

# Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan's vision

Nasim Yousaf

*The tremendous success of the "Development through Self-reliance" model would not have been possible without the visionary leadership of Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan. Taken in isolation, Dr. Khan's work at Orangi is a remarkable achievement. However, when considering its impact on other development efforts around the world, it becomes a revolutionary achievement*

"GIVE a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Acclaimed social scientist Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan used to refer to this well-known proverb. It quite fittingly represents his philosophy on community development. To Dr. Khan, the solution to Pakistan's problems did not lie in giving free charity, but rather in teaching people the methods of development so that they could stand on their own two feet. Dr. Khan's belief in this philosophy is clearly evident through his works, including the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), a non-governmental organisation that focused on self-reliance to improve the lives of the residents of Orangi Town in Karachi.

In Pakistan, a *katchi abadi* refers to a public settlement that is not recognised by the government for a development programme or other assistance. According to Dr. Khan, a *katchi abadi* has five inherent problems: housing, sanitation, health, education, and employment. The town of Orangi was a

prime example of a densely populated slum; it was completely neglected by the government and lacked any formal development projects to improve the quality of life of the residents. As a result, the residents were forced to endure a filth-ridden environment, lacking a sewerage system, electricity, and other basic amenities. The prevailing conditions translated into a high illness and death rate among the community. Without government support, the conditions at Orangi remained poor - that is, until the introduction of Dr. Khan's Orangi Pilot Project in 1980. More specifically, two aspects of the project in particular provide fitting examples of Dr. Khan's emphasis on self-reliance: (1) the development of a sanitation system by the residents of Orangi and (2) the use of microcredit.

A major underlying cause of this situation was the lack of an adequate sanitation system - a by-product of the residents' meagre resources and the lack of government support. Dr. Khan described the problem in the *Pakistan & Gulf Economist* (June 11-17, 1983) in a special report on the Orangi Project: "A man who has spent Rs. 15,000 or Rs. 20,000 on building his house...cannot pay Rs. 10,000 for the drainage...Though it is so shameful to relate but it is not a secret that for every hundred rupees charged by the contractor about 20 to 30 percent is kickback. The contractor himself was not ashamed of admitting that he was charging 40 to 50 percent profit..."

Dr. Khan knew that it was important to understand the underlying issue before arriving at a solution. According to Dr. Khan's son, Dr. Khan used to say, "Never start a programme with a blueprint in mind." A careful survey of the situation led Dr. Khan to the conclusion that Orangi's sanitation problem could not be improved without a strong emphasis on self-reliance.

Thus, Dr. Khan sought to empower the residents of Orangi to build their own sanitation system - without aid from the government or from domestic or international donor agencies. Based on an overarching philosophy of self-reliance, he worked with the residents of Orangi to formalise a plan for their sanitation system. The residents would have to purchase materials from their own pockets to build the sanitation system and would be required to work on the project without outside charity.

Meanwhile, the OPP would provide free technical assistance. Dr. Khan wrote in the *Pakistan & Gulf Economist* (June 11-17, 1983), "The ignorance of the people about the technology of the sewerage system was removed by undertaking teaching pro-

grammes." Dr. Khan ensured that the entire initiative was undertaken ethically and with the utmost sense of transparency. For instance, residents would have the liberty to buy materials from a source of their choice, in order to ensure that the OPP would not be accused of taking commission from a recommended shop.

The sanitation project at Orangi proved to be a tremendous success. Through their collective efforts, the residents of Orangi were able to build a modern sewerage system for the town. The residents learned how to problem solve and work collectively to achieve common goals. They were also able to pass on the techniques they learned to others. For the country, the initiative at Orangi saved money for the government exchequer as it developed the community inexpensively, free from costly foreign loans or foreign experts. Perhaps the most important benefit of the development was that it proved to the world that impoverished communities could be developed on a self-help basis.

Like the development of the sanitation system, the application of micro-credit at Orangi is another example of Dr. Khan's firm belief in self-reliance. Dr. Khan had originally applied micro-credit at the Comilla Co-operatives at the Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (PARD) (now Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development). The successful application of micro-credit at Comilla led to its adoption by Nobel Prize winner Professor Mohammad Yunus and others.

Based on the success of micro-credit at Comilla, Dr. Khan launched a similar scheme at OPP. He established the OPP-Orangi Charitable Trust (OCT) to provide residents with small loans for running micro-enterprises of their choice. For example, a resident could borrow funds to open a tailoring shop or to sell arts and crafts. It also reaffirmed the concept of self-reliance in order for the residents to improve their lives.

In fact, 70 percent of the 1.2 million residents of Orangi Town are self-employed. The recovery rate on loaned funds remains strong at 95 percent. Dr. Khan's micro-credit scheme has been praised globally. *MicroCapital Monitor*, a journal from Massachusetts (USA), wrote in its May 2008 issue (dated May 2008, Volume 3 Issue 5) under the title "Pioneers in Microfinance: Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan" (a series sponsored by Deutsche Bank), "Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan helped lay the basic foundations of the micro-credit movement through his work on the Comilla Model of rural development in the 1960s

and the Orangi Pilot Project in the 1980s."

From the very beginning, the OPP has worked without government or foreign aid, loans or foreign advisors. The initiative has completely relied on local resources and manpower. Based on the success of the OPP domestic and international experts (including students from various universities around the world) began to visit the OPP. The institution has thus transformed into a learning and development centre for undertaking projects on a self-help basis. Papers the world-over continue to be written on the OPP. Its success can be further gauged from the fact that the OPP Model is being replicated not only in Pakistan but throughout the world, including Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, South Africa, and Central Asia. The rise of microfinance and micro-credit techniques has led to the creation of a large number of NGOs and journals focussing on the subject.

The tremendous success of the "Development through Self-reliance" model would not have been possible without the visionary leadership of Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan. Taken in isolation, Dr. Khan's work at Orangi is a remarkable achievement. However, when considering its impact on other development efforts around the world, it becomes a revolutionary achievement. Though Dr. Khan passed away in October, 1999, he has left behind a legacy of new concepts, ideas, and admirers the world over. In an article on October 22, 2000, Indian daily newspaper *The Hindu* wrote, "Just who would you vote for as the greatest Gandhian in the Indian sub-continent in the post-Independence period? Our vote will unhesitatingly go to the Pakistani social scientist Akhtar Hameed Khan... (his) death is a loss not just for Pakistan but for everyone in the subcontinent. But like Gandhi he will remain immortal because of the inevitability of his ideas."

During a keynote address on June 21, 2008 at the annual Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan Memorial Lecture, K. Raju (Principal Secretary to the Rural Development Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh Hyderabad) stated that Dr. Khan, "deeply influenced the development discourse not only in this country but in several others, including my own country, India...we believe that Khansahab was the greatest Gandhian of the entire sub-continent in the post independence period". It is important to note that Dr. Khan's accomplishments are Pakistan's accomplishments as well. The spirit of self-reliance and community-based development that he inspired shall live on forever.

# Status of women



Rehana Anwar

A woman is entitled to equal rights as citizen of Pakistan and is entitled to be protected by the state. The women constitute nearly 52 percent of the population in Pakistan, however considering their status they still look to be living in the Dark Ages. Their right for acquiring education and economic freedom is not encouraged. It is a matter of deep concern that being Muslims we have completely forgotten the status of women given to them by Islam. As per teachings of our Holy Prophet (PBUH) women are more respected and secure in Islam than in other faiths. Islam is the first religion, which granted women all rights, 1400 years ago. In Arabia, before the advent of Islam, the birth of a female child was regarded as a great misfortune and shame, and cruel fathers buried them alive.

Islam elevated the position of woman in society and treated her on an equal footing with man, and in some cases, as a mother for instance, clearly gave her precedence over man. On an occasion when a man came to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and expressed his desire to join a military expedition, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) asked him if he had a mother. When he replied that he had, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) told him, "Stay with her, for paradise is at her feet."

Everyone has the right to live with freedom and security. Since the creation of Pakistan the rights of women were ignored just as similarly as the rights of Pakistani to rule this country and decide the fate of their future. After the independence of Pakistan the socio-political system does not change, little or no reform were carried out and therefore the status quo of society remain the same as it was before. The feudal system is the system to be blame for humiliation, exploitation and cruelty with women. The right of women cannot be protected till we provide ample opportunities to them.

If we see that women is most exploited in the West, in the name of democracy and equal rights, the freedom allowed there is not for the protection of women from exploitation. Even in this modern world, a woman is being humiliated in the socio-economic and cultural front. Everybody is talking about women rights with special reference to job, education and equal opportunities in society. Women are being exploited even in the modern society.

The most exploited women are from the working class due to economic problems, middle class in order to maintain fake standard of living and the upper class for the sake of enjoyment in life and for getting rid of frustration in their social domestic life. It is true that women in Pakistan have never been dissociated with the struggle for democracy. However, the women gained more maturity in its understanding of national issues because of this interaction and participation in the movement for democracy, where people, not only take pride in strictly adhering to the Islamic values but are ready to make sacrifices for the glory and sanctity of Islam.

Pakistan is an Islamic state. It does not impose any restrictions that may hamper the social growth and development of women. A woman is equally important member of society. The woman plays a vital role in

building the society on healthier and stronger foundations.

The women in Pakistan have been constantly complaining of having been isolated from the mainstream of society. Women feel disillusioned on being maltreated by the male-dominated set up. They strongly claim that if they are given a chance, they can contribute more positively towards the development of all social aspects. Pakistani women are at the crossroads and need a serious attention on the cause of exploitation of women rights. The present democracy and the representation of women in assemblies does not represent common Pakistani women, they are part and parcel of the rich and feudal families.

Almost 90 percent of the households in Pakistan have a male member as the head, while most household with women heads belong to the lower strata of society. Even though it is illegal for girls below 16 years of age to be married (As per the Child Marriages Restraint Act), there are frequent instances of child marriages, especially in the rural areas. The tribal clans of Punjab practice a child marriage ritual called '*Vani*', where young girls are married forcibly in order to settle feuds between warring clans. Interestingly, if the girl's clan agrees to pay up money or '*Deet*', *Vani* is avoided.

Almost 99 percent of the victims of honour killings in Pakistan are women. The punishments given to those who kill women under the pretext of honour killings are often punished leniently and sometimes go unpunished. Honour killing is a term described for killing of a person who is suspected of having an illegitimate relationship (or '*karo kari*' in Balochistan and Sindh). Typically, honour killings have been reported against those women who have married against their family's wishes, or want a divorce, or have been criminally molested.

The government has been trying to raise the status of women in Pakistan, but it is an uphill task and requires a paradigm shift in the way society (man-made rules) perceives women. Still considered as inferior or subordinate to the male-dominated society, Pakistani women have to do much to find their status in society. However, to give back honour and dignity to women, I want to give some suggestions to women.

Education and technical knowledge to be provided to every capable woman in separate and safe environment.

After enhancement of knowledge and skill, provide safe and separate environment to women to work and join national production force.

A guarantee for job opportunity should be provided to every woman, who wants to work in safe environment.

When 52 percent women power will join the production and services sector, national gross production/services will increase and so the increase in revenue.

Working women will earn for the family and bring happiness to the family and so the self-satisfaction, dignity and respect within the family will increase.

A separate working environment reduces the objection from the male members of the family.

An educated mother can train new generation in a better way and be a supporting partner in family as and when needed.

Being earning member of the family, self confidence of women will enhance and so the intrinsic skill will further developed.

Medical facilities and insurance coverage should be provided to every working woman.

Equal participation in political wing for women in political parties.

Only the society base on tolerance, equality and justice can be the real guarantee for the prosperous and strong Pakistan.

Therefore, I want to invite women from all walks of life to come forward and take the reign in their hands for the change in socio-political system and work for better life with dignity, respect and equal opportunities.

*The writer is a gender specialist*

# Poverty alleviation

Ahmed Umair

The present trends in the media tend to discuss every issue to the limits until the light of blame, as a reason for flux, is not shed on someone. Impartiality, a term that spares many from the blame, adds beauty and a tinge of truthfulness to writings. Although it is considerable that perfect objectivity is an unrealistic goal; fairness, however, is not. Related to the above phenomenon are many examples that quote the ongoing issues in Pakistan. To add facts to the stated, let us shed light on some of the current concerns of our society.

The issues prevailing nowadays in order of delicacy are: inflation (economic instability), terrorism and injustice. During the last decade, the order of the above-mentioned kept on changing, but the issues still remain the same. Importance must be given on how much has been done to tackle

with the above mentioned problems for the sake of giving relief to the people in terms of security, social equality and economical stability. It would rather be of high priority to note what role the government has played in order to support the act of betterment in society. Keeping aside the efforts of the past governments, the current Punjab government solely is a prior example of providing first hand relief to the people as far as the issue of the demand and supply instability is concerned. The efforts made for the poor are the ones that count; the criticism made to initiate negativity in society is rather something that does not.

Adding to the current efforts of the Punjab government namely Food Support Scheme, *roti* at Rs.2, Green Tractor Scheme, free dialysis and a lot more that are worth mentioning, it is meaningful to also discuss the prevailing conditions of the country; and while doing so it must also be considered that an initiative taken for the good requires a lot of courage, as it is the most opposed to. The opposing forces for

the efforts of the Punjab government have been many as well; counting among them the 'negativity' that has been entrenched within the thoughts of society.

The grapevine says that spending money raised through taxes to keep the prices of commodities under control is a 'flawed mechanism'. Considering the facts, using people's money for their own betterment does not come under the heading of 'flawed mechanism'. Punjab government has initiated the process of providing relief to the poor, of providing an equitable opportunity towards life to all, and this step by no means can be stated as a blamish. The grapevine further says that enforcement of restricted price also remains uneven. An intelligent person would rather see the issues of the overall country first and then elaborate on the problems that it is causing. Proper enforcement of orders and laws can only stem from a proper judicial system. Why the judiciary of Pakistan has not yet been restored is a separate issue, whereas the Punjab government besides this fact is con-

stantly keeping a check on the ones of offending the rules.

None can deny the fact that many of the problems that Pakistan is currently facing are deep-rooted and have been growing since decades. The phenomenon that is harder to accept is that an initiative taken towards eliminating such problems (as poverty) is facing criticism and is being discouraged through negativity to an utmost extent. Although, the government machinery also needs to be organised in order to implement the planning at a much proper pace. However, it will rather be more helpful to accept all these steps as starters or appetizers for more good yet to come. The Punjab government needs appreciations for the efforts being put in and the planning being realised. Furthermore, it is suggested that recommendations in favour of eliminating the prevailing issues be forwarded to the government of Punjab, as it has successfully spoken objectively for the people of the province and have the support of majority of masses.

# What our readers say ...

## Why democracy?

The major part of every country's population is the people who live a simple, hard and stressful life throughout their lives. Pakistan is such a nation where the middle and lower classes are mainly illiterate and have no sense of political discourse, whatsoever. They are the main targets of exploitation by the politicians and others as well. The 60 years of Pakistan has witnessed a continuous struggle of democracy in the country. These people being unaware of the socio-political environment of the country had been drastically aggressive about the success of democracy. I say, they always tend to take democracy negatively. The long marches and rallies, protests against various issues and as a consequence damaging the public as well as private properties, have become a part of the daily life. A major proportion of a population never demands political stability, socio economic growth etc. at first, but fulfillment of their basic necessities: food, shelter and clothing. Decades of democratic regimes have not been to provide them proper sustenance. Then why ask for democracy and not accept a military man as a president? Do these people really care about who is running the country and who is the scorer? No, what they really want is a healthy, independent and contented life. Moreover, burning shops down, frequent strikes, protesting by destroying public and private properties is only possible in a democratic government in this country. Last eight years of non-democratic regime has even witnessed a decline in violence and hostility from the part of public. So, democracy where judiciary demands for their own justice and reinstatement is never ideal, although they didn't create any examples when they were active. Therefore, people should stop shouting for democracy and realise the facts of political scenario of the country. Democracy is not always the best solution for every nation and Pakistani people should start realising this inevitable fact.

— MUNIB REHMAN ALAM, LAHORE

stand, confused and perplexed on what our future is.

I will soon graduate out of college with like-minded individuals, all with fresh minds, proper education, the right attitude, the necessary skills and passion but to do what? I would not know if a truck carrying a thousand kg of explosives is coming towards me, I would not know if I would be able to sustain myself in an economy of soaring inflation, I would not know if I would get a visa to the UK or the US in case I plan to study further, I simply would not know what to do!

It is time for us to pause and think and not just that but to understand where we are heading. All this uncertainty and chaos surrounding our fathers and mothers, our brothers and sisters will not just go away itself. It is a call for all of us to unite, to organise and re-educate ourselves for if we continue to travel the same path our country would not only lose my generation but would jeopardise the future of coming generations.

— HASSAN MASOOD CHOUDARY, KARACHI

## Terrorism

This is with reference to recent terrorist activities in Pakistan, including the latest suicide attack in Bhakkar, I think it is an eye opener for us and we cannot close our eyes whereas terrorists keep on killing innocent people. The brutal way the terrorists are killing our people, our women and our children and our forces personnel I say no one should doubt that we are fighting other's war.

I will request the whole nation to support our armed forces which are fighting bravely to save our beloved country from terrorism and in its way offering so many sacrifices. I will also request the media to plan an organised campaign against this menace and create awareness against this menace. We need to take a united stand as a nation against these people before it is too late.

— DR. FAREEHA KHANUM, MARDAN

## Golden chance

The terrorists after destroying the peaceful normal life of the people in the tribal areas have entered our major cities. These

## Jail conditions

Inadequate manpower creates problems for the administrative staff in jails, especially when they are dealing with tough criminals. Due to fewer numbers of trained staff, wardens have to remain on duty without availing leave. This arguably brings rashness in their attitude. This explains lack of proper treatment of prisoners and the resulting law and order situation in jails. There have been a few incidents of prison violence, protests, and strikes during the past few years. In one such incident, dozens of prisoners climbed onto the rooftop of their barracks in Hyderabad jail to protest against the alleged atrocities of the jail authorities. It is not just Punjab where the number of prisoners goes beyond the capacity of prisons. Another reason for the overcrowding of jails is those prisoners, both juvenile and older, who are held for committing minor crimes, and are kept alongside serious offenders. This is in violation of the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance (JJSO) of the year 2000. In this backdrop, talking about rehabilitation of the prisoners seems to be asking for the moon.

— AHSAN IKRAM, MULTAN

have discouraged few investors to leave and those thinking to invest in future have decided to stay away. The flight of the capital continues. The Taliban's strength till few days back seemed formidable and still they remained organised as most powerful non state actors, capable to strike anywhere. Our state agencies performance did not provide a solace of relief to the people. The Marriott Hotel, Islamabad, catastrophe is a proof of this utter failure.

The NWFP government should also muster its courage and should not surrender to the militants by agreeing to their demands of enforcing *Shariah*.

The local tribal people have provided a golden opportunity to the government by forming *lashkars*, government should not squander this opportunity and provide all support, in men and material, to those brave people.

— GULSHER PANHWER DADU



## Traffic rules

Lack of knowledge about road rules is a big factor in the high incidence of accidents. What is worse there is no information available about the traffic-load on a given road and at a specific time. If the authorities are to be believed, this may change in the coming days. In a meeting, the traffic authorities in Karachi have decided to put up eight digital display boards at the busiest crossings in the city to inform the commuters, drivers and others about traffic conditions on various main roads.

Along with a raft of other measures, like better monitoring and supervision mechanism for traffic wardens and providing drivers and commuters with training on traffic sense, these measures should improve the flow of traffic on Karachi's congested arteries. People will certainly be relieved of a lot of agony if they could use

their knowledge of traffic conditions to plan their journey. But this can only happen if a concerted campaign is launched to inform them about all the facilities available and how they can be accessed. Without such a campaign, the benefits of all these measures are not likely to materialise.

— YUMNA HASSAN, KARACHI

## Official pardon

Pakistan government seems to be bent upon pardoning and releasing Sarabjit Singh in the name of justice and human rights. The previous government liberated Kashmir Singh on the same pretext. The same kind of goodwill gesture was also shown to Mirza Tahir who happened to be a British national. The good luck with all three of them is that none of them is a Pakistani and their governments are not

that unconcerned with their citizens as our government was and is.

Mr Farooq H. Naek is specially going to visit Sarabjit Singh to ensure that a special and privileged justice is provided to him. I know of hundreds of innocent Pakistanis who unlike Sarabjit Singh are really innocent and are in the cells waiting to be mercifully hanged. Farooq H. Naek has promised that Sarabjit Singh will get best possible lawyers on government expense, so why the same facility is not being provided to poor Pakistanis? I was kept in cell No. 2 of Adyala Jail with the victims of one such case who have been tortured to the extreme, kept shackled in solitary confinement just because all of them are having beards and firm about their religious views and were vocal about it. Chief Tech Khalid Mehmood J/T Niaz J/T Nawazish J/T Adnan Rasheed and Mr Mushtaq are to be hanged, S/T Karam din and Cpl/Tech Nasrullah are given life imprisonment and Muhammad Islam has already been hanged, in the case of the attack on former president Musharraf where even a cat was not injured or killed. These people were tortured over a year and were made to plead guilty, the so-called witnesses were also detained and tortured and were forced to give false and fabricated testimonies, even Cpl/Tech Nasrullah was tortured and asked to give a false witness and on his refusal he was also booked for life imprisonment. All these victims were court-martialled and Mr Mushtaq who was treated as air force employee who had never ever served any of the defence forces in any capacity. We appeal to the government and the people of Pakistan to ensure that these people and other Pakistani victims get priority over Sarabjit Singh. I give a challenge to Mr. Farooq H. Naek that if he is willing to review the case of Sarabjit Singh who has been through all the legal procedure of Pakistan, if any inquiry is conducted and a chance is given to these victims to prove their innocence in any court of law, their innocence will be proven beyond any doubts as air force will not be able to bring any witness as they are no more in their custody.

— KHALID KHAWAJA, Via email

Letters to the Editor to: letters@thepost.com.pk