that it expects too much. It may be true that the younger generation expects too much but then was it not the older generation which was responsible for such expectations? Was it not the older generation which thought that 14th of August 1947 was the end of the task and that they had nothing more to do except enjoy the rewards of their struggle? Why did the older generation which had seen the throes of Pakistan's birth not tell the younger generation that their country was not a lotus-land to dream in, not a toy to play with, but a delicate young tree which had to be nurtured and guarded till it grew to maturity? Why did the older generation think that once Pakistan was achieved all their problems would be solved automatically without any further efforts on their part? Here I would like to recite an incident which was narrated

to me by a Pakistani Professor who had made a deep psychological study of the attitudes of those who saw the creation of Pakistan. Immediately after independence, one truck-driver was driving his truck when his truck got stuck in the mud. He got furious and exclaimed: “*Changa Pakistan bunya ay mera truck ee na-eeen chalda.*” (What good was the making of Pakistan – my truck does not move!) This incident – very minor in itself – is indicative of the general thinking of excessive expectations and an unwillingness to work for the consolidation of the young nation.

It is true to say that Pakistan was Iqbal’s dream and also the dream of many million Muslims, but the creation of Pakistan was only the beginning of the fulfillment of this dream. The end of the dream was the establishment of the Islamic way of life which would make possible the material and spiritual betterment of all. It is our misfortune that having achieved Pakistan the spirit of sacrifice and struggle which had labored without counting the cost, gave way to complacency and a desire for an instant solution to problems.

The young person of today, disillusioned with the disparity between Pakistan the ideal and Pakistan the actuality, has also grown disenchanted with Islam. He blames Islam for his frustrations and disappointments forgetting that Islam stands for a set of values which become effective as a remedy for social ills only when adhered to with earnestness and translated into actual practice. It is not Islam which is to blame for our present calamities and problems but our own imperfect will to implement its principles with honest-to-goodness sincerity. A verse in the Qur’an says, “Verily God will not change the conditions of people until they change what is in themselves.” If we wish to establish an order of things closer to our hearts’ desire we must first transform our inner selves.

While speaking of the significance of the creation of Pakistan it is assumed all-too-often that the 14th of August 1947 was the grand finale to a superb success story and that there is nothing more to be done except to rest on our laurels. Now having suffered the pains of early adolescence one feels that one has acquired enough wisdom to know that we have to go a long, long way as yet before the ideal that Pakistan symbolized can be achieved. This realization may well be the beginning of our journey towards self-discovery and self-awareness. Once we become honest with ourselves and with each other, we will find the inner strength to strive to make Pakistan what it should and can be.

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