

BUILDING QAID-E-AZAM'S PAKISTAN THROUGH THE POPULAR WILL

Safdar Hasan Siddiqi

(Presented at the seminar arranged by the Society for Citizen's Rights
at Best Western Hotel, Islamabad on 31st July, 2000)

I am sure every one has gathered here with conscious minds and throbbing hearts to contribute and exchange their well-considered thoughts on how best to serve their country by extracting it from the quagmire of bad politics, and putting it on the right track of good governance. This is the common concern of both the intellectuals and the ordinary citizens.

I will begin my treatise by stressing that we should not ignore the fact that we owe the very existence of Pakistan to the dedicated efforts and the exemplary leadership of Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Others, who have followed him, with few exceptions, have done disservice, to a smaller or larger extent, to the cause of Pakistan. We will have to pass this judgement without fear if we intend to reverse this tide and in future contribute positively, as a nation, to build the country. Now, instead of grieving over the happenings in the past we should give our utmost thought and attention to what the father of the nation wished Pakistan to be. We should seek guidance from the advice I am sure every one has gathered here with conscious minds and throbbing hearts to contribute and exchange their well considered thoughts on how best to serve their country by extricating it from the quagmire of bad politics, and putting it on the right track of good governance. This is the common concern of both the intellectuals and the ordinary citizens. I will try, as best as I can, to lay before you the bases of future Pakistan. I will be very frank and forthright in my presentation. It is for you to judge its correctness and directions of Jinnah, left with us as his legacy, and agree to set our political, moral and cultural direction according to his wishes.

But before we do that, you would agree that most of our political leaders after Jinnah were not intellectually, educationally and morally of the desired capability. The concepts and politics advocated and practiced by these political leaders were rotten to the core. These self-styled leaders had saddled themselves in the seat of power through dubious means. These leaders, mostly feudals and capitalists, had installed themselves in positions of power by hook or by crook, and indulged intensively in promoting their own interests to the detriment of the nation. Their misdeeds brought about poverty, unemployment and a hoard of other disparities in the social, economic, political and cultural fields.

Therefore, after all the frightful experiences that we have had at the hands of our leaders, of betrayal of promises and plunder of national wealth, we will have to finally adopt a new political philosophy and a down- to- earth plan of action based on principles, if we wish to build Pakistan. Now, we shall have to speak out and present the truth, and nothing but the truth.

The salient feature of this political philosophy shall be:

- (a) The ownership of all land and means of production will belong collectively to the nation, which includes all citizens of Pakistan irrespective of caste, colour, race or religion. All citizens will be provided equal opportunities for its utilization according to their capabilities.
- (b) All the citizens of Pakistan will have equal rights. No distinction whatsoever will be made on considerations of gender, race or religion.
- (c) Political leadership will, in future, be thrown upwards from the grassroots from amongst the educated, talented and honest people of the lower and middle classes, and not from the vested interests and exploitative elements of the upper class.
- (d) Duality in our socio-political and judicial systems will be done away with. The duality inherent in the terms 'secular approach' and 'religious approach' will be removed.

The plan of action for national construction shall contain the following steps: -

(1) The 1973 Constitution will be restored in its original form. All amendments made by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Gen. Zia-ul-Haq and Mian Nawaz Sharif will be scrapped because their dictatorial governments had made all those changes in the interest of the vested classes and thereby undermined the real interests of the people. The truly democratic government, when it is put in place by 2002, after the necessary land reforms have been effected and electoral reforms made, will indeed have the right to make the necessary changes in the Constitution through Parliament in the interest of the nation.

(2) Elections will be held on joint electorate system as laid down in the 1973 Constitution.

(3) All the political leaders, civil bureaucrats and army generals who had indulged in corruption and dishonesty, during the last decade atleast, will be subjected to strict accountability. All those found guilty will, in addition to penalties and imprisonment, be debarred from any public office for atleast two decades.

(4) Persons belonging to the army, civil bureaucracy or the judiciary (which are auxiliary organizations of the government) will not be allowed to take part in politics, much less take over the administration of the state. Such persons, however, may be allowed to take part in politics after two years of their retirement from service, and fulfillment of the requirements of honest and clean politics.

(5) The politics of intrigue and confrontation will be totally scrapped and politics of dialogue, consultation and consensus adopted instead as a national policy.

(6) *Jagirdari* and *sardari* system will be totally abolished, and absentee landlordism banned. Through a process of land reforms, excess lands of over 50 acres per family will be taken over by the state without compensation, and a minimum of 8 acres will be given to the landless tenants on easy terms. This will result in immense increase in agricultural production and will raise the standard of living of the rural population (which is 70 % of the total population) to a great extent. It will give a tremendous boost to the country's economy as well.

(7) The construction of palatial houses will be banned. The maximum area fixed for houses will be one kanal. Owners of residential properties and commercial plazas valuing over one crore

will be subjected to wealth tax on reasonable rates. Those who leave behind huge properties and massive wealth will be subjected to Death Duty. Such a step will serve as an incentive to spend excess wealth on collective interest in their lifetime rather than leave it behind for their rickist offspring.

(8) Greatest attention in future will be given to democratically organized political parties. The future of politics will hinge on their being propellers of the political process, creators of political awareness in the masses, and monitors of the working of assemblies and elected party governments. Political parties claiming an all-Pakistan status will have branches in all the four Provinces and in majority of the districts in the provinces. Political parties that fail to secure atleast 5 per cent of polled votes in the first round (in the new system of elections) will not be allowed to contest the final round.

(9) Radical electoral reforms are a must if a truly democratic form of government is to be introduced in Pakistan. An easily understood, reasonable, and feasible criteria for selection of candidates and for permitting political parties' participation in elections, will be made. Emphasis will also be laid on elections being least costly and transparently fair

(10) Women's full participation in the affairs of the state and other gainful activities will be ensured, and all social and cultural impediments in its way removed.

Finally, a piece of advice for the politicians who are still masquerading as champions of democracy, and are getting a lot of undue publicity in the press. They have had enough of say in government for the last half-century but have failed miserably; they have spread enormous ideological and intellectual confusion; they have damaged the country's economy and social setup to an immeasurable extent. Therefore, they stand entirely exposed before the people. If they do not acknowledge these facts about their incompetence and dishonesty willingly, they would learn a hard lesson through the coming elections. They should admit their failure to serve the nation and quit the political arena on their own. Let them gracefully give way to clean, honest, dedicated, capable and open-minded leadership. New political parties, un-tinted by trickery, deceit and corruption must now enter the political field to win over

the electorate by creating confidence in them, and take the reins of government in their hands. There is no dearth of educated and talented men and women in the society and, in spite of the frustrations and complexities created during the last fifty years by the political and military dictators alike, the majority of Pakistanis being good people. The press must also support and promote the new public spirited political leaders in the national interest, and stop projecting bad politicians that have vested interests of their own.

The need for an upsurge of political activity on truly democratic lines, and the raising of the level of political awareness among the masses, is now looming large. Good people in the society should now come forward and form new political parties or join the existing ones of their choice, take the political process in their own hands, eject the bad elements from the body politic and move on towards establishing a fraternal, just, humane and egalitarian society in Pakistan. Such a society can certainly be developed in the light of the principles of "universal" Islam as embodied in the Holy Quran and provided by all the Prophets, and also propounded by the great philosophers and spiritual leaders. According to these principles, all humans, irrespective of race, religion or genders are treated equally and un-biasedly, and hence there is no place for religious elitism and their cult of religious intolerance and sectarianism. We will be able to give true shape to Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's dream about his Pakistan if we give up the negative cults and build our future on positive values and creative endeavours.

(Presented at the seminar arranged by the Society for Citizen's Rights at Best Western Hotel, Islamabad on 31st July, 2000)