



Spirit of Pakistan Resolution

By Dr Noman Sattar

The Independence Movement saw many milestones in the arduous journey; the Lahore Resolution of March 1940 is seen as "the moment" that pushed the movement into high gear, galvanizing the Muslim community all over India. As the nation celebrates the 80th anniversary of this momentous day, it is a time of introspection, on the context of the Resolution, what it meant, then and now.

The context is easy to understand; Muslims entered the 20th century with feelings of despair and hopelessness. Hindus had been organised as a community under Congress, but Muslims had no such organisation. When Sir Syed Ahmed Khan showed Muslims the way, competition befell between the two parties. The formation of the Muslim League, as a representative body of the Muslims, was a silver lining in the gloomy scenario. The Muslim League brought to the forefront Muslim leaders of high caliber who could lead the Muslims toward their destiny.

The turmoil in Indian politics following World War I pushed both the Muslims and Hindus into confrontational politics and demand for rights from the British. In 1930, the historic address of Allama Iqbal kindled the aspirations of the Indian Muslims at the Leagues' annual session in Allahabad. The crux carried a historic

resonance, 'The Muslim demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India is, therefore, perfectly justified.'

At the annual session in Patna, in December 1938, the Muslim League authorised Mr Jinnah 'to explore the possibility of a suitable alternative, which would completely safeguard the interests of Muslims and other minorities in India.' As efforts failed to bring the two communities together in the thirties, such sentiments gained momentum, setting the stage for the historic gathering of Muslim leaders at Lahore. Interestingly, demand for Pakistan had already been made at a session of the Sindh Provincial Muslim League, held at Karachi in 1938.

The annual conference of the Muslim League, held at Lahore, in 1940 transpired in history as a major milestone; it is revered for two significant declarations: Mr Jinnah preferred the differences between Muslims and Hindus, and labeled them as 'two nations,' while Mr Fazlul Haq prompted the main resolution, putting forth the demand for Pakistan.

The Resolution emphasised that the Muslim majority areas of India should be brought together to aggregate 'Independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.'

The 1940's Resolution meant partition with the Hindus, there was a clear message for the British, that any future 'arrangement' for British India would be



A group photo taken at the residence of Mian Bashir Ahmed, Lahore 1940

unacceptable if that did not subscribe to the above principle. Of course, the message for the Hindu leaders was louder, based on the historical and cultural differences, and failure at rapprochement the two communities could not be part of a common arrangement.

This Resolution would be the roadmap for the struggle for Pakistan, yet seven years away, as

well as for building Pakistan as a sovereign nation for the British Indians who wished to live together in the new state— Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs. Many early resolutions, pre-partition, recognised the role and well-being of the minorities in the new nation.

The Pakistan Resolution could be providing a blueprint for the future Constitution of Pakistan (that, unfortunately, took rather

long to be framed in a democratic spirit envisaged at Lahore.) The contents of the Resolution came to be seen in the narrow context of history, and the Pakistan Movement, the real meanings being lost in the fog of history, and exigencies of politics.

The main features of the 1940's Resolution were important elements of nation-building and political development, federalism,

regional autonomy, minority rights, crucial for any emerging nation-state; all these could be realised through democratic dispensation that remained problematic. The federal principle implies regional/provincial autonomy that was either not granted, nor respected. It also implies equitable allocation and sharing of resources that remains an issue to this day. It was these lapses that

landed the country into severe political crises over the years.

While one salutes the foresight and political acumen of the 'founding fathers' in charting the course for the new nation, despite having little experience in real political engagement, fully, the course was not followed in the spirit of the ideals outlined in the Resolution. The spirit behind the Resolution and the ideas reflected the political reality of the selfless determination of the Muslim leaders under the banner of the Muslim League.

Eighty years on, the spirit of the Pakistan Resolution lives: commitment to democracy, federalism (autonomy), minority rights, human rights served as a template for the Pakistan Resolution as a political dispensation. This was also important keeping in mind the 'cross border' context, and the historic rivalry with our neighbour that ensued soon after partition and endures. Living as a sovereign country and carved out of a colonial empire, the spirit of the Pakistan Resolution keeps the nation charged. On 23rd March 1940, the Muslim League leadership gave a grand plan for the Indian Muslims—promising independence, rights, opportunities. Revisiting the spirit of the Pakistan Resolution today might help in addressing many crucial issues relating to rights and opportunities.

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