

University of Health Sciences
Project Professionalism Punjab
Caricature Story, September-2015

Title: Independent hearts of an independent homeland

It's 14th August. The cheerful and festive time of the year. Every nook and corner of the country rejoices merrily: all except for one place: the City General Hospital—where the mood of the air is bleak not because of the gloom of disease but because of the narrow mindedness of its patients.

Lahori Chacha muses at one corner, 'What a boring Youm-e-Azadi (Independence Day)'. Had it not been for his fractured leg, he would be celebrating merrily by decorating his house and eating Nihari Payee and Haleem instead of sulking in the Surgical Ward. He goes on rambling, "And the fellow patients here, Umph! None of them looks like a Punjabi. I am way better being reserved to a spot than engage with these people. Should I be chatting with this Sindhi? These people who have established there hegemony over the country's water—caring about none other than their own selves and leaving the entire country to die of thirst. Such miscreants!"

The facial expressions of Ajrak Saeen spoke volumes about his cross thoughts. Having just heard the news of the recent terrorist attack and bombing in Karachi in the news on the Television, he is fuming with Anti-Baloch sentiments and for now, the target of his ravaging anger is the patient Akbar Baloch admitted in the ward, "Quaid-e-Azam certainly made a wrong decision in including these terrorist Balochis into Pakistan. What else do they do other plotting to bomb and pulverize the entire country!", he continues to boil.

"And these Pathans," he continued in his choleric chain of thoughts looking at the Pathan, Khan Baba, lying next to him, "Useless group of folks---these Pathans. Eating Naswar and doing nil contribution to the country's development! Such a burden on the country's economy!"

Khan Baba, occupying a bed at the far end of the room does not have any warm feelings for Ajrak Saeen either. "Ah! So Ajrak Saeen is a Sindhi, the people of division and dispute! Their only business is to sow seeds of discord and usurp our rights. They want to snatch all the resources of Pakistan and leave us the Pathans, empty handed and destitute!"

Such was the air of discord and provincialism in the Surgical Ward. These residents of the four provinces seemed to be lying side by side but their hearts were divided by disharmony and severed by grievances.

Then the visiting hours started. Hustle and bustle commenced all over the place. A whole party of visitors came to meet Lahori Chacha. Lahori Chacha felt as though he had been liberated from isolation. A loud chatter and howls of laughter followed to the utter dismay of

the neighboring patients, Khan Baba and Akbar Baluch, both of whom angrily muttered under breath about how boisterous these Punjabis are.

Next came the families of Khan Baba and Akbar Baluch. Incidentally both of them had a son, named Chota Khan and Anwar Baluch respectively. As both the families immersed in talking to their ailing relative, something strange happened. Anwar Baluch was eating a lollipop that his uncle had just bought him from the hospital cafeteria. At some distance, Chota Khan was casting furtive and rather eager glances at Anwar Baluch's lollipop. Anwar Baluch recognized the intention of the glances and rushed to Chota Khan to share the lollipop and become friends with him. Seeing this, emotions of sudden resentment ensued in both families. Both the Baluch and Pathan uncles, in no time, separated the two boys, sternly advising that it is rather prohibited and 'morally illegal' to mix with folks of other Provinces. Anwar Baluch and Chota Khan had no option but to comply with morose hearts and downcast faces.

Soon after, the visitors had to leave because it was time for the Consultant's Round. But today the round was special: of course it had to be, it was 14th August after all. There was a cake cutting ceremony at the ebullient occasion of "Pakistan's birthday" followed by melodious 'May you have many mores" and heartfelt prayers for the longevity and solidarity of Pakistan. During the round, all the Patients were given 'Jasn-e-Azadi Mubarak' (Happy Independence Day) Greeting Cards that had specially been designed and ordered by the consultant, Zahid Butt, a Kashmiri himself. Belonging to a district at the border and having seen the atrocities upon the people of Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, he was a Pakistani who truly cherished independence and freedom. Recounting the incidents of his childhood, in a brief talk with the patients, he underscored the blessing of a free homeland and the need of unity of its inhabitants for its development and protection.

It was a moment of enlightenment. The dots somehow seemed to connect for both Khan Baba and Anwar Baluch, both of whom were embarrassed at their previous ill thoughts and feelings and for promoting this division in their younger generations. "If our children can rise above their personal interests for the greater good, why can't we adults let go of our malice and join hands for our homeland. It's a shame how our children are willing to share a lollipop but we are not willing to share our country."

Realization of wrong necessitates correction of past misdeeds. And so was the change that followed. Akbar Baluch and Khan Baba could restrain themselves no more and both warmly hugged each other exchanging statements of peace and love. Ajrak Saeen and Lahori Chacha, transformed by the scene, followed suit. This marked "the real independence from all hate, estrangement and differences".

Nothing sums the purport of this account better than the words of Iqbal,

"Rise above sectional interests and Private Ambitions...Pass from matter to light. Matter is diversity. Spirit is life, light and unity".

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