

Kya itni aazadi kaphi hai (क्या इतनी आजादी काफी है)?

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Abstract

We have celebrated 'Aazadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' (75 years of India's Independence) last year. This also mark the starting of the 'Amrit Kaal'. The budget 2023 is considered to be the first budget of the Amrit kaal by the finance minister. Amrit Kaal, although a Vedic concept which signify the period when the gates to heaven are open to common people, but here it signify the period 2023 to 2047. This shows the optimistic hopes of the government for the country in future. But the important question to ask is where we stand today and are we taking the right route to where we want to go. This paper will try to track the journey of India's last 75 years. At the same time this will also ask questions about the attainment of the goals that were set in past. This paper will try to ask are we enough independent. The last thing this paper will try to look at is the present fall of the fourth pillar of democracy and how this is a serious concern.

Keywords: 75 years of Independence, Fall of fourth pillar of Democracy, pseudo independence

Introduction:

15, August 1947 was the first day of free India, since then more than 75 years have passed. To Quote Mr. Nehru's historic speech at the Red Fort 'tryst with destiny' "Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge...."

The struggle for freedom was not a short-time fierce investment but a long and continuous series of efforts where many lifetimes were consumed fully or partially without no result or even worse with no hope for a result but still with great determination. We could run as either a rabbit or a turtle, but we couldn't take a chance to stop.

Freedom Struggle:

India is a country of great diversity; the diversity was such great that it was not even a country before the British. It was a collection of independent monarchical states. The East India Company acquired some of the states, some were in its direct or indirect control while others were independent. All these acquired states were governed in such a way that best suits the British needs. This ill governance ultimately resulted in the oppression of the natives. When the height of oppression reached, people started becoming hostile toward the government. Different regions have been affected differently by this ill governance. And it required great efforts on the part of our freedom struggle leaders to unite all these people with diverse backgrounds and even more diverse sets of problems and needs for a single purpose. Even more important was to create a sense of common identity among the people. Languages, literature, poets, and artists played a very important role in this along with the popular movements with very broad base like Civil Disobedience Movement, Non-cooperation Movement, etc.

The journey after the Independence:

After independence, with the end of a dark era, an even darker era of communal holocaust

started throughout the country. Millions of people moved across the border leaving everything behind not just their belongings but also the people whom they belong to. Many died, and many more survived just to long for death. Independence and partition were the same things for them, the common people who lost their dear ones were not wrong to think that independence is just another word for this bloodshed.

The colonial legacy that India inherited was of suppression and sufferings subjected to the Indian people. From the 1st century AD to the start of British colonization in India in the 17th century, India's GDP was between about 25 and 35% of the world's total GDP, which dropped to 2% by the Independence of India in 1947. It has been rightly pointed out by Dr. Shashi Tharoor during his Oxford speech that the industrialization of Britain was funded by the de-industrialization of India.

Due to partition, many fertile food-producing areas went to Pakistan, and we were very short of food to meet our own needs. With such economic backwardness and nearly no industrialization along with food shortages, a democratic government was not thought to be suitable for India. It was thought that people in

a poor country like India are more interested in a bowl of food than democracy and it is of no use for them if it can't guarantee them adequate food, clothing, and shelter. The task of surviving as a single country along with all these odds and a high degree of diversity was not anything less than impossible for most of the political thinkers of the time who were sceptical about the ability of our political leaders to contain all these diversities and prevent them to become a threat to the country itself. Yet with all these odds, we survived. The emergency during Indira Gandhi's tenure was one of the fiercest attacks on Indian democracy and an infamous example of using state power for one's political benefits. The economic growth has been slow for the first 30 years but since then we have had a growth rate of more than 6 percent. The achievements are many (successful nuclear bomb test, creation of Bangladesh, space missions, and so on), and so are the misfortunes (the demolition of Babri mosque, communal riots, war with china).

The pseudo Independence:

If we Compare India in 1947 with India in 2022, we have improved without a doubt. But the more important question to ask is how independence has improved the life of the common people. Has it even improved or not?

The essence of the progress that a country has made is how the people standing at the last are benefitted. And it is unfortunate to say that they haven't benefitted much. It appears that through Independence we have just changed our oppressors. Earlier they were used to be nominated by the British Monarch, now we choose them through elections. As former prime minister, Atal Bihari had said in one of his poems, ask people who sleep on the footpath, what they say about Independence. Has independence made them any independent? And if it has, is this much independence enough?

The answer is a big fat No!

Independence can't just mean independence of choosing our representatives but it should mean an inclusive environment that allows us to develop as an individual and as a country. And this has not happened. How can a country claim to be independent if crime rates towards women are high, children are undernourished, untouchability is prevalent in the society, inequality is very high, justice is very expensive, and so on?

Are we independent?

We are, indeed. But we are not independent of the reasons why we wanted independence from the British rule. We are not the country for which our great freedom fighters had sacrificed

themselves, we are not the country that our great freedom fighters had imagined while looking out through the light holes of their prison cells. And there is no reason to continue to celebrate Independence day if we are not independent of the reasons because of which we wanted Independence from the British rule.

The fall of fourth pillar of Democracy and conclusion:

Independence is not a tag but a process. We need continuous efforts to be more independent with time, at least more than what we were in the past. But the opposite appears to be the case in our country. In recent years, due to the technology outbreak, information is more accessible to the common people (smartphone recharge is cheaper than Dish TV recharge), and so is the miss information. Media houses are very well exploiting this new ability. Both the government and the media are on the same team. With the introduction of more informal and irresponsible sources of information like social media and the internet, it has become easier to spread fake news and affect elections by high-jacking people's minds. It also lets the government create a false sense of achievement among people even when nothing has been achieved. But exceptions are always there. We still have people who could see through the

propaganda and dare to question and criticize the government. Again, questioning the government is now seen as questioning the country and anti-national is the term being used for people who question. This is also evident from the increasing number of cases being registered under UAPA to silence the voices who question. In simple words, the situation is critical. On the one hand, we are not enough independent and on the other, we can not ask why we are not. Also, communal hatred is at its peak nowadays, all thanks to the media, internet and fake news. People are kind of ready to accept their misery if the person or community they hate is in an even worse situation. We can't sit silent and see the largest democracy dying before us. It is now or never.

References

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