

Faiz on Gandhi

(Faiz A. Faiz' editorial of the Pakistan Times dated Feb 2, 1948. Original title was: Long Live Gandhiji)



The British tradition of announcing the death of a king is "The king is dead, long live the king!" Nearly 25 years ago, Mahatma Gandhi writing a moving editorial on the late C.R Das in his exquisite English captioned it as "Deshbandhu is dead, long live Deshbandhu!" If we have chosen such a title for our humble tribute to Gandhiji, it is because we are convinced, more than ever before that very few indeed have lived in this degenerate century who could lay greater claim to immortality than this true servant of humanity and champion of downtrodden. An agonizing 48 hours at the time of writing this article, have passed since Mahatma Gandhi left this mortal coil. The first impact of the shock is slowly spending itself out, and through the murky mist of mourning and grief a faint light of optimistic expectation that Gandhiji has not died in vain, is glowing. Maybe it is premature to draw such a conclusion now in terms of net result, but judging by the fact that the tragedy has profoundly stirred the world's conscience, we may be forgiven if we lay store by the innate goodness of man. At least we can tell at the top of our voice suspicious friends in India that the passing away of Gandhiji is as grievous a blow to Pakistan as it is to India. We have observed distressed looks, seen moistened eyes and heard faltering voices in this vast sprawling city of Lahore to a degree to be seen to be believed. We have also seen spontaneous manifestations of grief on the part of our fellow citizens in the shape of observance of a holiday and hartal. Let our friends in India take note--and we declare it with all the emphasis at our command—that we in Pakistan are human enough to respond to any gesture of goodwill, any token of friendliness and, last but not least any call for cooperation from the other side of the border. Earlier we have indulged in a bit of optimism—and that for a very good reason. In India, sedulous and we believe sincere, heart searching has been going on ever since the tragedy took place. The Government of India too seems to have at long last realised that they are sitting on top of a volcano. And above all, a small incident in Bombay in which a Hindu mob broke open the office of the Anti-Pakistan Front on Saturday and

reduced its furnishings to smithereens is, we believe, realisation –though tragically belated---of the fact that Muslims are, after all, not the sinners--not to say the enemies of India. A large section of Hindus have discovered where their enemies reside and what political labels they flaunt. Not long ago, at Lucknow India's Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel, while hauling nationalist Muslims, who had assembled there a few days earlier, over the coals, sang a paean of praise for RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha---the organisation which, alas, produced that worst criminal in history, Nathuram Vinayak Godse. Sirdar Patel pandered to their jingoistic vanity by asking the Congress to flirt with them. Paradoxical though it may seem, his chief, Pandit Nehru, while at Amritsar two days prior to the tragedy picked the RSS and Sabha bubbles in no uncertain manner by describing their politics as doing the greatest harm to the country. Again, just one day after the pledge given by representatives of different political organisations to Gandhiji for the promotion of communal amity which led him to break his fast, the well-known Hindu Mahasabha leaders Mr. Deshpande and Prof. Ramsingh, had the temerity to say that Muslims must be driven out of India. If the Government of India would have tried to take some of the conceit and "fire" out of these rabidly communal and militant leaders, maybe Gandhiji would have lived to be 125. Instead of planting bombs and other weapons in innocent Muslims' houses in Delhi and other parts of India, had Mr. Patel's intelligence department taken good care to protect the precious life of Mahatmaji, this vast subcontinent, as indeed the world, would not have been smitten "by this calamity" .It was far from us to recount these pre-tragedy happenings but we feel constrained to do so for the weighty reason that the destiny of fifty million Muslims is involved in India. We demand that the powers that be in India must treat them fairly and squarely. We would be less than human if we were to make even the least attempt to exploit Gandhiji's death in furtherance of our co-religionists' interests in India. But we are gratefully conscious of the fact that nothing would give greater pleasure to the soul of the illustrious dead than dispensation of justice and fair play to Indian Muslims, which he so passionately preached and for which he laid down his life. To these countless Muslims Mahatmaji would ever remain a symbol of hope and courage. Though he is dead, he will live through ageless life.

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