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PHIR SE JEEVAY PAKISTAN
The Dream for a Prosperous Pakistan

By TeaBreak.pk

<http://teabreak.pk>

The dream for a prosperous Pakistan

written by: TeaBreak.pk

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Celebrating (Pakistani/Muslim) Women by Sabahat I Ashraf ("iFaqeer")



Just a little while ago, today, I stumbled onto an amazing juxtaposition of two of the Pakistani women one can be most proud of: a piece by Asma Jahangir on Mukhtaran Mai, written as part of one of those end-of-the-year series that major magazines do--in this case, the "Asian Heroes" series from 2004. Mukhtaran Mai, of course, is the Pakistani woman most often celebrated nowadays; the person victimized by a barbaric village council and who went on to both demand justice without regard to the cost to her, and then becoming an active presence for women's issues and rights in Pakistan and for Pakistani and Muslim women as she has travelled abroad and published a memoir/autobiography. Folks will have read reams and reams of copy--and maybe even her book. But for me, the most moving and profound tribute came last year in a personal conversation with Prof. Adil Najam. Paraphrasing from memory here: "I have sat next to and interviewed a Prime Minister, the person acknowledged as one of the greatest poets in our region in the latter half of the Twentieth Century; and Pakistan's only Nobel Laureate. But sitting next to Mukhtaran Mai, I was genuinely impressed. And, even compared to those other folks, proud of her as a Pakistani." And all this from a poor uneducated villager, one is tempted to say--and folks have often said. But then, that just shows that folks don't really know or understand Pakistani women, women, Pakistanis,

or work-a-day Muslims who live in Muslim societies, now doesn't it? But more of that later.



Asma Jahangir is the kind of person that makes you start a discussion with "If the Nobel Prize was really given purely on merit..." and, in her case, if the Nobel Peace Prize was really given purely on merit, and a woman activist in a Muslim country going up against all odds completely fearlessly again, and again, and then not just stopping there, but stepping onto the world stage to work on the same issues on a global level...well then, why wait till 2003? Anything else might I had the honour of spending some time stuck at Lahore airport with her and Naeem Bokhari back in 1994--and just shooting the breeze. [And this after representing the War Against Rape at a human rights moot held in her offices that very week, and watching her from afar.] Pakistanis--at least those paying attention--don't need to be told the story. Asma Jahangir famously started the first All-Female law practice in Pakistan. Opposition to Gen. Zia's "Hudood Laws" brought her onto the streets, so to speak, and not taking nonsense became her style. She famously turned around and slapped a senior police officer who had yanked her ponytail during one demonstration. She then went on to be one of the leading lights of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. (Something Dr. Amartya Sen is very quick to acknowledge when discussing civil society in Pakistan, for example.) She's since gone

global and taken on assignments from the UN as "UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Arbitrary and Summary Executions" and, since 2004, "United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief of the Commission on Human Rights since 2004". Oh, and Rani Mukerjee played what is often seen as a fictionalized version of her in a major Bollywood movie. As I started to say above, even with all the attention focused on Pakistan and Muslims since 2001, these women demonstrate in all they say and do, and in how they say and do it, something no amount of ink--print or electronic--has been able to capture and convey. And that is that one can live in a dictatorship, one can be victimized in the most barbaric way, and yet, even in this day and age, stand up and speak truth to power, demand justice while continuing to have and draw strength from a very strong and personal faith (as Mukhtaran Mai does) and advocate strongly for things like human rights, civil society, and civil rights in the context of, and with respect for, faith, family, tradition, and values. Today, we celebrate these Pakistani women--and Muslim women, and all women. Especially those not demanding special consideration for who they are, or what they want to do, but who are working for basic dignity and justice for themselves, for other women, and for all us. PS: And if you want to read more from me on this topic, try [this link](#). PPS: I cross-posted the above on a couple of sites focused on Muslims, and added the following introductory paragraph: On International Women's day, on this site, one would think of the Muslim Woman. But when one--anyone, Muslim or non-Muslim--thinks of the Muslim Woman nowadays, what does one think of? Well, not to push the stereotype too far, but it's either the headscarf-wearing (-and-calling-it-hijab), headscarf-pushing person demanding that her conservative values and practices be accepted and given allowances, or the other extreme; that of the memoir-publishing, interview-giving dissident or refusenik. But in all this, the person that I would really like to be heard from more is another kind of Muslim woman: the activist, the human rights lawyer, the person fight back against oppression, and to make the world a better place for all of us--comfortable with her faith, her community, and often her nation; but still being in the forefront of working to make them work better for her co-religionists, her neighbours and her compatriots. So here [you are]--and of course, I focus on Pakistan, for it is one of the corners of the Muslim world I know best; please do post your own "nominations"!

Pakistan's Civil Society Shines by Sabahat I Ashraf ("iFaqeer")

One of the rays of hope in the crisis in Pakistan at this time--and I am not just talking about the Earthquake-- is that Pakistan's "Civil Society", our silent majority, is showing what metal it is made of. I hate to sound like a broken record, tooting the same horn again and again, but readers of this blog will be familiar with WikiPakistan's documentation of the Quake and relief efforts, which is at: http://pakistan.wikicities.com/wiki/Earthquake_10-05 People following that story will have seen how, The way a nation, torn apart by ethnic animosities and sectarian conflict; the media coverage from where seemed to be all of "religious parties" holding rallies to burn international leaders in effigy (including their own--and never mind the religious proscription on making craven images); the way this nation just dropped all the noise and fury and focused on helping its own was a wonder to look at. And the "religious parties"? I have been trying to run an informational site on the crisis and it was on the 11th day that I saw anything from them that any Pakistanis paid attention to--and even then mainly to shake our heads in bemusement. I covered some of this in a previous blog entry. But this past week came some positive feedback from two other sources--both, in a manner of speaking, from just over the border. (And I mean this not in an gloating way, but in a "It is good to be thought well of by the most thoughtful of neighbours" spirit.) If you get a chance, listen to what Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has to say on Talk of the Nation (a US radio program put out by National Public Radio) about the Human Rights community in Pakistan, as well as <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4957424&ft=1&f=5> He says that Pakistan, in terms of Civil Society, has made major progress. Pointing to the Human Rights Commission, an NGO that "under visionary leadership of Asma Jehangir and IA Rehman" (his words) has done great work. He goes on to point out that our newspapers play a very big role, and give opportunity to different points of view. "I don't feel as hopeless about it...Pakistan will move towards democracy." Then a few days ago, a friend in India pointed out what Pankaj Mishra has to say about our Press in the 10th anniversary issue of Outlook, a major, well-regarded journal: <http://www.outlookindia.com/full.asp?fodname=20051017&fname=ANPankaj&sid=1> (skip to page 2 and

look for "Pakistan" if you are in a hurry) It is almost a throw-away line on page 2, and I feel that in his frustration with it, he's giving short shrift to India's very robust English language press, but it does make the point that Dr Sen makes: that contrary to what you might have heard in most of the media in the West and elsewhere (and not just on FOX), this Muslim nation at least (the second largest, by the way) has a very strong tradition of an independent press, independent thinking, and independent speech--and not just "Islamist" rhetoric, neither. So please, if you're not a Pakistani, in this moment when the world's kleiglights are trained on it, take a moment to explore Pakistan's society. You can start at WikiPakistan, or any of several sites that index Pakistani websites and information; or any of the Newspapers: The Daily Times, said to be the most independent; Dawn, our very own "paper of record", with all that that status entails; The News, our largest circulation English paper. Or explore the blogosphere at Karachi's Metroblog, or Lahore's; read Danial's blog; or tech maven TM's...write to me for more. And if you are a Pakistani or have roots in that region. Well, ditto. Take a look at Pakistan. Not the Pakistan we whine about or the Pakistan your parents or you left a decade or five ago. Follow the disaster relief effort: notice the strength of our spirit and the beauty of our hearts once the silent majority wakes up and engages with an issue. We need to keep this alive beyond this month, this year. We need to come out of this a stronger, more engaged, more caring nation, playing the role that our founders envisioned--that of a modern nation and a democratic republic that stands for the best, most--to use the dreaded word--enlightened model of how Muslims can engage with the world of today; any day. ---- Sabahat I Ashraf ("iFaqeer")

Technology: Tribute to a Pakistani Artifact by Sabahat I Ashraf ("iFaqeer")

...there are very few things that you can hold up as truly and purely Pakistani artifacts."



It often times gets lost in all the noise and fury of these interesting and fast-paced times, that we are blessed with a melting pot of rich history and culture from the Islamic and the wider South Asian civilizations. We have deep roots in the land within our borders. But we come from a tradition that, for the major part, is open and accepting of outside influences and implements; be they the treasures of other venerated cultures, or the everchanging offerings of technology's bleeding edge. Partly because we are too good at adopting and adapting, there are very few things that you can hold up as a truly and purely Pakistani artifact. But the "Dollar Pen", or "_Daalar Pein" as most of its users would refer to this writing implement of choice, for most of us ordinary work-a-day citizens, is something that is our very own. ATP has already written about my generation's veneration for the fountain pen . It was something we grew up using. Filling and refilling it to do our school work. Frantically operating the screw mechanism to draw in enough ink before we lose a train of thought in the limited-time, closed book exams we went thru with such clockword precision. Or worse, afraid we would not be able to finish dumping something we had stayed up late to learn by rote. Because if you lose your place in of those, you basically have start again and work your way to the same point before you can go on.

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The 'Dollar Fountain Pen' is a Pakistani artifact if ever there was one. If your fountain pen gives you any trouble, please let me know and I will be more than happy to send you a new one. The "ferule" - or the little screw holding the clip on the cover is notorious for breaking off - maybe that's why the desktop version of this pen that comes with the inkpot is so popular in offices. This pen is not a finely crafted example of fine Swiss craftsmanship. It is but a humble everyday implement.



The original “Dollar Pen” had an opaque body. It looked a lot clunkier and more no-nonsense than this cool-looking New Age implement with the transparent body you hold in your hand now. It used to cost about 3, 4, or I think 5 rupees when I last lived in Karachi. This one cost me about 15. At about 30 cents, actually, if you adjust for change in the exchange rate the price hasn’t changed. I found this updated and upgraded 21st Century version on my recent visit back home and fell in love with it immediately. I bought one. And then asked my parents to send me a bunch I could share with you. For this is one artifact that just begs to be shared. For me, it is

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a reminder, and a symbol. A symbol of a happier, simpler time in the life of an ordinary Pakistani. The gift you have in your hand is one Pakistani's attempt to share a piece of ourselves, our country, our society, our lives with friends, colleagues ... those near and dear to one's heart.

Little Drops of Water... by Shaista Hussian

The recent trend of minority killings in Pakistan, specially targeting the Christian community has disturbed us a lot. I am disturbed particularly because I spent eleven years of my life in a Christian School in Rawalpindi and I have beautiful memories of those formative years. What I learnt at school was well in line with the basic teachings of Quran, our own religion. When I was in a playgroup, we would receive milk and biscuits for lunch, and my parents would fondly recall that every time I would have anything to eat at home, I would close my eyes, put my hands together and say, 'Thank you God for the milk and biscuits, Thank you!'. The school had taught me my first basic lesson, to be grateful to God for all my blessings. Our school was more than a 100 years old, and we would occasionally have visitors (old goras mostly) who would come and visit the school and tell us why they remember it so fondly. The school had a character of its own and the motto was true to what it believed: Not Self but God and Others. A regular day in school would start by the school choir leading hymns (pray books) that all of us would sing out loudly and cheerfully. There was a school prayer that was to be recited and included the school motto to remind us all of the vision that the school stood for. We ended up in the National Anthem and the school would then disperse to start the regular classes. I recall how the annual Christmas play was such a glamorous event every year (The angel Gabriel would be the most beautiful girl in class 10! And all of us would look at her in awe) and each year all of us would participate with excitement and joy. I had the pleasure of being the narrator of the Annual Christmas play twice, and our parents would almost always attend the annual play because one of us would be participating. Then, there was the annual milad and you would see all Christian and Muslim students preparing naats with zeal and excitement for the big day. It was not just the Islamiat (Islamic Studies) teacher who would be leading the event, it would be our Christian teachers too participating with equal enthusiasm, encouraging and coaching us all to do our best. I was recalling one of my most favourite hymns ' Little Drops of Water' from back in the day, which was a classic example of the teachings of our school, that respected us all as equal human beings and not discriminating against any one student because he/she would be from a particular sect or religion. Then I wonder,

this tolerance and equality and respect for humanity is also reflective of the teaching of our religion as well. So why is it that when it comes to Islam, the most tolerant of all religions in theory as far as I know, is turned so intolerant in practicality by its followers that we react to a situation before we even think about the consequences? We can at the minimum, reflect upon the situation itself in its own merit. Is it because our sense of self righteousness has inflated so much that it does not allow us to distinguish between the right of any other religion against what 'we' see as the right thing to do? Who has given a common man on the street the authority to assume the role of the 'moral police'? Are all of us so pious in our own doings and actions that we can go around putting any house on fire because we 'think' that they have done some harm, without having any proof whatsoever?

Whatever happened to unity, faith and discipline which were to be the motto of our motherland? The voice of one nation? Can we not all go back in time, and like that small school of mine, situated somewhere in a small city, learn to live together, accepting our differences and respecting each other's right to religious freedom? Obsession with one's religion should not come at the cost of failing to recognize the other person's basic human rights. I am reflecting on that little hymn we would sing in the morning in the school assembly, and can only hope that this August 14, as we all raise our national flag, we do see the white rectangular border on the left hand side of the flag as representing the minorities of our country. My flag is not complete without that white band and I cannot relate to the Pakistani flag without that beautiful white border that merges so well with the green majority. Little drops of water, little grains of sand, make the mighty ocean and the beautiful land. And the little moments, humble though they may be, make the mighty ages of eternity. Little deeds of kindness, little words of love, make our earth an Eden, like the heaven above. So our little errors lead the soul away, from the paths of virtue into sin to stray. Little seeds of mercy sown by youthful hands, grow to bless the nations far in heathen lands. Glory then for ever be to God on high, beautiful and loving, to eternity.

---- Post by: Shaista Hussain (<http://shaistathinks.wordpress.com>)

Be the Change... by Shaista Hussain

They say that if you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem itself. How long can we all sit and watch our country constantly being referred to as the most dangerous place on earth? How long can we watch our own people killing each other and being killed, all in the name of religion which seems remote to those of us who see our religion as a religion of peace, promoting harmony and a religion that teaches you tolerance? While we cannot remain indifferent to the current crisis, we should stand up and be counted as the conscious voice in support of our country and in support of those few brave individuals who are still upholding the spirit of one united Pakistan. We should be the change we wish to see in the world. Each year as mid-August approaches, we should all remind ourselves what it means to have our own country, a place to call our own. Maybe it is just a random observation but each year the zeal to 'celebrate' our one national day seems to diminish. The month of August is not just about buying some extra flags (that lay cluttered on the ground next day unfortunately), listening to old national songs or enjoying another public holiday. It is about reflecting back on the essence and core values that became Pakistan. It is an opportunity to tell our children what they can and should do for their country. Unity, Faith and Discipline sound like a far cry in the current situation when all you hear about is more killings, another blast, another attack on innocent lives, in addition to the ongoing energy crisis. And if all that was not enough, ongoing riots, sectarian killings and increasingly minorities coming under fire too. It is perhaps time to remind ourselves that our national leader and founder of Pakistan strongly believed in the concept of social cohesion. Social cohesion is the 'glue' that binds people together in a society, particularly in the context of cultural diversity. Jinnah was a strong advocate of an inclusive and impartial government, religious freedom, rule of law and equality for all. While Jinnah's portrait seems to adorn every government department and office, his words seem to have lost their way in the crooked corridors of history. The least we can all do this August is to catch up on our Jinnah readings and remind ourselves of the true spirit behind the creation of Pakistan. It is ironic that the most contentious issue when it comes to the Leader of the Nation is his vision as perceived by the common man, and the real vision he had

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for Pakistan as clearly echoing from all his speeches. I quote one from his Presidential Address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, August 1947, as a reminder in the context of the recent Gojra violence. 'You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or 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.' ---- Post by: Shaista Hussain (<http://shaistathinks.wordpress.com>)

The beat of change makes me proud by Syed Faisal

Recent incidents of Gojra, Muridkai and some other parts made me sad and made me to think about whether this is the Pakistan we need? The incidents were a result of mobs irrational behavior towards blasphemy concept and the exploitation of these emotions by some freaks who call themselves ulemas. Also the facts that missing Pakistanis are still missing and the government is doing nothing for them, Dr. Afia is still having a miserable time in US jails and courts, electricity is still a problem of our country even in the 21st century and of course don't forget we are a nuclear state, jialas are plundering the nations wealth, Kashmiri Pakistanis are still fighting for their basic right of freedom from India and name the problem and you will find it there in our country. Our forces are still fighting a foreign war imposed on us by the former dictator (who is still free and enjoying his days in Europe) just for Dollars! And nothing is done to give justice to those who died in the name of this war against humanity and Pakistan.



So what's the point? Are we dead as a nation or incapable of solving the problems? Is this the country our ancestors struggled for? I some times get really irritated and in some way frustrated by the present situation but in between this I heard some real good news which brought hope in me.

The days like 31st July 2009, on which the Supreme Court (the true one restored by the people of Pakistan on 16th March 2009 after a long and hard struggle) of Pakistan declared the actions of the former dictator and tyrant Pervaiz Musharraf on 3rd November 2007 as unconstitutional and illegal and proved the dictator as a traitor and also declared PCO and PCO judges as illegal making their decisions including NRO as ineffective. This decision is important for me as I also was and still a big supporter for the movements for independent judicial system in Pakistan as this is the only way we can keep ourselves together. I remember the last year long march of June 2008 (as I was a part of that) and how people from every corner of the country, every walk of life, every ethnic identity of the country, every sect, every religious presence in the country took part in the movement to save Pakistan. The movement saw it's ups and downs, saw the killings of innocent people by establishment and dictator supported parties on 12 May 2007 and 9 April 2008 but it kept it's pace despite all hardships and finally achieved it's big milestones. I still say milestones because the path to achieve SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE and COMPLETE JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE is still long and hard but the big positive thing is that we are on the right track, the change is coming and I am really proud of that. The change has started, I can hear that beat, you can hear it too and those who can't will see the change as it will come InshaAllah! Therefore I dedicate this day to the people who supported and participated in the cause of independent judiciary , the cause of saving Pakistan. In the end I would like to share a quote of Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah: "As you know, history shows that in England conditions, some time ago, were much worse than those prevailing in India today. The Roman Catholics and the Protestants persecuted each other. Even now there are some States in existence where there are discriminations made and bars imposed against a particular class. Thank God, we are not starting in those days. We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State." (Presidential Address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11th August, 1947.)

Green and White by Fazal e Abbas

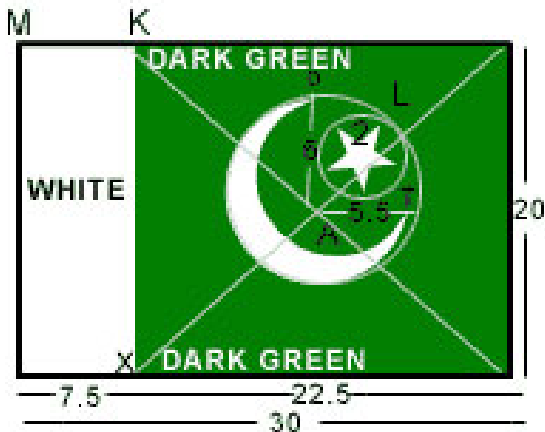


Was going through fb, felt the independence day spirit in me and changed the profile pic to the Flag of Pakistan and also thought of making an entry in my dormant blog



I just want to share that the flag of Pakistan as we are seeing on the roads sides being sold in different shapes, sizes and colors in not appropriate as in they should be made with the correct ratio and proper colors as defined the Constituent Assembly... Following is the extract from, “ Pakistan Flag specification: Resolution Passed by Constituent Assembly“defines the flag of Pakistan: The official design of the national flag was adopted by the Constituent Assembly together with a definition of the features and proportions: “A dark green rectangular flag in the proportion of length and width 3:2 with a white vertical bar at the mast, the green portion bearing a white crescent in the centre and a five-pointed white heraldic star. The size of the white portion being one-fourth the size of the flag, nearest the mast, the remainder three-fourths being dark green. The dimensions of the crescent and star are obtained as follows: “Draw the diagonal from the top right hand corner to the bottom left corner of the green portion. On this diagonal establish two points ‘A’ and ‘B’. Point ‘A’ at a distance equidistant from top right and bottom left hand corners of the green portion, i.e. the centre of the green portion. Point ‘B’ at a distance from the top right hand

corner equal to $\frac{13}{20}$ th the width of the flag. With centre point 'A' and radius $1\frac{1}{4}$ th the width of the flag describe a second arc. The enclosures made by these two arcs form the crescent. The dimensions of the five-pointed white heraldic star are determined by drawing a circle $\frac{1}{10}$ th the width of the flag. The circle surrounds the five points of the heraldic star. The star lies with one point on the diagonal at a point where the larger arc of the crescent, if completed, cuts the diagonal." Furthermore the following extract from, "Pakistan.Gov.pk – The Official Web Gateway to the Government of Pakistan" tell the exact size and shape of OUR flag: For ceremonial occasions. 21# x 14#, 18# x 12#, 10# x 6- $\frac{2}{3}$ #, 9# x 6# $\frac{1}{4}$ For use over buildings. 6# x 4# 3# x 2# For cars. 12# x 8# For tables. 6# $\frac{1}{4}$ x 4# $\frac{1}{4}$ The Pakistan Flag ?



Explanation NM (width of flag) is equal to $\frac{2}{3}$ rd of NZ (length of flag) NX (white portion) is equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ th of NZ (length of flag) A is the middle point of XY & KZ (diagonals) YB is equal to $\frac{13}{20}$ th of YZ (width of flag) AO (radius of outer arc of Crescent) is equal to $\frac{3}{10}$ th of YZ. BT (radius of inner arc) is equal to $\frac{11}{40}$ th of YZ. CL (radius of the circle surrounding the star) is equal to $\frac{1}{10}$ th of YZ.

Passion and Promise-Max Robinson

The author Max Robinson is a TV development researcher in the UK. Married to a Lahori he's fallen head overheels in love with Pakistan. He also makes passable biryani for a gora.

My very first day in Pakistan was on August 14th. Four days later I was married. I had no idea when I was on the plane from London that I would be arriving on the nation's Independence day. All my thoughts were with how I was going to meet my future wife and her family. None of whom I'd ever met. Nervous excitement could not prepare me for the cacophony of sights, sounds and smells that were about to assault my senses. After passing through passport control, customs and regaining my luggage I walked through in to arrivals. The sheer throng of the crowd being held back by a few hapless guards was extraordinary. So too was the heat. I knew it was going to be hot but I couldn't believe how at 3am in the morning it could be nothing short of a sauna. I was momentarily dumbstruck as beads of sweat rolled down me. Then I saw my wife holding a bunch of flowers looking like a vision of tranquillity in a sea of chaos. As we drove through the streets from Allama Iqbal airport to Lahore Gymkhana where I was to stay for a week I was amazed at how the streets were packed with people. Young boys racing up and down Jail Road on tiny Honda motorbikes doing wheelies and generally creating mayhem. Everyone was in jubilant mood and everywhere there were the national colours of green and white.

Pakistan was going to be like nowhere else I'd been. My heart was racing as adrenalin surged within. The next few days were taken up with meeting my future relatives and being given a whistle-stop guided tour of Lahore. My camera never stopped clicking. The lush greenery in the sub-tropical surroundings was a world away from the concrete grey of London. I went to Badshahi Masjid, Lahore Museum, The Mall, the Lahore Fort and a host of other sights. The most exhilarating being a trip to the Wagah border to see the flag ceremony at sunset.

This was Pakistan in a microcosm for me. Chaotic, maddening and occasionally the tinge of danger ever present. But the lasting impression was the magnificent display by the soldiers as they faced-off with each other. The crowds roared and screamed but ultimately were remarkably orderly. Everyone was superbly friendly and pushed me to the front so I could see better. The passion was infectious. Despite all its troubles over the last 62 years, Pakistan is still here. Its people remain the most hospitable I've ever known and have made me feel as if I belong. That's something I cherish and one-day hope to repay in kind. On the 18th August I was married in a simple yet intimate ceremony. I had dived into Pakistan and Pakistani culture head first. Overwhelming yet ultimately uplifting and full of promise. That's how I will think of Pakistan on this Independence Day.

Reasons To Be Cheerful-Pakistan

The author Saesneg, is a journalist working in South Wales whose nose about Pakistan and the rest of the world. He defines it best himself "Maybe I should mind my own business". His blog can be found at Roznama-Bach My mum would tell me off for complaining at Christmas – and seeing as Independence Day is a holiday I don't see why she'd say any different today. Fact is, US generals and others were predicting the death of Pakistan just a few months ago. One was as bold to give the country a deadline of two weeks to save itself. But despite bombings, suicide attacks, an insurgency, riots and other disturbances, the state is not the teetering Russian monarchy some imagined it would be, or wanted it to be, in 2009. And there's plenty to be happy about. For a start, Pakistani civil society is healthy. There is no way without the pressure of constant protests and the lawyer's movement would General Pervez Musharraf have been forced out of office. Neither would it have suffered without the media playing irritant. Musharraf may have allowed Pakistan's television channels to establish themselves, but they did not return the favour with slavish coverage when times got hard and – for a short time – they paid for their independence. Pakistan continues to have a thriving free press with reams and reams of coverage, some of it world class, not to mention a ridiculous number of news channels. There are plenty of eyes and ears watching the government are doing, and although there's self-censorship there's a healthy and developing public sphere. Pressure from civil society manifested itself again into the Long March earlier in the year, holding Zardari to account and forcing the PPP government to bring back Chief Justice Chaudhry. It is difficult to imagine that a neo-Musharraf could retain control now without howls of opposition from the media, the judiciary, lawyers and ordinary members of the public. The quiet coup of 1999 could not take place now without provoking massive opposition – even with the incompetence of Asif Zardari as it is. The resilience of Pakistanis was shown during the IDP crisis, which prompted mass acts of kindness among ordinary people. Although the figures of cash raised may not have been as high as during the 2005 earthquake, many homes, schools and other buildings opened their doors to the displaced during the Swat action. These provided shelter and food where IDP camps, riven with poor sanitation and

a lack of resources, could not. It underlines that the concept of Pakistan is still strong among Pakistanis. Sport is a crude barometer of patriotism but the celebrations following the T20 shows the country still gets behind the flag, as it did in it's widespread support for the military action against the Taliban in the north. This deliberately positive article isn't to decry Pakistan's problems – of which I have written about many at my blog. Musharraf was of course replaced with a dynastic crook. Chief Justice Chaudhry was never exactly an unbiased party when he ruled the former president's actions were unconstitutional. The country's finances are a mess, while the Establishment remains convinced India is it's biggest enemy and is still willing to make deals with men with guns and sue for peace. Protests can turn brutal, and Gojra showed Pakistan has a lot to reconcile with it's minorities. I could go on, but most of these issues are at state level, and I know not everything I listed above is perfect. But among the people there's a lot to like in Pakistan. Happy Independence Day.

How will the 14th August Celebrations Begin ?

The author Jamal Ashiqain is a Captain at Karachi Metroblogs. Only two days left, and on the night 13 of August, as soon as the clocks will strike past midnight, shifting the date to 14, the independence day of Pakistan Celebrations around the country will begin and I am sure this year too like the last year in Karachi, we will resort to celebratory firing marking the first half hour of the independence day celebrations, of this land of pure with a gesture of violence which will leave several injured, and may be a few others dead just like we did a few months back to celebrate our victory in the twenty20 World Cup cricket. Has violence become such an integral part of our lives that it has dominated our protests, arguments, jokes, and even celebrations ? Do we not realize how our irresponsible actions are disrupting the peace of our city destroying its warmth and sense of security and what a negative image of our country are we painting for the rest of the world ? And please I know many of you will think this post somehow responsible to tell the world what faults we have, But really do you think shoving the dirt under the carpet will solve anything? Has it ever, till this date solved anything ? NO, It is about time we take ownership of our faults, accept them, address and confront them and eliminate them from our lives and tell the world what a wonderful nation we are. I hope, this year midnight, 14 of August, 2009 the sounds which will fill the air would not be of gunshots but of national anthems and songs of peace and love. I hope this year we will celebrate the independence day of Pakistan in its true spirit of joy, peace and love.

What I Love Most About Pakistan-Hamza Zafar

The author Hamza Zafar can be found on twitter as @hamzazafar Now that honestly isn't a very easy question to answer. The reason isn't that its very hard to think of anything admirable about Pakistan, but rather its about choosing the best out of it. When I saw the teabreaks's campaign regarding 14th August, in which you have to share something you love about Pakistan, I started wondering what could it be. Several thoughts crossed my mind, and I thought of making a top ten or twenty list, but guess I'll stick to one and most favorite reason in my eyes for loving Pakistan. Before stating it, I'd like to add a small personal thing about me first that by the Grace of God, I had the opportunity to visit many developed countries since my childhood, so I'm not a kind of person who hasn't seen World, or who would be fascinated by observing something ordinary, so when I mean that this thing about Pakistan is out of the box, it means that its something that I'm proud of when I go abroad. And that thing is none other than the Natural Green Beauty of Pakistan, its forests, rivers, mountains.. you name it. I've seen Canada, US, few European places who were renowned because of their gifts from nature, but none was even close to our Northern areas when it comes to the Natural Beauty. Our forests in the mountains of NWFP, the chill refreshing water of Lake Saif-ul-Malook, ice covered peaks of Himaliya series and K2, and I don't know what else. All I know is that when I watched the scenaries while going uphill to Nathia Gali, or saw several small villages while visiting Tarbela Dam, I observed the stuff, so beautiful, charming and attractive which I haven't witnessed in other parts of the World. I saw few tourists there too, who were surprised to see how beautiful Pakistan really is, and how opposite is the image of Pakistan in the eyes of World. A relative of mine who used to live in Switzerland and now in Saudia Arabia visited those places. She said that a major amount of revenue that is generated by that country is in term of tourism, the government promotes it worldwide, and manages to attract several thousands of people each year who love to see the nature in its full bloom, but places like those in Pakistan were nothing in comparison, according to her. She said I'm surprised why Pakistan isn't earning much from tourism. And yet thats a point our government should ponder about. Nepal survives because of Mount Everest only, they haven't got any other source of income, so

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the several other countries. Our Government has made progress in this regard though, the roads and highways from Islamabad to these places is pretty smooth, facilitated by several hotels and restaurants, but still a need of proper campaign should be felt to advertise these places. This could become a bigger part of our GDP. I read somewhere that a German tourist said that its really surprising how Pakistan is a poor country despite of owning K2. Whenever I visit Nathia Gali or Abbottabad or Kaghan or any other areas in their vicinity, and when I look at all the massive natural beauty they have got, I really feel proud as a Pakistani, as I feel that all that stuff down there, all the greenery and blue water, I share some pride in it because I was born on this land, in that very country which has been gifted with what others don't have. And thats all I wanted to say. I'm sharing some photos (Album 1, 2) too which I took at those places and would love to share with the readers. Hope you'll enjoy it.

Do you have it?

Post By: Supe (<http://supersizeme.wordpress.com>)



I can't recall whether the country's always suffered from an image crisis or whether it's a notion only as new as the day I kind of stumbled upon the realisation that we're 'not a particularly loved nation' across this planet, which was approximately a year ago fyi. Who's to blame for this supposed spiral downwards, I wonder? Well for starters it's an amalgamation of media claptrap, inherent ignorance, the inane or tragic situations we get ourselves into and then we will always have our clever little selves to blame too. I have been curious for a while as to why even the utterance of the name 'Pakistan' can put non-Pakistanis on edge. OK, the major reason is religion, that's basically me stating the obvious there, but then there is that 'something' else there also. From my own observations, I feel Pakistan lacks the cutesy, warm, cuddly, welcoming factor, "please come to us, we'll lick your ess" vibe some countries' nationals manage to give off successfully. But us? No, we are too just too damn 'real' to faff about with any of that. Aren't we? And does all this image and people's perception of us truly faze us and deviate us from our objective? I'll let the reader answer that. What annoys me, is how quick we are to plonk ourselves into the sheep category (guilty as charged), by doing so we instantly deplete any progress we make intellectually. Sheep? That is something Pakistanis as a whole can never

be. If there ever was a more diverse nation of people, Pakistan is it! From colouring, we range from the Makran folk who were African settlers to the blonde haired Kalash tribes of northern Pakistan. Ideologies range from extremes like Zaid Hamid to Nadeem F. Paracha, entertainment tastes run from complete abstinence from music and film (in a religious sense) to full blown headbanging rock gigs and I could just go on. The kind of dreams we see as a nation are for those kind of populations that can reach a consensus, a common goal, but the fact that we are so diverse a people, it works against us, just as much as it works for us. But then the amazing thing is, this divided nation still elicits surprise when Pakistanis come together to celebrate the cricket, as they did with this year's T20 world cup celebrations, or during this year's Independence Day as was witnessed on Twitter today. Maybe underneath our unique facades, if we scratch under the surface, we are one? And that we share the same anxiety-ridden spirit of 'Pakistan'. I highly doubt there is another country such as ours where we feel everything we are doing in all fervor and zeal, little or large impacts heavily on the country as a whole, and where the smallest of our actions by compatriotes can make us cringe in embarrassment or preen with pride. We have the utter disasters like-- (fill in the blanks) or glimmers of brilliance from Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan to the Badshahi Masjid. We procrastinate, we whine, we curse, we clumsily stumble, we get hurt easy, we lie, cheat and beg, but all's well that ends well, as they say, because somehow, somewhere along the line, we do the right thing too and eventually things pan out just fine.

They generally do, and then we laugh, sing, dance and make jokes about it until we make a boo boo again. And that, friends, is the spirit of Pakistan, it doesn't matter whether you leave the land behind, you never quite leave the spirit behind. You can't deny we all have it, call it a curse, or a blessing, as you wish. Funnily enough, coming back to image factor, there are folk out there who also possess this 'spirit', this obsession, this strange attachment to Pakistan without actually being Pakistani. There may not be a lot of these people around but they do exist. So, quality vs. quantity? Genuine vs. fake? Anyone? Ha! My philosophy entirely! Happy 62nd Birthday Pakistan! We rock and we just know it.

Hum Ek Hain, Pakistan

Post by Kalsoom from CHUP (<http://changinguppakistan.wordpress.com/2009/08/13/hum-ek-hain-pakistan/>)

Yesterday, I visited an IDP resource center run by a local non-government organization in Rawalpindi. There, I met several Swati women and children who were still living with host families. In Pakistan, many of the people displaced from the offensive have already returned home, but some remain, wary of the tenuous security situation up north. Waqar, a man displaced from his home in Buner and who acted as a translator for me [since I don't speak Pashto], explained to me that many of these women have stayed behind, despite living in poor conditions and having little or no money, because they constantly fear for their safety while at home. At least here, he told me, they don't have to worry about a militant [or even a soldier], banging on their door late at night. As a Pakistani woman from a progressive, moderate family, my life is relatively worry-free [mash'Allah]. And yet, 45 minutes away in a small skill-building center in Pirwadhai, women my age and older live such drastically different lives. One mother told me her daughter couldn't attend school for nearly two years because of the Taliban. Another said they didn't have enough money to pay their electricity bill, let alone come up with rent for her and her ten family members living in cramped quarters. It is easy to forget that we are all Pakistan. A politician from an affluent family, a child selling flowers on the street, a prominent fashion designer, a soldier fighting in an ongoing military offensive, a young woman displaced in her own country. Our lives exist as different planets, orbiting around one another without ever touching. We are too often caught up in our differences rather than in what makes us all the same. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of our country, said on August 15, 1947: The creation of the new State has placed a tremendous responsibility on the citizens of Pakistan. It gives them an opportunity to demonstrate to the world how can a nation, containing many elements, live in peace and amity and work for the betterment of all its citizens, irrespective of caste or creed. Our object should be peace within and peace without. August 14th, Pakistan's Independence Day, should be a time to reflect on such a statement – to consider our mistakes and what still unites us as a nation. In the 62 years since Pakistan's birth, we have been torn apart by violence,

civil strife, political turmoil and intolerance. And yet, in the face of such adversity, we continue to be resilient. Sitting across from those women yesterday, their courage brought tears to my eyes. Their story taught me how important it is to reach outside one's comfort zone to help fellow citizens in need, regardless of their caste or creed. At the end of the day, we must remember that we are all Pakistan. Hum ek hain , ["We are one."].



Let us all be Worthy of Pakistan (by Shaista Hussain)

Post by Shaista Hussain (<http://shaistathinks.wordpress.com>) Friends, Bloggers and Countrymen....lend me your ears (and eyes): A few hours ago, I returned after a traditional trip to the heart of the city to watch the 'lights' in celebration of the 62nd independence day of the country and it warmed my heart to see people dancing and cheering with joy. Later in the night, I switched on the TV and all across the country I could see men and women cheering and celebrating their independence day with infectious zeal...all for one cause: Pakistan. And that left me wondering: what makes the love for one's country all encompassing and so overwhelming despite one's crisis, problems and challenges? More importantly, why do we need to 'go green' and wear the Pakistani flag only around the month of August? Is love for one's country limited to only as far as waving the flag is concerned or is it much more? Why can our hearts and minds not remain for and on Pakistan for the rest of the year too? 62nd year of independence and still standing, as a friend stated on her facebook page. I also heard many stating with a tongue in cheek: Na bijli hai na paani hai, phir bhee dil Pakistani hai (there is no electricity, no water, but my heart still sings Pakistan!). Perhaps it is time to really and practically realize what we can do for our country, rather than fret over what our country can do for us. I do not have a long wish list to share with you all, just a few contributions we can all make. For starters, maybe all of us, and I really mean each and every one of us, make a very conscious decision not to clutter the parks, markets and places we go to, just as much as the effort we put in cleaning our own home! If Pakistanis can abide by the law outside Pakistan, they can be conscious citizen back here too. I see no reason why not. We may not have implementation of laws in place, but at the end of the day, it is us the citizens who make or break the law too. So why not start from today and really make an effort to keep our surroundings clean. Teach our children to pick up the litter after a picnic in the park, tidy up after a birthday party at a public place and definitely not throw anything outside the car window!! Small steps but they bring great changes!! Think Clean. Think Green. Respect the individual, especially those at the bottom of the food-chain so to speak. Respect the policeman who dares to stop your car because you do not have your seat belt on. He has been standing in the

heat all day long, but it is the gentleman sitting in the air conditioned car who fumes up with rage because he has been stopped by the policeman! The poor man is only performing his duty. The least we can do is to comply and to respond with respect. Respect the cook who stands in the melting heat to cook food for you and your family, while you slouch and chatter away in the living room. Ask the value of house-help versus self-help to all your family living abroad, most of whom do not have the luxury of affording house help and need to do everything on their own, starting from cooking, to cleaning, to washing to running around and finish their daily chores.

Thank your lucky stars for living in a country that still provides you with the luxury of having more support staff than the number of people living in the house! That's a royal lifestyle, just in case you are missing the point. There is no denying the fact that our country is currently in one of its biggest crisis, ever. It is important for an average citizen like you and me to stand up and be counted. Being the silent minority of patriotic but indifferent citizens will not help us, will not help raise our concerns over things that are close to our heart and history will definitely not forgive the silence of the educated, enlightened and conscious minority of this country. Instead of constantly complaining and grumbling over the failure of the state and its machinery, perhaps we should keep doing our bit by enacting the change we wish to see around us. Perhaps it is time we start justifying our own job descriptions, start delivering at our own micro units because every little drop counts! And last but not the least, lets us not, for even one second doubt the integrity of Pakistan or the future of Pakistan. It is heart breaking to see how convenient it is to declare Pakistan's disintegration in one random rush of moment by average citizens like you and me. Let us not forget that we are the future! We are the ones who will make or break the country, not the circumstances. Let us make peace with the past, and on this 62nd birthday of our country, let us all do our own bit to be able to tell our children in the future what role we played in the current crisis. Let us finally be worthy of Pakistan. I am remembering Shakespeare's Mark Antony as I mourn the loss of true patriotism in our country and only hope for people to rise above all differences and celebrate this Independence truly green from their hearts, not just appearances! O judgment! Thou art fled to brutish beasts, And men have lost their reason. Bear with me; My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar, And I must pause till it come back to me.