

A Dream Deferred: Pakistan's Ongoing Fight for True Freedom

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(By Muhammad Awais)

As Pakistan marks its 77th year of independence, it's time for a sober reflection on the true meaning of freedom for a nation founded with grand promises of liberty and justice. While celebrations may paint a green, festive picture, a closer inspection reveals deep-seated issues that challenge the essence of the freedom many continue to fight for. This prompts a critical question:

“Have we attained what Jinnah had dreamt of?”

Decades have passed since independence, yet the fundamental human rights of many Pakistanis remain unprotected. Women and minorities are particularly vulnerable, often feeling unsafe

both in public and within the confines of their own homes. Sectarian unrest disrupts daily life, and

violence perpetrated by so-called patriots against the most defenseless members of society is all too common. The political environment is stained by instability, our education system is crumbling, and economic hardship has become the norm. Corruption infiltrates our judicial system, exacerbating crime and deepening poverty. Such conditions make the dream of a just society seem ever more distant.

Additionally, while the world makes significant advancements in technology, Pakistan significantly lags behind. Many areas in the country still struggle with basic internet access, which hampers educational and economic opportunities. This technological divide not only isolates us from the global community but also impedes our national development. Our judicial system, too, is decaying, with forced disappearances by law enforcement agencies becoming a horrifyingly common occurrence, undermining trust in the institutions meant to protect and serve the populace. A significant reason for our national struggles is our blind allegiance to political and religious leaders. Collectively, we have lost the ability to critically analyze and question the ethics and actions of those in power, which hampers progress and stifles reform.

Despite Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision of a nation where everyone could practice their beliefs freely, today's Pakistan often sees cold murders over petty religious disagreements, starkly contrasting with his ideals of tolerance and state neutrality in religious affairs. George Orwell's

words resonate deeply in this context: “Freedom is the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.” This emphasizes the importance of freedom of speech, a crucial element of democracy that remains constrained in Pakistan.

Even with these formidable challenges, there is still hope. Pakistan is gifted with rich resources and a young, energetic population. Over 60% of our citizens are under 30, packed with potential to enact change and drive innovation. To utilize this potential, enhancing education is critical. A well-educated population can challenge the status quo and advocate for necessary reforms.

Expanding access to technology across all regions would empower our citizens and better integrate Pakistan into the global economy. Promoting a culture of tolerance and inclusivity can also help mend the deep societal divides. By accepting diversity, we can build a society that values every individual’s contribution.

Further measures should include strengthening the rule of law to ensure justice for all, investing in sustainable economic projects to boost job creation, and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency in governance. These steps would not only build public trust but also attract foreign investments that are critical for economic growth.

As we look ahead, let’s find inspiration in our enduring spirit and the visions of our forefathers. By staying true to the values that shaped our nation, we can make Pakistan a prosperous, fair, and

free country as intended. This anniversary is not just about looking back but also about taking a significant step towards a better and more welcoming future. Together, we can help Pakistan—a land of Quaid—stand tall among the nations.

In conclusion, I wish for a prosperous Pakistan—a nation envisioned by Jinnah. Let us strive for a land of peace and prosperity, where justice and freedom are not just ideals, but realities.

About the author:

“The writer is an engineer by vocation and has a deep, research-based knowledge of Pakistan’s polity.”

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