

Democratic Welfare State as Visualised by the Quaid-i-Azam

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Quaid-i-Azam as a Socio-economic Thinker

The Quaid-i-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, is known more for his political achievements than for his socio-economic thought. Last two decades, however, have seen a continuous flow of books containing his speeches, statements, messages, interviews, discussions in pre-independence legislative bodies and addresses in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. Even a cursory look at this vast literature shows that he was not only concerned with the political aspect of sub-continent's independence movement but also consistently expressed his views regarding the socio-economic uplift of masses in general and Muslim society in particular. These views in their bare essentials reflect a remarkable continuity of approach from the earlier days of his political career to the period he occupied the position of Governor General of Pakistan.

Actually, he became more and more expressive and forthright as the prospects of Pakistan coming into existence became bright. When Pakistan finally appeared as a sovereign nation on the map of the world, he openly rejected the prevailing economic system as having failed to do justice between man and man and to eradicate friction from the international field.

To quote his own words: "The Western economic theory and practice will not help us in achieving our goal of creating a happy and contented people. We must work our destiny in our own way and present to the world an economic system based on true Islamic concept of equality of manhood and social justice". [Yusufi (1996).] On another occasion, while responding to his public reception at Chittagong, he declared: "You are only voicing my sentiments and the sentiments of millions of Musalmans when you say that Pakistan should be based on sure foundations of social justice and Islamic socialism which emphasises equality and brotherhood of man."¹

The Quaid-i-Azam's interest in socio-economic issues dates back from 1909 when, at the age of 33 years, he was elected as a member of pre-partition Indian

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¹*Op. cit.*, p. 2733.

Legislative Council and with few years of interruption held this membership till 1947. Apart from speeches of political nature, he left a durable impression on legislation which dealt with a very large number of contemporary economic problems. During this period, he spoke with knowledge and authority on bills concerning such diverse subjects as Indian coinage, steel industry, land customs, currency, tariffs, railways, merchant shipping, insurance companies, trade unions, inland postal rates, income tax, excise duties, gold standard, Reserve Bank of India, aviation, cotton textile industry, education, child marriage, and central budgets. His speeches on all these occasions show him to be a ceaseless advocate of interests of common people, with continuous condemnation of well-organised European commercial lobbies and their monopolistic practices. [Afzal (1976).] He also laid emphasis on Indianisation or democratisation of all public sector institutions in order to ensure greater and greater participation of people in the decision-making process and enhancement of social welfare.

While participating in legislative discussions, the Quaid-i-Azam gave foremost attention to economic rights of the Muslims. An early example of this aspect was the passage of Muslim Walkf-e-Alal-Aulad Bill in 1913 which was skillfully piloted by the Quaid-i-Azam with a view to revalidating Muslim trusts whose preservation was necessary for saving Muslim families from economic disruption. This incidentally also revealed his familiarity with Islamic jurisprudence for understanding which he was constantly in touch with religious scholars like Maulana Shibli Noamani and others.

SOURCES OF HIS ECONOMIC THOUGHT

The richness and variety of the Quaid-i-Azam's observations on socio-economic issues shows that although he fully benefited from currents of contemporary thought on various issues, he did not allow them to dominate his own approach to life and its problems. His professional mastery of law enabled him to go deep into the heart of an issue, acquire details, and cast new light on it according to his own rational and enlightened interpretation. This way of looking at things helped to develop certain recurring socio-economic and political themes in his intellectual set-up such as role of participatory political power in solving economic problems, equality of manhood, promotion of justice and fairplay, seeking of human welfare as a deliberate objective of social policy, workable solution to specific problems even if it meant disturbance of status quo, eradication of poverty and income gaps for cultural emancipation of masses, uplift of agricultural and industrial workers, and education of the people at all levels, with particular emphasis on professional education and science and technology.

A deeper look at the life and times of the Quaid-i-Azam shows that, broadly speaking, he drew inspiration from the following four sources:

First, Al-Quran, Sirat-e-Rasul (PBUH), and Islamic jurisprudence were frequently consulted by him. Right from the very first day of his admission to Lincoln's Inn to the last days of his life he took inspiration from the Holy Quran and made frequent and well-informed references to Islamic Law, history and ethical values in his speeches and statements. His personal library contained a large number of Islamic books and he was reported to keep in his pocket a copy of the Holy Book which he often consulted for seeking guidance for the solution of various issues. [Bokhari (1998); Haidari (1994).]

Secondly, his visits to England helped him to become familiar with the great welfare state movements initiated in the late nineteenth century by such philosophers as John A. Hobson (1858–1940), Richard H. Tawney (1880–1963), and Fabian Socialists. As against Marxism, these movements stood for what was called positive liberalism designed to build up a society in which human welfare was consciously sought as the chief objective of social policy. Under the influence of these ideas England witnessed a quarter century of reform, including legislation for factory safety, limited working hours for women and children, clearance of slums, widened powers for labour unions, old-age pensions, sickness and disability insurance, and healthy planning of towns. The Quaid-i-Azam was greatly influenced by positive liberalism. [Bolitho (1954).] His advocacy for similar and even more aggressive reforms on the occasion of 25th Annual Session of Muslim League in 1937 reminds one of his early liberal approach. These reforms will be discussed presently.

Thirdly, conditions of abysmal poverty prevailing in India, especially among Muslim masses, greatly perturbed the Quaid-i-Azam. He forcefully attacked budgets of British India for their inadequacy for solving problems of poverty and continuously demanded full control of people of India over all fiscal policies. In this connection he often quoted Dutt (1963) eloquently analysed the reasons for India's mounting poverty.

Lastly, one single person who more than any other contemporary thinker influenced his thoughts and perceptions was Iqbal. In 1930s the whole direction and emphasis of Muslim politics, and for that matter of Indian political scene, was transformed by the appearance of a single address, viz. Iqbal's Presidential Address at the Twenty-First Annual Session of All India Muslim League. This address and the letters which Iqbal sent to the Quaid-i-Azam between 1936 and 1937 greatly influenced the latter's thinking about the political and economic destiny of Muslim India. In his letter of May 28, 1937 Iqbal advocated that social democracy consistent with the legal principles of Islam had the answer to economic and social problems being faced by the Muslims. [Allana (1968).] The Quaid-i-Azam seems to have accepted this approach as he regarded Iqbal as his leader, friend and philosopher "who was the main force behind the national renaissance of Muslim India". [Saeed (1977).]

The Concept of a Democratic Welfare State

The foregoing observations show that although the Quaid-i-Azam was not a professional economist, he had a firm grasp of the basic notions which constitute a welfare-oriented economic philosophy. He viewed the proper form of society as one in which the interests of the community as a whole transcended those of the individual and in which economic relationships were motivated by goodwill and concern for the interests of others rather than by pure profit-seeking intentions. A society of this type should serve the interests of masses and, in his own words, should be fully “backed up by the people throughout the country”. [Rauf (1965).] He declared in Muslim League’s Thirtieth Annual Session held in Delhi in 1943 that the goal of Pakistan Movement was to set up a ‘People’s Government’ which would not allow landlords and capitalists to flourish at the expense of masses.² Only such a government could establish a society in which human welfare would be consciously sought as the major objective of social policy. This was how a democratic welfare state would come into existence.

What would be the major objectives of such a welfare state? In the speeches and statements of the Quaid-i-Azam one finds repeated emphasis at least on the following three broad-ranging guidelines:

- (i) “It is not our purpose to make the rich richer and to accelerate the process of accumulation in the hands of few individuals. We should aim at leveling up the general standard of living amongst the masses. Our ideal should not be capitalistic but Islamic and the interests and welfare of the people as a whole should be kept constantly in mind”.³
- (ii) Pakistan should not blindly follow Western economic theory and practice and should develop its own economic system based on true Islamic concept of equality of manhood and social justice.⁴
- (iii) Public sector should play a more active role in providing a network of social and public utility services and relief and amenities, especially in underdeveloped areas. Key industries should also be controlled and managed by the state.

The above guidelines provided the foundations for a host of welfare-oriented policies which the Quaid-i-Azam wanted to be followed for the development of various socio-economic sectors. For example, to build up social infrastructure, education should be given top priority as an instrument of socio-economic change, with emphasis on compulsory primary education and production of professional and technical manpower. There should be no discrimination between sexes in any sector of society. Industrial workers and peasants should be organised to ensure adequate

²Yusufi, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1719-20

³Ibid, p. 1961.

⁴Yusufi, *Op cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 2787.

wages and to promote health, education and recreation. There should be rapid agricultural modernisation and industrialisation, and appropriate heavy industries should be set up. Similarly transport, energy, irrigation network, ports, aviation and other types of physical infrastructure should be developed and financial and banking sectors should be explored, mobilised and strengthened .

On the occasion of Pakistan's First Budget, the Government announced a liberal Industrial Policy to associate individual initiative and private enterprise at every stage of industrialisation. A few key industries were reserved for public sector and the remaining were left open to private enterprise. Similarly doors for foreign economic assistance were opened on the principle of mutual commercial respect. In spite of this open-door policy, interests of workers and labourers were to be safeguarded by the government.

It will be seen that the Quaid-i-Azam's philosophy of welfare state was pragmatic in view of the fact that Pakistan virtually started from a scratch and had to build up almost every conceivable economic and social sector. Further, more than 8 million refugees had to be rehabilitated in spite of lack of an adequate administrative machinery and financial resources. However, the ultimate goal of all proposed policies and measures was to give high priority to equity and welfare in economic life. From this angle, the Quaid-i-Azam's concept of welfare state was pragmatic yet visionary, critical yet hopeful.

Two Important Welfare Documents

Two pre-independence documents, prepared under the active guidance of the Quaid-i-Azam, throw adequate light on his socio-economic welfare philosophy.

The first document consists of an economic, social and educational programme chalked out in the 25th Annual Session of Muslim League in 1937. Its salient features were:

- To fix working hours for factory workers and other labourers;
- To fix minimum wages;
- To improve the housing and hygienic condition of the labourers and make provision for slum clearance;
- To reduce rural and urban debts and abolish usury;
- To grant a moratorium with regard to all debts, whether decreed or otherwise, till proper legislation has been enacted;
- To secure legislation for exemption of houses from attachment or sale in execution of decrees;
- To obtain security of tenure and fixation of fair rents and revenue;
- To abolish forced labour;
- To undertake rural uplift work;

To encourage cottage industries and small indigenous industries both in rural and urban areas;
 To encourage the use of *Swadeshi* articles, specially hand-woven cloth.
 To establish an industrial board for the development industries and the prevention of exploitation by middlemen;
 To devise means for the relief of unemployed persons;
 To advance compulsory primary education;
 To reorganise secondary and university education, specially scientific and technical;
 To enforce prohibition;
 To abolish and remove un-Islamic customs and usages from Muslim society;
 To organise a volunteer corps for social service. [Pirzada (1970).]
 To further consolidate the above programme the following additional steps were recommended in 1941.

- (i) No loans on interest be taken for marriage and funeral processions.
- (ii) Use of intoxicants and gambling be checked.
- (iii) True spirit of brotherhood based on Islamic concept of equality and fraternity should be infused among those Muslims who have adopted the un-Islamic view of caste based on profession and occupation. [Ahmed (1996).]

The above recommendations reflected a more advanced approach towards the establishment of a progressive and welfare-oriented society than that of any other contemporary reform movement in vogue in South Asia.

Later on the Quaid-i-Azam appointed a committee to chalk out a detailed scheme for collecting systematically zakat, fitra, and skins of qurbani and using them for the promotion of Muslim interests and welfare according to the shariah.

The second document relates to the Report of the twenty-three member Economic Planning Committee appointed by the Quaid-i-Azam in 1994. The Report prepared a comprehensive Twenty-Year Development Plan for economic and social uplift, state industrialisation, free primary education, reform of land system, security of tenure, improvement in the condition of labour and agriculture, control of money lending, provision of welfare services, removal of gross inequalities of income, and development of health, housing, transport and trade sectors. [Hasan (1991).]

This plan laid great emphasis on distributive justice and recognised the role of state in devising measures to remove the prevailing inequalities of income and property. Apart from a long-term egalitarian vision, the plan further emphasised that latest techniques of production should be acquired and made accessible to small and medium producers in such a way as to ensure a minimum annual rate of growth of six percent in national income.

Most of the above recommendations reflected the Quaid-i-Azam's notions of transforming Pakistan into a welfare-oriented state. It may be noted that Pakistan's First Five-Year Plan (1955–1960), carried many of the proposal of the Committee but, as is well-known, this plan was put into cold storage by vested interests.

Islam's Non-discriminatory Welfare Approach

One important element in the Quaid-i-Azam's vision of a welfare state was its non-discriminatory character in promoting prosperity among all sections of the people irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. For this he drew inspiration from the teachings and works of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). As a matter of record, in his countless speeches, statements, and messages before and after the establishment of Pakistan, the Quaid-i-Azam emphasised the role of Islam as an all-embracing code of life standing for non-discriminatory social justice, fairplay, democracy, equality of manhood, and welfare of masses as a whole.

During the Allahabad Session of All-India Muslim League in 1942 he was asked as to what type of state Pakistan would be. He replied: "It will be an Islamic State on the pattern of Medina State with human rights, liberalism, democracy and complete tolerance and freedom of conscience to all citizens without any distinction of colour, creed, language, and race as granted by the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) to Christians, Jews, idol worshippers and all others. Justice, brotherhood, liberty, equality and fraternity will reign supreme". [Ahmad (1997).]

What was the pattern of Median State referred to by the Quaid-i-Azam? The Medina State was run on the basis of the famous document known as the Constitution of Medina (*Meesaq-e-Medina*). This document, prepared under the instructions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), dealt with the rights and obligations of citizens of Medina including Muslims, Jews, and all others. Through this document the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) made a friendly agreement especially with the Jews and established them in their religion, property and occupations and declared them as one community (*ummah*). The clause 25 of the Constitution of Medina declared in no ambiguous terms: "The Jews of Banu Auaf are a community (*ummah*) along with the believers. To the Jews their religion (*din*) and to the Muslims their religion (*din*). This applies both to their clients and to themselves, with the exception of anyone who has done wrong or acted treacherously; he brings evil only on himself and on his household". [Watt (1966).]

This clause clearly reflected the Quran's non-discriminatory approach to the rights of non-Muslims. In Sura II (verse 256) the Holy Quran says: "There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error". Similarly in Sura 109 (verse 6) addressing to non-Muslims the Quran says: "Unto you your religion and unto me my religion". [Pikthal (1924).]

In the ninth Hijra when Islam had spread far and wide the Prophet (peace be upon him) recognised the rights and obligations of Christians of Arabia's southern tract Najran in the same way as was written in the Constitution of Medina. In a letter addressed to Bishop of Najran he assured the Christians of complete freedom of worship and management of churches and also preservation of their honour and dignity. [Sayyara (2000).]

The tolerance and goodwill shown by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) in Medina and elsewhere became established as a basic principle of state policy in Muslim countries. Note, for example, the following charter of freedom given at the time of conquest of Jerusalem to Christians and others by the second Pious Caliph Umar b. Al-Khattab: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! This is the security which 'Umar, the servant of God, the commander of the faithful, grants to the people of Elia. He grants to all, whether sick or sound, security for their lives, their possessions, their churches and their crosses, and for all that concerns their religion. Their churches shall not be changed into dwelling places, nor destroyed, neither shall they nor their appurtenances be in any way diminished, nor the crosses of the inhabitants nor aught of their possessions, nor shall any constraint be put upon them in the matter of their faith, nor shall any one of them be harmed". [Arnold (1913).]

The non-discriminatory and humane tradition of the Constitution of Medina and Hazarat Umar's Jerusalem agreement was literally followed by the Quaid-i-Azam when he addressed Pakistan's Constitution Assembly on August 11, 1947 thus: "You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State".⁵ What the Quaid obviously meant was that state had no business to discriminate between citizens on religions or any other basis as was provided in the Constitution of Medina which did not discriminate between Muslims and Jews and treated them as one *ummah* so far as their rights as citizens were concerned. The Quaid-i-Azam further added: "In course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the state". As a matter of fact equality of rights and welfare as citizens of the state was the essence of *Messaq-e-Medina*, and that is precisely what was the essence of the Quaid's speech.

It is interesting to note that three days after his above speech the Quaid-i-Azam spoke again on the occasion of inauguration of Pakistan's Constituent Assembly on August 14, 1947 and re-emphasising the central theme of his speech of August 11 made the following observation in response to Lord Mountbatten's

⁵Yusufi, *Op. cit.* Vol. IV, pp. 2604-2605.

reference to Emperor Akbar: “The tolerance and goodwill that great Emperor showed to all the non-Muslims in not of recent origin. It dates back thirteen centuries ago when our Prophet (peace be upon him) not only by words but by deeds treated the Jews and Christians, after he had conquered them, with the utmost tolerance and regard and respect for their faith and beliefs. The whole history of Muslims, wherever they ruled is replete with those humane and great principles which should be followed and practiced”.⁶

It is apparent that the Quaid-i-Azam’s speeches of August 11 and 14, 1947 bear close similarity, in both letter and spirit, to the Constitution of Medina. This constitution was neither secular in the prevailing sense of the term as the Islamic State of Medina was not a secular state, nor was it based on the concept of papacy, an institution which does not exist in Islam. Further, it recognised the existence of Muslims and Jews as separate entities, though bound together as citizens with mutually agreed obligations and duties. It is also pertinent to note that the Quaid-i-Azam’s speeches of August 11 and 14, read along with his pronouncement at the Allahabad Session of All-India Muslim League in 1942 clearly point to the fact that there was remarkable consistency in his pre-independence and post-independence thoughts about the pattern of state in Pakistan.

Concluding Remarks

It may be asked as to why the Quaid-i-Azam’s welfare-oriented approach did not become major part of public economy of Pakistan. Although Pakistan started from scratch in 1947, and since then has made significant advances in different economic sectors, it has by no means emerged as a welfare state. There may be many reasons for this state of affairs but one basic reason is that a few years after the death of the Quaid-i-Azam power passed into the hands of vested interests who had no sympathy with the socio-economic objectives or ideology of Pakistan Movement. As a matter of fact, even scholars of Pakistan Movement have produced few works which highlight the dynamic and progressive approach of the Quaid-i-Azam to the solution of problems of poverty and uneven distribution of incomes and wealth.⁷ Now that the Quaid-i-Azam’s year is being celebrated throughout the country, it is high time that we re-examine our entire socio-economic policy framework in the light of his pragmatic yet visionary advocacy for the promotion of a society in which human welfare based on Islamic principles of equality of manhood is consciously and deliberately sought as the sole objective of all social and public policies. This task should continue beyond the year 2001 as historically and conceptually all future years of Pakistan are years of the Quaid-i-Azam and Allama Iqbal.

⁶*Ibid*, p. 2610.

⁷The first serious attempt in this connection is that of Pervez Tahir, *Economic and Social Thinking of Quaid-i-Azam*. Research Society of Pakistan, Punjab University, Lahore, 1980.

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