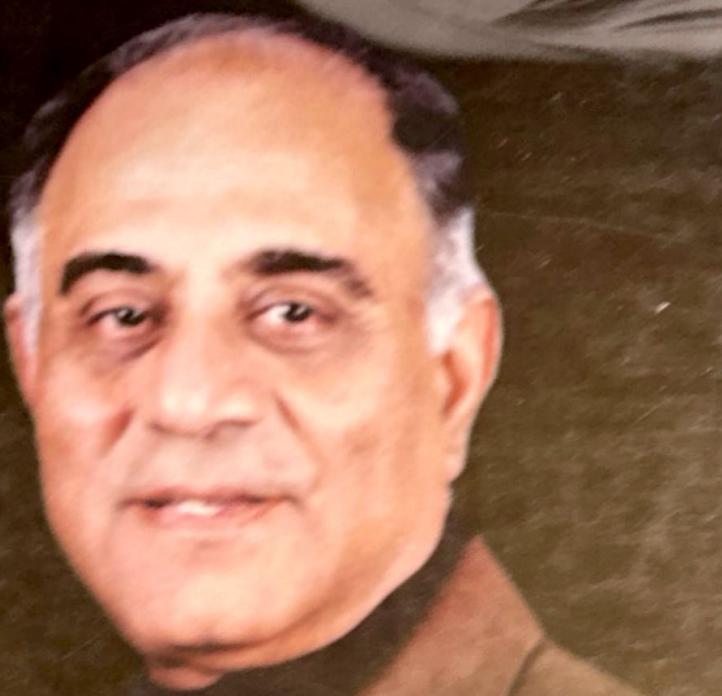


Views and Comments

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By



## Naeem Tahir

Published in

**Daily Times**

With a foreword

from

**Mr. Pervez Musharraf**

(Ex. President of Pakistan)

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## Foreword



Naeem Tahir is an icon on the cultural and literary scene of Pakistan. His services to art and culture have immensely benefited the art circles and will continue to enrich cultural life of average Pakistanis. His entry as a newspaper columnist is a valuable addition to journalism. It is a privilege for me to write a few words for this collection of articles written by Naeem Tahir. His vision, forthrightness and love for the country and its people come out strongly from his pen. His articles cover many past

and current events and reflect his views in an unbiased manner. It is also an effort by him to correct many a falsehoods about the historical events which took place during my tenure and also about Pakistan. He has also admirably analysed the events of recent past which are influencing lives of ordinary people today.

I wish Naeem continued success in writing with the same intensity and logic in the service of Pakistan.

Pervez Musharraf

## Preface

It was in the third week of February 2010 that I called Mr. Rashed Rehman; the newly appointed editor of The Daily Times. We met the same day and spent some time together in his office. His editorial board members also joined in. During this meeting Rashid asked me to write for 'The Daily Times'. I reflected for a moment and my first reaction was positive, primarily because the news paper has an enlightened outlook and shows a rare balance in its presentations. So I had little problem with the 'policy'. I asked him 'What subject?' He answered 'Whatever you like'. So he left no room for me to have a second thought. I started. Now in May 2011 it has been over one year. Mostly my articles were published as 'Views' or 'Comments' on op-ed pages and a few were 'Book Reviews'.

Very soon I realized that a 'readership' had developed! Several persons from the civil society considered my writings worth reading and their comments encouraged me to continue writing even at times when I felt lazy. Little or no deletions occurred in the text of my articles. However the lines or words that got 'changed' for some reason, have been restored and are included in this collection. But I do acknowledge the 'non' interference policy of the Daily Times.

At the time when I started my column I followed my natural responses to various situations. Occasionally I wrote with a sense of humor. Now I feel a change occurred in me, since I started writing in the newspaper. When I carefully looked at the national issues, I began to lose my sense of humor! National issues were getting too serious and the trends were even scary. There were senseless murders, radicalization, terrorism, corruption, and so on. I found it difficult to laugh these off.

I hope someday situations will change and I will be able to get my sense of humor back.

Before I conclude I wish to express my grateful thanks to ex-President of Pakistan, Mr. Pervez Musharraf for his kindness in writing the 'Foreword' for this collection.

Naeem Tahir, March 12, 2011.

March 4, 2010

## India-Pakistan: hiding behind excuses again?

"The 2008 terrorist act in Mumbai surely needs to be condemned in the strongest possible words, but one wonders why was the incident allowed to happen when all advance information was available. Why?"

Once again, India and Pakistan "fail to make a breakthrough". The Kashmir and Mumbai attack issues have blocked any progress. Over 60 years have passed since independence and we still cannot show the maturity to shed the old baggage and move forward like civilised, progressive people. The reservations are too deep, vested interests too strong, and there are suspicions about the 'intent'. All these serve the anti-normalisation lobbies. We need real leadership to rise above these constraints.

Every time the good intent of making a breakthrough is expressed, opposing forces blow away the cherished goal of the majority of the people of the two countries. It happened in 2008 by burning the two bogies of Samjhota Express. Symbolically, the Samjhota was derailed in spite of the governments showing determination to settle disputes. This time the peace loving people are being flogged with the Mumbai incident and Kashmir issue.

I do not need to introduce the Kashmir problem. Everyone knows the issue. But using the Mumbai incident has some element of surprise. The 2008 terrorist act in Mumbai surely needs to be condemned in the strongest possible words, but one wonders why was the incident allowed to happen when all advance information was available. Why?

There is evidence available that actionable, and precise, information about the attack on Mumbai through the sea was available to India's Intelligence Bureau (IB) at least one week before. The terrorists were

identified, their route was known, and even their number and the boat were on record with the IB. The IB even had the mobile phone numbers of the terrorists, which could be monitored.

India has a free and very professional press. This 'lapse' has been pointed out by important newspapers, not 'rags'. Readers may refer to the following:

"RAW sent an intercept to IB as recently as November 19 saying that a Lashkar-controlled ship had, with dangerous cargo, sailed from Karachi and could try to sneak into Indian waters" (The Times of India, Pune, December 1, 2008). Indian Navy sources angrily deny that the information was ever passed on to them.

"US Intelligence alerted the state about a 'potential attack from the sea against hotels and business centres in Mumbai'" (The Times of India, December 3, 2008).

"Responding to an allegation, Naval Chief Admiral Suresh Mehta said that the suspected boat 'Kuber' was inspected and released by the Coast Guards because its papers were in order" and "Internal inquiries into the Mumbai terror attack have revealed that despite clear intelligence inputs, the Coast Guard and the Navy failed to either spot or interdict Al-Hussaini, the ship that carried terrorists, and this took place at a time when warships and IAF aircraft were participating in an annual exercise for the defence of Gujarat" (Sakal, Pune, December 3, 2008).

"The input by RAW requested the Coast Guard Jakhau station to direct a ship to the area for surveillance; launch Dornier aircraft at first light for a coordinated sea/air search and deploy boats and personnel to patrol off the creek area. This input was shared by all agencies concerned, including the IB. The Coast Guard, it is learnt, did launch a hovercraft and an offshore vessel to interdict the suspected LeT [Lashkar-e-Tayyaba] ship, but the search apparently ended by 6:00 pm at Kandla on November 21. Sources said Coast Guard ships docked for a function that night" (Indian Express, Mumbai, December 11, 2008).

"An internal probe...has pointed fingers at the Intelligence Bureau for not refining its inputs, and at the Naval HQ for keeping Western

Command out of the loop" (Indian Express, Mumbai, December 15, 2008).

"Sources in the highest quarters in Delhi have told Tehelka that the mobile phone numbers that were used by the Mumbai terrorists were available with the Intelligence Bureau for at least five days before 26/11." The news report reveals that a secret note containing 35 mobile numbers, precisely stating that "these numbers need to be monitored", had been received by the IB on November 21. It is only after the terrorists "had killed 58 passengers at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, after ATS Chief Hemant Karkare had been shot dead with two other officers...that someone in the IB woke up to the fact that it had received a list of phone numbers" (Hindustan Times, Mumbai, January 10, 2009).

One could go on listing the lapses. The question being asked is if these lapses were, in fact, intended to use the chaos to get rid of Karkare and his colleagues in clandestine action because they had unearthed the full Indian network of right wing terrorists responsible for most of the acts committed in recent years. The objectives are varied, including political advantage, suppression of minorities, particularly the Muslims, and promoting Hindutva fascist philosophy. Karkare had filed an over 4,000-page case with Nasik court, and if he had the time to provide the evidence and to conclude the case, the whole terrorist network under the cover of Sangh Parivar would have been exposed, and the criminals involved in the Samjhota Express, Nanda and Malegaon incidents brought to book. These criminals were prominent rightist leaders and activists, so it was urgently necessary for the elements in the agencies to let the Mumbai terror attack happen and plant people in the chaos to get rid of the Karkare team. It appears that the unfortunate incident at Mumbai may have been 'allowed' to happen and the circumstances do point in that direction. With this background, Pakistan being whipped by the Mumbai bogie is not entirely fair.

In conclusion, one can only request the Indian leadership to avoid bowing to the rightist pressure and do the right thing and work for peace. Pakistan is laden with its own problems of terrorism and it is fighting to control them. Pakistan does not have the ability to guard the Indian borders nor can it be expected to do so. Then why make the Mumbai issue a hurdle in the peace process?

We all need to be upfront and honest, put our respective houses in order and stop the blame game. Let us look at some 'out of the box solutions', even in the case of Kashmir, provide real creative leadership, even at the cost of some popularity. Great leaders have the courage to take unpopular decisions in the larger interest. Let us all face the realities.

Saturday, March 13, 2010

### Prime Minister's asset management?

"If all the millions, even billions, worth of properties stay in one name, then the risks are enormous. For example, an adversary in power may confiscate the assets, or an enquiry into the legitimacy of assets may be instituted. Such things are embarrassing and it is better to avoid such an occurrence."

The prime minister provides the lead. It is a new concept of 'assets management'. However, he does need to learn a bit from the 'two time prime minister'. Prime Minister Gilani is upright; his physique and posture clearly give that impression. He was shown on the electronic media on March 1, 2010, saying that he transferred his properties to other people in the family because of the fear of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). In the meantime, the prime minister's sleuths have done well and his statement about the fear of NAB has disappeared from the media mysteriously. In any case, at least he has some fear.

In fact, non-declaration or transfer is a great solution for the rich in politics. When in power, or in a strong political position, riches increase in mysterious ways. If all the millions, even billions, worth of properties stay in one name, then the risks are enormous. For example, an adversary in power may confiscate the assets, or an enquiry into the legitimacy of assets may be instituted. Such things are embarrassing and it is better to avoid such an occurrence, no matter how genuine such ownerships may be, for example from gifts, nazars, partnership shares, etc. So the best thing is to not involve your name directly. Such 'transfer' of assets ensures that the 'assets' do not get converted into 'liability'.

But still our one time prime minister has more to learn from the two time prime minister. Our one time premier has not much in assets. Let us look at his record. Daily Times, March 21, 2009, quotes: "Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani may be one of the poorest Members of the National Assembly (MNAs), as his furniture, fittings and others items of personal use are worth only Rs 200,000, and he owns no other property." This is the reality and one wonders how can anyone believe the internet gossip saying that he gifted a watch worth \$ 50,000 to Sohail Ahmed as an appreciation of his TV appearances? There are so many 'nonsensical' stories doing the rounds! After all, he is the prime minister, and also a revered murshad. He will go a long way, and therefore once again the need to learn from the great and living twice elected premier.

Now let us look at a comparison between the one-timer and the two-timer. Our two-timer wields a lot of power. No, I am not referring to the electric power stolen for the election campaign of Lahore's NA-123 elections. This is absolutely inconsequential and all the ruckus about it is a waste of time. The amount of electric power gobbled before to run the steel mills may run into thousands of megawatts, so why worry about peanuts? Let us look at the assets that allegedly belong to our two-timer: "The Raiwind estate spread over several thousand acres; Ittefaq Sugar Mills set up in 1982; Brothers Steel in 1983; Brothers Textile Mills in 1986; Brothers Sugar Mills Ltd in 1986; Ittefaq Textile Units in 1987; Khalid Siraj Textile Mills in 1988; Ramzan Buksh Textiles in 1987; and Farooq Barkat (Pvt) Ltd in 1985."

This is obvious and 'tangible', but there are said to be other 'intangible' but useful 'assets'. The examples are quoted: \$ 60 million from the famous road contract known as GT road (connecting Lahore-Islamabad); \$ 140 million in unsecured loans from Pakistan's State Bank to fund companies owned or controlled by the two-timer. He did not pay the loans back to the bank, instead got them pardoned from President Muhammad Rafiq Tarar. Rs 60 million from government rebates on sugar exported by mills controlled by him and his business associates, Rs 58 million from inflated prices paid for imported wheat from the US and Canada. There may be an endless list of gains by using authority, gains in taking over foreign exchange, levying of duties after

the Ittefaq Group imports and so on, and of course the prime properties in London and elsewhere.

If all the above-mentioned is true, then I do not actually have the accounting ability, or the accounting expertise to add up the total value of these assets. My calculator is non-professional and has digits only up to some billions, not as many as needed in this case. But still, on record or declared, there is almost nothing in the name of the great two time prime minister.

So, the one-timer has really a lot to learn. We should be glad that he frequents the two-timer often. There is a bright future ahead for him. The two-timer has handled the NAB extremely well, although it has been a pain in the neck, and elsewhere, for so many.

He does not hold a political office, not even the head of a political party on paper. But he wields power, and points his finger at everyone else. Money flows at his beck and call. It is like what Mao once said: "Power flows from the barrel of a gun". In this case, 'the barrel of the gun' is replaced by 'his lips'. This is the way to go Mr One-Timer. Learn from the two-timer how he manages, retains and uses assets. Should this advice not be taken seriously?

March 20, 2010

### The terror is next door, Mr. CM?

"The chief minister Punjab needs to be reminded of the fate of JUI. People in the NWFP rejected that party because of its relations with the Taliban, and history can also repeat itself in Punjab."

Over 12 terror attacks in less than a year, hundreds killed, including women, children and men. Thousands traumatised and billions lost in property. This is what is happening to the city of Lahore, once known as the centre of intellect and culture.

What is the chief minister doing about it? He delivered a speech. As usual it started with Musharraf, uncomfortably close to "Shuru karta hoon saath naam Allah ke...". Almost blasphemous. This repetition of the start is boring now, but he continues the speeches in the same manner. Yes, he also sings sometimes. I have no problem with his singing, but what about governance?

This time it is a very serious matter. Lives and property of innocent people have been lost and the chief minister must do something. Only a song will not do now. Realising this, he decided to deliver a 'speech' about terrorism, and that speech took the cake. He requested his 'friendly' terrorists to spare Punjab because the PML-N had something in common with them. Rarely had he been noticed as much as he was noticed this time. Explanations followed, but these explained nothing. Everyone, including parliamentarians, journalists, government functionaries, and the general public tried to figure out the meaning of this request. Did he mean to suggest that the terrorists should spare Punjab and try Balochistan? Or Sindh or, for convenience of proximity to the Punjabi Taliban, try the capital Islamabad? His cronies, and he

himself, stated that he had been misunderstood. That is his assessment of the intelligence of the people who elected him. Jokes apart, the matter is too serious and the danger is too close to Lahore. The terror epicentre is at Muridke.

In fact the 'chief minister' made a very telling statement, and it needs to be understood in a historical perspective. In 2004, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) stationed in Afghanistan completed its planned intervention and operational strategy by landing in Kunar province of Afghanistan. About that time, the terror collaborators, the Taliban, al Qaeda, the Punjabi Taliban, Uzbeks, Chechens and others decided to move their headquarters away from Afghanistan, i.e. to Miranshah. They already had a 100 kanal establishment in Miranshah under Haqqani's management and duly supported by Osama. The operational strategy was to attack Afghanistan from North Waziristan, and Pakistan from South Waziristan.

A high-tech training centre was set up in Peochar valley. Three caves, as long as 500 metres, were fitted for medical treatment, storage of food and armaments, etc. Peochar was tucked away in high mountains and did not even appear on the maps of Swat, so it was an ideal location for this clandestine activity. Terrorists were recruited, trained and tasked to perform acts of terrorism, which are now known to all. There were definite training programmes imparted in Arabic and suicide motivations in Pashto. Some people have even heard the actual recordings. The terror grew but the provincial government in NWFP turned a blind eye. It used its contact with the Taliban as leverage to blackmail the Centre. It is said to have even received a share of the terrorists' funding. A close relative of the chief minister of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam's (JUI) government was killed in a dispute over the distribution of money. The provincial government of NWFP resisted army action under the constitutional clause that prohibits army action without the request of the provincial government. Army presence without the authority to fire back was ineffective and caused heavy loss of lives of the army officers and men. Terrorists attacked them at will. Thousands of families went through the horror of death and destruction. It was only after the elections that the JUI was rejected by the voters and the Awami National Party (ANP) government took over. The ANP government cooperated with the Centre and the

successful Operations Rah-e-Rast and Rah-e-Nijat flushed out terrorists.

History is now repeating itself in the province of Punjab. The terror epicentre has shifted to Punjab. Muridke is next door, and there are other centres as well. Like the JUI, the PML-N government is soft on Taliban and Co. It has vested interests, which are well known. They are alleged to have received huge amounts to pass the bill in the national assembly to become the Amirul Momineen and practically hand over the country to the Taliban/al Qaeda mindset. The chief minister Punjab won an election with the support of the banned terrorist outfits. The PML-N leadership has never come out with clear condemnation of the Taliban. Their statements and approach are ominously similar to those of the JUI. They talk of negotiated settlements with the terrorists as the JUI did. The Punjab law minister moves around openly with leaders of the banned outfits and, to crown it all, the chief minister requests the terrorists to make a 'friendly' gesture of sparing Punjab! What about the rest of the country? Not concerned.

The chief minister Punjab needs to be reminded of the fate of JUI. People in the NWFP rejected that party because of its relations with the Taliban, and history can also repeat itself in Punjab. The chief minister has had two years in command with no real achievement made in Punjab. The public is not interested in score-settling between the Sharifs and Musharraf. Nobody is impressed by their accusing his 'dictatorship'. The Sharifs happily worked with the worst dictator of all times. Therefore, it is time to pay attention to the life, welfare and security needed by the people of Pakistan, and Punjab. Otherwise time will run out. Time does not wait for anyone.

Mr CM, you had a good stint the first time. Can you cope with the realities of today?

Sunday, March 28, 2010

The lion wakes up?

"The Sharifs are leading the second largest political party and the largest province. People take them seriously even if they do not take the people or the province or the federation seriously. Let there be no mistake; the people are watching and they are no fools."

The fard-e-vahid has stalled a landmark of the democratic process from reaching completion. The constitutional amendments, the nation and the federating units all must wait for the nod of the 'Amirul Momineen', who also claims to be a champion of democracy.

Almost everyone has heard the proverb "Bare Mian so Bare Mian, Chhote Mian subhan Allah" [The elder one is clever, but the younger one is even better]. After the Chhote Mian's turn of acknowledging a friendly understanding with the Taliban had hit the headlines, how could the Bare Mian stay behind and let himself be upstaged? Now he has proved his 'steel' mettle.

The lion woke up suddenly from his slumber of nine months, while deliberations were underway by perhaps the most well represented committee in the country, including the lion's ace representatives. Then with one single roar in front of the press, the lion sent out shock waves to the whole populace. That is like the 'lion' and like the Bare Mian, and like his version of being the 'champion of democracy and justice' — I wonder which justice, though.

Later, his own members were seen in a meeting, almost stunned. Ishaq Dar was kept at a safe distance and Chaudhry Nisar wore a meaningful smile.

The timing of the 'roar' of the lion was perfect for the media and, of course, for the country. It was the day when all issues were said to have been settled. It was the day when a great document of consensus for the federation was about to be publicly reaffirmed. It was also the day when the general public felt, for the first time, that this democratic set-up had the ability to work together on serious matters. Dramatically, Bare Mian walks in and everything gets changed. The media goes gaga. All the media of mass communication, including newspapers, talk shows, news, satires and jokes zeroed in on the Bare Mian and he stood exposed.

Even the Chhote Mian was forgotten for the time being. He had already received his lion's share of publicity. Good or bad, that does not matter. As they say, "Badnaam jo hon gay tou kiya naam na ho ga?" [If we are notorious, won't we still have fame?]

What could be the story behind the scenes? Everyone, from high-flown politicians to prominent analysts to media anchorpersons, is pitching in to reach a conclusion. Several scenarios are being worked upon. For example, is the lion ensuring that in all decisions 'justice' prevails absolutely? If there is an understanding that Barey Mian wants 'justice' for the removal of the bar on his elections, his way out of earlier convictions, his way towards the prime ministership and the possibility of installation as the cherished Amirul Momineen, then only those judges should be appointed who meet the requirement of this desired justice.

Or is it because this time the credit of a major consensus was going to the PPP of Mr Zardari? The Barey Mian would have gotten the position of only an 'also ran', and how could a lion accept this? After all, the ego is more important than these minor national issues. This is how he understands the concept of Khudi of Iqbal.

Or is it that his extreme rightist credentials and dictatorial grooming leaves no room for progressive and democratic thought? The ambition to have utmost power must be followed ruthlessly. There is always room for amassing more wealth and more power, so why let anyone else have a chance?

Hopefully, all these conjectures are wrong. The Mian sahibs are simple people, fond of the good things in life like good food, flowers and other beautiful things. Suddenly, they realised that they must take out a bit of time to know and think about what had been going on in this constitutional committee. So they asked for a bit more time, not realising that the others involved thought the review time was over. If the whole thing is as innocent as this supposition, then I am sure the PML-N is soon going to take another U-turn, this time very meekly, and try to get away with some minor change of words to save face. The pair of lions should then turn around and say "Girtey haen shahsawar he..." [It is the king of riders that fall...] or, even better, sing a song together and tell everyone, "Akelay na jaana" [Don't go alone]. This will help them stay in the public memory, until the next general elections and save them from being forgotten forever.

For some members of the party, the Mian sahiban may have created some serious dilemmas. Many serious-minded people must have been forced to evaluate the quality of leadership being offered to the party. Even the voters who had high hopes pinned on the party may want to know the reality behind the rhetoric of justice and democracy. They are leading the second largest political party and the largest province. People take them seriously even if they do not take the people or the province or the federation seriously. Let there be no mistake; the people are watching and they are no fools. They know that their vital interests need serious attention. They need water, they need electricity and they need food, education and, hopefully, some cultural renaissance and pride. The great attribute of democracy is that it can remove those who fail to deliver to the country and the people. If the people keep getting deeper into trouble, they will have second thoughts about their leadership. So, it is time to be done with academics and immediately go ahead with the solution to the real problems. So, may I suggest: take another u-turn Mian sahib, it may improve your image.

Saturday, April 03, 2010

Thank you, Heidelberg Academy!

"The invaluable rock carvings in the northern mountains have been photographed and recorded. The record of human travellers over thousands of years over the Silk Road has so much to tell. It has taken a team of researchers from Heidelberg, Germany, some 40 years to complete the task, just in time before the majority of the carvings are submerged in the Bhasha Dam waters."

The Heidelberg Academy for the Humanities and Sciences has made an unforgettable contribution to humanity, in particular to the people of Pakistan. Dr Hauptman as head of the team and his colleagues should be congratulated and thanked by every Pakistani. Also to be complimented is the Ministry of Culture and the Department of Archaeology.

The invaluable rock carvings in the northern mountains have been photographed and recorded. The record of human travellers over thousands of years over the Silk Road has so much to tell. It has taken a team of researchers from Heidelberg, Germany, some 40 years to complete the task, just in time before the majority of the carvings are submerged in the Bhasha Dam waters. The task included photographing some 50,000 rock carvings and 5,000 inscriptions, spread over hundreds of miles of rocks in mostly inaccessible terrain. In spite of a harsh climate, constraints of language and finances, the team has completed the task. What an amazing dedication to the pursuit of knowledge!

Initially, in 1905 the carvings of the Buddhist period were noticed by Ghulam Mohammad around Chilas; later Sir M Aurel Stein paid them some attention. However, it was in 1973 that the German scholar Karl Jettmar fully realised the importance of these carvings on the rocks of the mountains around upper Sindh River. He started a planned documentation. The distinguished scholar and researcher Dr Ahmed Hassan Dani joined in and a joint Pak-German project started, followed by regular fieldwork. After the demise of Mr Jettmar, the research work was carried on under the very able guidance of Dr Harald Hauptman and the dedicated team of researchers including V Thewalt, Martin Bemmann, Oskar von Hinber, Jason Neelis, Nicholas Sims-Williams, Ms Ditte Bandini-Konig and Ms Salva Hauptman among many other scholars. It has now been published in German. The record is in several volumes. The size is larger than foolscap; the best grade art paper has been used to ensure high quality reproduction. Each photo of the rock carvings has an expert's note with it. Imagine the magnitude, the size and scale of the undertaking.

The Pak-German project started in 1980 with a first documentation campaign at the 'Sacred Rocks' Haldeikish near Ganesh in the Hunza valley: 1,712 carvings, including 133 inscriptions in Kharosthi, Brahmi, Sogdian, Bactrian, Chinese and Tibetan. From the beginning there were epigraphists such as O von Hinüber and Gerard Fussman in the project. Before this archaeological project, the earlier work of Karl Jettmar in Gilgit-Baltistan began with ethnographic and linguistic studies on the Tangir dialect of Shina and Dardic Kanyavali in the 'valley republics' of Darel and Tangir. Karl Jettmar had joined the Second German Hindukush Expedition as an ethnologist under the leadership of the renowned ethnologist Adolf Friedrich, University of Mainz, in 1955 together with the Indologist Georg Buddruss and the ethnologist Peter Snoy. This expedition of the Northern Areas was overshadowed by the tragic death of Friedrich.

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Saturday, April 03, 2010

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persuaded the well-known specialist Ahmed Hasan Dani to establish the Pak-German Study Group to start this project, which began in 1980.

Dani and Jettmar discovered an until then nearly unknown rock art province in the world, both unique in its diversity and wealth of different styles ranging from the Late Stone Age to the arrival of Islam in the 16th century. The 5,000 inscriptions reveal an important source for cultural and political history, and therefore Dani was able to write a history of the Northern Areas, and to present a first overview of the rock art around Chilas (1983). Jettmar published numerous articles about the archaeology and ethnography of the mountain region.

Dr Haumptmann was invited by Jettmar to join his team in 1982. He welcomed the great chance to be introduced to this new world of archaeology by Dani when he travelled from Chilas via Gilgit to Baltistan. He was fascinated by the possibilities to start also an excavation to reveal the settlement history of this region. But during this period he had his own large-scale excavations going on along the Euphrates at Lidar Höyük and Nevali Cori in southeast Turkey. So he took over the directorate of the research department 'Rock Carvings and Inscriptions along the Karakoram Highway' at the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in 1989. His main interest as an archaeologist was not only to start a systematic documentation of all the rock art sites and other archaeological sites such as settlements, forts, etc, on the basis of a topographic mapping, but also to supplement this documentation work by systematic excavations. But the official mandate was limited to documentation, so the excavation work has been left out. It is strongly recommended that this work be also undertaken. It is a unique source of information that the nation should preserve with pride. The work of the 'Pak-German Archaeological Mission to the Northern Areas' is financed since 1984 by the Heidelberg Academy. It is contained in 10 volumes.

The size of the project and its findings are of such huge dimensions that no short article can hope to do justice to their significance. However, one would urge all Pakistani universities, libraries and institutes to make sure that they acquire it for researchers and scholars. Interestingly, the publications include an introduction by Dr Hauptmann for each volume, translated into Urdu. The main text is in German and it will be worthwhile to have it translated into English or Urdu for convenience of understanding. The books bear a reference as ISBN 3-8053-3493-1 (onwards), and have been printed in Germany on fade-resistant and archival quality paper by Philipp von Zabern, Mainz am Rhein.

**Saturday, April 10, 2010,**  
**Supreme national interest.**

"There is a very wide gap between the priorities of the 'people' at large and the 'leaders' at large. This may be the cause of the failure of many regimes, including the so-called democratic as well as non-democratic ones 'Supreme national interest'..."

I have heard this expression or something to this effect, several times. Each time it had an ominous sound to it. Most of the time the expression has been used to justify an action that could otherwise not be justified. This sentence is a favourite of the dictatorial mindset and now it is being used by some 'democratic' leaders as well. In particular, it has been used by a 'leader', who neither heads a party, nor is he a member of the assembly, but manages to have all his orders obeyed. He declared that his recent actions to suddenly stall the working of the parliamentary committee two weeks ago were in the "supreme national interest". Perhaps now the 'supreme national interest' has been served. What was it? This is not necessary for us to know.

A long time ago, in March 1949, the Objectives Resolution was steamrolled through the constituent assembly, despite reservations of the minority communities. It was said to be done in the 'supreme national interest'. In many ways, the said resolution opened the way for those who had a 'Taliban' line of thought. It contradicted the spirit of the federation as explained by the Father of the Nation who promised equal rights for all citizens of Pakistan.

Later, the resolution was made a substantive part of the constitution and mysteriously the word 'freely' about the religious practices of

minorities was omitted. Probably this was also meant to be in the 'supreme national interest'.

In 1954, the appeal of Maulvi Tamizuddin was dismissed by Justice Munir and the note by Justice Cornelius was ignored. This decision changed the course of Pakistan's history. Was the change made in the 'supreme national interest'?

Then we experienced several shaky democracies and martial laws. The performances of these questionable governments is not the subject of discussion here, but most of the time the phrase 'in the supreme national interest' was used to tell the questioning people to 'shut up' because the 'leaders' knew better. On April 6, 1979, General Ziaul Haq, in an interview to BBC said that he was convinced that his order to hang Bhutto was in the "supreme interest of the nation", reminding again that we, the people of the land who think otherwise, are dumb and stupid.

There can be many more examples where the so-called leaders have used the phrase under discussion. In fact, this phrase has become a cliché and lost its meaning. A well-read 'leader' would want to avoid it. But where is that kind of leader?

Let us try to guess, after all, what is included in the 'supreme interest of the nation'?

Is providing food and ensuring the existence of Pakistan citizens something in this category? Does providing shelter, literacy opportunities, and healthcare fall in this category? Is the necessity to provide job opportunities, law and order and security something we could include in the 'supreme interest of the nation'? Is any effort to provide electric power and gas for industry and normal life activities something 'in the supreme national interest'? Is preservation of heritage and culture, the most important instrument of image building for a nation, to be considered 'in the...'? Is availability of water to drink and for agriculture, something of such importance?

The list is long; it includes eradication of discrimination on the basis of gender, age, colour, or religion, and so many other issues, which the

common people are convinced, should be in the august list of matters of 'supreme national interest'.

However, one hardly hears the leaders assigning that kind of priority to these issues. They attach such priority only when they find an action to be in their own interest to gain, or to retain power. They may also believe that amassing billions of dollars outside the country by questionable means as personal assets is also 'in the supreme interest of the nation'?

The fact seems to be that there is a very wide gap between the priorities of the 'people' at large and the 'leaders' at large. This may be the cause of the failure of many regimes, including the so-called democratic as well as non-democratic ones.

If any leader is listening, I would like to share a feeling with him/her: the people of Pakistan have lived on dreams for a very long time. They have patiently heard of your 'sacrifices', on umpteen occasions, and even sympathised: They have repeatedly heard of the bad things done by every 'previous regime', and they have also supported you on asking for more time to set things right. Now, Sir/Ms, much water has flown under the bridges, people have waited far too long, and it is not going to be good for you if you stretch their patience too far. There are limits to tolerance, forbearance and waiting. Please bridge the gap between your set of priorities in the category of the 'supreme national interest' and share what the people in the street consider to be in the 'supreme national interest'. If these do not match, a change is inevitable and in a democracy people will have to take the final decision and show that they also have some wisdom.

**Saturday, April 17, 2010**

### Abhinav Bharat, a base of terrorism

"It is true that Pakistan has been plagued by terrorist networks like al Qaeda, the Taliban and others. But it is also true that India has had a strong and substantial homegrown terrorism for a long time and its intention has been to intimidate the minorities, in particular the Muslims and Christians."

My article 'India Pakistan: hiding behind excuses again?' (Daily Times, March 4, 2010) got several responses from readers in India. Most of these were in good grace as those from the cultured Indians are expected to be. Some got very angry, almost threatening and looking down on Pakistan. Both kinds of responses are representative of the Indian mindset. Fortunately, the majority is of people with a good balance of mind. But one cannot ignore the minority, as more often than not, it is vociferous and effective. In a nutshell, the hard-hitting letters stressed that Pakistan is a bed of terrorists, and India is a great economic power, which can teach a couple of lessons to Pakistan. They also ignored the possibility of any terror networks in India.

The purposes of this article is not point scoring. It is meant to have a better understanding of the situation so the people of the two countries can hope to have peaceful relations. There is no denying the fact that India has made remarkable progress in many fields, including economics, culture and infrastructure development. It is true that Pakistan has been plagued by terrorist networks like al Qaeda, the Taliban and others. But it is also true that India has had a strong and

substantial homegrown terrorism for a long time and its intention has been to intimidate the minorities, in particular the Muslims and Christians. It also has a dream to dominate the world, a dream common with the Pakistani Taliban. If Pakistan-based Taliban want to force their brand of religion on the world, the Hindutva terrorists want to enforce their brand of Brahmanism on everyone else. So people of both countries need to look at the ground realities and devise a corrective strategy.

I am bringing to the notice of our readers just one of the Indian organisations, Abhinav Bharat, which has a long history of terror. It is not to be confused with a trust of the same name. The trust disowns the terror organisation. The extremist Abinav Bharat was born before independence. Led by Vinayak Savarkar, initially it called for an 'armed struggle' against the British occupation of India. It performed several terrorist acts. Its home was India House in London. The activities of India House did not go unnoticed. By 1909, India House was under surveillance from Scotland Yard and Indian intelligence. Savarkar's elder brother, Ganesh, was arrested in India in June that year, and was subsequently tried and exiled to the Andamans for publication of seditious literature. Savarkar's speeches grew increasingly strident and called for widespread violence, and murder of all Englishmen in India. The culmination of these events was the assassination of Sir William Curzon Wyllie, the political aide-de-camp to the secretary of state to India, by Madanlal Dhingra on the evening of July 1, 1909. Dhingra was arrested and later tried and executed. A number of sources suggested the assassination was in fact Savarkar's brainchild and that he planned further action in Britain as well as India. In March 1910, Savarkar was arrested and deported to India. In the following year, the police and political sources brought pressure on the residents of India House to leave England. While some of its leaders like Krishna Varma had already fled to Europe, others like Chattopadhyaya moved to Germany. Many others moved to Paris.

A branch of Abhinav Bharat with the philosophy that arose from the works of Savarkar was consolidated in India in the 1920s. It had an explicit ideology of Hindu nationalism, exemplified by the 'Hindu Mahasabha'. It was distinct from Gandhi's devotionalism. Savarkar's philosophy earned the support of Hindu chauvinism. In recent years, the Abhinav Bharat has been led by Savarkar's granddaughter Himani Savarkar. She is also related to Nathuram Godse, the man who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January 1948. This organisation undertook a super active and violent programme after the joining of Lieutenant Colonel Purohit as its main protagonist since 2006.

Lieutenant Colonel Purohit, during his stint in Jammu and Kashmir, collected a stock of explosives, particularly RDX, and probably hid it in Pune, his hometown. He appeared to have struck an understanding with some other extremist organisations like Bajrang Dal, Vishva Hindu Prishad (VHP) and Jagran Munch. The training to use explosives was provided by Major (retired) Ramesh Upadhyay. The hate speeches are generally carried out by many members including Sameer Kulkarni. A religious cover to the terrorists is provided by the swamis, and the political cover by Sangh Parivar parties like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Shiv Sena and BJP. The technical and logistic guidance is available from the Intelligence Bureau (IB). The large media network of Sangh Parivar is used to propagate that every terror work is sourced from Pakistan.

The Abhinav Bharat network has been found involved in several terrorist acts. Of these, the most well known are the 'Samjhota Express' blast killing 68 persons, the Ajmer Blast and the Malegaon Blast 2007. In each case, the main targets were Muslims. In the investigations by the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) chief of Maharashtra, Hemant Karkare, the network was identified and 11 members and associates of Abhinav Bharat were arrested. The case was filed in the Nasik court of Maharashtra. The charge-sheet also said that the ultimate aim of the group was to establish a separate Hindu Rashtra with its own

constitution. This case is being heard now, but Hemant Karkare was mysteriously killed.

Unfortunately, terrorism flourishes under the cover of religious or extreme nationalistic movements. The extremists in such movements lead the others astray and bring discredit to their movements. The Talban, Abhinav Bharat, al Qaeda, etc., are basically the same.

In a democratic set-up, of which India takes pride, there should be firm actions to exercise control. Pakistan also must control but it has a more difficult path because it is not a 'secular' state. There are no angels anywhere. We need to learn and work hard to make it possible to live as good humans and serve the humanity. Denial is not the answer to the problem; facing the facts and taking firm action will lead the way to peace.

Saturday, May 01, 2010

A look at theatre.

"In the context of 'today', the theatre movement has shown its resilience not because of the support provided by the government, but sometimes in spite of it. The so-called censorship, script approvals, raids on theatres and bans are all bureaucratic mechanisms for arm-twisting, suppression and corruption."

One of my early memories of theatre in Pakistan is of the Kendal family of Shakespeareans performing at the Pakistan Arts Council, Alhamra's minuscule hall. I recall Mr Kendal, his wife Laura, and the two daughters, Felicity and Jennifer, sitting in the verandah and repairing the costumes. One of the daughters got married to Shashi Kapoor and featured in the film 'Shakespeare Wala' in 1965, directed by James Ivory and starring Shashi Kapoor, Felicity Kendal, George Kendal, Madhur Jaffery and others. The Kendals had arrived in Lahore to perform a selection of their repertoire on the invitation of Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, the then secretary general of the Pakistan Arts Council.

I have seen a lot happen since then. The contribution of Government College, Khawaja Moeenuddin, Zia Mohiyuddin, myself, Sigred Kahle, Miss Harbottle, Mohsin Sherazi, Kamal Ahmed Rizvi, Naveed Rahman, and Mehr Nigar Masroor. There are many other pioneers, including those who are not much talked about, but some of them need to be mentioned, e.g. Ali Ahmed, who concentrated on plays with progressive thought in Lahore, Raza Yousafi and Nazeer Zaigham and his team, the roving village theatre of Inayat Hussain Bhatti, Aashiq Jatt, and Aalam Lohar. Then there was participation in melas. The roving theatre of my team of Qavi, Yasmin Imtiaz Ali, Rehana Siddiqi, Naheed Rana, Khurshid Shahid, Zaigham, Masood Akhter, Kaukab Afzal, Jamil Bismil and many others made a contribution in reaching out to the masses in trying conditions. I always pray for those who laid the foundation of the great movement that theatre is today in Pakistan.

In 2009, when I was still the chief executive and director general of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), I organised a theatre festival in Islamabad. Contrary to the expectations of the cynics, the festival ran for over 40 days to packed houses, and teams from all over Pakistan participated, ranging from Skardu to Sibi. There were some memorable presentations and people were amazed at the huge power and scope of the theatre movement in Pakistan. The popular response happened in spite of terror threats.

In the context of 'today', the theatre movement has shown its resilience, not because of the support provided by the government, but sometimes in spite of it. The so-called censorship, script approvals, raids on theatres and bans are all bureaucratic mechanisms for arm-twisting, suppression and corruption. This festival met with success because an effort was made to stand between the coercive forces and the creative impulses. Some very memorable plays were staged, including those of Sheema Kirmani, Madiha Gohar, Sania Saeed, and Come Again, by a young team. Plays like Burqavaganza were staged with its satiric content. It is surprising that now I hear a lot of talk about some 'censor' on Burqavaganza! What censor? Why? Just because a rightist MNA of the previous assembly raised a question? A question that was ignored by the National Assembly and no orders were issued? There was no censor on this play at that time, during the so-called 'dictatorship'. How can this 'democratic' government, which professes a progressive approach and support to the arts, ban a satire? Have a heart and let the play be staged, put aside the personal differences with Ajoka and do not choke the writer's voice.

In recent years theatre activity has strengthened in (all) three directions, namely the popular theatre of the masses, theatre of social relevance, and the elitist theatre which is mostly in the English language. The elitist theatre groups get away with a lot. Young people like Shah Sharabeel know how to handle influential individuals. But this form, although sneered at by some highbrows, has played a very important role in popularising theatre in the influential circles. A recent production of the musical *Mamma Mia* was amazing and surprised audiences by the stunning singing talent in the country.

The worst hit is the popular theatre, which is blackmailed, raided, accused of obscenity in a shameless way by the heavy hand of the administration. Still, the support of the common man continues as they pay for tickets, contribute to taxes, and provide livelihood to so many.

VIEWS AND COMMENTS

The next is the theatre of relevance. Here some great drama-<sup>W</sup> created. The recently staged Dara at Alhamra by Shahid Nadeem W<sup>W</sup> touching and focused on the tragic turn in history that brought a fundamentalist emperor into power, causing the beginning of the end of an empire, an empire that could have survived by the inclusive approach of Dara. Such theatre often meets criticism from right-wingers, mostly those who have a 'Taliban' mindset, expressed either openly or hidden. Tolerance, wider vision, and sincere analysis are needed to make these efforts grow. In fact, this is the real role of theatre as an institution. Such theatrical plays must provide food for thought, in depth understanding of society, and point out the areas where attitudes need to be reviewed.

Theatre in our country still has a long way to go. With the demise of cinema in our country, theatre is the only place where a motivated set of people goes and either enjoys or learns, or both. I had proposed the construction of a national theatre and theatre halls at provincial capitals and some other places, including Gilgit. I sincerely hope these projects will see the light of day and the land reserved for this purpose will not be withdrawn. The present government has earned the unenviable reputation of being inefficient and rudderless, but I believe that sooner or later everyone can do some good. Maybe the now all-powerful prime minister will show a commitment and support to the performing arts in reality. I also hope that the government will restrain the oppressive forces and the agents of corruption. That they will take pride in this national heritage and set up an 'archive of performing arts' before the record of the great struggle in this area since independence is lost or destroyed.

Sunday, May 09, 2010

Book review: Murky murders



Who Killed Karkare? The Real Face of Terrorism in India By S M Mushrif Pharos Media; Pp 319; \$ 25

Who Killed Karkare? The Real Face of Terrorism in India, by S M Mushrif, the former IG police, Maharashtra, was first published in 2009. Since then a 'Revised edition' in 2009 and three more editions have already been published and the fourth edition is now being sent to the bookshops. The book has attracted unprecedented attention. The author has shared his long investigative observations with his readers. His findings are a source of surprise, even shock, for many Indians and Pakistanis.

The former IG police of Maharashtra has carefully traced the beginning of the communal conflict to 1893 and the exploitation of the conflict for political purposes. He has asserted that the communal conflict is a tool of Brahminists to subjugate common Hindus. In the author's words, "This book is a research work based on my long experience in the police service and in the social field, and on the reports published in newspapers and periodicals in respect of communalism and terrorism during the last few years. The main objective of this book is twofold: one, to seek answers to many questions in regard to communalism in India that had been nagging me throughout my life, especially after I joined the police service, and two, to put on record the yeoman service rendered by late Hemant Karkare to the nation by exposing an anti-national terror plot."

In the process the author puts up bomb blast investigations: 1) Mumbai train bomb blast 2006; 2) Ahmedabad bomb blast 2008; 3) Sanjhota Express bomb blast; 4) Hyderabad Mecca blast 2007; 5) Ajmer Sharif Dargah blast 2007; 6) Serial blasts in UP courts 2007; 7) Jaipur blasts 2008; 8) Nanded bomb blast 2006; 9) Malegaon bomb blast 2008.

The last two have been analysed in detail. The last one, i.e. Malegaon blast 2008, holds the key. Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) chief Hemant Karkare led a completely impartial, intensive and very professional investigation. It was the Malegaon investigation by Hemant Karkare and his team of Mr Kante and Salaskar, which led to the most startling revelations. It established beyond doubt that all the blasts referred to in the book were the handiwork of Hindutva extremists. The group of planners and executors started with the Intelligence Bureau (IB) of India, and included Lieutenant Colonel Purohit of Abhinav Bharat, Sadhvi Pragya Singh of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), and others from Jagran Munch, Bajrang Dal, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and many other members of the Sangh Parivar, plus a bunch of 'Swamis' for religious cover. The methodology was fairly clear: the explosives were sourced through Lieutenant Colonel Purohit and his associates like Major Upadhyay, the training provided by Bhonsla Military Academy, a private organisation associated with Mr Kalkarni (Mr Kalkarni's hate speeches against Muslims and Pakistan can be seen on YouTube). Many details of the crimes and the perpetrators were revealed in the narco tests of Lieutenant Colonel Purohit and Sadhvi Pragya Singh and subsequently verified by Hemant Karkare and his team of investigators from the ATS. The political cover to these operatives was provided by the BJP as a political necessity to consolidate Hindu extremist support. The Sangh Parivar provided the very large network of media contact. The operations were planned, executed, and reported as the work of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) with Pakistan involvement and this fake news was spread immediately so that the public perception recognises the 'villain'. Later, the investigation would be taken over by the IB on the plea of "international involvement and sensitivity" and the prime minister briefed accordingly. The IB would thus cover up. This system worked well for them until Hemant Karkare of RAW took over.

Hemant Karkare found out the real perpetrators of the terror attacks and was taking them to court with solid evidence; a case had been filed in the Nasik Court of Maharashtra. The situation was critical; the whole terror network in India composed of Hindutva extremists was going to be brought into the open and convicted. The life of the criminals, activists, perpetrators and accomplices was in danger. The politics of the BJP was in danger. The covert operations of the IB were at risk.

Hemant Karkare had to be immediately eliminated along with *the key* members of his team.

At this point, as the author says, a God-given opportunity arrived. *The* IB with its connections with the FBI found out that a terror attack was planned by Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) operatives, with the involvement of an American 'David Headley'.

The information was available almost one week before the Mumbai carnage. The attackers were to come through the sea on the boat named 'Kuber'. Every movement of the Kuber was known to the IB. However, the incident of the Mumbai carnage was allowed to happen by suppressing the information. The Indian Navy denied having received the information. Possibly they could have apprehended the terrorists and saved thousands of lives in Mumbai from being affected. The author infers that, in the cover-up of the Mumbai terror attack, Hemant Karkare and his team members were to be eliminated.

The author supports his finding with the skill of decades of investigative experience. He lays bare the suspicious circumstances in which Hemant Karkare was led to Rang Bhavan lane near Mumbai's Cama station, where the killers were waiting for him.

The author does not buy the involvement of Kasab in this case. He even questions the identity of Kasab. Who is he? Ajmal Kasab's name does not appear in the duty roster of the ship 'Kuber'! The author demands an independent enquiry into the murder of Hemant Karkare and that it should not be mixed up with the Mumbai carnage.

Who Killed Karkare? is perhaps the most bold and credible book written on the terror networks in India. It should be respected and benefited from to eliminate the sources of terror there. Terror hurts humanity; Indians or Pakistanis are the same when attacked. The price of the book is on the higher side. Its Urdu and Hindi versions are also available in India.

Saturday, May 15, 2010

### Media matters

"The media anchorpersons seem to have recovered from the euphoria of democracy and started looking at the needs of the people. Perhaps there is a realisation that all systems, concepts, including democracy, are, after all, intended for the betterment of the people."

Since coming out of the bottle, the media genie has continued its non-stop attacks. It got its freedom during the times of President Pervez Musharraf. Then the genie looked around and found its favourite prey, Musharraf himself. To its delight, the last years of Musharraf also provided opportunities to the media genie to sharpen its skills. Fair or unfair, the criticism continued unabashed. Most of Musharraf's allies had already pocketed the advantages they possibly could have obtained from him and were hardly motivated to take the trouble of putting up a defence. These 'allies' either kept quiet or jumped to board the anti-Musharraf bandwagon. The psyche of the populace was pushed to want a 'change' and they got it. Musharraf said Khuda Hafiz and let the new managers perform the promised miracles. Some media powers, which use the media for their own goals, felt confident that they can 'do it'.

There has been a lot to talk about since then: the Murree Accord, restoration of the chief justice, 18th Amendment, drone attacks, Kerry-Lugar Bill, even Shoaib and Sania. In fact, the crazy coverage of the event mentioned last indicated that subjects for the media are running out and the TV channels were racing to find some juicy and sensational material. They looked for Asif and Veena, Waseem and Sushmita and so on. One channel seriously planned a show on politics as a joke. This may have been a chance programming, but in fact the politics of the so-called 'democracy' was becoming a joke. Nothing seemed to be going

right. The media started to take note of it. A defence brigade was promptly sent out by the leading political party. It was like fielding a cricket team. The 'opener' was Sherry Rehman who came with style, tried, found the job difficult and gracefully 'retired hurt'. The one down, and two down ladies did not last long either. Then entered a more confident Fauzia Wahab. She took a good stand, almost tireless. But the political situation was getting so bad and people's problems were so real that she was getting bogged down. Strangely, she defended the purchase of tyres worth a million for the Speaker National Assembly by saying, "Do you want our Speaker to be moving in a Suzuki?" Many people were aghast at this statement from a person who is from a party claiming to represent the poor masses.

Then the prime minister forbade the use of airconditioners by staff under grade 20. Such actions show a highbrow, elitist and feudal mindset. Maybe the ambience of the capitol has done it. However, by her statement, Fauzia Wahab was 'hit wicket'. The middle order of defence has been steady. The bold, well-prepared and aggressive Senator Faisal Abidi, and composed Mr Qamaruz Zaman Kaira have been doing well. But the media attack armed with the NRO, Swiss cases, PM's bloomers, rental power scandal, BB's murder investigation inadequacies, and the rising cost of 'existence' have exhausted these 'defenders', and the doubtful support of Dr Firdaus Ashiq Awan as a tail-ender may not be of much help. Sooner or later, the media can get them. The innings may close.

As an optimist, I see a sign of hope in the conduct of the media anchorpersons and really wish that the owners of the media empires would back them up. The ground realities in the microanalysis give a shocking picture of the state of affairs between now and three years ago.

The media anchorpersons seem to have recovered from the euphoria of democracy and started looking at the needs of the people. Perhaps there is a realisation that all systems, concepts, including democracy, are, after all, intended for the betterment of the people of a country. The governance, if it fails to deliver the benefits to the populace, will be considered a failure whichever route it may have come through. Also, if the preferred routes are not workable, then alternate routes will be sought by the people. This is where the danger zone is. Anything can be

expected, from a coup d'état to a mass uprising. Most of our anchorpersons are now asking the leaders of the present 'democracy', including its friendly opposition, for the solutions to unaffordably high price of eatables, lack of supply of electric power, law and order issues, unemployment, inflation and a host of other problems. They are beginning to compare. In three years, the atta price has increased from Rs 13 per kg to Rs 31, sugar 21 to 70, milk 32 to 46, a motorbike 32,000 to 45,000, the dollar has risen from Rs 60 to 86, GST 11 percent to 16 percent and so on. And the difference is widening. To top it all, there is the power crisis hurting our industry, trade, education, and homes. Is it some sort of revenge? Do short terms benefit and run policy? Was this the meaning of "democracy is the best revenge"? What is the reality of power supply sources? It is said that there is a current potential of 19,000 MW power generation, which may be effectively 15,000 MW, still sufficient for the national requirements. Is Barre Mian Sharif only paying Rs 5,000 income tax? (If so, the governor Punjab may be right in suggesting the 'Benazir Income Support Programme' for him.) Many questions need answers. There needs to be an end to falsehood, incompetence and corruption. There is something wrong somewhere, or maybe even 'everywhere'.

The media has now started looking at the ground realities. Anchorpersons are beginning to re-evaluate the Musharraf regime and overcome the 'no no' syndrome. They are willing to consider giving the devil his due. This is a sign of maturity and deep down patriotism above short-term gains. Such anchorpersons are the real hope for the future of the media and governance of the country. The reality is that media matters; it can help the nation to correct its perceptions, and if necessary, bring change. 'Freedom' and the consequent 'responsibility' are a package. These are to be acted upon simultaneously; otherwise the package is lost, and nobody wants that to happen.

Saturday, May 22, 2010

Khalid Khawaja fallout.

"There is the mystery that many of the internet sites about Khalid Khawaja are now 'restricted'! What does that mean? It is in the national interest of Pakistanis that they know who is a friend and who is a foe."

Khalid Khawaja is no more, but he has left a lot behind. Was he an ISI, CIA or FBI operative? Was he supportive of Talibanisation or was he against terror? What was his connection with Osama bin Laden?

The most important questions are: why was a prominent leader — Mian Nawaz Sharif — meeting Osama bin Laden again and again? What is the reality about his statement that many terror outfits in Pakistan are infested with Indian operatives? What is the connection with Hamid Mir?

These are critical questions and a serious probe is required in the interest of the country. I would even say that among so many other suo motu actions taken by the honourable chief justice of the Supreme Court, these questions merit his attention. The answers to these questions may clarify how deep the covert support to the Taliban is in our society and polity. Who is using whom? And are they serving some objectives of the enemies of our country?

The reference to Mian sahib's connection with Osama bin Laden has been aired before. It shocked the populace but matters did not go any further. Its significance has been lost in the populace's mind. The 'people' are only required to cast a 'vote' at the time of elections, at other times they are a liability, so why bother? (Next time, coercion and

corruption can do the needful again). But barre Mian sahib has a *claim* to the politics of principles, so why does he not make an open statement on the issue?

An internet site says: "According to a senior Pakistani *intelligence* source, Osama bin Laden passes a considerable amount of money *to* Sharif and his party, since Sharif promises to introduce a *hardline* Islamic government. He has been supporting Sharif for several years — Sharif and bin Laden had a relationship going back to when they first met face to face in the late 1980s. There are also accounts of additional links between Sharif and bin Laden (spring 1989, late 1996, and between late 1996 and late 1998). And also further on."

([http://www.historycommons.org/entity.jsp?entity=khalid\\_khawaja](http://www.historycommons.org/entity.jsp?entity=khalid_khawaja)). There is also another statement: "In an interview with a national Urdu daily, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, the leader of the largest Islamic party in Pakistan, the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), and of the six party religious alliance called the MMA, said that Nawaz had repeatedly met Osama bin Laden, who offered him money to buy the loyalties of parliamentarians in the late 1980s in order to topple the government of the then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Ahmad also said that bin Laden was a big supporter of Nawaz Sharif's bid to be prime minister in 1990."

(<http://www.militantislammonitor.org/article/id/1779>). Mian sahib ended up with a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, and was looking at becoming the Amir-ul-Momineen through a constitutional amendment. Mian sahib is still a big political force. He has demonstrated his popularity in Punjab. Is it not a valid request to an 'honest', 'principled' leader that he should clear the mist?

What followed as a consequence of an alliance or connection with the Taliban by our governments was the worst thing that could have happened to Pakistan, i.e. terrorism, bad publicity in the world, destruction of law and order and the economy, and so on. A statement of the realities by the distinguished Mian sahib may restore the confidence in him of many who are concerned citizens. If he has no questionable connection, he should have nothing to worry about.

Then there is the other question: that of names of the involved, including that of the Qari in charge of bombers of the Taliban! Here again: are the 'Islamist' terrorists and 'Hindutva' terrorists coordinating?

What is the objective? Chaos in Pakistan? Also there is the mystery that many of the internet sites about Khalid Khawaja are now 'restricted'! What does that mean? It is in the national interest of Pakistanis that they know who is a friend and who is a foe. Some Pakistanis quietly believe that the Taliban are fighting for a 'noble' cause although they may differ with the terror strategy. If there is a 'Hindutva' connection, then the disaster created by the Taliban will surely not be sympathised with by even hardcore supporters. This allegation from Khawaja also reminds one of some earlier news about how the many terrorists caught and killed in Swat were not actually Muslims. This accusation is still on the internet with gruesome photographs. If anything has turned the world into a 'global village', it is the internet, and in this day and age it is difficult to hide matters of general concern. In any case, the principle of 'freedom of information' should be applied and the facts should be made known. I have no doubt that some agency of the government, some NGO, or some private researcher or a media person must have collected a load of credible information, which must be shared now.

Finally we come to our media colleagues and Hamid Mir. Khalid Khawaja must have upset him at some point in time. If not, while alive, then his son is definitely bent upon upsetting Hamid Mir. Khawaja's son has pointed his finger at Hamid Mir as a perpetrator of his father's death. Because of its coverage, Hamid Mir has sent a legal notice to Daily Times to assert his innocence. Legal notices hardly mean much unless a case is actually filed in the court, and will he do that? His alleged recording is available to anyone and everyone on the internet.

As a moral issue, all media persons must clearly indicate which side they are on, a responsible, nationalistic individual must be above board and confident of his or her convictions and support them or revise them in a

civilised, democratic manner. This should also be applicable to media owners (Oops! Am I living in a fool's paradise?).

Is the wish to get answers to these questions something too much to expect?

Saturday, May 29, 2010

Rip van Winkle in Washington!

"The political right got moral, financial and material support, culminating in promoting jihad in Afghanistan. The groups of moderates, progressives, and the Left were left out as untouchables."

This time 'Rip van Winkle' has not woken up in the Catskill Mountains of New York as the fairytale goes. He has now woken up in Washington DC because of a 'Dumb Shahzad' from New York. I am not referring to the author of the fairytale, Mr Washington Irving. I am referring to a distinguished correspondent of The Washington Post. He has woken up to notice that there is a "jihadi network among the elite" in Pakistan and elsewhere.

If our new 'Rip' (as the friendly Americans may like to call him) opens his eyes wider, he may find that the 'network' is also beyond Pakistan. The shock came to 'Rip' from one Dumb Shahzad who made a failed terrorist attempt to blow up a vehicle in Times Square. This failure in the dangerous 'activity' game was the best thing that could have happened. New York police did an appropriate job and Dumb Shahzad was promptly apprehended while attempting to escape.

Then the story unfolded. Dumb Shahzad is the son of a retired air force officer. He had sympathisers in a leading catering company of Islamabad through a well-educated 'US qualified' person, and there were other links. It was also noted that the halo of connections included individuals of American, Pakistani and other origins. It is, indeed, a very sad story. Those who suffer most as a consequence are Pakistanis and the most irritated and shocked are the members of the US government.

Let us admit that, as a free nation, it is the prime responsibility of the people of Pakistan and its leaderships to develop a nation with the mindset of moderation. Our failure should be admitted. Let this be made clear that the Americans, perceived to be a friendly nation for a long time, also failed in areas where they could have helped.

Pakistan achieved its freedom in 1947 and the key address of Quaid-e-Azam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, clearly identified the direction for the Constituent Assembly to follow. Let us recall that key message: "You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of 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."

In the same speech, the great leader pointed out other important actions that needed to be taken, e.g. against corruption, bribery, black marketing, nepotism, jobbery, religious and ethnic discrimination, and he stressed the importance of support to the poor. In the years after demise of Quaid-e-Azam, none of his advices was to be followed and the state was to be made 'religious' instead of a 'nation' state.

So Rip van Winkle needs to understand that the process of moving towards the extreme right has been going on since then. Also, if any encouragement has been given by the decision makers in Washington, it has been given to the elements of extreme right, not moderates or leftists in Pakistan. The support also came to the establishment, which has been predominantly rightist. Was it so because of the fear of communism? Was it because of the phobia perpetuated by McCarthyism?

It is too late to determine the reasons because the damage has been done. For a long time our armed forces have been taught to defend the country, because it is a citadel of Islam not just because of a nation's right to freedom. The political right got moral, financial and material support, culminating in promoting jihad in Afghanistan. The groups of moderates, progressives, and the Left were left out as untouchables. A social imbalance continued and rightist elite emerged. For this, Pakistani people are responsible but the Western powers have some

share of responsibility too, as this new nation looked towards them for support and direction.

Now where is the justification for the 'surprise' that our Rip van Winkle in Washington has expressed? Has the present state of affairs not been arrived at with its covert and overt collusion with our extreme right? I repeat that the prime responsibility of building a moderate society is of the Pakistanis themselves, but looking at the ground realities of the need for international support, I also understand the inherent weakness of our decision makers to compromise for the sake of security and financial viability.

Now that our friend Rip van Winkle in Washington has tasted the bitter fruit of history, it is important that the strategy is reviewed immediately. The only way forward for Pakistan is to encourage moderation, progressive thought and tolerance. The nations do that by promoting quality education, visual and performing arts, preserving cultural heritage, improving technical and scientific skills, supporting equality in gender, cast and creed, and so on. To me, it seems that we all need to 'do more', much more in fact. The support committed by the world must determine these priorities. Otherwise the frustration will continue to generate anger, which will continue to be destructive for us and the world. The anger has little opportunity to sublimate and become constructive energy. As one of the concerned persons, I feel that the failed 'activity' of Dumb Shahzad should be read as a message for an improved strategy and better employment of indigenous and borrowed resources toward more constructive ends.

If, by any chance, the Dumb Shahzad incident has been 'manufactured' like some others, for Pakistan's arm-twisting, and to force it to take immediate action against North Waziristan Taliban groups, then the intent is not right. Pakistan's armed forces and the government must decide the timing. Priority must be given to consolidation of gains from operations Rah-e-Rast and Rah-e-Nijat before taking the next step.

Saturday, June 05, 2010

**North Waziristan, the Punjabi Taliban and the Durand Line.**

"Baitullah Mehsud and Maulvi Fazlullah supported the violent *Punjabi* Taliban who had a sectarian agenda and turned a blind eye towards criminals, smugglers and the drug mafia and took their share of the booty."

The recent attack on the Ahmedis, Faisal Shahzad's terror attempt in New York, Fazlullah's presence in Nuristan and a new warning by the Taliban of attacks on army personnel, minorities, Shias and the MQM, have stressed the urgency of an army operation against the Taliban and al Qaeda in North Waziristan. The US is even considering an independent attack.

The operation against terrorists in North Waziristan will need to take place, but when? The timing is very important. Some issues will need to be settled before the operation. They are: consolidation of the successes of Operation Rah-e-Rast and Operation Rah-e-Nijat, the clearance of the Punjabi Taliban and future control at the Durand Line for the stoppage of infiltration to and from Afghanistan.

The operations in Swat and South Waziristan met with success after a great deal of sacrifices. Swat and Malakand were terrorised and, as they were settled areas of Pakistan, they had to be cleared first. Next was South Waziristan, which was a tribal territory but the operational centre of the Taliban and al Qaeda for their terror activities against

Pakistan. Perhaps most people already know that as a division of operational strategy, the terrorists had decided upon South Waziristan as their headquarters against Pakistan and North Waziristan as their headquarters for Afghanistan.

Baitullah Mehsud and Maulvi Fazlullah were the main instigators against Pakistan, with foreign 'specialists' and 'consultants' as supporters. They also supported the violent Punjabi Taliban who had a sectarian agenda and turned a blind eye towards criminals, smugglers and the drug mafia and took their share of the booty. The atrocities committed by them in Swat and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were horrendous and the people's suffering unimaginable. The Swat action was the first to be undertaken under the rubric Operation Rah-e-Rast and it included many heroic deeds that the world should know about, including, in particular, the Peochar heliborne attack, which is said to be the largest since World War II. Normalcy has been restored, by and large, although it is still feared that Maulvi Fazlullah may have escaped to Nuristan in Afghanistan along with some 5,000 criminals involved in terror activities. He may be marking his time (if he is alive) to sneak back through the porous border marked by the Durand Line.

Rah-e-Rast was followed by Rah-e-Nijat. This was a very large operation in most of the areas of South Waziristan where terrorist strongholds were attacked. The much objected to drones of the CIA also participated. The Taliban, the covert supporters of the Taliban in the political parties and the elite society including the media, termed drone attacks to be an attack on Pakistan's sovereignty. This was an effort to raise public sentiment to get rid of the drones and, thus, provide relief to the Taliban-al Qaeda combination. Ultimately, the valiant armed forces of Pakistan gave several sacrifices and overpowered the terrorists, whilst the drones got Baitullah Mehsud. The surviving terrorists must have escaped to the safe haven of North Waziristan or Afghanistan, taking advantage of the porous Durand Line. Some splinter groups have been formed and are still operating.

The Punjabi Taliban of Muridke, Jhang and elsewhere are also operating and they coordinate with their headquarters in North Waziristan. These groups must be dealt with to secure the lives of Pakistani citizens. The urgency of this task has been underlined by the recent attacks in Lahore and the many subsequent threats. Splinter groups like the Asian Tigers and others have adopted different strategies. To eliminate them, the federal government and the army needs to get full support from the Punjab government, and this has not been forthcoming so far. The PML-N leadership has had relations with the Taliban and it is time they finally decide which side they are on. This should be a deciding factor before the next 'operation'.

The Durand Line is of critical importance for the future. The loose demarcation of the boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan is the main source of problems. The Durand Line refers to the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is poorly marked and is approximately 2,640 km long. It was established after the 1893 Durand Line Agreement between the government of colonial British India and Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman Khan for fixing the limits of their respective spheres of influence. On the plea of facilitating the tribes to meet their co-tribals on either side with ease, controls are so relaxed that most of them can walk through the openings in the mountainous terrain almost without any check. This becomes the most convenient method of infiltration into Balochistan and areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Waziristan. Proper administration of this border has been resisted by Afghanistan, primarily because of the revisionist baggage of history. Some Afghan elements still cherish the dream of Afghanistan to include within its territory the areas up to Bahawalpur as it was in the time of Sher Shah Suri in the early 16th century and up to 1840. Then, following the British, the Sikhs took this territory. This historical baggage must be shed, and ground realities faced by the Afghan leadership. The porous Durand Line is the most dangerous place in the world. A settlement on effective controls must be arrived at for the success of an army operation. This will block runaway terrorists from

escaping to Pakistani territory and avoiding international forces.

The operation in North Waziristan is indeed unavoidable and urgently required, but the considerations of protecting the people in mainland Pakistan and control of the infiltrators through the Durand Line must take precedence. At this time the operation is as important for Afghanistan and the US as it is for us, perhaps more for them. It will help the US complete its assignment and get out of Afghanistan and for Afghanistan it could mean lasting peace. For Pakistan it will mean safety of life and property.

Action in North Waziristan must be undertaken, but the timing must be decided by the government of Pakistan and the armed forces, and it should follow the settlement of these issues.

Saturday, June 19, 2010

### Who is David Headley?

"In 2006, Daood Gilani changed his name to David Coleman Headley, borrowing the family's American name. The change was made to help Headley escape detection and travel easily between the US, India and Pakistan with his American identity."

Indian investigators have now been allowed by authorities in the US to interrogate David Coleman Headley. This permission has been given after noticeable reluctance from the US.

The investigation under reference relates to the Mumbai terror attacks of 2008. Headley earned the grim distinction of being the American jihadist with the highest body count. He remains something of a cipher, quite literally an international man of mystery. One wonders if the Indians will find new facts. Will they be able to understand his mental makeup?

Who is David Headley? How did he end up being what he is?

He has one blue and one brown eye, a symbol of his mixed parentage. Some senior officers of Radio Pakistan may remember him as a fair looking boy hanging around the Lahore Radio Station. Others may remember him as a teenager living with his father near the Jamia Ashrafia off the Canal bank. His father was a bureaucrat and a poet. Within the broadcasting service he rose to become the director general, and served for some time in the Voice of America in Washington. Mr Salim Gilani is remembered for starting the transcription service in the broadcasting set-up, which is the only archive collection in the country. He was known to be comfortable with musicians, but otherwise "stand-offish" and strict.

It was during his stint with the Voice of America that he met Serrill Headley. She ran away from home when she was 15, eventually settling in Washington and finding work as a secretary. "She was very independent, very freewheeling," says her brother, William Headley. It was in Washington that she met Salim Gilani. They got married.

Headley was born Daood Gilani on June 30, 1960 in Washington. Later they moved to Pakistan, but the marriage did not last long due to cultural differences. Serrill eventually returned to Philadelphia — without Daood, and, in 1973, she enrolled in a bartending school. "She was a stunner with snow-white skin," recalls Ronnie Horsman, 85, who ran the Philadelphia Bartending School. "After she took the course, she told me she was going to buy a bar on Second Street. She had her mind set." So she started her own joint called Khyber Pass. Daood Gilani was sent to Hasanabdal Military School. Salim Gilani, meanwhile, probably married again. In 1977, Serrill returned to Pakistan and convinced the then teenage Daood to drop out of the military academy and live with her in Philadelphia. In the opinion of his maternal uncle William Headley, "Daood was shocked by his mother's libertine lifestyle: the drinking, the revealing clothes, the flirting with men. Serrill's romantic life was further cause for friction between Daood and his mother. When Serrill found a new love interest, it took precedence over everything else in her life, including Daood. She eventually turned her back on David and that was just unforgivable."

Eventually, Daood assimilated into American life. He enrolled in Valley Forge Military Academy, but lasted just one semester. Friends of his mother believe that it was there that Daood first developed a taste for illegal drugs. He lived in a room in the bar and met some people of questionable occupations.

In 1985, he married a woman he met at the bar. "When he would go to Pakistan he would get all riled up again," the woman told the Inquirer. "He would use words like 'infidel' when he would see an Indian person in the street. He used to spit in the street to make a point." Much like his parents' marriage, this union would not survive the cultural differences; two years later it ended in divorce. "I guess he was torn between two cultures," she told the Inquirer. "I think he liked both. He did not know how to blend them."

"He got involved with some bad people, which is not unusual when you live in a room above a bar," William says.

Returning from a trip to Pakistan in June 1988, he was arrested at the airport in Frankfurt, when customs agents discovered two kilogrammes of heroin hidden in the false bottom of his suitcase. Daood was turned over to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and agreed to cooperate in return for a lighter sentence. Two days later, he was back at his apartment on New Street, which had been wired for sound and

video, after which he ended up as a DEA agent and a drug addict. DEA also coordinates with the CIA in some matters. In 2006, Daood Gilani changed his name to David Coleman Headley, borrowing the family's American name. The change was made to help Headley escape detection and travel easily between the US, India and Pakistan with his American identity.

He visited Afghanistan several times to trap the drug mafia. He was in contact with jihadi networks as well. He was booked for his involvement in the Denmark terror plan but escaped the death sentence, once again by the 'plea bargain' strategy. By then, he was totally in the hands of the secret agencies.

He was the major facilitator in the Mumbai attack. He provided maps, photographs, even GPS systems to the attackers. He visited Pakistan, Afghanistan and India several times. How were his trips funded? Did he use his half brother Danyal Gilani, the PRO to the prime minister, in any way? Was the CIA, FBI, IB or some other agency involved in planning the Mumbai carnage? Did they suppress the information for covert motives and let the attack happen? Such questions need answers.

Headley is the product of a broken home, a split nationality, neglect by society, influence of the mafia and totally inhuman exploitation by secret agencies. No one fulfilled their social responsibility. Parents, friends and society all ignored him while he needed help. He ended up as what he is — a menace, with the prospect of spending the rest of his life in jail and further manipulation. The best that Indian investigators can achieve now is to identify the terror networks, share information and save future targets from destruction.

Saturday, June 26, 2010

VIEW: Punjab government funding Jamaat-ud-Dawa —Naeem Tahir

"The United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on JuD, declaring it a global terrorist group. Pakistan's government also banned the JuD on the same day and issued an order to seal the JuD offices in all four provinces."

The chief minister of Punjab has allocated funds of Rs 86 million to the suspected terror nursery of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) in Muridke, defying the ban on the organisation by the federal government. The JuD is alleged to have been involved in the Mumbai attacks.

What message will be delivered to India at a time when peace is being talked about? Is this how we bridge the trust deficit? On the other hand, an almost Rs 100 million cut has been made in the funds for culture and youth affairs. The Punjab budget 2010-11 of the chote Mian Sahib speaks of his preferences.

These matters have been reported by two important newspapers in the country. Others in the media are either in a state of disbelief and total shock, or have grown insensitive to whatever happens and have just given up.

The matter is too serious for a mitti pao attitude. Civil society must take note and protest. There is hardly any need to stress the importance of the promotion of the culture and development of the youth in our country. This is the only way to build a healthy society. Youth development is a nation-building programme. Progressive education, healthy sports and awareness of culture and the arts ensure balance and tolerance in a society. We have been deficient in paying due attention to

it and now there is an unforgivable cut, and this is the unkindest cut of all.

Funds to the JuD of Muridke are being provided by the CM of the largest province in the federation, while the amir of JuD is also the founder of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT). According to media reports, the JuD and LeT have been accused by the US of training the gunmen of the November 2008 Mumbai attacks.

On December 7, 2008, under pressure from the US and India, the Pakistan Army launched an operation against LeT, raided a *markaz* (centre) of the LeT five kilometres from Muzaffarabad, and arrested more than 20 members of the LeT and Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, the alleged mastermind of the Mumbai attacks. They are said to have sealed off the centre, which included a madrassa and a mosque along with the offices of the LeT. On December 11, 2008, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on JuD, declaring it a global terrorist group. Pakistan's government also banned the JuD on the same day and issued an order to seal the JuD offices in all four provinces. To continue its activities, this organisation has gone through many name changes. As one name came under a ban, they changed to another. After the UN ban, they morphed into Tehrik-e-Tahaffuz-e-Qibla Awal (TTQA). LeT is a militant offshoot of Markaz Dawat-ul-Irshad, an Islamic charity and educational organisation. Markaz Dawat-ul-Irshad has since been renamed Jamaat-ud-Dawa.

Lashkar based its philosophy on the extreme views of Wahabiism, the austere brand of Islam practised in Saudi Arabia, and has relied on donations from overseas. Pakistan's then President Pervez Musharraf banned the two groups accused of the attack on India's parliament in January 2002. It had already been banned in India in October 2001 and was also designated as a 'foreign terrorist organisation' by the US.

In the US anti-terrorism circles, it is also known as Jamaat ud Dawa il al Quran al Sunnah (JDQ). A detainee at Guantanamo Bay, Abdul Rahim

Muslim Dost, who is a poet and a journalist, is said to have stated during his interrogation that "the JDQ has a military wing and practises assassination".

An Indian journalist, Harinder Baweja, who was provided access to the Muridke centre of JuD, quotes the following dialogue with his guide: "Do you support Lashkar-e-Tayyaba?" Response: "We used to." Question: "You used to?" Response: "Yes, we were like-minded, but the group was banned after Indian propaganda following the attack on parliament, which was done by Jaish-e-Mohammed and not the Lashkar. We used to provide logistic support to them, collect funds for them and look after their publicity." Question: "Did you also provide them with arms?" Response: "They must have bought weapons with the money we gave them. They were obviously not using the money to buy flowers for the Indian army." The author further says that Amir Ajmal Kasab confessed to having received training at Muridke.

After all this, Punjab is officially providing funds to JuD on some pretext. With this kind of background, how can the Khadim-e-Aala Punjab, the chote Mian Sahib, be so naive as to commit public funds to such an organisation? In his defence, one can only say that he may have been busy with his usual 'lunch and lassi' while some motivated bureaucrat slipped in the funding support to the JuD quietly, and our CM knows nothing about it. Hard to believe! But what else should we think?

The only alternate theory is that the CM has sympathies with the JuD. He is prepared to turn his face the other way from their terror activities, and even the most recent attack on the Ahmedis. Accordingly, the CM likes to ignore his law minister's contacts with jihadi organisations and supports the nurseries of terrorists. Finally, the CM is prepared to confront the federation against the ban on the JuD! Suspicions also arise about the billions of rupees kept as block provisions in the budget, which are in fact additions to the CM's discretionary funds. Where will these funds end up?

One wonders what the representative of the federal government to Punjab, the governor, thinks of this funding and the defiance of the federal ban. Does he also endorse the cut in the funds for culture and youth affairs? Is there anything in his powers to correct this situation?

**Saturday, July 03, 2010**

### Our films; crisis and opportunity.

"The magnitude of the change is so big that the name 'film' is being challenged by some, as the conventional photochemical process has a smaller role to play, and the technology is now primarily digital."

While a revolution in the film industry is taking place the world over, with technology getting a much more prominent role, it is high time that we look at our own tradition and devise a way forward. In Pakistan, films have an unforgettable association with Lahore. Film, in its rudimentary form, was introduced by Lumier Bros in Bombay in July 1896. It was an exciting way of recording things back then. By 1916, its commercial potential had been realised and work on making silent films started. The first silent film was released in Lahore in 1924. Historically, the most significant of these was 'Loves of a Mughal Prince' (released in 1928), which was based on Imitiaz Ali Taj's play 'Anarkali' and produced in collaboration with a German film company. Directed by Chenu Roy, the title role went to Sita Devi with Sawan Singh playing Salim, while Akbar was portrayed by the playwright himself. A film studio was set up by A R Kardar and Ismail on Ravi Road in 1930, where now exists the timber market. And so, the city of Lahore appeared on the map of the cinema world and attained an important position later on. Many films were produced and legends like Imitiaz Ali Taj, Ghulam Hyder, Pancholi, Shaukat Hussain Rizvi and Nur Jehan came to be recognised.

After independence, Lahore continued to be a major centre while Karachi developed as well. New studios like Evernew, Malik, Bari, Shabab and others came up and the industry flourished. For at least two golden decades, films were produced with success. Then the decline started. Many factors contributed; politics, fundamentalism, industry squabbles, lack of funding, government apathy, corruption, little research and training etc.

At present, the Pakistani film industry is virtually nonexistent. *Cinemas* have been converted into other commercial ventures. *Their number has* reduced from 1,000 to a couple of hundred. *Production has declined* to about 12 films a year. Only 'Majajan' by Syed Noor and 'Khuda Kay Liyay' by Shoaib Mansoor have tasted success in recent years. Hence, the film industry is crying for help from the government. However, there exists a silver lining. The film industry having hit rock bottom provides the opportunity to rise again and make a fresh start by letting in the new digital revolution.

It is a historic turning point in cinema worldwide. It is assimilating the digital revolution and the conventional technologies are on their way out. Pakistan has a chance to catch up with the changing world at a fast pace. Since everything is to be rebuilt, it would be sensible to do so with the future in mind. One positive thing is that a number of young directors have had worldwide exposure and training. However, technicians will need to be trained and modern facilities will have to be provided. It is in this area that government help can be most meaningful.

The magnitude of the change is so big that the name 'film' is being challenged by some, as the conventional photochemical process has a smaller role to play, and the technology is now primarily digital. Amateur photographers, domestic users of still cameras and students already know this for a fact. Even the filmmaker who uses the 35mm camera goes through the digital intermediary (DI) process to ensure superior results. The DI process converts the film to digital form, enables non-linear editing, colour correction, image assembly, special effects, Dolby sound and so on. Conveniently and relatively quickly, an improved final version is made and is then converted to the 35mm format for conventional cinema screens.

Such has been the progress that major camera producers are competing in making digital movie cameras with results comparable to 35mm. Makers of Arriflex, Red and even Kodak are spending research and development funds in improving their products for digital production. Award winning films like 'Slumdog Millionaire' and 'Avatar' were made totally with digital technology. Steven Spielberg makes extensive use of new technology in his films as well. Most of the conventional Pakistani filmmakers will become irrelevant if they do not update themselves. DI facilities are conveniently available in Thailand, India, and Dubai. They are being used both by advertisers and new filmmakers. It is estimated

that about Rs 400 million is spent by Pakistan's ad agencies and filmmakers every year for DI processing. Most of this drain can be avoided.

The use of digital technology goes beyond the pre-production and post-production phases. Exhibitors and distributors are also adopting it, with cinemas being converted to digital projection. This step makes print making in the photochemical laboratory unnecessary. The image is sent to the screen from a digital projector with a hard disk. It saves the higher cost of the print and also makes storage and archiving easier. The distributors plan to go a step even further. In future they may release the film from a location with the ability to send a signal to cinema houses. No multiple print making or fiddling with contents would be required. The film would be received in the cinema at the given time through a satellite signal like television.

Pakistan can convert the present state of disaster into a great opportunity. The whole chain of equipment, starting from cameras to cinema projectors, is almost totally outdated and little better than junk. The time is ripe for the change. The recent exhibition of cinema equipment in Las Vegas was an eye-opener for all because digital technology completely dominated and future orders mostly centred on it.

During the 2005-07 period of the Musharraf era, support was available to creative workers. The KaraFilm festival in Karachi was bringing a large number of newcomers to the forefront. Some seminars in Islamabad were also held to give some serious thought to the revival of the film industry. The significance of culture, in particular films, was understood as the strongest perception management vehicle. Only recently, the present government has expressed some good intentions and if they are implemented, it might turn out into a much-needed feather in its cap.

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2010

### A new phase of terror?

"The attack on Data Darbar makes a naked and blatant declaration of terror against a peaceful Muslim community that does not subscribe to Wahabiism, Salafiism or Qutbism. It has shaken up the largest Muslim sect in the country."

The attacks on the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore killed 44 worshippers in prayer and injured another 100. The terrorists chose Thursday to execute their plan when the attendance was very high.

There is no precedent for such an atrocity; an attack on peace-loving people in a shrine that symbolises sufi thought across Pakistan. The only parallel one can think of is the attack in India on Ajmer Sharif on October 11, 2007. Khawaja Moeen-ud-Din Chishti's burial place was left with two dead and 28 injured. Terrorists carried out the act in the holy month of Ramazan, during the time of Iftar on a Thursday, just two days before Eid-ul-Fitr. There could have been a religious blame game in India, but what about Pakistan?

In Pakistan, sectarian terrorism is not new but had subsided for some years now. In the recent past, attacks have been more focused on security forces and the blitz on a mosque in Rawalpindi could possibly be considered an assault on the army. However, the attack on Data Darbar makes a naked and blatant declaration of terror against a peaceful Muslim community that does not subscribe to Wahabiism, Salafiism or Qutbism. It has shaken up the largest Muslim sect in the country. The condemnations and protests from civil society and religious groups have been intense and in large numbers. The grief is

deep and even if some groups had a bit of tolerance for the jihadis, it now seems to have gone.

More importantly, it has woken up the likes of Chotey Mian (CM) and the Punjab law minister. The protesters were shouting "Down with Shahbaz Sharif" and ridiculed the CM's repeated vows to defeat terrorists. It is generally believed that the Punjab government has been soft on terrorists. Punjab's high officials have been in a denial phase for a long time. To add insult to injury came the ridiculous statement 'requesting' terrorists to stay away from Punjab. Then came the shocking news of the provision of Rs 86 million from the provincial budget to Jamaat-ud-Dawa. Such appeasement did not help and led to a 'slap in the face' or a 'stab into the heart of Lahore' in the form of violent onslights on sacred places.

This could possibly mark the beginning of a new phase of terrorism. There are several reasons for believing this. First, it is a different type of terrorism that is directed towards peaceful practitioners of Islam by those whose beliefs are different and who are totally intolerant and exclusivist. This intolerance is not particularly directed towards Shias, Ahmedis or any other sect. It is an attack on all those who do not conform to the militants' convoluted beliefs. Let us recall that followers of many religions including Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and others hold Hazrat Ali Hajvery in high esteem. Therefore, this is one reason that this phase challenges everyone in general and not just a limited segment of society. This attack also brings the two major religio-political parties into an intense conflict between them.

Second, this strike appears to be coming from a different epicentre. The previous phase of terrorism was launched primarily from South Waziristan. That is where most of the militant groups had gathered and planned their strategies. After the armed action against these groups, Waziristan has been losing its status as a safe haven for terrorists. There are several splinter groups like 'Asian Tigers' and 'Qazi Force' among others. If the previous phase could be traced to Laal Masjid, then this phase may be related to Data Darbar. However, both the phases seem to be very different in nature. Also, the new epicentre seems to be in Punjab (it might be Muridke or Raiwind specifically).

The difference between the two phases was the ostrich-like attitude adopted by the MMA government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa until they learnt that 'negotiations', 'peace accords', 'settlements' and appeasement had no value with terrorists. For the militants, these are only strategic moves to consolidate and attack. This time, the 'ostrich' was the Punjab government, which should have learnt from the fate of the MMA but it did not. After the shock of July 1, it probably has woken up now.

The only action that merits a small level of optimism is the recent announcement by the Punjab government that it will swoop down on 17 banned outfits including Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan, Tehreek-e-Jafariya Pakistan, Tehreek Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi, Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan, Khudamul Islam, Islami Tehreek Pakistan, Hizbut Tahrir, Jamiatul Ansar, Jamiatul Furqan, Kherun Nas International Trust, Islamic Student Movement, Balochistan Liberation Army and the Jamaat-ud-Dawa.

One can welcome this announcement if it is supported by sincere and determined action. The CM can wash off a great deal of criticism if he succeeds in bringing peace, law and order to the province and consequently help the whole nation.

There has been some pointing of fingers between the CM and Rehman Malik about the extent of negligence in the case under reference. It is a pointless and wasteful activity. They should stop this ambivalence in political relationships in the interest of a bigger cause — peace in the country. Both of these leaders represent major political parties and must have realised that their performance so far has been dismal and disappointing. I sincerely hope that this opportunity is not too late for them to learn from mistakes and to restore people's faith in 'democracy' in Pakistan and its exponents.

**Saturday, July 17, 2010**

Disappointment with the Punjab Assembly.

"Clichés like "the worst form of democracy is better than dictatorship" and "democracy is the best revenge" do not help the people in their daily lives. Tangible improvements are not there for us to see, and the quality of life has deteriorated."

The true colours of our present politicians can now be seen. Who will believe that the resolution passed by the Punjab Assembly against the media's reporting of fraudulent degrees did not have the backing of political parties, particularly the PML-N? Now they are trying to find an easy way out by making Sanaullah Mastikhel the scapegoat. What about the special procedural steps taken by the house in order to pass the resolution? What about the presence of the leader of the house, Chotey Mian sahib, during that session? Suddenly, Barrey Mian, the lion, has woken up and is roaring from his real estate empire in London. He intends to expel the resolution sponsor and offer a 'sacrifice' for the sake of remaining on the 'right' side, a side that includes the journalistic community. He seems to have learnt his lessons during the sojourn with Ziaul Haq and made amends after harassing a media group.

Barrey Mian has some favourite pastimes, one of them being to point fingers that he does physically during his speeches, while another is the desire to 'attack'. One of his infamous onslaughts was against the courts, followed by a tirade against the army chiefs. This strategy started to backfire and ultimately the 'attack' on the army chief in 1999 cost him his job. He made a deal, NRO-style, with General Musharraf to save his skin, and so the sher turned into a bakri. It seems that he cannot get over it and is looking for revenge.

The dishonest parliamentarians have brought disrepute to his name and have hurt his cause. If they were not caught, he would not have cared. Now the situation is serious, more so because it jeopardises the support he commanded amongst the media. He must have been angered by the actions of the PML-N parliamentarians who committed such fraud. His party is in the leading position as far as the number of fake degree holders is concerned. The media exposed this and reported the facts to the voters — the public. How could Barrey Mian or even Chotey Mian like it? They desire absolute power and the courage of the frail single pasli journalists was too much of an affront for the mighty. These ordinary journalists had to be taught a lesson. Therefore, the party allowed the resolution to pass. They did not realise that the media has had a taste of freedom and would not take it lying down. It claims the credit for bringing matters to such a point that Pervez Musharraf opted to resign. Whether it is right or wrong can be debated but the fact remains that the power of the media in Pakistan today is immense. Misuse of power can occur, as Lord Acton said, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The media men must also watch out. Chances of them learning in the process are better because they have not earned their positions on the basis of jaali degrees.

A chorus of condemnations regarding the resolution is coming from all quarters because the media has shown its teeth. It is hard to survive for a politician if the press goes against him. The politicians might 'buy' a few saleable individuals and the stories of lifafas may have some truth to them, but this cannot last for long. If a politician, in his pursuit for power, does not hesitate to commit a crime, and obtains a bogus degree, then such a politician will also not hesitate in offering 'compensation' to the media members or groups for 'favours'. In the interest of dignity and the sense of social responsibility, the media should be cleansed of such elements forthwith.

The resolution under debate does have a limiting clause. Newspapers reported that it urged the media to observe impartiality, refrain from publishing 'baseless' reports, and demonstrate responsibility. Good so far. In fact, if one looks at the text (Daily Times, July 10, 2010, page B1), then it may be noticed that the resolution is carefully worded to avoid offence. Then where did things go wrong? Why is the media so agitated? There are several reasons for this. The most obvious is the

timing. The media had built up a dream of democracy and strong institutions amongst the people. But this dream turned into a nightmare. The performance of democratically elected officials has been extremely disappointing for all. On top of that, many legislators are suspected of doing outright cheating and engaging in criminal acts. Expectations have gone down tremendously. An increasing number of people have started to question the logic of forcing the resignation of Pervez Musharraf. If journalists knew what they were going to get as his replacement, many of them might have thought twice.

Clichés like "the worst form of democracy is better than dictatorship" and "democracy is the best revenge" do not help the people in their daily lives. Tangible improvements are not there for us to see, and the quality of life has deteriorated. This is embarrassing for the media, and when, on top of it, the assembly members support the cheaters by moving a resolution to 'advise' journalists, it hurts. It hurt very badly, and worked as the proverbial last straw. The media's patience ran out, and an intense protest is ensuing. All those politicians, who are now born-again supporters of the freedom of press, may just have done so at this moment to get the sympathy of a robust and agitated media force that is ready to hit back. Reporters now need to watch out who is genuine and who is an ibnul waqt. Some shers might be wearing the cloak of bakris. Taking back or amending the resolution will hardly mean anything at this stage of duress. It is the mindset and the character of the individual members of parliament that need a change. It should be a sobering moment for all. The parliamentarians should show some grace by resigning if their character is suspect. But perhaps this is also a time of soul searching for the media persons and their bosses as to how deeply they are committed to reporting the truth without ulterior motives. When the chips are down, people do speak and there are no holy cows.

Saturday July 24, 2010.

### Senior citizens and national savings.

"Considering the fact that most of the seniors using the National Savings Scheme are educated, experienced and have lived as useful citizens who have contributed to the best of their ability, they need to be shown greater sensitivity by the government."

It is estimated that there are about eight million senior citizens in Pakistan today. All of them require particular attention. However, this article is limited in scope and focuses on a smaller yet important group that invests in the National Savings Organisation. For these individuals, this is the best option to meet their monthly expenses. Such people number around 0.625 million. Most of them are well qualified and have been in the national mainstream.

The senior citizens who depend on the 'profit' from their investment are a special lot. Generally, they are pensioners, retirees with some savings and provident fund, business executives who do not want to be involved in the nine to five routine anymore, technocrats, and other similar individuals who wish to avoid 'risky' investments. The investment of such individuals is estimated to be about Rs 500 billion. The average investment per person is around Rs 800,000. In most cases, the yield is the individual's only source of income.

The quality of service of this particular organisation is generally good. In fact, it is better than most government departments. I even find a nostalgic and romantic aura about the manual entries in the registers like old times. Luckily, the manual work does not stop with the frequent power breakdowns these days. However, one does feel that this entity suffers from some indifference from policymakers. One presumes that

most of the policymakers are young and are not beneficiaries of such schemes and therefore unaware of the issues at the users' end.

The major problems occur with the rates of profit and limits of investment. The available options include Behbood Certificates and the pension scheme for certified pensioners belonging to government departments. Behbood Certificates are the most popular amongst investors. Those who were fortunate enough to invest during the Musharraf era in 2008 earned profit at a rate of more than 16 percent and no tax. However, the rates have been gradually reduced. It is beyond comprehension why this treatment is being meted out to senior citizens while the cost of living has skyrocketed. How can they be expected to maintain their safed poshi (respectable existence)? The maximum limit of investment is three million. Also consider the fact that the state does not provide free medical facilities or housing. Reverse mortgage is also unavailable unlike in many other countries (including India). Reverse mortgage enables the owner to pledge the house and receive monthly instalments. At the time of death, either the next of kin can retain the residence by paying the bank or it is sold and the bank, after recovering its money, gives the balance to the designated relative. This system enables the owner to have a positive cash flow and live a somewhat independent life.

Surprisingly, other financial institutions discriminate against senior citizens, as they are not given credit cards or leasing facilities, for the crime of living beyond 60 years! In a civilised society, this unfairness would be a cognisable offence.

Considering the fact that most seniors using the National Savings Scheme are educated, experienced and have lived as useful citizens who have contributed to the best of their ability, they need to be shown greater sensitivity by the government. As mentioned above, the average investment in these accounts is only about Rs 800,000 each. However, a small number of investors could make full use of the prescribed limit as well as invest a larger amount. It would add a great deal of convenience if the limit of investment could be raised to, say, Rs 10 million. This would help the seniors stay at one place instead of knocking on other doors. This will be no big favour because this money is a long-term investment and will support the funding of projects that are in the

national interest. It might even reduce some of the burden of expensive borrowing by the government from other sources. The other possibility is that the Mahana Income Scheme be exempted from withholding tax for only those who are over 60 years of age. No doubt the rate of profit in these schemes is low, but if the elders are exempted from the withholding tax, some sort of relief will be provided to them. It is said that the national exchequer gets about one billion in revenue from this particular levy. Exclusion of the seniors will cause no substantial impact on the collection but will assist them and also provide the government with additional funds.

Lastly, I suggest that the rate of profit should at least be reverted back to the rate that was in late 2008 for all investors and be adjusted according to the net inflation on a regular basis. We need to give up the attitude of not wanting to know about the old fogies. Many of these are experts and worth much more than the commonly held beliefs. The prejudice and discrimination due to age should be dispensed with and their talents and experience be utilised for the greater good. This is indeed a social responsibility and we must also remember that it is a religious duty to take care of the old. Accordance to eastern family traditions, offspring have a definite responsibility towards their parents. Their prime duty is to offer emotional support. The younger generation has a lot of financial responsibilities and most seniors might find it awkward to extend their hand to the young for monetary support. It is much better to help the seniors live in dignity during the final stages of their lives.

**Saturday July 31, 2010**

**VIEW: Your turn, Mr Pillai —Naeem Tahir**

"Mr Pillai must have yielded to the Hindutva pressure. He rushed to embarrass his own external affairs minister by blaming Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence of being behind the Mumbai terror attacks."

This comes as no surprise for those who have studied the strategies of the Indian Sangh Parivar. Once again India and Pakistan wanted to talk sense, look at ways to improve relations and behave as civilised neighbours. But would the Hindutva groups let it happen? Of course not! Their agendas have nothing to do with those of the foreign ministers. They have perfected the technique of blowing away goodwill efforts. Thus 'something had to be done and this time G K Pillai, secretary 'interior', chose to meddle in the affairs of the 'exterior'.

It appears that considerable and sincere efforts had preceded the meeting between Shah Mehmood and S M Krishna. A smiling Nirupama Rao visited Islamabad, finalised the agenda, and left in an optimistic mood. When the Indian external affairs minister arrived, and as the receptions and other goodies were continuing, one noticed that something was going wrong. A damper from Mr Pillai had worked. While the favourite whip (the Mumbai attacks) of the Indian administration was beginning to fade and both governments were cooperating in bringing the culprits to book, something new had to be brought to the surface. Mr Pillai decided to leak the contents of the so-called 'interrogation' of David Headley. He even took the risk of violating diplomatic norms by making statements about a sub judice case in the US. Mr Pillai must have yielded to the Hindutva pressure. He rushed to embarrass his own external affairs minister by blaming Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence of being behind the Mumbai terror attacks. Obviously he showed a lack of confidence in Mr Krishna and made sure that the environment during the talks was disturbed.

If Mr Pillai was to be fair, honest, and interested in determining all the facts of the Mumbai carnage, then he should have also acknowledged the covert involvement of the Indian Intelligence Bureau (IB). He should have asked for an investigation as to why did the IB let the attack happen when they had clear, credible and actionable intelligence available (at least four days before the onslaught began) about the movement of the terrorists towards the coast of Mumbai. Stopping the terrorists would have been no problem because the Indian navy was already deployed in that part of the sea and was carrying out exercises. The information was also not made available to the city police, which could have made checks even when the terrorists reached the coast. Why did Secretary Pillai not refer to the books and investigative material contained in publications like Who Killed Karkare? by a former inspector general of the Maharashtra Police? Or why did he not bother to check Vinita Kamte's To The Last Bullet? He had probably ignored the July issue of Outlook magazine as well. It is hard to believe that he is not aware of all this. He cannot be so naïve; after all, he is a very senior civil servant. It had to be intentional because if he had shown knowledge of these, then India would have had to share the onus of responsibility for the happening. But, of course, the government wants to appear totally 'kosher'. The Hindutva/Pillai move seems to have been well thought out in order to derive maximum benefit.

There are several precedents for such sabotage. The Sangh Parivar and Hindutva terror mechanism, with the support of IB, had done it during former Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri's visit to India by blowing up the Samjhota Express in 2007, and then squarely putting the blame on Pakistan. The investigation revealed that one of the accused had been dead for over a decade and the other one had been in police custody for several days before the incident! At this stage, the IB quickly had the Samjhota investigation stopped. It was much later that Anti-Terrorist Squad Chief Hemant Karkare uncovered Abhinav Bharat's involvement. One is also reminded of President Pervez Musharraf's bold initiatives to settle disputes amicably. When everything seemed to be working well during his visit to India and the two countries were close to make a historic breakthrough, the Bharatiya Janata Party-run government pressurised Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee to back out of signing the document.

This time around, the two governments had openly discussed and agreed to deal with the terrorists and hold the talks, and so the old tactics were hard to follow. A new way had to be discovered in order to sabotage the negotiations. Mr Pillai rose to the occasion and dug out the dead horse of the Mumbai attacks and flogged it. It was the first time perhaps that instead of a covert action, the interior secretary played a role in an official capacity. He stepped in and gave his own version of Headley's statements, embarrassed Mr Krishna, and spoiled the mood of the talks. The Hindutva supporters and the Sangh Parivar combined must be preparing for the next round as well. Beware!

David Headley is as much a criminal for Pakistan as he is for India or the US. It may be advisable that Pakistani investigators also grill him and find out his contacts in the Indian IB. There are questions about his association with US secret agencies. How could he operate so freely while being under constant surveillance by multiple US agencies? It should also be investigated who was communicating with the Indian IB and updating it with the movements of the Mumbai terrorists while they were at sea.

Mr Pillai got no appreciation from his government but did get a pat on the back from the BJP. They have prevented the normalisation of relations by the skin of their teeth. One hopes that the Sangh Parivar/Hindutva group will run out of tactics and the will of the sensible and peaceful people of the two countries will ultimately prevail.

August 7, 2010.

### Where has all the power gone?

"Why are the existing power plants not made to work full swing? Is it true that the Chinese government has made offers to meet the national electricity requirement at Rs 300 per month?"

There was some load shedding in 2007-08, but suddenly, after the new government took over, an acute shortage was discovered. Since then we have returned to a 'dark' age. It may be suggested that ex-president General Pervez Musharraf is responsible for it. Because he is responsible for everything that ever went wrong! In this case his brief case should have been thoroughly searched for the missing 5000 MW of electricity. (This sentence was deleted by the DT editorial.) The installed capacity in Pakistan is 19,855 MW, our current need is about 14,500 MW and even this is not being met. The shortage is 5,000 MW. What is the matter? We need to do a careful analysis.

Details of the installed capacity first. Electricity produced in Pakistan is from three main sources: 1) hydel, 2) thermal (gas/steam/furnace oil), and 3) nuclear. There are four major power producers in the country, which include the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), Karachi Electric Supply Company (KESC), independent power producers (IPPs) and Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC). Below is the break-up of the installed capacity of each of these power producers (as of June 2008).

#### 1) WAPDA:

a) Hydel power capacity: Tarbela 3,478 MW, Mangla 1,000 MW, Ghazi-Barotha 1,450 MW, Warsak 243 MW, Chashma 184 MW, Dargai 20 MW, Rasul 22 MW, Shadi-Waal 18 MW, NandiPur 14 MW, Kurram Garhi 4 MW, Renala 1 MW, Chitral 1 MW, Jagran (AK) 30 MW. Net hydel production by WAPDA comes to 6,461 MW. Hydel electricity generated by WAPDA varies between two extremities, i.e. between minimum of 2,414 MW and maximum of 6,761 MW, depending upon the river flows through the whole year.

b) Thermal power capacity: Gas Turbine Power Station Shadra 59 MW, Steam Power Station Faisalabad 132 MW, Gas Turbine Power Station Faisalabad 244 MW, Gas Power Station Multan 195 MW, Thermal Power Station Muzaffargarh 1,350 MW, Thermal Power Station Guddu 1,655 MW, Gas Turbine Power Station Kotri 174 MW, Thermal Power Station Jamshoro 850 MW, Thermal Power Station Larkana 150 MW, Thermal Power Station Quetta 35 MW, Gas Turbine Power Station Panjgur 39 MW, Thermal Power Station Pasni 17 MW. The net installed thermal capacity of WAPDA comes to about 4,811 MW.

WAPDA's combined hydel and thermal capacity is 11,272 MW.

2) KESC thermal power capacity: Thermal Power Station Korangi 316 MW, Gas Turbine Power Station Korangi 80 MW, Gas Turbine Power Station SITE 100 MW, Thermal Power Station Bin Qasim 1260 MW. KESC's total installed capacity: 1,756 MW.

3) IPPs thermal power capacity: Hub Power Project 1,292 MW, AES Lalpir Ltd Mahmood Kot Muzaffargarh 362 MW, AES Pak Gen Mahmood Kot Muzaffargarh 365 MW, Altern Energy Ltd Attock 29 MW, Fauji KabirWala Power Company Khanewal 157 MW, Gul Ahmad Energy Ltd Korangi 136 MW, Habibullah Coastal Power Ltd 140 MW, Japan Power Generation Lahore 120 MW, Kohinoor Energy Ltd Lahore 131 MW, Liberty Power Limited Ghotki 232 MW, Roush Power Khanewal 412 MW, Saba Power Company Sheikhpura 114 MW, Southern Electric Power Company Ltd Raiwind 135 MW, Tapal Energy Limited Karachi 126 MW, Uch Power Ltd Dera Murad Jamali Nasirabad 586 MW, Attock Gen Ltd Morgah Rawalpindi 165 MW, Atlas Power Sheikhpura 225 MW,

Engro Energy Ltd Karachi 217 MW, Kot Addu Power Company Limited 1,638 MW. IPPs' total installed capacity: 6,365 MW.

4) PAEC's nuclear power capacity: KANUPP 137 MW, CHASNUPP-1 325 MW. PAEC's total capacity: 462 MW.

The total power generation capacity of Pakistan (including all sources) is 19,855 MW and the electricity demand as of April 20, 2010 is 14,500 MW and all these producers put together are merely generating 10,000 MW.

The inconvenience caused to the domestic sector by the power shortage is immense. The loss of business and revenue is devastating. This is a crisis people have protested against repeatedly. The short cut that the government has found to get out of one crisis is to let another crisis happen — price hikes that are nerve shattering; target killings that destroy peace; food shortages raising the spectre of starvation; general economic meltdown, and so on. The democratic governments of today have used diversionary tactics fairly successfully, but they have failed in solving the people's problems. This is a serious matter if the country is to be given decent governance. Sooner rather than later, these issues will need to be resolved and the key to many of these issues is electricity. Looking back, one remembers the promise that the power crisis will be over by the end of 2009. The promise was false. Then we heard of solutions like rental power projects. Instead, why are the existing power plants not made to work full swing? Is it true that the Chinese government has made offers to meet the national electricity requirement at Rs 300 per month?

Ex-prime minister Shaukat Aziz must be asked why he did not add to the sources of power production, and why did the proposed dams get damned. Probably they will have some explanations. But what is the explanation for not utilising what we already have? Will somebody, some politician, some civil servant, or some technocrat, please tell us? We may be just worth a piece of paper called a 'vote' once in five years, but still please be magnanimous and tell us: where has all the power gone?

August 21, 2010

Dear anchorpersons.

"This was actually a time when the anchorpersons should have shown some forbearance, encouraged the administration to get its act together, and should have helped them by pointing out the results of their observations. This is the time to build up the heroes who are rising to the occasion."

I feel like talking to our 'anchorpersons' of the electronic media, unless some of them feel that they already know it all! In any case, some of these distinguished personalities may find matters worth thinking about. So it is worth a friendly try.

Most of our anchorpersons seem to have been inspired by the anchor of BBC's programme 'Hard Talk'. This anchor is aggressive and, occasionally, embarrasses the person being interviewed. Most of our anchorpersons take pride in being aggressive. They try to browbeat those being interviewed. They test their patience and consider it a great measure of success if some reach the limit of their patience and prefer to walk out. Is this the only role of the responsible anchorperson-journalist?

The flood situation is indeed devastating and each individual in the nation is touched and disturbed by the havoc and misery meted out to the affected people. So are our anchorpersons. The electronic media has done well in reporting and informing the populace about the extent of the damage and the consequences. What they have also done, almost unanimously, is erode confidence in the civil administration in toto! At each and every location they have made it a point to register the absence of civil administrators and politicians. They have done it with force and passion. Yes, they have complimented the role of the army very

correctly. The armed forces are responsible for providing rescue and relief. Indeed, they have done a tremendous job, even beyond the call of duty. Some have acknowledged the role played by 1122, which is fair. But these institutions are also part of the government, of the administration and the political set up. These have performed well because they are equipped with quick response facilities.

The primary role of the civil administration and institutions is to rehabilitate and reconstruct. This is basically a follow up of rescue and relief. What one feels is that there has hardly been any consideration given to the constraints of the civil administration. Every individual and all administrations are not geared for immediate response anywhere in the world. We have seen disasters in the US, Indonesia, Africa and many other places. Natural disasters, in their early stages, take a huge toll. If anchors focus entirely on the foreign visit of the president and conclude that the administration is not doing anything, then it is an immature act. Have all of you not been crying hoarse that powers be shifted to the prime minister? Have these not been shifted? Do you prefer to believe that it is only a hoax? Or do you feel that the PM is incapable of responding? What is it? How can the whole administration respond within hours and show its effectiveness at each and every spot that the media anchor visits? This was actually a time when the anchorpersons should have shown some forbearance, encouraged the administration to get its act together, and should have helped them by pointing out the results of their observations. This is the time to build up the heroes who are rising to the occasion. Despite political differences and personal reservations, it was time to applaud the Sharifs for contributing Rs 10 million, it was time to acknowledge Musharraf for contributing Rs 10 million, it was time to acknowledge the Hindu community in Sindh who have taken the responsibility to feed 2,000 families of the affected without any consideration of religion, caste or creed. It was time to appreciate a politician in Sindh, Islamuddin Sheikh, who is raising Rs 4.5 million a day for food and then distributing it. How about Edhi's efforts and those of so many others?

I think it is time to acknowledge good work and appreciate the role models who are emerging from this disaster. It was funny that, while the information minister was giving details of the help sent by the federation to the provinces including thousands of tents, he was cut off

for a commercial! And why do we not appreciate the valiant information minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who has shown exceptional courage and dedication even after the devastating personal tragedy of the loss of his only son?

I think what needs to be done is a careful presentation of the facts in a balanced way. Stop being so aggressive and interrupting everyone on the show. When you shout and speak more than the guest, you are projecting your prejudices and blocking the other point of view. If you believe that someone is hiding or misrepresenting the facts, then your calm and pointed questions will indeed expose him or her and the viewers will understand. Your aggression puts the viewer off. An anchor's calm creates the benchmark for the tone of discussion. Please realise that viewers have already been educated, thanks to your efforts. Now they expect more. They look for an analysis of the situation. They want a dispassionate, thought provoking appraisal and a way forward. They expect public opinion to be motivated for short-term and long-term solutions. One anchor interviewed a Sindh 'nationalist' leader and probed his reservations about the present scheme of water management. Some positive thinking emerged. This was an example. While the nation has experienced this colossal natural tragedy and is prepared to avoid a recurrence, we need to focus on acceptable planning. If the civil government fails to rehabilitate, reconstruct and plan for the future, the media must take it to task.

Anchors have the power of communication beyond the reach of anyone else. It is the nature of your job that it is burdened with social responsibility. If you appreciate the good work of the armed forces, highlighting it is the right thing to do, but also encourage those who are sincerely mobilising. Build role models. Look at the causes and hold responsible those who have neglected the proper need for water management. Focus on developing a consensus on future strategy. Of course, expose corruption, mismanagement, apathy and incompetence. But be a role model yourself — of character, knowledge, investigation and decency.

August 27, 2010.

### Sialkot and the writing on the wall — I

"There are also whispers that efforts are afoot to save the guilty. This may become an invitation to be lynched. Has anyone tried to understand the consequences? Do we understand the cause of mob anger and its desperation to take revenge without recourse to law?"

A TV news channel was showing the gruesome killing of two young boys by a mob in Sialkot last week. It was so disturbing that I did not have the heart to watch it. I moved away, shocked. The channel was doing public service, but one wished that it were not true. Unfortunately, it was a horrible reality. Two young brothers, aged 19 and 15, returning from a playground, were beaten to death by an angry crowd. They were beaten by sticks in full view of the camera, in front of policemen. Their bodies were hung on 1122 signboards. Nobody tried to stop it. Video footage broadcast by the media clearly show that eight police officials behaved like silent spectators watching the two young brothers being tortured to death. Even some of the spectators were cheering and chanting slogans and encouraging the killers.

Nobody tried to find out if at all they were accomplices in a dacoity or not and, above all, the police let it happen. It was a violent expression of the mob and its contempt for the law and its administration. Some of the government representatives have vouched that legal action will be taken swiftly. A statement of zero credibility.

The two Mian Sahibs also landed in Sialkot at an MNA's house and sent for the grieved parents to offer sympathies. How rude, and high and mighty can they be? The attitude is as shocking as the murder. Instead of going to the shattered parents and begging forgiveness, they

chose to 'send for' the parents. How could anyone behave so obviously? Did the 'lions' chicken out because of fear of the public? Did they assess the intensity of anger? Did the khadim-e-ala realise what khidmat his governance had done?

Then there are also whispers that efforts are afoot to save the guilty. This may become an invitation to be lynched. Has anyone tried to understand the consequences? Do we understand the cause of mob anger and its desperation to take revenge without recourse to law? The fact is that people have lost faith in institutions; they have lost faith in the people they are said to have voted for, and they find the justice system ineffective.

It is too alarming a reality. This is not an isolated incident. Similar mob revenge has been taken at other places. The targeted killings in Karachi are such an expression. Even the suicide bombings and the unrest in Swat and Waziristan are rooted in the failure of the justice system and the administration.

Are these warning signs of a bloody revolution waiting in the wings?

In the last 100 years, the world has seen the Russian, Chinese, Cuban and Iranian revolutions. A look at the causes of these revolutions and the crumbling of law enforcement systems shows that none of the conditions match our situation in entirety. However, this should be no consolation. No revolution is exactly the same. There are only some common elements. And the writing on the wall says that the common elements are on the increase in Pakistan.

In Iran, the regime that the revolution overthrew was thought to be heavily protected by a lavishly financed army and security services. As one observer put it: "Few expected the regime of the Shah, which had international support and a modern army of 400,000, to crumble in the face of unarmed demonstrators within a matter of months." The difference in Pakistan is that it is 'police' in the protective mode, not the army.

Let us have a look at the analysis of the causes of 'revolutions' by historians.



First, the Iranian Revolution. The Shah's strong policy of westernisation and close identification with a western power resulted in a clash with Iran's Shia Muslim identity. This included the use of large numbers of US military advisers and technicians and granting of diplomatic immunity from prosecution to them, all of which led nationalistic Iranians, both religious and secular, to consider him a puppet of the West.

Does this appear familiar to our situation in some degree?

Add to this extravagance, corruption and elitism (both real and perceived) of the Shah's policies and of his royal court; bottlenecks, shortages and inflation and Shah's overconfident neglect of governance; failure to prepare and train security forces for dealing with protests and demonstrations, and failure to use crowd control without excessive violence. The personalised nature of the Shah's government necessitated the concentration of all powers in very few hands.

In Pakistan's context, the local governance has been disbanded and no government functionary can exercise his usual powers without reference to some big boss. There exists a personalised style of use of power by big bosses, like dictators.

Let us now look at Cuba's revolution. It is summed up very adequately in the words of John F Kennedy in an interview with Jean Daniel on October 24, 1963: "I believe that there is no country in the world including any and all the countries under colonial domination, where economic colonisation, humiliation and exploitation were worse than in Cuba, in part owing to my country's policies during the Batista regime. I approved the proclamation, which Fidel Castro made in the Sierra Maestra, when he justifiably called for justice and especially yearned to rid Cuba of corruption. I will even go further: to some extent it is as though Batista was the incarnation of a number of sins on the part of the United States. Now we shall have to pay for those sins. In the

matter of the Batista regime, I am in agreement with the first Cuban revolutionaries. That is perfectly clear."

Almost a perfect parallel to the conditions and historical perspective of Pakistan.

Also note what Castro said.

(To be continued.....)

August 28, 2010.

## Sialkot and the writing on the wall — II

"Sporadic violence perpetrated by conflicting groups is most damaging for a country. It falls short of a revolution and becomes an internal struggle for power by groups with vested interests like ethnicity, religious bias, mafias, and revenge by the have-nots."

Castro went to the US to explain his revolution. He said, "I know what the world thinks of us, we are communists, and of course I have said very clearly that we are not communists; very clearly."

The important thing to note here is that Pakistanis are not religiously aggressive like the situation prevailing at the time of the Iranian Revolution, nor are they communists. There are many commonalities between the Chinese revolution and Russian revolution and even the French revolution. None of the mentioned revolutions were an exact parallel to each other, but there were common factors and causes, and these also exist in Pakistan. It is, however, a question of the tolerance threshold.

The basic factors in all these cases have been:

1. Ineffective governance;
2. Rampant corruption;
3. Elitist apathy regarding the common people;
4. Poor economic conditions;
5. Failure of the legal system to administer justice;
6. Breakdown of law and order;
7. Intolerance reaching a boiling point.

Consider and compare these factors and see if an impending 'revolution' is the writing on the wall.

Should this warning be ignored like the warnings of the floods? Certainly not. Because this will not be water flowing in the streets; instead, it can be human blood. Violent revolutions do not discriminate. Anyone perceived among the 'haves' by the 'have-nots' as guilty gets the wrath even if he is 'not guilty'. The 'suspicion' does it. So it did in Sialkot.

A people's uprising is not like the drawing room or teahouse revolutions of the 'intellectuals'. These are cruel and bloody. We cannot say "Hum dekhen gae..." (We will see...) because we may be wiped out in 'friendly fire'. Now is the time to do something and to save the country and save the saner sections of society.

The situation can be prevented from going out of hand if a sincerely planned strategy is put in place. At least three politicians are known to have been reading the writing on the wall and mentioned the possibility of revolution time and again. These include Dr Sher Afgan Niazi, Imran Khan and Altaf Bhai. Sporadic violence perpetrated by conflicting groups is most damaging for a country. It falls short of a revolution and becomes an internal struggle for power by groups with vested interests like ethnicity, religious bias, mafias, and revenge by the have-nots. A 'revolution', if steered by a philosophy, national priorities and sincerity, brings a healthy change at some cost of life and property, but gives a new life to a nation. Do we have leadership and discipline to bring about this type of constructive revolution? The leadership of the MQM, a very serious and disciplined political party, has hinted at a role of the army being acceptable. The ANP leadership has also said so. Most recently Imran Khan in an interview with Dr Shahid Masood agreed that the army has a role to play. All these leaders may have different reasons to seek the army's role. These could include the lawlessness in Karachi and Sindh. It could be the breakdown of administration in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the wayward administrations in Balochistan and Punjab. The Punjab law minister, in an interview on TV on August 23, said clearly that the present legal system for criminal justice is not practicable and criminals cannot be brought to book. It was one of the most clear and surprising admissions from the Punjab law minister. If the civil and criminal law has failed, then what are you hinting at? Relevant voices for action are being heard from at least three federating units and the fourth is likely to follow.

Public perception is an important factor. The public perception of the army is very good at this moment, particularly because of its actions against terrorism and provision of rescue and relief to flood victims. People are also comparing the present civil administration with the previous, favouring the previous one. The other institution, in fact the head of the institution, who commands some respect, is the Supreme Court. This is about all. After the institutions there may be only individuals like the great humanist Mr Edhi and competent technocrats and society members. In my humble opinion, this is a time for a considered and sincere collective action by the National Assembly, institutions, political parties and concerned and sincere individuals from different segments. The bloodshed of a revolution must be avoided but the mobilised energy of the masses must be diverted to build the 'new' nation and a nation state. It does not need to be an 'NRO', which ended up protecting criminals and the corrupt, but it does need to be a reconciliation to protect the national interests. Urgent methodologies to administer justice within a short time will solve more than half of the problems and defuse the stored 'anger' against injustice. It will also restore confidence in the new administration of a revolutionary set-up. The National Assembly should resolve and support a revolutionary set-up. The National Assembly must make necessary legal changes and let the 'revolutionary set-up' implement the law speedily and eradicate corruption and lawlessness and so on and so forth. New elections should take place at the scheduled time and should be held fairly under a system that should not be designed to support the landlords, waderas, sardars, elite, and the powerful. It should be designed to pick the best from the working classes and technocrats, specialists and other dedicated individuals committed to continue the process of nation building. The decision needs to be taken now, not later, before the sparks spread the fire beyond control. Revolutions start with small sparks, but end up engulfing everything.

(Concluded)

Saturday, September 04, 2010

### After Sialkot, anger at the cricketers?

"We associate victory with national honour. Is this not overdoing things to the extreme? We should be able to take pride in the performance of our team or some special players who make an outstanding effort. Why do we have to link an individual action with the larger-than-life concept of 'national honour'?"

An angry, aggressive and even vindictive mass is what our people have become. The killings in Sialkot shocked the sensibilities of the sensible and now, in a different way, it is happening to our cricketers on tour in the UK. In this case, the media shares the blame of total character assassination before finding anyone guilty. They have even forgotten the floods. If our heads have to hang in shame when our cricketers are found guilty, then our heads hang in shame now because of the reactions that the media is showing. The buzz of match fixing was present on the final day. It is as if we were looking for a scandal to hide behind and not accept a defeat. Defeat is unforgivable. Would we behave like this if the match had been won?

Some soul-searching is called for.

When we watch a game of cricket, what are we looking for? A good game, a match contested to the best of the team's ability in given conditions, or only for the bottom line of 'victory'? It seems most of the viewers, including most analysts, barring a few, look for victory only. Then, to make matters worse, we associate victory with national honour. Is this not overdoing things to the extreme? We should be able

who make an outstanding effort. Why do we have to link an individual action with the larger-than-life concept of 'national honour'? Looked at from another angle, how do we treat our players who do well? As soon as the match is over, the television is switched off and the players and the team are forgotten. The players go back to, generally, a life of misery because most of them come from a life of hardship. The same is the nation's attitude towards most of our artists; lots of praise if they please you, and no concern afterwards. Still, we want them to bring home some national pride! If they do anything like other common people that is not to our liking, we get so angry that we are ready to lynch even before guilt is established. If nothing else, then people from the media complete their role of character assassination as quickly as possible and want to be ahead of their competitors in doing so.

Let us look at the events currently being focused on. A 'newspaper' known for scandals seems to have hired a suspected 'fraud' professional, namely Mazhar Majeed, to get them a scandal. Mazhar Majeed, a day later, provided them with some videos of no-balls bowled by Pakistani bowlers. Also, he claims that he had phone conversations with three players. It may be remembered that the two bowlers, Amir and Asif, are the top bowlers in cricket's world listing. Also, Amir has been honoured at the age of 18 for being the youngest player to have taken five wickets in England. He is also the 'Player of the Series'. The hired person, Mazhar Majeed, also claims that the no-balls were delivered at the agreed time. Also, he says that it was 'agreed' that Amir would deliver the third over of the innings. A cursory look will tell anyone that Amir is the most successful opening bowler of the team and will, in any case, deliver the third over! No rigging is needed. It takes a dumb captain to take off the most successful bowler just after the opening six balls. Amir took six wickets on the first day and Asif took one. Together they brought about the collapse of the England team, later miraculously saved by their batsmen at numbers three and nine, who succeeded in creating a world record. This is what the game of cricket is like, always unpredictable. If Amir had made them collapse, the two batsmen reversed England's fortunes. Why can we not believe that the English players fought back instead of accusing our players of dishonesty? And that too even before anything is proved? We believed merely the allegations of a scandalous newspaper, based on a suspect character, Mr Mazhar Majeed. Why do we not consider the possibility of someone

trying to damage our rising players of the future? The players being nominated are Salman Butt, Muhammad Amir, and Muhammad Asif. The last two are the real hope for Pakistan. In spite of inconsistent performance by some, we must remember that this is the Pakistan team that beat Australia after 15 years and also beat England after nine years. This team has beaten Australia in both the Twenty20 matches. Our players could even have been framed. Is it fair to get after them in a hurry and shatter their nerves halfway through the tour? Are we not colluding with the conspirators unconsciously? I mean what is the panic all about? Almost every team in the world when playing at this level has suffered from allegations, but no one has created a ruckus like our impatient public has. How ridiculous it is of us to be taking out processions on donkeys with the names of cricketers from the national team. Some even want them hanged or at least given an exemplary punishment. Why get hysterical? The moment they win we go wild in their praise and the moment they lose we want to shoot them for one reason or the other. If there is something wrong with our players, there definitely is much more wrong with our viewing public, and some anchors and commentators are included.

I would like to request our readers to please have some patience and let the facts be determined before anybody is punished or character assassinated. Please see a game as a game, a match as a match well played or not well played, and please do not link your national honour with every ball. You have chosen a young team and have generally welcomed it; help them, support them, encourage them and do not dump them without an established major cause. What if they are cleared? Please do not try to be more pious than the pope. Everyone can make a mistake, including you.

Saturday, September 18, 2010

## Of 'revolution'.

"The most powerful element to start a revolution is a widespread dissatisfaction with the existing situation. Dissatisfaction is rapidly increasing and solutions are not forthcoming. It seems a credible leadership is missing."

One has heard it before. We have heard of an impending revolution for at least 60 years if not more. In teahouses and coffee houses. In the afternoons and evenings and late into the nights. Every day, a dream of revolution was seen and believed in. In the famous Pak Tea House, where tea was served at six annas for a 'half set', i.e. two cups. However, an extra cup was provided to accommodate if a guest appeared. Tea for two was then shared by three in the 'comrade' spirit. In the nearby coffee house, a little richer 'revolutionaries' gathered, who could afford a whole one rupee for a coffee for two, and there they also talked of the revolution. Hopes ran high if Faiz walked in with his mysterious smile and suddenly the revolution enthusiasts felt that the 'revolution' was next door. They would go home in the ecstasy of Faiz's romantic promise and great poetic prowess. Habib Jalib stayed in the background and roughed it out in poverty. Jalib struggled for an awakening for the real revolution, which never happened. Like the play Waiting for Godot, the people, mostly youth, in the teahouse and coffee house, waited for the revolution to come.

The revolution, in those days, was to arrive from Russia via Faiz or from China with someone else. Students in and around universities and colleges of Lahore listened to the pipedreams of a revolution in restaurants and coffee houses. Then they left college and confronted life's realities. Perhaps some of them developed a sensitivity for the

have-nots and carried it with them. Some used 'revolution' as a slogan for political popularity; some used it for social distinction and coupled it with verses from Faiz. Mostly the young joined the rat race of living and prospering and 'revolution' only survived as a romantic thought. Some completely forgot and engaged themselves in improving their personal balance sheets at the cost of the poverty-stricken millions through the use of political or other influences.

The progressive parties in Pakistan were the targets of state oppression, and were suspected of planning 'unrest'. The elements of the establishment engaged in secret operations used this as a justification for their own existence and continued to blow the potential 'danger' out of proportion. People like Hassan Nasir were considered enemies and secretly killed. Others were hounded, arrested and dispersed. The establishment believed they were 'enemies' of the country and to further strengthen their claim, termed these people as a-religious. Let alone progressive thought, even creativity, arts, journalism and literature were all suspect. The status quo was strengthened, progressive thought and its proponents were demoralised, and the country continued on the path prescribed by retrogressive, pseudo-religious leaders. The true and peaceful spirit of religion was suppressed, and an aggressive version was taught and used for hegemony. The classical example of this approach was the rule of Ziaul Haq. The country suffered a counter-revolution well before the dream of the progressive revolution could ever become a reality. The rich and the influential continued to increase their power; the poor and the helpless saw a rise in their misery. Some, who could manage, migrated or joined the diaspora for a hope in life, and to support their families. With the Zia-led change, the nation unconsciously landed into the situation produced by al Qaeda and the Taliban who implemented the theory of Edarat-al-Wahsh (Governance of the Wilderness) by Abu Bakr Naji.

Why did the dream of revolution never come true? There are several reasons, and state oppression was one of them.

We will need to understand 'revolution' as well as the process and strategy of it, to understand the phenomenon. A revolution is a fundamental change in power or organisational structures that takes place in a relatively short period of time.

Aristotle described two types of political revolution: 1) complete change from one constitution to another; 2) modification of an existing constitution. Revolutions have occurred through human history and vary widely in terms of methods, duration, and motivating ideology. Their results include major changes in culture, economy, and socio-political institutions. These can be peaceful or violent. Whatever route it takes, the ideal is to build a cohesive nation, social justice and a welfare state.

The potential elements that call for a revolution are on the increase in our polity. I have listed these in an earlier article. What we do not have is a convincing and workable 'motivating ideology'. Nor do we have a unified leadership and a political organisation suited to revolution. The most powerful element to start a revolution is a widespread dissatisfaction with the existing situation. Dissatisfaction is rapidly increasing and solutions are not forthcoming. It seems a credible leadership is missing. The most concerning fact is that if the potential elements of a revolution remain directionless, the outcome can be anarchy, lawlessness, and even indiscriminate bloodshed. The Sialkot lynching is an example. Some leaders of political parties have repeatedly called for a 'revolution', but do they realise what they are playing with? Is there a 'motivating ideology', education, and the desire of joining hands for a united and selfless struggle? A revolution needs more serious thought than has apparently been given to it. Revolution 'yes', anarchy 'no'. No one would want a dream of a revolution intended for betterment to end up in regrets. This is the challenge for all emerging political forces who feel the need of change. It is with these forces that hope is now associated. A very serious thought must be given to realities by Altaf bhai, Mr Imran Khan and Mr Pervez Musharraf. It is time to make a coordinated effort, build up a true 'national' spirit and then a great country. They can bring a peaceful revolution if they use the brains, muscle, and capabilities available to them, and, if they have a strong will to do it.

**Sunday, October 03, 2010**

**Birth of a political party.**

It was in London that history was made once again. Or is it that history will repeat itself!

On Friday October 1, Mr Pervez Musharraf announced the activation of the political party named All Pakistan Muslim League worldwide. The name strikes a chord of familiarity because it is inspired from the name of the party that Muhammad Ali Jinnah successfully led and was called the All India Muslim League. Jinnah returned to India about 80 years ago and led the Muslims to achieve an independent state, are the people looking for a leader to consolidate that independence now?

London has been a centre of many things for centuries and now it is the first centre of the All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) to be officially declared so.

A large number of political figurers were seen around, but what is significant is that they were outnumbered by young and educated individuals who had not been in politics before. A preliminary meeting for organisation details had been held at 20 Old Street, the new office of the APML. Mr Musharraf presided. There were at least 80 workers from across over the world present there. They included workers from all over Pakistan, the US, Canada, the UK and other countries. Some recognisable were those of former ministers Shahbaz Chaudhry, Lala Nisar, Barrister Saif, Dr Amjad, Nasim Ashraf, Nisar Memon, Ehsan Ali Khan, Sher Afgan Niazi, and young politicians like Raza Anjum, a councillor of the Conservative Party from Cambridge. Also present were Mubin Fatima from Quetta, Nawab Saifuddin Laghari from Badin, Nadim Sheikh, the organiser, from London, Barrister Fawad Chaudhry from Lahore, Gen Rashid Qureshi from Islamabad, and many other devotees of Mr Pervez Musharraf.

Musharraf wanted to join the party as an ordinary member, however there was a unanimous decision that he be elected as the president at this point.

The event on October 1 was followed by a series of public addresses and meetings throughout the UK. During the October 1 event, Pervez Musharraf presented his 'vision' and answered questions from over 100 journalists present.

Saturday, October 09, 2010

A week to remember in the UK.

"Musharraf talked of women's emancipation and general enhancement of educational opportunities. He pledged support for the freedom of the media and expected a sense of social responsibility and also truthful statements from media men. He encouraged the youth to come forward."

Ghalib is an all-time poet. His verses fit many occasions. This time it was in London, on October 1, at the First White Hall that his verse proved true. There was a lot of speculation that Mr Pervez Musharraf will have a rough time at the announcement of his 'vision' for Pakistan and strategy for returning Pakistan to the road of progress. I was there as a witness.

'Thee khabar garam keh Ghalib ke urrain gay purzey Daikhney ham bhi gaye thay *peh* tamasha na hua" (The news was current that Ghalib will be taken to task, we went there to see but there was no such happening).

On the contrary, the hall had as many persons in it as could possibly be accommodated and there were additional numbers hoping to get his glimpse or hear his voice. The intensity of enthusiasm, euphoria and slogans could only be compared to the responses to Bhutto. Pervez Musharraf was loudly and repeatedly cheered, and finally, after a very crisp introduction by Naeem Bokhari, the former president of Pakistan set about his presentation.

His vision of Pakistan could only be that of a patriot. He based his thinking on three documents: the Quran; Quaid-i-Azam's address to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947, and the Objectives Resolution presented by Mr Liaqat Ali Khan.

It is significant that the worldliest, Pakistan-specific, and much respected document is the speech of the Quaid-i-Azam. There has been a strong perception among the thinking people that the real vision of Pakistan is contained in this speech of the Quaid. There was a very detailed statement of measures necessary for the relief to the poor, price

control mechanism, food security and the war against terrorism, while not compromising national dignity. He gave indications of the steps for the improvement of the economy and reduction of debts. He talked of women's emancipation and general enhancement of educational opportunities. He pledged support for the freedom of the media and expected a sense of social responsibility and also truthful statements from media men. He encouraged the youth to come forward.

The document circulated on the occasion is very convincing and if he can implement it, as he seems determined to, it will be good news for the people of Pakistan. He also announced becoming a member of the All Pakistan Muslim League (APML).

On the conclusion of the speech, a unanimous resolution was presented to elect Mr Pervez Musharraf as the president of the party, and he accepted.

The real 'show', or fireworks, was expected afterwards, i.e. in the question and answer session. There were many members of the international media who asked their questions and got their answers. One foreign correspondent asked him why the supply route to NATO forces has been cut off if Pakistan is committed to the war against terror. Musharraf responded that anything that potentially compromises the sovereignty of Pakistan has to be checked. In this particular case, there could have been some suspicions. Another questioner wanted to know why the voter should elect him while he already had eight years in power. He responded, smilingly, "That is exactly why they should vote for us because we did a good job." The people in the hall responded with laughter. Mr Musharraf later left for a series of TV interviews, including one by David Frost.

The following day was marked for a visit to Birmingham by Mr Musharraf and the APML delegates from all over the world. The first commitment was a public address in Bingley Hall, with a capacity of about 2,000. A jalsa was organised by MP Khalid Mahmud. Another gathering at a hotel hosted by Akram Gill, a local businessman, followed. However, the place with a bit of political spice was the jalsa venue where, about 200 yards away from the entrance, some 50 persons of the extremist Hizb-ut-Tahrir protested with placards and were shouting against the US, UK, Europe, Nawaz Sharif, Zardari and Musharraf — all in one! One lonely person was planted with a pair of slippers to symbolically show that the visitor was unwanted.

During the speech in the hall, one person from Hizb-ut-Tahrir sneaked in and demanded the proclamation of khilafat! Mr Musharraf did not allow himself to be distracted and continued to outline his vision to ensure progress for Pakistan. He also repeated his pledge to return to the country by the next general elections. Some members of his entourage were also given the opportunity to address the gathering. The security remained very alert and also courteous, which underscored the difference of attitudes in Pakistan and UK. Musharraf got a rousing applause repeatedly and even his pungent comments were applauded by the audience. Maybe, he was practising for the awam, but some prefer him to continue with his usual personal graces.

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Saturday, October 16, 2010

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meeting of workers and press conference by Baray Mian sahib. It was reported that Mian sahib has urged and motivated his followers to make sure that they show up at the jalsa in Manchester, in large numbers. One group reported that Barrister Sultan Mahmud is not likely to join the 'protesters' and he has instructed his followers to receive him at the London airport instead of going to Manchester. The jalsa in Manchester had some 3,000 people present and turned out to be bigger than the one in Birmingham. There were only around one hundred protestors from Hizb-ut-Tahrir, shouting slogans of khilafat and condemnation of all and sundry.

With not much success in the strategy against the jalsa in Manchester, Mian sahib must have occupied himself in looking after his real estate empire. He is said to be the biggest real estate tycoon in England operating under Flagship Investments Limited. Details of the holding is public knowledge and can be seen on its website [www.flagshipinvestments.co.uk](http://www.flagshipinvestments.co.uk). His worthy son Hasan Nawaz Sharif is the owner; he has a three-flat complex worth 12 million pounds. It is a luxury that even the prime minister of England cannot afford. Other properties are worth over Rs 1.6 billion. So it must have been worth Mian sahib's while to pay attention to the more profitable pastime of real estate. By the way, what about taxes? Or declaration of assets in Pakistan? One wonders if this worthy son of Mian sahib is the same who was declared very ill and Musharraf was asked to allow him to be taken to the UK for treatment? Musharraf did allow it and it seems the 'treatment' in London has done a lot of good to him and the family. In any case the 'Lion of Punjab' is the undisputed king of real estate in the UK and is only being challenged by another resourceful Pakistani.

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offered Rs 1 billion in cash and a hundred acres of land to the person who would kill Musharraf. This Bugti scion is completely out of step with the country's legal system and thinks like the all-powerful sardars. Does he realise that inciting someone and offering remuneration for murder is a cognisable crime? If a case is filed in court along with the recording of him making this offer, he could be convicted. Also where is that Rs 1 billion going to come from? Is it tax-paid or received from unknown sources? Why is not some part of this money being spent on starving Bugti tribesmen?

However, the Baray Mian sahib's party has been more thoughtful and cautious. They have only publicised a 16-point charge sheet. It is yet to be seen if there is really any point in the '16 points'. They have also done a clever thing by passing a resolution in the Punjab Assembly urging the central government to take appropriate action. Great, the load is off the back of the PML-N. Lip service done and enough material to embarrass the PPP government. The PML-N laps up every opportunity it can find to attack the central government. This is true to the character of Baray Mian sahib who is always pointing fingers, or attacking someone. It could be a chief of the army, or the Supreme Court, or a media group, or Zardari. So there is more to come. Mr Pervez Musharraf has now seen the opposition strategy and as he said, "Khel to ab shuru houa hae" (the game has only just started). Keep watching.

Saturday Oct.23, 2010

Long march or non-march?

"We have become so fashionably western that we do not call long marches by their traditional name of jaloos. Now these are called rallies. Whatever we call them, they are not long marches. I tend to believe that these politicians, few of whom may even be well read, do not know what they are talking about."

The number of threatened 'long marches' is on the increase. The chief minister (CM) says he will be going on a long march for a bunch of reasons, including corruption. He should start from his own home! The pious say they will start a long march from Bari Imam and arrive at Data Darbar. And, of course, Mr Aitzaz Ahsan and company feel they have already done it. They all call their 'non-march' a long march. The lawyers' march was the first in this series. They proposed their arrival in throngs in Islamabad. The movement picked up. When it was at its height, the Mian sahibs thought it to be a golden opportunity to jump onto the bandwagon and hijack it. Mian sahib changed the character of the lawyers' movement from being a principled one to a political one. But before they could get very far — beyond Gujranwala — the judges were restored and the march was over. Hopefully, all enjoyed a feast of tikka and kabab, which is the Gujranwala speciality, and returned happily. This was the best of the local marches so far. It was still a non-march; participants marched a small distance for photo sessions, and then jumped into their Pajeros, jeeps, Mercedes, etc. The media men enjoyed the occasion and accorded full-blown publicity. The other marches now being talked about are hilarious. These could, at best, be called rallies. Incidentally, we have become so fashionably western that we do not call these by their traditional name of jaloos. Now these are called rallies. Whatever we call them, they are not long marches. I tend to believe that these politicians, few of whom may even be well read, do not know what they are talking about. Has anyone read about the original 'Long March'? Do they know the history of China, our staunch friend and a great country? Do they know what the Long

Musharraf wanted to join the party as an ordinary member, however there was a unanimous decision that he be elected as the president at this point.

The event on October 1 was followed by a series of public addresses and meetings throughout the UK. During the October 1 event, Pervez Musharraf presented his 'vision' and answered questions from over 100 journalists present.

Saturday, October 09, 2010

A week to remember in the UK.

"Musharraf talked of women's emancipation and general enhancement of educational opportunities. He pledged support for the freedom of the media and expected a sense of social responsibility and also truthful statements from media men. He encouraged the youth to come forward."

Ghalib is an all-time poet. His verses fit many occasions. This time it was in London, on October 1, at the First White Hall that his verse proved true. There was a lot of speculation that Mr Pervez Musharraf will have a rough time at the announcement of his 'vision' for Pakistan and strategy for returning Pakistan to the road of progress. I was there as a witness.

'Thee khabar garam keh Ghalib ke urrain gay purzey Daikhney ham bhi gaye thay *peh* tamasha na hua" (The news was current that Ghalib will be taken to task, we went there to see but there was no such happening).

On the contrary, the hall had as many persons in it as could possibly be accommodated and there were additional numbers hoping to get his glimpse or hear his voice. The intensity of enthusiasm, euphoria and slogans could only be compared to the responses to Bhutto. Pervez Musharraf was loudly and repeatedly cheered, and finally, after a very crisp introduction by Naeem Bokhari, the former president of Pakistan set about his presentation.

His vision of Pakistan could only be that of a patriot. He based his thinking on three documents: the Quran; Quaid-i-Azam's address to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947, and the Objectives Resolution presented by Mr Liaqat Ali Khan.

It is significant that the worldliest, Pakistan-specific, and much respected document is the speech of the Quaid-i-Azam. There has been a strong perception among the thinking people that the real vision of Pakistan is contained in this speech of the Quaid. There was a very detailed statement of measures necessary for the relief to the poor, price

control mechanism, food security and the war against terrorism, while not compromising national dignity. He gave indications of the steps for the improvement of the economy and reduction of debts. He talked of women's emancipation and general enhancement of educational opportunities. He pledged support for the freedom of the media and expected a sense of social responsibility and also truthful statements from media men. He encouraged the youth to come forward.

The document circulated on the occasion is very convincing and if he can implement it, as he seems determined to, it will be good news for the people of Pakistan. He also announced becoming a member of the All Pakistan Muslim League (APML).

On the conclusion of the speech, a unanimous resolution was presented to elect Mr Pervez Musharraf as the president of the party, and he accepted.

The real 'show', or fireworks, was expected afterwards, i.e. in the question and answer session. There were many members of the international media who asked their questions and got their answers. One foreign correspondent asked him why the supply route to NATO forces has been cut off if Pakistan is committed to the war against terror. Musharraf responded that anything that potentially compromises the sovereignty of Pakistan has to be checked. In this particular case, there could have been some suspicions. Another questioner wanted to know why the voter should elect him while he already had eight years in power. He responded, smilingly, "That is exactly why they should vote for us because we did a good job." The people in the hall responded with laughter. Mr Musharraf later left for a series of TV interviews, including one by David Frost.

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Saturday Oct.23, 2010

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March in China meant? Before they proceed to equate their *rallies with* an all time massive movement, it is recommended that they update *their* knowledge and not expose their 'abilities'.

The Long March is the symbol of history's greatest resistance to oppression. It is the story of the embattled Chinese communists' breaking through nationalist enemy lines and the beginning of an epic flight from their encircled headquarters in southwest China. Known as Ch'ang Cheng (Long March), the retreat lasted 368 days and covered 6,000 miles, nearly six times the distance from Lahore to Karachi.

Civil war in China between the nationalists and the communists broke out in 1927. In 1931, communist leader Mao Zedong was elected chairman of the newly established Soviet Republic of China, based in Kiangsi province. Between 1930 and 1934, the nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek launched a series of five encirclement campaigns against the Soviet Republic. Under the leadership of Mao, the communists employed guerrilla tactics to resist successfully the first four campaigns, but in the fifth Chiang raised 700,000 troops and built fortifications around the communist positions. Hundreds of thousands of peasants were killed or died of starvation in the siege, and Mao was removed as chairman by the Communist Central Committee. The new communist leadership employed more conventional warfare tactics, but these tactics failed and the Red Army was decimated. With defeat imminent, the communists decided to break out of the encirclement at its weakest points.

The Long March began at 5:00 pm on October 16, 1934. Secrecy and rear-guard actions confused the nationalists, and it was several weeks before they realised that the main body of the Red Army had fled. The retreating force initially consisted of 86,000 troops, 15,000 personnel, and 35 women. Weapons and supplies were borne on men's backs or in horse-drawn carts, and the line of marchers stretched for 50 miles. The communists generally marched at night.

Do the readers find any resemblance with our local non-marches here? The first disaster to the Long March came in November, when nationalist forces blocked the communists' route across the Hsiang River. It took a week for the communists to break through the fortifications and it cost them 50,000 men — more than half their number. After that debacle, Mao steadily regained his influence and, in January, he was again made chairman during a meeting of the party leaders in the captured city of Tsuni. Mao changed strategy, breaking

his force into several columns that would take varying paths to confuse the enemy. There would be no more direct assaults on enemy positions. And the destination would now be Shensi province, in the far northwest, where the communists hoped to fight the Japanese invaders and earn the respect of China's masses.

After enduring starvation, aerial bombardment and almost daily skirmishes with nationalist forces, Mao halted his columns at the foot of the Great Wall of China on October 20, 1935. Waiting for them were five machine gun and red flag-bearing horsemen. "Welcome, Chairman Mao," one said, "We represent the Provincial Soviet of Northern Shensi. We have been waiting for you anxiously. All that we have is at your disposal!" The Long March was over.

The communist marchers crossed 24 rivers and 18 mountain ranges, mostly snow-capped. Only 4,000 troops completed the journey. The majority of the over 100,000 who started the Long March perished. It was the longest, continuous march in the history of warfare and marked the emergence of Mao Zedong as the undisputed leader of the Chinese communists. Learning of the communists' heroism and determination in the Long March, thousands of young Chinese travelled to Shensi to enlist in Mao's Red Army. After fighting the Japanese for a decade, the Chinese Civil War resumed in 1945. Four years later, the nationalists were defeated and Mao declared it the People's Republic of China. He served as chairman until his death in 1976.

The Long March laid the foundations of a free, progressive nation and a great country. Let us not call a small rally and make ourselves believe that a long march has been carried out. We do not have that resolve nor do we have that kind of leadership or philosophy.

Saturday, October 30, 2010

Murder for money.

"Who are the ulema following? Does Islam allow killing on suspicion? These mullahs have also added the killing of women in the Lal Masjid episode among the charges and justification for killing their accused. Do these mullahs have the evidence of even one woman killed in the Lal Masjid action?"

What is the law of our land? Is it all right if someone offers money, and other attractions, for committing murder? And if it is in public knowledge, and the instigator is reachable, then who is supposed to take action? On the other hand, is it 'legal' to do so? My common sense says it cannot be legal and should be a cognisable offence where notice must be taken. *Suo motu* is what they like to call it. Our highly respected judges, particularly the honourable chief justice of the Supreme Court, is known for his *suo motu* actions on many matters of public interest. He has restored the prestige of the justice system. But, surprisingly, a person in the country is blatantly offering a huge sum of money for murder, and no notice is being taken. Is this a joke? How could it be a joke? With greatest respect, may I ask the honourable justices why they have not taken any notice? We are not in a jungle. Or are we?

To refresh the memory of the readers, Talal Bugti from Balochistan, the son of late Sardar Nawab Akbar Bugti, is repeatedly offering a sum of \$ 1.3 million as head money, i.e. more than Rs 1 billion. He has also offered 100 acres of land to support the murderer for the rest of his life. Talal Bugti is well known and his address should be easy to find. He has further strengthened this offer by collecting a bunch of fatwas (edict) issuing mullahs who have promptly justified the proposed murder. Such mullahs cannot be taken seriously because all leaders, including Iqbal and Jinnah, received such fatwas. Imagine what would have happened if Iqbal and Jinnah had been eliminated. Such ulema (scholars) are only good for the extremist Taliban who follow them and

carry out carnage and acts of terror. The Talal Bugti offer cannot be dismissed entirely as a joke and even if it is a joke, it must be taken notice of.

The Talal Bugti offer is also an extension of the tendency to take the law into one's own hands. It may be recalled that in Sialkot, a group of people took the law into their own hands and killed two young men most brutally. When the media took notice, some movement of the law enforcement agencies took place. The issue has almost been forgotten now. Is this the likely trend for the future? Are we going to see newspaper ads from moneyed people asking for the elimination of their suspected opponents? Some newspapers may even encourage this because, of course, the advertisement will bring them revenue. Unfortunately, some media and press owners are not known for their scruples and principles.

A word about these ulema. Who are they following? Does Islam allow killing on suspicion? In fact, it forbids killing. These mullahs have also added the killing of women in the Lal Masjid episode among the charges and justification for killing their accused. Do these mullahs have the evidence of even one woman killed in the Lal Masjid action? Many so-called ulema are known for issuing fatwas for money, but what happened to a senior member of an established religious-political party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, who endorsed it?

Irrespective of political differences, such actions only shake the faith in people, and even in state institutions. By the way, what does the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan think about this? They want the death penalty removed. This is for good reason. But in this case, even the process of the law is short-circuited. Do they not need to take notice?

Then there is the much talked about 'silent majority'. Why must it stay a headless mass and just specialise in staying silent? Silence is a demonstration of consent. If it is not consenting, then what is it? Are they a party in crime? According to a press report: "Nawabzada Talal Bugti announced \$ 1.3 million as head money for Pervez Musharraf, saying that it is binding on all Muslims under the statement of religious scholars to behead him (Musharraf) as soon as possible. Talal said that he would approach the court in this regard."

One wonders what he is going to approach the court for. He has taken all the decisions already and, in the tribal tradition, added Musharraf's name to the beheading list. Some consider Talal insane; if so, then there

is a system that society has developed to deal with insanity and he should be treated accordingly.

(Note: The following paragraphs were deleted due to some 'policy matter'!)

When Akbar Bugti was interviewed by a foreign journalist, Sylvia Matheson, he recounted his killings. This is how the author writes in her book "Tigers of Baluchistan":

'Of course,' said the Nawab, 'you must remember that I killed first man when I was twelve!' quotes Sylvia Matheson of Nawab Akbar Bugti. (page 1).

Sylvia Matheson writes further:

Quote ..'About this man you killed' I reminded the Chieftain. 'ER- I mean, why...?' He sipped his tea and nibbled a piece of halva. 'Oh, that! Well the man annoyed me. I have forgotten what it was about now, but I shot him dead. I have rather a hasty temper you know, but under tribal law of course it wasn't a capital offence, and in any case as the eldest son of the Chieftain I was perfectly entitled to do so....'

This was Sardar/Nawab Akbar Bugti a believer in the tribal law and not the Law of the State. Ms Matheson concludes "For Bugtis, tribe, even sub-tribe, remained a more important basis for action than broader sources of identity such as Baluch Pakistani nationalism or Islam." Akbar Bugti lost the count of his killings thereafter.

Talal Bugti's mindset is no different.

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2010

BOOK REVIEW: Revisiting a theatre maestro

Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj ki

Tamseel Shanasi

Compiled by Prof Salim Malik

Majlis-e-Taraqqee-e-Adab;  
Pp 672; Rs 600



This book, a collection of articles, comments and reviews by Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, is a rare and invaluable addition for all those who have an interest in the theatre of the subcontinent. There is no other collection of eyewitness accounts and critical appreciation of the dramas that could match this collection.

Professor Salim Malik has added a detailed appreciation as well as the account of his efforts for the collection of the scattered articles, interviews, notes, etc. The title is very appropriate as it is comprehensive and indicates the content of the narratives of an all-time maestro, Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj.

The collection is divided into five sections. These are: 'Discussions'. Under this section are placed 22 reportages or writings of Mr Taj. These are about Urdu's old theatre, professional theatre and its downfall, and the necessity of a national theatre, regional dramas, etc.

'Classical playwrights and their works'. Here are grouped 40 articles, which cover the works of the classical Urdu playwrights starting from Behram Ji Marzban to Hubab and a few little known authors.

'Critical analysis of miscellaneous plays'. This section provides a commentary on seven plays by Ahmad Shuja, Harsh Dev, Talib, Naseer Ahmad, Mohammad Rafique, Ahsan Lakhnavi and Zareef, written during the period 1919-1969.

The fourth section includes the introductory notes to some of Taj's own plays and some other contemporaries.

The fifth section is devoted to Taj's writings about films, two interviews on the same topic and references of the book.

The introduction by Dr Salim Malik indicates the depth of Taj's knowledge, research and creative works. He underscores the fact that Taj's general understanding of being only the author of 'Anarkali' does not do justice to the real measure of the maestro that Taj was.

The 'Muqadma' or 'Critical appreciation' by Prof Malik is the most significant piece of writing and makes the reader understand the times of Taj in their true perspective. It reveals the most interesting facts of Taj's association with theatre since 1906, when he was just six years old. Taj was a storehouse of knowledge and this is why Syed Ahmed Shah Bokhari (Patras) wrote to him: "You are the only one who is an eyewitness to the history of theatre. Please record it because no one else can do it."

In 1906, Darul Isha'at Punjab was the major publishing house in Lahore. It was owned by Syed Mumtaz Ali and was known for the publications Tehzib-e-Niswan for women and Phool for children. These were the only publications of the kind in the subcontinent. Because of the availability of the printing process, all visiting theatre companies would have their posters, etc, printed at this press and would leave some complimentary tickets. Taj and his friends including Abdul Rehman Chughtai made use of this facility and would go and see the plays of most of the theatre companies that performed in Lahore.

The writings of Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj in this collection give some details that are amazing and in some ways eye-openers. He comments on actors and their performances, staging methods, audience reactions and the life in Lahore of the early 20th century. The descriptions are so vivid that one almost starts living in those times. This is so in spite of the fact that he lost his diaries and the files containing the publicity material of the dramas staged. He recorded the details from memory. Hats off to such a detailed and photographic memory.

Taj also takes a look at theatre and the film industry as a critic and a philosopher who stresses the social necessity of the existence of theatre. Of particular interest is his writing on the Dramatic Club of Government College Lahore. This article ends with a touching prayer and good wishes for those who can continue the journey when he will be gone. The prayer is for all of us.

The research work done by Prof Malik is commendable. No one would have been able to read all the articles published in different places. He has done a service to the community. The publishers, Majlis-e-Tarraqi-e-Adab, have added a wonderful title to their publication. They owe it to the memory of their director Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj. There are still a lot of Taj's scattered writings that need to be put together for scholars, and one hopes that this will be done.

The book is printed on regular quality paper and therefore very reasonably priced. It should be a prized possession of public and private libraries.

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2010

## Headley, the US, Mumbai and LeT—I

"The contours of the Mumbai conspiracy are now becoming visible. There were individuals and organisations involved in the US, India and Pakistan who carried out a covert operation and the horrible carnage in Mumbai with the help of motivated operatives."

The colour of his right eye is blue and his left eye is brown. A personality split in body and mind. He has ended up as the most relevant and almost central character in the Mumbai terror attack of 2008.

I wrote on Headley earlier, 'Who is David Headley?' (Daily Times, June 19, 2010). It was a brief write up on David Headley, also known as Syed Daood Gilani. He is the son of the late Mr Salim Gilani, the former Director General of Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation, and his American wife, the late Serrill Headley. Daood, or David as he is called now, was a perfect blend of East-West procreation, physically and also in his mental makeup.

The contours of the Mumbai conspiracy are now becoming visible. There were individuals and organisations involved in the US, India and Pakistan who carried out a covert operation and the horrible carnage in Mumbai with the help of motivated operatives.

The issue has gained urgency and has grown in proportion since President Obama's statement that facts must be determined and the perpetrators should face justice. It is therefore necessary that the splinters of facts be put together to let a comprehensive picture emerge. The involved agencies would like to suppress some factors from pointing towards their involvement and thus distort the overall picture. A common sense narration of facts will point in the direction of reality. The units of this jigsaw puzzle are scattered and, if carefully put together, an interested reader can see the full panorama. This is what I will try to do in this and following writings.

In the Mumbai carnage, multiple motives and multiple operatives were involved. The suspected organisations are the US Central Intelligence

Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Indian Intelligence Bureau (IB), Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the banned Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT). Also there was a role of the so-called Sangh Parivaar and some of its constituents. Among these individuals the most important is David Headley. He is the key figure from start to finish. Following him is Tahawar Rana, the bearded businessman, David Headley's old friend, class fellow and partner. Then there are the listed operatives who got on the boat from Khuber, to Mumbai. Ajmal Kasab? There are several question marks about him. Was he on the boat or did he come into the picture from elsewhere? In any case, he is a small fry but is paying the full price, as small fries are usually destined to do!

Here is something to think about: the necessity of the Mumbai carnage in the context of a global strategy for power and hegemony. The matter is not one of a simple terror attack by some crazy Islamic fanatics. It has several angles to it.

I had introduced Headley earlier in some detail but there is not much that we know of his friend Tahawar Rana who was arrested with him. A word about him will help in building the perspective. According to available information, Tahawar Hussain Rana was born in Chichawatni in the province of Punjab. Rana received his education at Cadet College Hasan Abdal, a military residential college in Pakistan, before becoming a citizen of Canada. It may be recalled that it was here that an understanding and friendship developed with his class fellow Daood Gilani.

Rana and his wife emigrated to Canada in 1997 and obtained Canadian citizenship in June 2001. Rana and his wife are both MBBS doctors. Rana has served as a captain in the Pakistan Army. He lives primarily in Chicago and owns several businesses including First World Immigration Services, which has offices on Devon Avenue in Chicago, as well as in New York and Toronto and possibly in Mumbai. In Mumbai, David Headley is said to have been in charge of the business. This could be a cover up for his terror operations. He also owns a home in Ottawa where his father and brother stay.

Rana and David Coleman Headley were charged and arrested for plotting attacks on the offices of Jyllands-Posten, a Danish newspaper, which published the controversial cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). During the subsequent interrogation, it was found that Rana had travelled to Mumbai and had stayed in the Taj Mahal Palace and

Tower, one of the sites of the Mumbai tragedy. Tahawar Rana, 48 years old, was arrested and charged with one count of conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist group.

In 1998, David Headley, then 38 years old, was convicted of conspiring to smuggle heroin into the US from Pakistan. He was sentenced to less than two years in jail. Later, he went to Pakistan to conduct undercover surveillance operations for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

It is clear that Headley was under the observation of the DEA for a long time and his activities could not have gone unnoticed. Around this time he may have even been taken in by the CIA. This is very likely because the DEA and CIA, two US organisations, share substantial amounts of data with each other.

To summarise, here was David Headley under the control of DEA, and possibly having connections to the CIA. He had additional financial support and an alibi provided by Tahawar Rana. These connections afforded him freedom to operate. He could follow the mixed trends of his split personality. He could serve US agencies and also develop contacts with the terrorist groups in Pakistan. He could travel freely on a US passport and justify his visits to Mumbai for the purported business.

This is how he was set and geared up to implement a plan, a ruthless conspiracy of arson and murder, to be noticed by the world later.

(To be continued.....)

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Headley, the US, Mumbai and LeT — II,

"Headley claims to have been in touch with two persons: ex-Major Iqbal and ex-Major Sameer Ali, who supposedly helped him in his planning work. These two men had retired earlier from the payroll of the Pakistani ISI. This slander on ISI serves as the core reason behind the Indian propaganda machine that portrays Pakistanis as perpetrators of terror with 'official' backing."

David Headley was fluent in English and Urdu because of his background. He had charms and knew how to get along. He had the support of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), CIA and a business cover-up from Tahawar Rana. With the help of a US passport, travelling was easy. One would not be surprised if he obtained a Pakistani passport also to freely move around in the tribal areas or even in Afghanistan.

According to one of his wives, he had a deep hatred for Indians. It is hard to find the reason for this and one can only guess that possibly he met with fanatics from the right wing during his stint as a student with Tahawar Rana. The extreme right fanatics in Pakistan and in India are no different from each other as far as nursing 'hate' is concerned. With this mindset, it seems very probable that during his stay as an agent of DEA he also came into contact with Pakistan's banned organisations. Of these Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) is the one where he found support for his plan.

Who were the planners or supporters of the Mumbai carnage? According to the report by the Indian National Investigation Agency (NIA), who interrogated Headley for 34 hours, "Osama himself named the fidayeen team chosen for the terror strikes on Mumbai." Headley is also reported to have said: "Lashkar commander Abdur Rehman alias Pasha is directly in touch with the top brass of al Qaeda, including Ilyas Kashmiri who is now number three in the al Qaeda hierarchy in Pakistan. Abdur Rehman has met Osama a number of times." Rehman

How Headley walked into the orbit of LeT and operates with a large degree of financial support to terror operations that is said to be involved in the Mumbai carnage. It is important to note here that Jund-ul-fida is in contact with the al Qaeda hierarchy. It is on the basis of the dossier first submitted by the Indian authorities, some of the facts related were the following: The attackers were Bada Abdul Rehman, Abass Ali, Abu Saleh, Abdul Imran Chota, Farhatullah, Ismail Khan, Nasir Abu Umar and Babar Imran. These eight persons left the coast of Karachi on a small boat on November 22, 2008 at 8:00 am. When at sea, they changed over to a bigger boat said to be provided by LeT planners. This boat was 'met' by the Indian trawler 'Khuber'. The group of eight attackers boarded Khuber, killed the crew except the captain, who was asked to take them to Mumbai. Navigation instruments were available to them. The log belonging to Khuber describes the duties assigned to each of the eight persons to carry out their routines on the trawler. Each person had specific duties. Ajmal Kasab's name is not there! Each person had November 26, they arrived at the Mumbai coast at 4:00 pm and the main Mumbai area by 8:00 pm. The terrorists from Khuber split into two groups; six arrived at one point and two at another. Ajmal Kasab was in neither. Still, it is Ajmal Kasab on whose evidence the whole Indian investigation rests! The Indian investigation claims 10 terrorists. The photographs of the eight killed were published. How did the additional two get included? One of these 'two', Hemant Karkare, was killed on Rang Bhavan lane. Kasab survived. So, only Kasab was left to provide all the 'evidence'. He was caught 'injured' from the same lane. But how did Kasab arrive on Rang Bhavan lane? Was he not fully covered by photographs implicating him at Taj Mahal Hotel? Who was controlling Kasab's movements?

Headley is reported to have provided all the information about Mumbai, including maps of the streets. Headley travelled between Pakistan, Mumbai and the US several times for the preparations. He was finalising details of the travel, strategy and locations to hit. Was he doing this on his own? He was carrying out his official assignments from DEA. Was the Mumbai project also a secret assignment?

During the preparation time, Headley claims to have been in touch with two persons: ex-Major Iqbal and ex-Major Sameer Ali, who supposedly helped him in his planning work. These two men had retired earlier from the payroll of the Pakistani ISI. It is very likely that these persons either had extreme right wing beliefs, or were offered lucrative remuneration after retirement by Headley from his resources. The earlier ISI connection of these two persons has been widely publicised. This slander on ISI serves as the core reason behind the Indian propaganda machine that portrays Pakistanis as perpetrators of terror with official backing. It also shifts the focus from the doings of Indian agencies.

In Mumbai, David Coleman Headley frequented upmarket Mumbai bars like Topaz on Grant Road and Mansi in Andheri. Sources say that he was sometimes accompanied by foreigners. Who were these foreigners? Could they have been from the CIA or Mossad? Also, the Indian officials investigating the Mumbai attacks claim to have traced David Headley's Goa connection. The officials claim that Headley was in constant touch with an American who had been living in Goa for the past nine years. This connection could have provided a suitable meeting place for the co-planners.

On the other hand, the eight attackers arrived on the Mumbai coast on 26/11, passing through a large Navy in exercise at that time in the seas around Mumbai, without being challenged or stopped! Does this not sound a bit strange?

Six of the attackers met a woman, Anita Uddaiya, on the coast before going to Mumbai for the attack. This woman was mysteriously whisked away. David Headley also disappeared. (To be continued.....)

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2010

### Headley, the US, Mumbai and LeT — III.

"It is evident that the carnage at Mumbai in November 2008 suited many, and those who had advance knowledge let it happen. It served them well although the price was paid by the blood of hundreds of innocent souls from all over the world."

Anita Uddaiya, 47, was one of the people who saw the terrorists land on the shores of Mumbai on November 26, 2008. She mysteriously disappeared later on. Her daughter, Seema Joshi, launched a missing complaint with the police (Pune Mirror-Times of India, January 14, 2009). She also reported that for 15 days Anita had been going through a battery of medical tests. One day she said, "I am ready to go to the US, pack my bags." Then on Sunday morning she got up at 6:30 am and went to the toilet or pretended to do so. Neighbours saw a large jeep parked outside the toilet. Officials came and whisked her away. The Mumbai newspapers reported several details of her visit and recording of a statement in the US along with the details of the plane that carried her. The plane had white, blue markings and a star on the tail and there were 15 people in it, perhaps including Headley. Her travel was not recorded because of the influence of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). She was also asked to identify the bodies of the terrorists. She identified the six she had seen. She refused to oblige the IB and did not identify any other. Consequently, she was dropped from the list of important witnesses and she was also prosecuted. Obviously the number of terrorists remained limited to eight and not more. It remains a mystery where the additional two came from.

In the book, Who killed Karkare? the author Mr S M Mushrif, former Inspector General (IG) Police Maharashtra clearly indicates that by that time, November 2008, Mr Hemant Karkare had filed the case of

VIEWS  
as the main group of terrorists, which included Pragya Singh among others. Karkare could have been convicted. Karkare and his team had to be eliminated. This was a cover-up was useful for the IB and Hindutva. It is also well established that the FBI and IB had definite advance knowledge of the impending terror attack. One of Headley's wives, Moroccan Faiza Outalha, met with an assistant regional security officer and an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer at the US Embassy in Islamabad in 2007 that Headley was involved in a terrorist group that was actively plotting against targets in India. According to the New York Times, one of the two American officials confirmed that Headley's wives shared concerns with US officials prior to the attack and that those concerns warranted attention. How is it possible that the information was not conveyed to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)/Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)? It is also a known fact that the Indian agencies had advance information, but the navy was not alerted nor was the Mumbai Police.

It is evident that the carnage at Mumbai in November 2008 suited many, and those who had advance knowledge let it happen. It served them well although the price was paid by the blood of hundreds of innocent souls from all over the world.

Who were the gainers?

The secret agencies in the US established the fact that they are better equipped to track terror and alert India, thus gaining additional credibility. The hawks in the agencies and their political connections needed to keep India under influence for other manoeuvrings and use India as a potential alternate to Chinese influence. It served Indian hawks to discredit Pakistan and isolate it while it was on the up economically and investments in Pakistan were soaring. With several foreign nationals losing their lives the exploitation by the powerful Indian propaganda machine was readily believed. They successfully put in the mind of the world that Pakistan is a source of terror and, even worse, that terror activity has official support. Needless to say, this helped India to push back the Kashmir issue, which has the support of

Pakistan. But perhaps the Hindutva/IB nexus made most immediate gains. They succeeded in getting Hemant Karkare, Kamte, Salasker and others to rush to Rang Bhavan Lane where a trusted officer of the IB/Hindutva in the Anti-Terror Squad had already planted two mysterious terrorists, Ajmal Kasab and his companion. Karkare and others were killed, Kasab's companion was killed, but Kasab was saved to get the desired statements. Incidentally, there is considerable information available stating that Kasab had been captured in Nepal much earlier and possibly acted as an agent of agencies as did Headley. The details of the planning and execution could not even be covered in several volumes. But hopefully the readers now see an overall picture. In the end, it is always the common people and the weak that pay the price. So it is in this case. Headley would continue to be protected; Kasab may get away or may be dispensed with. But those who lost their lives in Mumbai had done nothing to deserve such an end. Pakistan suffered immensely and it is still suffering due to the propaganda. The Indian authorities have interrogated Headley; it is very important that Pakistani authorities also interrogate him and obtain firsthand knowledge to avoid recurrence.

On the positive side, India has recognized the Hindutva terror networks and officially accepted that Samjhota Express and Malegaon, etc, had nothing to do with Pakistan as initially propagated. Instead these were the handiwork of Hindutva terrorists. India's willingness to receive Pakistan's dossier on Mumbai and to respond to it gives hope. A joint investigation would have been much better.

Terror outfits exist in many countries. It is wrong to use them for politically expedient covert actions. Terrorists are nobody's friends. Terror backfires in the long run. If governments realise their responsibilities towards humanity it may become a better world to live in. (Concluded)

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2010

### Thinking of democracy — I

"The governments of the PPP and PML-N were removed twice in the 1990s. The same two political forces are at work again. Is it the performance of elected governments and the appointed functionaries that are falling short of expectations? Or is there something deficient in the system that needs improvement?"

It was not long ago that we appeared to long and pray for 'democracy'. Nor was it the first time that such a desire was expressed. But it is also known that, in the past, soon after the assumption of political power by some democratic governments, disappointments set in quite early, and overt and covert actions were taken to get rid of those democratic dispensations. The usual cause of disappointment has been corruption and inefficiency. This is the chequered history of democratic governments in this country.

Now, again, voices are being heard expressing dissatisfaction and seeking change. The timing is not different either, i.e. less than three years of a democratic set-up have gone by. Interestingly, the political parties, whose governance is found wanting, are also the same. The governments of the PPP and PML-N were removed twice in the 1990s. The same two political forces are at work again. Is it the performance of elected governments and the appointed functionaries that are falling short of expectations? Or is there something deficient in the system that needs improvement? Is it that, unless a system improvement is made, the result will always be the same and the result will be disappointments? Where is the problem?

In fact, there is not just one problem, there are several. These broadly cover four basic facts: the brand of democracy adopted by Pakistan, the political culture, incapability of the incumbents and poor judgment by

the voters, most of whom may not comprehend the full importance of choosing a national leadership. Let us look at these.

There are several kinds of democracies and systems of governance adopted in the world. Some are hybrid and similar and others are widely different. Different terms are used to describe them. Representative democracy involves the selection of government officials by the people being represented. If the head of state is also democratically elected, then it is called a democratic republic. The most common mechanisms involve the election of the candidate with a majority or a plurality of the votes.

Parliamentary democracy is a representative democracy where the government is appointed by parliamentary representatives as opposed to a presidential rule, wherein the president is both head of state and the head of government, and is elected by the voters. Under a parliamentary democracy, the government is exercised by delegation to an executive ministry and subject to ongoing review, checks and balances by the legislative parliament elected by the people.

A liberal or constitutional democracy is a representative democracy in which the ability of the elected representatives to exercise decision-making power is subject to the rule of law, and usually moderated by a constitution that emphasises the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals, and which places constraints on the leaders and on the extent to which the will of the majority can be exercised against the rights of minorities.

There are several other forms. However, the ones mentioned are more common. Interestingly, no country seems to have applied the definition as it is in the book. Most countries have adapted, mixed or made a hybrid to suit their country's polity. The US is a 'full democracy', a federal constitutional republic. The United Kingdom is a full democracy, a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. France is considered again a full democracy in the form of a semi-presidential system and bicameralism. India is termed as a 'flawed democracy' in the form of federalism, parliamentary democracy and bicameralism. Pakistan is termed as a 'hybrid' federal parliamentary republic, and Turkey a parliamentary republic. The encyclopaedia lists 30 full democracies, 50 flawed democracies, 36 hybrid regimes and 51 authoritarian regimes in the world. How this classification is done is not

the subject of discussion here. But what I dare say is that "many varieties and colours of democracies as the varieties in mangoes. Perhaps even more."

What is abundantly clear is that countries design their governance system suitable to the genre and tradition of a people and find a reliable way to ensure the incorporation of the people's will and civil liberties, as well as effective decision making. Pakistan could have set itself on the right course if Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had lived long enough to put democracy on the right course, or even if his address to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947 was followed in letter and spirit. The constitution of 1956 was discarded by Ayub Khan, who brought in the 1962 Constitution. Then again a constitution was passed in 1973. The constitution of 1973 has since gone through so many amendments that it is quite different from the original in some ways.

The process of elections, in particular, is what needs a careful review. The present system has lent itself to exploitation by the elite powerful lobbies of landlords, sardars, the moneyed class and other influentials. The lack of education and ignorance among the masses has also contributed to the distortion of the spirit of true representation respecting the will of the masses. In a constituency with five candidates, the highest vote getter wins a seat in the assemblies, while, in fact, he does not represent the majority because the votes cast in favour of the winner are usually far less than the combined votes of the opposing candidates.

The 20th century Italian thinkers Pareto and Mosca (independently) argued that "democracy is illusory, and serves only to mask the reality of elite rule". Indeed, they argued that elite oligarchy is the unbendable law of human nature, due largely to the apathy and division of the masses (as opposed to the drive, initiative and unity of the elites), and that democratic institutions would do no more than shift the exercise of power from oppression to manipulation. It seems mostly true in Pakistan, making democracy itself a system calling for renewed thinking.(To be continued.....)

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2010

## Thinking of democracy — II.

"We need a democratic system which ensures the participation of the distinguished achievers at the decision making level. The persons of known capabilities among technocrats, specialists, thinkers, artists, media men and philosophers must be associated with planning and implementation on a regular basis".

Our democratic system was more or less copied from the British system. It needs a second look and should be adapted to our conditions, as many other countries like France have done. A study indicates that in practice it may not pay the incumbents to conduct fair elections in countries that have no history of democracy. This study showed that incumbents who rig elections stay in power 2.5 times more than those who permit fair elections. The same study shows that election misconduct is more likely in countries with low per capita incomes, rich in natural resources, and lacking institutional checks and balances. This appears familiar in our context.

Some economists criticize the efficiency of democracy. They premise this on the concept of the 'irrational voter'. Their argument is that voters are highly uninformed about many political issues, especially relating to economics, and have a strong bias for the few issues on which they are fairly knowledgeable. It is also stressed that democratic institutions work on consensus to decide an issue, which usually takes longer than unilateral decisions.

The time is ripe for the constitutional experts ~~and~~ to do some serious homework and improve the prevalent ~~sys~~ institution of democracy itself be questioned and effort made to save ~~it~~ The disillusionment of the masses calls for action, now.

We need a democratic system which ensures the participation of the distinguished achievers at the decision making level. The persons of known capabilities among technocrats, specialists, thinkers, artists, media men and philosophers must be associated with planning and implementation on a regular basis and must be provided with the political and administrative support. This can enable our country to move forward in a planned manner. The present system sidelines this important group of people. As a result, the political leadership is decided by about 35 percent of the voters. Of these, the winner is usually an influential who has managed to get more votes than his rival, and almost certainly less than the total votes cast against him. The winner starts as a leader, commanding the confidence of only a minority in his/her constituency. He is thus handicapped. It should also be a matter of concern that such leadership, in the best situations, is only capable of communicating and convincing a few in electoral constituencies. Such leadership is not necessarily qualified as lawmakers or administrators. So the obvious result is what we have been experiencing in poor decision making and less-than-desirable governance. The result is a popular desire to change. It ends in a face change only because of the system. But a face change is not the solution. The solution is to be sought in developing a system through which the most capable individuals are enabled to exercise power in the interest of the country and its people.

We also need to discipline and educate the masses. There should, of course, be popular leaders who can understand the logic of the decisions at higher levels and use their rapport and communication skills to make the masses understand the logic and benefits of the decisions taken. This effort at communication needs to reach all levels of the masses. The system of local governments is an important factor in reaching the

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nction with the macro issues. At the local level, micro  
are important.

At all levels, an adequate representation of the ethnic and minority groups needs to be ensured. Women must be important contributors in decision-making. In the presently defunct local bodies system of representatives, inclusion of the female population was ensured. It must continue and be made more effective. Everyone must understand that the two genders have different perceptions and issues, and in a healthy society both need to be fully respected. Therefore, an adequate representation of all genders needs to be ensured. I would even advocate some representation of the uncommon persons, i.e. special persons, including khawaja saras. What right do we have to look down upon any human being? And what right do we have to consider ourselves 'normal' and superior? Just because we are in a larger number? Does that entitle us to do injustice?

To sum up, I believe it is high time that men of distinguished legal and political experience and credibility get together and do some serious thinking. There is no dearth of persons of known integrity and stature like Mr SM Zafar, Dr Javed Iqbal, Ms Asma Jahangir and others in various parts of the country. The system of a liberal/constitutional democracy may need serious consideration with some modifications.

The improved discipline and education of the masses must be ensured. The overtones that create ethnic and religious conflict will need control mechanisms to avoid naked oppression. Space must also be provided for the specialists and men of distinction in different fields to benefit the nation and to create worthwhile opportunities for them and thus to check the brain drain. Such persons need to be 'weighed' and not just counted. I would like to hope that such a democracy, suited to our conditions, will get the support of all the powers which matter in the

country and elsewhere. Let me say it again, we need to start now and must not postpone it. We need to have the constitutional structure for progress and well being of the people and the country. When people want 'change', then this is the nature of change, reflected in our electoral system, that the country needs.

(Concluded)

Saturday, December 25, 2010

Noor Jehan — the one and only.

"In desperation for work with some respectability, Noor Jehan decided to stand outside the gates of the Pancholi Studio and sing to attract attention. She knew she could do it. Of course when she sang, time froze and she was admitted into the Pancholi family."

It was on December 23, 2000 — the 27th of Ramzan — when the melody queen Noor Jehan turned to eternal life. Her memory will remain green for a very long time.

She was born on September 21, 1926 into the family of Amman Hasso in Kasur. Amman Hasso was loved by the citizens for her voice and her magnanimous charity. The wife of Amma Hasso's son, Madad Ali, died leaving behind two daughters, Bharo and Umda. He then married Fateh Bibi who was of Kashmiri origin. The marriage produced five sons and two daughters, Eiden and Allah Wasai. The Punjabi expression Allah Wasai means "the one who is taken care of by God". Indeed she was blessed by Allah and was to be recognised by the world as Noor Jehan, the queen of melody. She was destined to rule the hearts of hundreds of millions of people in and outside the subcontinent. Her superb voice with unmatched singing skills would light up hearts and brighten faces. She shared her noor in her voice. No single person in the subcontinent ruled the hearts of the people longer than Noor Jehan. She was the singer of the millennium. Her voice had the power to stop the moving world and create pin drop silence. She was abundantly endowed by nature in beauty, charm, voice, expression, a brilliant mind and a sense of humour. Noor Jehan had a tireless will to work for perfection. She struggled with courage in an unkind world. She knew she was a woman

and that her path would be difficult. But she should be remembered as one woman who could not be defeated. She was a role model for many.

In her early days, as 'Allah Wasai', she had seen much hardship. The family was forced to move out of Kasur in search of work. Noor Jehan told me of her journey from Kasur to Lahore on foot one very hot summer. She reached the house of a relative in Lahore and Allah Wasai, very thirsty, was offered water to drink in a cup. "I can never forget how nice and cool that water felt to me as it travelled down my throat."

At the age of five, on the advice of their relative Nazir Begum in Lahore, the two girls Eiden and Allah Wasai were made pupils of Ustad Fazal Hussain for music education. He in turn entrusted them to his disciple Ustad Ghulam Mohammad. Soon Ghulam Muhammad would be struck by the blessing of God endowed upon his youngest student. Her capability to understand the classical and her personal creativity amazed the teacher.

The economic recession after the First World War was telling and by 1932 Allah Wasai started singing in a theatre in Lahore along with her sister Eiden and a cousin, Hyder Bandi. The theatre was probably known as Parbhat Talkies. Traditionally, they appeared before the show during the interval. Allah Wasai sang a naat (hymn) 'Hanste Hain Sitarey, Ya Shahe Madeena'. The audience loved the naat and the pretty little girl, so it showered money on them.

Soon this team of singers was to be discovered by the talent hunters of Karnani's theatre in Calcutta. The family moved to that centre of all show business. Noor Jehan told me of her experiences in Calcutta, which were good, bad, and even tragic. The best thing that happened there was that she was given the title of 'Noor Jehan' by the favourite star of Seth Karnani.

But still she was baby Noor Jehan. She recalled that one evening she was sleeping in the theatre tent provided to them and her mother woke her up and said, "Get up quick. Some film people have come and they want to hear you sing." According to Noor Jehan, she was half asleep and hardly focused; rubbing her eyes she sang whatever came to mind. It could have been either the naat or 'Mera Sohna Shehr Kasur' (my

beautiful city Kasur). This was the only 'audition' the girl had and she was on her way to such heights of stardom that no one would ever achieve.

In 1942, baby Noor Jehan was ready to be a star. The family had returned from Calcutta and was in dire financial straits. Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj at that time was the prime writer of film stories and worked with Pancholi. Pancholi had Shaukat Hussain Rizvi and Ghulam Hyder in his team as well. In desperation for work with some respectability, Noor Jehan decided to stand outside the gates of the Pancholi Studio and sing to attract attention. She knew she could do it. Of course when she sang, time froze and she was admitted into the Pancholi family. She was the star of Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj's 'Khandan', to be directed by Syed Shaukat Hussain Rizvi. The story of superstar Noor Jehan is no secret thereafter.

Her respect and attachment with the family of Mr Imtiaz Ali Taj is known. In all her trials and tribulations, the house of Taj was her haven. I met her in 1956 and for the following 44 years she was a very dear friend. She loved to be in the company of the educated and intellectuals, particularly Hijab Imtiaz Ali, Faiz and Taj. Her knowledge of classical and popular music was immense and she sang for hours at our house. Of course, Noor Jehan sang our sehra written by Faiz sahib. Yasmin and I could never thank her enough for this gesture, nor could we ever thank Faiz sahib enough.

In 1998, in Cleveland, she was struggling for life and her courage amazed her doctors. I was with her and she shocked me in a moment of consciousness saying that I should write the story of her life. Did she want to tell it all to the world? Maybe she did. She was honest, courageous and proud of her fight in life. Her personality and talent was bigger than what we know as yet.

Saturday, January 01, 2011

Welcoming New Year 2011.

"It is now that we need to organise and work for the kind of revolution that brings to power people who understand what kind of revolution is needed and implement their agenda."

"HE it is Who appointed the sun a splendor and the moon a light, and measured for her stages, that ye might know the number of the years, and the reckoning" — Holy Quran, Surah Younas, Ayat 5.

As the new solar year is here, let us look back at the year gone by and look forward to New Year 2011. Before going further, let us thank the Almighty for the blessing of life, for having lived one more year and for entering a new year. This has been entirely possible by His blessings in the face of terrorism, desperate traffic, floods, illnesses, accidents and killings. Personally, I thank the Almighty for letting me survive a cancer in the kidney. Like always, we recall the happiness and sadness of the year past, make some promises to ourselves and pin some hope on the future.

In a lighter vein, the biggest disappointment came from my cricketers. Cricket is the one game I like to watch, ball by ball. Personally, I am no player of cricket but my son Ali is; he even captained his school team and scored centuries. But I do understand the strategies and techniques. The irresponsible game played by our cricketers, and their conduct, put me off. Can one expect a better performance this year? Can they play again as they did in the two test drawn series against South Africa? I would like to entertain the hope in 2011 that they will. The World Cup is a challenge they need to take seriously, not just for themselves but also

for the pride of their fans. The flip side is the discovery of some good young players, particularly Hafiz. In 2011, serious attention must be paid to the education and training of these players. It is a big and paying career and should be available to well-educated, skilled and honest people only.

Our television anchors did not perform any better than the cricketers. Playing to the gallery and picking up all kinds of negativity in the politicians and the government agencies has been their favourite pastime. All cannot be black. There must be some good somewhere! I would like to hope that our anchors will show a greater sense of responsibility to society. They do not need to try and hasten the end of all governments. Poor governance will do that for them anyway. So save your breath and use the power of the media with care.

Now we come to the politicians. This is a more serious matter. This breed does not seem to have learnt much from the past, except some refinement in perpetuating their power and sharing the booty with the 'opposition'. There is no real concern for the general populace or the ability to find ways to improve its lot. However, some worthwhile effort with the help of the armed forces in combating terrorists must be praised. Indeed the civilian government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has shown real patriotism and determination, and has given great sacrifices. It even held the National Games! One hopes that during 2011, the politicians will work to substantiate their words with deeds. The politicians must stop playing the 'province' card and should not exploit Balochistan in particular. Can we hope in 2011 that the concern for the betterment of the country and its people will be so high in the priority list that all parties will bury their personal hatchets, put aside their vendettas, stop selling past sacrifices or feeding the egos of their 'quuids', forbid exploitation of the religious divide, guarantee a safe and dignified return to leaders in exile, and sit together in a civilised manner to work for the betterment of the people? Even if I am dreaming, I would like to entertain such hopes for 2011. Finally politicians, please stop blaming each other, living in the past and telling us good and bad stories. Such things do not fill stomachs.

Women and old people continued to be ignored. Creative artists have been relegated to the position of toys to play with for amusement and

are pushed aside when entertainment is not required. Education, culture and the minorities need better attention. A serious look must be given to the so-called Blasphemy Law, which is an instrument of exploitation by the pro-extremists. Discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and gender continues. Rickshaws and buses still carry the slogan: 'This is because of my mother's blessings'. What happened to the father who killed himself in trying to raise his family? In 2011, how about saying: 'This is because of my parents' blessings'?

The economy is in tatters. This is a familiar story. It started to change in Musharraf's time but we are back to square one now. People do not want to pay taxes. They have no faith in the government's sincerity and cash feels good in their pockets anyway. What a catch-22 situation! This is an area we must improve upon in the year 2011. Inflation, power shortages and corruption continued to make life difficult in 2010. Unfortunately, there seems no hope of betterment.

People will do well if they give serious thought to the whole system of democracy, which is full of flaws. New elections are not far off. It is now that we need to organise and work for the kind of revolution that brings to power people who understand what kind of revolution is needed and implement their agenda. In fact, a revolution is needed in the mindset of the people themselves, in the masses and in us. We must stop not caring. We must stop taking things lying down. We must carry out our responsibilities and not keep crying for rights all the time. There can be no rights for the irresponsible. One hopes and prays that the basis of a peaceful and constructive revolution will be laid. Revolution must not be just a play of words to excite people; it must be supported by an agenda and a resolve of the masses to carry it out. Will 2011 see the dawn of such a resolve? Let us be optimistic and continue to make efforts in our humble capacities.

Saturday 08 Jan. 2011

### Blood of a distinguished son of the soil.

"The religious fanatics have silenced a voice of sanity. If the extremists continue to infiltrate the different ranks of society and its disciplined forces, then more murders will happen and the sane will continue to lose their lives."

Blood on the concrete pavement was what the television screens showed. It was the blood of a distinguished human being, Salmaan Taseer, an outstanding son of the soil who worked hard and achieved a lot. He was a professional, a businessman, a politician, a friend and a family man. He also had the most valuable human asset — a sense of humour. Salmaan Taseer was and will remain a role model for a long time. May God bless his soul.

He laid down his life for a cause. He was one of the very few outspoken politicians and he did not mince his words. He boldly stood up for principles and justice for all. He believed that the innocent should not be persecuted without the appropriate process of the law. He believed that any law made by men could be reviewed if its practical implementation were faulty. Significantly, the first person to lay a bouquet of flowers on the blood stained pavement in Kohsar Market, outside the restaurant Table Talk, was the Ambassador of Spain in Islamabad, symbolic of the fact that Salmaan's voice for justice was heard around the world.

The religious fanatics have silenced a voice of sanity. If the extremists continue to infiltrate the different ranks of society and its disciplined forces, then more murders will happen and the sane will continue to lose their lives. History is a witness to the fact that the voices of

Khulafa-e-Rashideen (caliphs) were also silenced. What is going on? Are the Kharji, Salafi, Qutubi and other such extremists now using their sleeper cells after being pushed back in Waziristan? How deep has the cancer of extremism spread in the polity? Can the nation survive or is it going to succumb? It is a matter of life and death now. The learned ulema, civil society, establishment and particularly all the services that are issued arms must act immediately to control the menace. It is shocking that some lawyers presented flowers to the murderer of Salmaan Taseer when he was produced in the court. Who were they? Have the security forces identified them yet?

There is no question about a security lapse. Surely, it was a huge security lapse and the involvement of security personnel other than the murderer is almost certain. It is said that other members of the 'elite force' did not fire or overpower the assailant because there was an understanding between some of them to let Qadri complete his crime and only then arrest him alive. Obviously, there is planning in the crime and the desire to gain publicity after the assassination during court appearances. There are also statements being issued by some religious extremists showing no regret. If such people call themselves Muslims, then they need to study the Quran once more and understand the message of the Almighty, "He is the most Merciful and Beneficent."

Also consider that this was not a case of an individual losing control in anger; the assassination was premeditated. On November 23, 2010, the Almi Tanzeem-e-Ahle Sunnat issued a decree saying that Salmaan Taseer was no longer a Muslim because he considered Asia Bibi innocent and desired a review of the relevant law and the procedure of its application. Then Pir Afzal Qadri threatened that there were many like Ghazi Ilm Din who had killed a Hindu for blasphemy. This was an obvious indication for potential fanatics to follow suit. The Governor's House started receiving threats of bomb blasts. Tehrik-e-Hurmat-e-Rasool leader Qari Sheikh Yaqoob demanded the death penalty for Salmaan Taseer. These actions were also reported in the national press. There were echoes of similar demands and edicts from other groups that claim to be very righteous. In short, Taseer was being labelled a non-Muslim, threatened to meet with the fate of a Hindu blasphemer and liable for the death penalty. Following all this, tempers were whipped up further with rallies and sermons. In spite of the

clarifications issued by Salmaan Taseer, it is clear that the intent to eliminate him persisted.

In this situation, the responsibility of the security providers should have increased manifold. It is shocking that the assassin, Mumtaz Qadri, found his way back into the Punjab Elite Force protecting Salmaan Taseer. Five years ago, Qadri was declared unfit for VIP duty due to his religious fanaticism. It is almost impossible to believe that some of the providers of security to Salmaan Taseer were not involved in the conspiracy. Also responsible are the higher-ups that recruit such persons. An immediate cleanup must be taken in hand. One expected a crackdown within 24 hours. Exemplary punishment must be given immediately; delay is counter-productive.

May I ask the honourable courts why they are turning a blind eye to the threats? Has there been an enquiry pertaining to whether the court in Nankana Sahib announced the conviction of Aasia Bibi under threats or on merit?

Threats and incentives for murder were issued in the case of the Governor Punjab, Salmaan Taseer, and continue to be issued to others. Head money is being offered for other murders as was offered in the case of Salmaan Taseer. Are the judges so concerned for their own personal safety that they do not take suo motu notice? Talal Bugti, a cleric in Peshawar, and another in Rawalpindi have been reported for open incitement for murder. The press has done its duty and has brought such activities to the notice of public. What is the use of all this if the law does not take its course and justice is not enforced? If a government, federal or provincial, cannot find protection for its citizens, even for its distinguished leaders, or apprehend those issuing threats and incitements, then does it have any justification to be there? I hope the sectors responsible for security see this crime as their last chance to prove their worth in enforcing justice and cleansing the system. Please do not wait for all the voices of sanity to be silenced.

Saturday Jan 15, 2011

Salman Taseer — postscript,

"Islam seeks unity and cohesion among the believers. Then why are the leaders of political parties trying to divide? Why is the word being spread around in favor of a murderer? This is 'radicalization' and this is an effort to divide the polity and to consolidate political clout by providing a 'religious' base."

The murderer has confessed. He killed a Muslim — a kalmia-go (someone who recited the Kalima) — who only asked for the course of justice to be followed. One is reminded of the Holy Quran, which says in Surah Al-Nisa (04:093) "If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (Forever): And the wrath and the curse of God are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him."

Mumtaz Qadri's worldly matters should be decided by the process of law and in the afterlife the matter will be with God Almighty.

But what has happened in the streets of Pakistan is another matter. A strange conduct has been shown by a section of the 'black coats' and 'religious' politicians. 'Black coats' collected in numbers and shouted slogans in favour of the murderer! The prosecution lawyers were intimidated. The extreme-right politicians followed this, as did some professed religious groups. They took out a procession in Karachi comprising of madrassa students and made fiery speeches. Holding Salmaan Taseer responsible for his own death! Heavyweight leaders of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and Jamaat-e-Islami were among the speakers. The sad event of the murder had occurred some days ago, then what was the purpose of this rally? I can only wish that they would hold their tempers and leave the matters to law and justice

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and not make intimidating postures. Unfortunately, the Jamaat-e-Islami of Maulana Maududi, or Maulana Amin Islahi or even Mr Naeem Siddiqi is no more. It is now a party that tasted power in General Ziaul Haq's regime and enjoyed the intimidation by 'danda' (stick). It strives for the same clout and the present leadership expresses hatred and issues 'fatwas' (edicts) without any sense of social responsibility. On the other hand, the party of Maulana Fazlur Rehman is out of power, which they managed to enjoy in almost all regimes. The JUI-F represents a certain school of thought in religion and is accommodative of terrorists. The JUI-F did not support the Swat operation or the South Waziristan one. During its control of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) it shielded the Taliban and, under the excuse of political negotiations, provided them the opportunity to re-group and strengthen themselves with arms and men and the funds flowing in from powers interested in weakening Pakistan. So such political groups fan the hatred and division to consolidate their support from potential activists, hence the exploitation of madrassa students in Karachi.

Even more poisonous is the 'radicalization' campaign in society by those who take illiterate mullahs' word as the teaching of Islam. Islam by all definitions is the religion of peace. All mannerisms taught promote peace. The 'salam', the 'Bismillah', the prayers, and God being 'Rehman' and 'Rahim', underscore the spirit of Islam. Islam also seeks unity and cohesion among the believers. Then why are the leaders of political parties trying to divide? Why is the word being spread around in favor of a murderer? It is being done at all levels in society, amongst women, the young and at the workplace. This is 'radicalization' and this is an effort to divide the polity and to consolidate political clout by providing a 'religious' base. Is it not 'fitna' (lure) or 'fassa'ad' (mischief). Such things neither serve the country nor do these serve the religion.

One would also expect the learned ulema to ponder if such divisive actions would fall into the category that is indicated in the verses of the Holy Quran, which says; Surah Al Baqrah (02:011) "When it is said to them: 'Make not mischief on the earth,' they say: 'Why, we only want to make peace!'" (02:012) "Of a surety, they are the ones who make mischief, but they realise (it) not." (02:204) "There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle thee, and he calls God to witness about what is in his heart; yet is he the most contentious of

enemies." (02:205) "When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But God loveth not mischief."

Humans are expected to maintain peace on earth. We all need to strive for it. Our beloved country is facing so many challenges, would it not be better to work for humanity and avoid divisive actions? Intolerance has been on the increase for years and it will not serve us well. Political leaders should be working for national harmony if they are sincere to the country and the nation. After all, we have a democratic system and we are governed by the representatives of the people. Lawyers in particular are from a noble profession and they must lead by example. The common man on the street looks up to them and their leadership is what determines the actions of the less educated. If sanity is to be restored in society, then all of us — particularly the leaders — have a great responsibility. So is the responsibility of those who manage the country, especially the men in positions of power. Every individual must read the Holy Quran personally and understand the message of Allah. Any further information should be sought from the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Finally, we do not need to get intimidated by the appearance and 'costume' of someone who means to oppress, suppress and intimidate in the name of religion.

The prime minister has made a statement on the floor of the House about the blasphemy law. The matter should now end.

The blood of Salmaan Taseer must make everyone realise that tempers have gone too far. That individuals are taking the law into their own hands like they did in Sialkot and in Islamabad and at many other places. All political leaders, responsible scholars, pious religious individuals and the media must work on a war-footing to defuse the situation, to restore sanity, to de-radicalise attitudes, to promote tolerance and harmony. We all owe it to ourselves and to the nation.

Saturday Jan 29, 2011

## Silent majority?

"The silent majority found it convenient to give up their responsibility of learning from the Quran and succumbed to the lethargy of letting someone else claim expertise. This was a critical mistake. Even today substantial amount of hate literature is being circulated by extremist sects in the name of Islam and misleading people."

What is a 'silent majority'? Why does it stay silent? What is its role in a society? How long it needs to stay silent and when must it speak? Is silence at some point almost criminal? Or has this 'majority' become silent out of fear?

The silent majority is an unspecified large majority of people in a country or group who do not express their opinions publicly. The term was popularised by US President Richard Nixon in a November 3, 1969, speech in which he said, "And so tonight — to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans — I ask for your support." In this usage it referred to those Americans who did not join in the large demonstrations against the Vietnam War, who did not join in the political opposition, and who did not participate in public discourse. Whatever Nixon's motives had been the strength of the 'silent majority' was recognised. He saw this group as being overshadowed in the media by the more vocal minority.

The 'silent majority' must play a constructive role in critical situations for a nation. Such a situation has developed in Pakistan. It is said that 80 percent of Pakistanis believe in the fact that Islam gives the message of peace. The message of peace is repeated again and again in the Holy

Quran. Also, all believers in other religions who were blessed by the Almighty's message through holy books, namely Zabur, Taurat, and Injil are to be respected. The Quran even indicates other prophets not known to us. Compassion, charity, social responsibility, welfare, and mutual respect are the essence of human behaviour. If the 'silent majority' in Pakistan believes in these peaceful values, then how is aggression and intolerance creeping in?

In hindsight one is inclined to believe that it has not happened in a day. The poisoning has been slow and over at least 60 years and has continued. One would like to hope, without the desire of blood but for gaining political power. Unfortunately, it has shed a lot of blood and shaken society.

Two groups involved in this activity can be identified. One is the determined self-righteous group of claimants to religious expertise who did not believe in Quaid-e-Azam's vision of an enlightened Pakistan. Second, equally responsible, is the 'silent majority' whose members did not study the Quran's message themselves and accepted anything given to them by persons in typical attires, to be the teachings of the Holy Quran. I have personally experienced that some individual quoted Arabic verses in support of an incorrect message, which were not actually from the Quran. May Allah forgive such proponents and also forgive those who are misled. The silent majority found it convenient to give up their responsibility of learning from the Quran and succumbed to the lethargy of letting someone else claim expertise. This was a critical mistake. Even today substantial amount of hate literature is being circulated by extremist sects in the name of Islam and misleading people.

Also responsible are some of those on the pulpit who misuse their privilege. Their hands were strengthened by the 'Objectives Resolution' being adopted in preference to the Quaid's guidelines in his speech of the August 11, 1947, to the Constituent Assembly. The aggressive sectarians looked for greater slice of support from the simple-minded and increased their street power and added an element of fear for those who did not comply with their views. So the story goes on.

The agitations of the mid-1950s were confronted but still these sent a message to political operatives that the effort had some potential. The radicals continued to monopolize the religious rituals, and found the 'elite' and so-called liberals compliant. The room for manipulation by the religious groups kept increasing. This created a more dangerous situation. Now the silent majority, instead of learning and acquiring the knowledge themselves, completely surrendered and preferred to side with one strong group or the other. A powerful monster of radicals came into existence that had a taste for power. The silent majority is now a hostage of aggressive religious-political groupings and mafias. These groupings are destroying peace by in-fighting for power. They have no scruples; everything is acceptable including foreign help and coercion. The target is hegemony over the nation for their brand of religion. Killings, fatwas, rewards, head money are all going on. Members of the 'silent majority' think and hope that they will not be the targets but actually they are sitting ducks. If the so-called 'silent majority' does not get motivated to save its belief that Islam upholds peace and the finest human values, then it can only be interpreted to be 'silent partners' in crime and nothing else. I believe this is not what the majority of the people in this country can find acceptable. If my optimism is justified, then each member of society will stand up and should be counted. Each one will gain strength from the study of the Quran and reject anything that is concocted. Each member must raise his/her voice against the 'mortals' who assume the right to declare a 'kalima-goh' as non-Muslim. Society as a whole must insist on the sovereignty of the Almighty and refuse to accept the commands of the individuals who try to exercise His powers. The 'silent' must raise their voice now, prevail upon the media, government agencies, courts, educational institutions, civil bureaucrats, and everywhere else to de-radicalize the nation. After the killing of Salman Taseer and the events thereafter, the message must be read loud and clear. The 'silent majority' must not stay silent anymore. Any more silence will be a criminal consent. The role of the 'silent majority' at this point is to restore the sanity in the people and uphold the values they believe in. They must speak loud and clear in voice and in action. If we all do so, there will be hope.

Saturday 05, Feb. 2011

Insulting the arts and the artist.

"Mr Siddiqui Farooq needs to ponder and do some soul-searching because if he thinks that his remarks have any sort of religious sanction then he is sadly mistaken, and so is anyone else who considers artistic creativity less than respectable in religious terms"

Some people think that insulting the arts or the artist is casual, normal behaviour. An example of this mindset was given by Mr Siddiqui Farooq of the PML-N during a television programme recently. Involved in this kind of behaviour are usually persons belonging to the extreme right, those possessing Talibanised attitudes and their sleeper cells in society. But Mr Siddiqui Farooq disappointed me more than Mr Nisar Chaudhry when he recently issued below-the-belt remarks against the MQM and ended up being called Mr Bean himself!

This is how the latest event transpired: Mr Farooq of the PML-N was in a meaningless political squabble on a TV channel with Mr Fawad Chaudhry of the APML. As the argument intensified and, as Mr Fawad Chaudhry supported the policies of Mr Pervez Musharraf, suddenly Mr Farooq lost his cool and said contemptuously, "Do not talk of him, he is a singer...he sings!" Mr Farooq showed his feelings for singing as being a lowly activity and, therefore, Musharraf as a lowly person and not a leader. Musharraf can defend himself but one should not overlook such derogatory remarks against the arts. My disappointment became more profound because this gentleman had visited me a couple of times in Islamabad and sought some help for his daughter who had chosen to study a performing arts subject. By taking interest in the study of liberal arts by his daughter, he gave me the impression of being an enlightened individual. Alas it was not to be.

This gentleman, by his appearance, gives the impression of being pious. But did he get carried away? Did he want to be more loyal than the king himself, i.e. the barrely Mian Sahib? Does he know that his Quaid also sings? I am sure he is aware of the stories making the rounds, but I have no objection as these are strictly his personal matters. I wish him luck and hope he can sing better. But Mr Siddiqul Farooq needs to ponder and do some soul-searching because if he thinks that his remarks have any sort of religious sanction then he is sadly mistaken, and so is anyone else who considers artistic creativity less than respectable in religious terms. "God is beautiful and loves beauty/aesthetics," is a famous Hadith and the arts emerge from aesthetics.

I would also like to remind him of some contents of the Quran-e-Pak. "He is Allah, the Creator, The Evolver, the Bestower of forms (or colours)," Surah Al Hashr, ayat 24, para 28. There are about 300 ayats in the Quran, which refer to beauty and aesthetics — 32:7 Surah As-Sajda and 40:64 Surah Ghafir, which says, "It is Allah Who has made for you the earth as a resting place, and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shapes, and made your shape beautiful," and so on. Another reference is significant: "Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious" (16:125). Furthermore, God talks about the appropriate manner of speech, "Tell My bondmen to speak that which is kindlier" (17:53). If Mr Siddiqul Farooq, apparently a pious person, looks at his manner of speech, he may realise that he fell short of the preferred benchmarks. He may have done it to please his master, barrely Mian Sahib but then he overlooked the command of the master of the whole universe.

It is also pertinent to understand the place of music in particular. The Quran clearly and repeatedly recognises all other prophets and advises respect for the word of God revealed through the books of Taurat, Zabur and Injil. The Quran also recognises a multitude of prophets who are not specifically mentioned. But those prophets who have been honoured by His message have a special status. It is recorded in the Quran "Verily, We have sent the revelation to you (O Mohammad PBUH) as We sent the revelation to Nuh and the prophets after him; We (also) sent the revelation to Ibrahim, Ismail, Ishaq, Ya'qub and Al-Asbat (the offspring of the 12 sons of Ya'qub), Isa, Ayyub, Yunus,

Harun and Sulaiman; and to Dawud We gave the Zabur" (4:163). "And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee (Mohammad PBUH), and sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter. They are on (true guidance), from their Lord and it is these who will prosper" (2:4 and 5).

It is beyond any doubt that Muslims are instructed to believe, follow and respect the Quran as well as the other holy books revealed to the earlier prophets. Needless to say, the Zabur contains the message of the Lord as revealed to Dawud (AS).

Let us refer to some of the 'psalms' as the contents of the Zabur are called. Psalm means 'a song'. The revelations are like songs because of their musical quality and the prophet, being endowed by the Almighty with a great voice, understood the magic of music and the ability to recite musically. It must be noted that these were His preferred qualities that the Almighty endowed his messenger with. Does it become us, or anyone else, to ridicule or insult the act of singing? Whosoever does that needs to seek His forgiveness.

Mr Siddiqul Farooq is free to criticise the policies of Mr Pervez Musharraf but should not venture to insult the arts or the artists. I would be happy if Mian Sahib or Pervez Musharraf sing and improve, as I would for anyone else because it helps people to become better human beings.

Mr Siddiqul Farooq has hurt and annoyed hundreds of artists and has done no service to himself or his party. People who exhibit unacceptable behaviour exist in all segments of society like lawyers, doctors, politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats and even some artists. But any person who singles out the artist shows a questionable attitude. Artists in this country have made more contributions to national causes than others. This fact must be remembered and respected.

**Saturday 12 Feb, 2011**

The truth behind the Samjhauta tragedy.

"The Samjhauta Express train of February 18, 2007 was to go on its journey of friendship just one day before the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan were to continue their dialogue in India to further the process of normalisation. From the point of view of the Hindutva terrorists, this was the appropriate time to act."

The Samjhauta Express started from Delhi's historic railway station on the night of February 18, 2007. It was brimming with people who had a reason to go to Pakistan. Some were returning after visiting relatives, some had come for marriages, some went sightseeing, some visited ancestral homes, some explored business opportunities and some had visited shrines. There was happiness, nostalgia, devotion and business interest. The journey from Delhi to Lahore is no ordinary journey — there are emotions attached to it. The Samjhauta Express is no ordinary train either. It is the symbol of the ambivalent attitude of the people of two countries that keep playing 'hot' and 'cold' with each other. Relations turn good or bad because of vested interests. Some political parties, particularly Hindutva supporters, are not interested in peace between the two countries. The Hindutva sentiments are in line with the extreme right in Pakistan and those possessing the Taliban mindset. Both draw their strength from hate and fear and propagate these to keep their vote bank intact. The Hindutva wants a religious Hindu identity for India — one caste and one religion instead of a secular identity. Any effort for good relations with Pakistan is not acceptable because they want a larger India. The talks aimed at normalising relations between India and Pakistan in 2007 were against the Hindutva theme and needed to be stopped. Hence the plan to sabotage the very symbol of friendship and accord, the train called Samjhauta.

The Samjhauta Express train of February 18, 2007 was to go on its journey of friendship just one day before the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan were to continue their dialogue in India to further the process of normalisation. From the point of view of the Hindutva terrorists, this was the appropriate time to act. They planned to blow up the train and blow up the talks with it. But the sabotage had to be planned shrewdly and cleverly to hide the real face of the saboteurs.

Bombs were planted — packed in passenger suitcases — and the 'operators' left the train near Panipat. The bombs exploded soon after their departure. This could have been done by a timing device or remote controlled action. The bombs exploded in two bogies and an inferno of fire burnt 70 passengers alive. They could not jump out as the doors had been locked to meet immigration requirements. The passengers in bogies number 10 and 11 were reduced to mere ashes. The unfortunate victims included children, men, women, the young and the old — all Muslims. Five or six Hindus or Sikhs also perished. Among the survivors were a husband and wife whose five children were burnt alive. The terrorists celebrated their success. The talks of friendship received a setback but later the two governments showed remarkable determination to continue their parleys.

Hindutva associates in the Sangh Parivar, having immense clout in the media and Indian government, flashed the news worldwide that the act of terror had been committed by two Muslims, namely Ghulam Rasul Kashmiri and Azmat Ali, with the support of Pakistani terrorists. The headlines were seen by millions in India and elsewhere along with the 'finding' that the attack appeared to be the handiwork of "Islamic terrorists" from Pakistan. Many believed this because terrorism has been associated with Pakistan since 9/11.

This could have been the end of the story, but it was not to be. The Haryana police, in whose jurisdiction the terror attack had occurred, responded urgently and tried to follow the 'leads' provided by the Hindutva set up. The Haryana police looked for Azmat Ali at his address. They reached his house only to be ridiculed and snubbed by the inmates because Azmat Ali had been dead for the last five years! They searched for Ghulam Rasul Kashmiri and found out that he had already been jailed for over a month for travelling without a ticket! The

Hindutva/Sangh Parivar story collapsed. The Haryana police then traced the explosives because they found some unexploded suitcases on the train. The analysis of the explosives found that they contained material used by the Indian Army in Kashmir. The Haryana police started getting closer to the truth. The truth could have blown up the whole façade and Hindutva's terrorist plans would have come to light, so something had to be done. The long arm of the Hindutva groups activated their supporters in the Indian intelligence and army and ordered the investigation to be taken away from the Haryana police. It was dumped for some time and they thought that they could live happily ever after.

This was not to be. Tired of inconclusive and suspicious investigations of these acts of terror, the Indian media started to raise its voice so much so that finally it was heard. The Indian government decided to appoint a distinguished, impartial and courageous officer as the chief of the Anti Terror Squad in Maharashtra, Mr Hemant Karkare. Karkare and his team started to study all the cases of terror that had taken place in the recent past in India. They looked at the Haryana police record, which pointed towards some Hindutva groups and, soon, evidence was provided by the explosions at the Malegaon mosque on the 27th of Ramzan in 2008. The bombs, in this case, were planted on the motorcycle used by Pragya Singh Sadvi, an activist of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP).

Hemant Karkare's discoveries were shocking for the Saffron Brigade, Hindutva believers and the Sangh Parivar. Politicians, army men, business tycoons as well as the religious swamis all faced exposure. The survival of Karkare and his team meant disaster for these people; his death could be their saviour. So Karkare got killed during the Mumbai carnage. But he had previously filed his case in court. By now, the Indian government has verified that the Samjhauta tragedy was the handiwork of Indian terrorists. Swami Asimanand, one of the accused, has spilled the beans. The names of Colonel Srikant Purohit and others have come to be known. Some facts of the Samjhauta tragedy are now public knowledge.

Sooner or later, the facts behind the Mumbai terror attacks and Karkare's murder will surprise the world.

Saturday 19 Feb, 2011

### Scapegoat for failure.

"Benazir Bhutto, in her wisdom, agreed to work with Musharraf because it was the need of the hour. This arrangement did not suit those who are the beneficiaries of the power bonanza after her murder."

The two governments, Punjab and federal, both find it convenient to divert attention from their colossal failures. This time, once again, they have looked for a diversion. Pakistan's political history is marred with mismanagement, corruption, ethnic strife and incapability of the governments to handle issues and make plans to take the country forward. But the current government in Islamabad and the one in Lahore have beaten all previous records of incompetence and mismanagement.

Recently, they were confronted with the Raymond Davis issue. Both the governments looked at the issue in a state of stupefaction. The issue started to grow. Of course, the rightists grabbed the opportunity to push the government onto the back foot. The Khadim-e-Aala found it convenient to leave the baby in the lap of the federal government. The federal government, to get a breather, found it convenient to involve the courts. This suited everyone, this running away from responsibility.

But this is not the only crisis the two governments are facing at this time. Power, expensive food, rising prices, law and order, corruption and a financial crisis are part of a very long list. So they need to look for scapegoats for their failures. The usual method is to declare the cause of all failures to be the problems 'inherited' from the past — the past when

Musharraf was in charge. Unfortunately for them, the mud they threw at him did not stick in most cases.

There is another difficulty for the PPP. The Benazir Bhutto (BB) murder investigation has been delayed beyond any reasonable limit. There were obvious efforts to divert attention with propaganda and reliance on the UN investigation. It is not the function of the UN but it liked the fat fee and submitted a useless report. The report provided the PPP with nothing more than a few months of waiting time. One wonders why they were looking for delays as there were investigations in progress already! Baitullah Mehsud's terrorists were under interrogation and the case seemed fairly straightforward. The president of Pakistan stated the involvement of Baitullah Mehsud. This was a credible claim because Benazir Bhutto could never have been acceptable to the terror outfit. All the more lethal would have been a Benazir-Musharraf combination, which was in the offing! For the vested interests, both needed to be eliminated. BB was eliminated through terror and Musharraf escaped all attempts. So the interest of some could be served if they involved Musharraf in the murder of BB. This is the ugliest political manoeuvre in the history of politics in this country. But it suits the PPP in power at the Centre and the PML-N in power in Punjab. This is how it fulfils their agenda:

The PML-N can mobilise its right-wing supporters against Musharraf and divert attention from their own failures, including the mess up of the case of Raymond Davis. Additional benefit can be obtained if Raymond Davis is handed over to the US authorities in compliance with the Vienna Convention. Then a further campaign of rallies will help weaken the PPP government. Plus, in the background of the demands of the PML-N not being fulfilled, a massive agitation can be launched to bring the PPP government down. Finally, the PML-N chief's burning desire to take personal revenge from Musharraf will have a chance to be fulfilled. So it suits them to get Musharraf on the accused list for the BB murder.

On the other hand, the physically tall prime minister has proved to be a pygmy in the management of national affairs. Has he done anything right? A television channel on Tuesday counted 17 U-turns in his decisions since the PPP came to power. His favouritism in

appointments, the exposure of his family and friends in massive corruption and his inability to make timely decisions, are only part of an endless list. His ministries have tried to survive by putting the blame on Musharraf for everything that has gone wrong. This mud did not stick because the masses knew for a fact that the eight years of Musharraf's government were better, and life was not as difficult as it is now. They also wonder that, if the situation was potentially so bad, then why did the PPP take responsibility and not allow Musharraf to continue to handle it?

A good number of people in society also suspect some key figures of the PPP as being involved in the BB murder in one way or the other, covertly or actively, or at least they let it happen. BB, in her wisdom, agreed to work with Musharraf because it was the need of the hour. This arrangement did not suit those who are the beneficiaries of the power bonanza after her murder. They must have been looking for an 'approver' and may have tortured or enticed someone to accept that notorious and shameful position that Masud Mahmud accepted in the case of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in Zia's regime of terror. So, after almost four years of delaying this case, another element is required to divert public attention away from the real issues. Now, again, ex-President Pervez Musharraf is being made a scapegoat. A lower court in Islamabad has issued his warrants of arrest in the BB murder case.

However, what the PPP government is forgetting is that they are falling into a trap by the rightists, fully supported by elements in the PML-N who are in collusion with them. The only sensible thing for the PPP government is to pick up the courage and get out of the PML-N slavery that is championed by the prime minister. This slavery is good only for his own perpetuation. The PPP must try to regain its progressive commitment and not live by compromises, even if it has to sit in the opposition at this time. The PPP's only *raison d'être* is its commitment to progressive thought. People accept its shortcomings because of the party motto. It has, in the recent past, let down hardcore party supporters. The PPP/PML-N combine can keep blaming Musharraf but the end of the current governments is not likely to be delayed by these tactics.

Friday 25 Feb. 2011

BOOK REVIEW:

Relevant to our times.

Razia Sultan — A Drama

By Dr. Javed Iqbal

Sang-e-Meel publications;

Pp 88; Rs 140



Dr. Javed Iqbal is known the world over for his scholarly works, speeches, lectures and his objective understanding of Muslim history. His works include his autobiography, *Apna Gareban Chaak*, which is a landmark in honest introspection. His biography of his father, Allama Iqbal, is also objective and does not shy away from or evade the questions that may be in the minds of some people. There are other books that Dr sahib has written that have great value in understanding the thoughts of the great thinker Allama Iqbal. He has also published collections of his dramas, short stories and articles in two volumes called *Jahan-e-Javed*.

His latest published play is *Razia Sultan*, which has only recently been marketed. The choice of the subject has great relevance to current times. It deals with a female ruler/politician who was a Muslim. An obvious parallel exists in Pakistan's context. Razia Sultan was murdered as the result of a conspiracy and so one can see several parallels and relevance with the present times.

Razia Sultan, the daughter of Sultan Shamsuddin Altamash, sat on the Delhi throne from 1236 to 1240 AD. She fell prey to the conspiracies of her own courtiers and, ultimately, her head was severed. The author states that the content has been taken from historian Sirajuddin Minhaj's book *Tabqat-e-Nasri*. Dr Javed Iqbal's play has very strongly commented upon the history of Muslim royalty and its tradition of cruel conspiracies. In the play, there is unabashed twisting of Islamic values to suit the purpose of conspiracies and heinous crimes. The methodology is alarmingly close to several familiar happenings in recent times. Murder and fear are rampant instruments to establish political hegemony in the name of Islam. All the persons involved are 'honourable men' in Shakespearean terms. They use all possible ploys, starting with Razia being a woman and not acceptable as the head of state, then they plague aspersions on her morality and then they exploit the colour prejudice against the 'black' soldiers and her loyal commander. The conspirators' main purpose is to launch a puppet and not a thinking ruler who has the ability to guide and govern. They launch a puppet and perpetuate their power, irrespective of the damage done to the state. Dr Javed Iqbal also exposes how gullible the masses are in general. This has been true in history and it is true today. Those who can exploit the public one way or the other get their hegemony. Most often, exploitation is done in the name of religion. Razia Sultan's good deeds, her victories over the enemies of the state, her charity, actions for the rule of law and providing justice, all get washed away by the conspiring 'honourables' who hatch a lethal conspiracy and spread rumours.

Dr sahib has also touched upon the understanding of the Quran and some of its aayat, which may not be understood generally, e.g. 52 of Hammeem 'Alsajda': "Bethink you: If it is from Allah and ye reject it — then who is further astray than one who is at open feud (with Allah)."

The contents of the script are thought-provoking and informative. It is a play that can be read and, for that, it is good reading. It would make excellent play-reading for a class of history and politics and I strongly recommend that teachers find some occasion for a play-reading of *Razia Sultan* in the classroom.

To stage the play means to meet many challenges. It has long cast, period costumes, locations with palaces and even a field of war. It could be made suitable for a television production by some skilful re-writing and development of a suitable screenplay.

In an atmosphere of indiscriminate 'belief' in doubtful statements and quotations, in a state of suppression and fear, the play invites you to spend a moment with yourself and clarify some of your perceptions about Islam. It is a different play from the routine and needs serious attention. Only a scholar of Dr Javed Iqbal's status, vision and courage could deal with a subject like this.

There is a rush of drama designed on the basis of ratings on TV and thus playing to the gallery. If decision making on the basis of ratings continues, then degeneration will be the destiny. The role of the media demands social responsibility in providing education and information, not just entertainment, to make money. The process of education must be extended to the advertiser as well. The advertiser should not insist on ratings alone. The advertiser must realise that he has the power to mould taste and that he can lead and not just follow. A conscientious sponsor who is aware of his social responsibility must pick up this play for a telecast as a tele-film.

Saturday, March 5, 2011.

### A pro-Taliban government in Punjab?

"The support to the PML-N is strongly committed from the violent minority. Funds, muscle and street power are all made available by exploiting the fair name of 'Islam'. The future is incredibly depressing for those who believe in the vision of Allama Iqbal and the statesmanship of Quaid-e-Azam."

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has been almost 'kicked out' from the Punjab government. The uncomfortable marriage between the PPP and the PML-N has come to an end with little grace. The end of the 'coalition confusion' will, hopefully, be good for the people. The game of good cop-bad cop is over and both can show their true character. But their true characters are also a matter of concern. The PPP has so far appeared very spineless, incompetent and ineffective. The PML-N has shown a pro-Taliban mindset and support for pro-Taliban activists. The PML-N is known to have provided over 50 million worth of financial assistance to Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), a banned network, in its provincial budget. Senior leaders of the PML-N are seen campaigning with extreme rightists and aggravating interfaith discord. The PML-N stands with them while inflammatory and hate speeches are delivered and ensures that the extremist, pro-Taliban vote bank continues supporting them. The PML-N leadership has shown little sensitivity to the damage they are doing to the social fabric by standing with the extremists. The PML-N has made no effort for inter-cultural harmony. It relies on 'Punjab support', and plays that 'card'. It has also diverted attention from its own corruption and incompetence.

The change has come according to the PML-N game plan. The much denied document of 'pardon' for Nawaz Sharif and others did actually

exist and the Mian sahibs informed the Saudi authorities that they have completed the period of abstinence as per the contract and now they are entering the regular political scene. In the meantime, a flirting game to keep the political image was played and the contract was also violated by Chotey (little) Mian sahib, Mr Shahbaz Sharif. Many somersaults were made; first the PML-N joined the federal government and put up an erratic behaviour. Then they realised that being in the government will gradually erase their identity and the opposition will gain as usual. So they decided to move from the treasury benches to the opposition benches. The PML-N adopted the strategy to throw the bait of sharing the government in Punjab, which left the PPP neither here nor there.

The PML-N held 60 percent of Pakistan, but sat in the opposition in the National Assembly and thus enjoyed the position of being in power as well as in the opposition! Why the PPP liked this arrangement is hard to understand. Why did the PPP not take an opposition role in Punjab from the beginning? Also, why did Prime Minister Gilani keep showing up at Raiwind every week dutifully and almost as a subordinate of the Mian brothers? It must have further demoralised the PPP workers. If one goes back in the chain of events it is evident that most of the decisions made by the PPP were endorsed by the PML-N. Then the PML-N shared the deliberations in the Constitution Committee and got everything that was in its favour. So the PML-N marked time, kept its chief minister on the basis of a stay order of the courts, played with the simple PPP prime minister and prolonged its life. On the other hand, the PPP's Mr Gilani thought he was playing safe and ensuring the PML-N support in case the divide in his own party and the coalition partners became worrisome. As these manoeuvrings were going on to make sure that the political situation maintains the status quo, actual governance was non-existent. The PPP obviously wants to stay in power for five years and reap a rich harvest, the PML-N wants to dig deeper and consolidate with rightists, extremists, and General Zia sympathisers and their mysterious financiers. 'Financiers' may not be much of a mystery for those who claim with confidence that substantial funding from al Qaeda was made available to Mian Nawaz Sharif. Also something to think about is that the murdered, Benazir, Taseer, Bhatti, all were enlightened leaders from the PPP. The next target is to involve Musharraf by hook or crook.

The support to the PML-N is strongly committed from the violent minority. Funds, muscle and street power are all made available by exploiting the fair name of 'Islam'. The recent launching of the total control of Punjab by the PML-N appears to have been 'celebrated' through the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti by the Punjabi Taliban.

The future is incredibly depressing for those who believe in the vision of Allama Iqbal and the statesmanship of Quaid-e-Azam.

The important question here to consider is what role the PPP is going to play now. Is the leader of the opposition in Punjab happy with the perks and will stay quiet and let the PML-N continue and expedite the process of radicalisation in Punjab? Would the PPP really stand up and expose and struggle for a Punjab free from fear? Is the federal government of the PPP going to continue to live with the murder of its leaders in Islamabad or is it going to do something about it? Is the PPP left with any commitment, energy or will to stem the tide of radicalisation? At the present time not much can be expected from this party. It seems to be content with the status quo at the cost of the blood of its leaders and maybe does not plan to be an effective political force in future. Its inner conflicts and the disappointed coalition partners are ready to write the postscript to the PPP story. The Bhuttos have been used long enough, so now what?

The PML-N strategy would be to extract every ounce of advantage and seek fresh elections. Sounds simple but politics is not always so. The masses have seen the performance of these parties, they have also seen prices sky-rocketing, law and order shattered, supply shortages, and in-fights within the parties. Would the masses still vote for these feudal and power brokers? They may, under fear.

March 19, 2011.

Month of March, Mian sahibs and Raymond Davis —

*"The Raymond Davis case has more to it. To start with, it became a vehicle for the 'Punjab lions', Mr Sanaullah included, to embarrass the federal government. As usual, the federal government chickened out and even removed the foreign minister."*

Almost one year ago, it was in the third week of February 2010 that I called Mr. Rashed Rehman; the editor of The Daily Times. We met the same day in his office. His editorial board members, Ms Mehmal Sarfraz and others also joined in. During this meeting Rashid asked me to write for 'The Daily Times'. I reflected for a moment and my first reaction was positive, primarily because the news paper has an enlightened outlook. So I had little problem with the 'policy'. I asked him 'What subject'? He answered 'Whatever you like'. So he left no room for me to have a second thought and I started. In March 2011 it has been one year and covers 47 articles. Very soon I realized that a 'readership' had developed! Several persons from the civil society read and responded. Their comments encouraged me to continue writing even at times when I felt lazy.

At the time when I started my column I followed my natural responses to various situations. Occasionally I wrote with a sense of humor. Gradually a change occurred in me. When I started looking at issues, I gradually lost my sense of humor! National issues were getting too serious and the trends were even scary. There were senseless murders,

radicalization, terrorism, corruption, and so on. I found it difficult to laugh these off. I hope someday situations will change and I will get my sense of humor back.

In the Month of March one should actually be talking about spring, flowers and lovely birds. I am reminded of Begum Hijab Imtiaz Ali whose death anniversary falls on the 18<sup>th</sup> March. She was a lover of nature, she created an imaginary world of her own in the writings, still she was the first Muslim women licensed to fly an aircraft in the British Empire. Hijab called up Intizar Hussain in daily Mashriq and expressed concern that she couldn't hear the voice of 'Koel' in that season! Are we concerned about the environment in these days?

Here is what we are actually concerned with in this Month of March. Top of the line Raymond Davis! Didn't we all know that he was going to be released sooner than later? Why do the rightist make a 'beard brigade' and make political capital and play with public sentiments? Raymond Davis committed a crime, he was going to be treated according to the law of the land. Why is the 'street' interfering? Are we expressing no confidence in the Courts? Funny Imran Khan joins in where ever he finds a bunch of people standing on the streets! What is his position as a politician is not clear. People respect his achievements in sports and medical field but he needs to build his overall credibility in the management of national affairs.

In any case the Raymond Davis case has more to it. To start with it became a vehicle for the 'Punjab lions', Mr. Sanaullah included, to embarrass the Federal Government. As usual the fed. chickened out and even removed the Foreign Minister. What update was given by the Foreign Office about the diplomatic status is unknown. However one presumes that there must have been a good measure of 'Ifs' and 'Buts' to let the court interpret. However most useful was Kerry's meeting with the Mian Sahibs. Mian Sahibs decided to please the US on the side and found a way. As in Mian sahib's thinking, solution to everything is money. That is what they used and it worked. A newspaper has stated

an interesting chronology of events but leaves a mysterious gap of happenings between Feb 21 and March 16 which was the crucial period. My Sherlock Homes instincts put the pieces together in the following lines. After Kerry's meeting the Mian sahib loyalists started working on the legal heirs. They approached every one and negotiated for the amount of 'blood money' or 'Diyat'. As is revealed by the press the amount was good enough for each one of them to live a life of comfort ever after. So they agreed. Then the social side of the 'forgiveness' was taken care of and the family members were ready to leave for Umra or change of residence in another country. So each one was ensured the fulfillment of their wishes. Having planned this out the heirs were convinced to sign the legal documents of forgiveness. Consequently the case was made of murder and the court announced the charges. The public was pleased that their 'man' has been duly charged. Victory for 'Punjab lions.' The charge had the planned solution according to law and Islamic tenets. The court accepted the 'forgiveness' documents, freed the accused and all the 'heirs' and the accused was whisked away in a jiffy. The deed having been done Mian Sahib remembered that his wife was unwell and he must travel abroad to look after her. He also realized that he had a heart issue and this was the best time to have a stent placed for the treatment. It was of course reasonable for the CM to rush and enquire about his 'leader' and elder brother's health in London. Ideal position to avoid public questioning and protests. They will be back in 'good health' as soon as the matters subside! The hospital tricks are a great help to politicians and have been often used before. So far so good. But how would they explain that the spying charges against Raymond Davis were not filed? Obviously that would not have been covered by 'Diyat'. Also how did they forget the girl who committed suicide and refused to forgive? There may be more home work for the politicians and surely a lucrative way out for all will be found. After all the public sentiment is not something to worry about. Public should be given a big jolt of prices, or electricity or something similar so they get to worry about themselves rather than national issues.

Saturday March 26, 2011

This is cricket

*"We do not need to go wild and fire in the air, drive motorcycles at crazy speeds, or do one-wheeling, etc, in case of a victory. Nor do we need to smash windows, collapse on our bed, be depressed, miss office and quarrel with friends and family and least of all prepare to insult the cricketers on return in case of defeat."*

On Wednesday (March 30), hardly anyone will be talking of anything but cricket. It is Pakistan vs India! So it is more than an ordinary match. It is the World Cup semi-final that adds to its significance even further.

The India-Pakistan match is estimated to attract up to one hundred million television viewers according to well respected TV ratings firm 'Initiative'. The Indian and Pakistani cricket teams have been long-time archrivals and their rivalry is considered one of the most intense sports rivalries in the world. Defeat is usually unacceptable to the fans of both teams. In the World Cup matches, India has a 4-0 record over Pakistan, although in Champions Trophy matches between these sides, Pakistan has a 2-0 record over India. Let us hope that by this time good 'cricketing tradition' has been understood and a game is seen as a game. I would like to appeal to all viewers to be calm and graceful whether we win or lose; a game is after all a game. We do not need to go wild and fire in the air, drive motorcycles at crazy speeds, or do one-wheeling, etc, in case of a victory. Nor do we need to smash windows, collapse on our bed, be depressed, miss office and quarrel with friends and family and least of all prepare to insult the cricketers on return in case of defeat. This is not a war between 'kufar' and 'Islam'. Grace in victory or defeat

will be the test for us, and we, the fans, must pass the 'test'. Yes, surely, pray for Pakistan by all means.

Pakistan cricket team has a very interesting history. I recall the days when the venue of Test matches used to be the Gymkhana Club ground in Bagh-e-Jinnah. Following independence in 1947, cricket in the country developed steadily. Justice A R Cornelius, who later became the chief justice of Pakistan, was the captain of Lahore Gymkhana, with his other fellow cricketers like Mian Muhammad Saeed, Dr Jahangir Khan, Sheikh Muhammad Nisar, Dr Dilawar Hussain, and Q D Butt invited then Chief Minister Punjab, Khan Iftikhar Hussain, the Khan of Mamdot to form the Board of Control for Cricket in Pakistan (BCCP). Khan Iftikhar Hussain became the first president of BCCP. The matches in the Gymkhana ground were held by creating a makeshift stadium of wooden planks. On the occasion of a match, when a lot of Indians were expected to come and see the match, the atmosphere in the city was amazing. Lahore households felt like hosts. The Lahore spectators, including our family and friends, cooked food to serve to the Indian visitors; we carried extra darries (rugs) to be put on the wooden planks and saved space for the Indian visitors. It was an unprecedented show of hospitality and goodwill; a tradition that needs to be carried on. Pakistan was given Test match status at a meeting of the Imperial Cricket Conference at Lord's Cricket Ground on July 28, 1952. Abdul Hafeez Kardar emerged as the most significant captain in those times. He was a good all rounder, a disciplinarian, inspirational, and carried himself gracefully. His captaincy was what was needed by the country. His educational background helped. The Pakistan team visited India. Pakistan's first Test match was played in Delhi in October 1952 as part of a five-Test series, which India won 2-1. Pakistan won at Lucknow, thanks to a century by Nazar Mohammad and devastating bowling by Fazal Mahmood. Everyone in Pakistan was glued to the radio for commentary. Commentators like Rajkumar of Vizianagram 'Vizzy' and Tala Yar Khan set standards of sports communication on radio. In 1954 came the first major challenge. Pakistan's Test status was on trial during the team's visit to England. Pakistan had lost one Test, two were drawn, and the final in the series was to be held at the Oval. It was a close match. We were glued to the radio. Fazal had taken 12 wickets, 24 runs remained and the last English batsman was playing. He made a strong hit, Hanif Mohammad fielding near the boundary line, picked up the

ball, made a good throw and the batsman was run out! The Test and Test status were won. Kardar wrote the book, *Test Status on Trial*, later on. To draw against the most formidable team spoke of the great potential of Pakistani players. In a lighter vein, one is also reminded of the potential and determination of the players of this subcontinent in Aamir Khan's celebrated film 'Lagaan'. In recent years the game has changed a lot. The Kerry Packer influence in introducing 'One Day' cricket was sneered at in the beginning and now it is the most popular format. It is colourful as against the white dress of the 'Test matches' and is affordable in time. The 20/20 format is a hit and run game, exciting but not really serious cricket. Personally I enjoy the One Dayers and the Tests. The current Pakistan team has been through very hard times recently. Starting from the chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and down to the players, real hard bashing has been going on. Cricketers have been the favourite punching bag of all and sundry. England proved to be the land of scandals when three important cricketers were suspended for 'spot-fixing'. The biggest damage was caused to the bowling side because of young Aamir's loss. Aamir was growing as a phenomenal cricketer and was improving consistently. He was named as the world's most promising young player. Unfortunately, he got trapped in a scandal. At the age of barely 18 he should have been guided and taken care of. However, the team and the team management have learnt their lessons. The team seems to have left its problems behind and after a long time started to behave as a well knit, consistent and professional side. Good luck to them and all the viewers. Hold your breath and be supportive.

April 02, 2011

The match in Mohali.

*"It was feared that the reaction to defeat in Pakistan would be intense and ugly scenes of threatening the players and their families, burning of flags and effigies etc might happen. None of these ugly reactions emerged."*

By the time this article appears, lots of cricket fans will be engaged in thinking about the final match on April 2 in Mumbai. But many will remember the cricket match in Mohali, particularly the Pakistanis. This Saturday, Indian fans will be praying for India and the Sri Lankans for their country. Let us hope, once again, that the game is viewed as a wonderful and exciting game only. It is a game that brings people together through its intense entertainment value. The real winners in the Mohali match were the people of the two countries who showed grace and enjoyed the contest. No doubt, there is painful regret being felt by the Pakistanis for having lost the match but more surprising is the fact that almost everyone accepted defeat as an outcome that is always there and must be lived with. The Mohali match proved to be more than just a cricketing contest. It appeared like a semi-final between the teams who were trying to build relations between the two countries. None of these teams lost; it was a tie with the promise to play more. This was the more important result for the people of the two countries. The captains of these two teams and Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Gilani did a good job. Manmohan Singh has a perpetual smile on his face that fits all occasions and never changes. One would like to hope that this time the perpetual smile was real and reflected his actual state of mind and heart. Relations between the two governments have been mostly tense. There is a section of the Indian public that does not want good relations. Some of these see political advantage in animosity, like the Sangh Parivar politicians. Others play on religious

**VIEWS AND COMMENTS BY NAEEM TAHIR**

sentiments like the saffron brigade and Hindutva groups. In addition there is a section of the Indian armed forces that feels its budget and strength have a strong relation with keeping Pakistan posted as an enemy. They also do not subscribe to Nehru's view of cutting the army's strength and building friendly relations with their neighbours. There are elements in the Indian army who were hurt when Shastri returned the two hillocks to Pakistan after the Tashkent Accord. They felt betrayed after having laid down many lives. In Pakistan, the extreme right is the stumbling block. In both countries there are expansionist elements. In Pakistan, these are the religious fanatics and in India they are the dreamers desiring the Mahabharata. They need to understand that in all religions, maximum importance is attached to being good human beings. This is the central message of all faiths. Good humans make good nations. They do so within their political geographic limits and beyond.

In Mohali, the message perpetuated was of peace and, therefore, I feel the people of both countries have won. It was feared that the reaction to defeat in Pakistan would be intense and ugly scenes of threatening the players and their families, burning of flags and effigies etc might happen. None of these ugly reactions emerged. Mostly people have shown magnanimity and civilised behaviour. They have appreciated the efforts made by the cricket team and their success in reaching the semi-finals after 12 years. For most people, a contest with India is the ultimate thrill. Nothing else really matters and they got that thrill. This affinity is the root of their sentiments. People in India and Pakistan want to 'play', they want to meet each other, do business, make friends and laugh together. One wishes that Manmohan Singh succeeded in bringing his perpetual smile to all the people in the subcontinent.

Now about the Cricket World Cup semi-final match in Mohali. Granted that disappointment is not obvious, but defeat has hurt the Pakistani fans. Surprisingly, most people were content with the cricket team making it to the semi-final. They also felt happy that they had defeated Australia, the champions of three World Cups and that they packed off the West Indies convincingly. All these achievements revealed the potential of a great team, one that could have made it to the final. I suspect that even Afridi did not believe it. Even Afridi and his management colleagues seemed to have thought that entering the final

would be expecting too much. The team could have won this match after the wonderful performance by Wahab Riaz. He took five wickets and forced the Indian team to finish at a low score. After bowling out Sehwag, Dhoni and Yuvraj Singh, Wahab had pushed the Indian team against the wall. But several things went wrong at the same time. Tendulkar continued to play, and we dropped his catches four times. No team can hope to win even after dropping one catch of such a player, yet we dropped the winning catch four times! Luck was with Tendulkar and India. Tendulkar survived in the 11th over at his score of 23, despite having been given an out by the umpire, thanks to a review. In the next ball from Saeed Ajmal's over, he survived the stumping. Then, in the 13th over, Misbah dropped the catch off Afridi's ball. Tendulkar had only 27 runs on board. The gory saga of dropping Tendulkar's catches continued; Younas, Umar, Kamran, all dropped Tendulkar's catches until he reached 85 and was caught off Ajmal's ball by Afridi. The extra 58 runs added by him sealed the match in India's favour, although they were restricted to a less than expected score of 260 runs. Pakistan's openers started well, but mistakes followed one after the other. Hafeez chose a ridiculous shot, Younas and Misbah were reluctant to score, Afridi avoided the power play he is so famous for and so on and so forth. This lack of planning and preparation led to the team losing by only 29 runs. The team lost a match they could have won hands down. The team once again confirmed its tremendous potential. With discipline and planning they can do better. The board needs to think. Let us stop sulking and hope for the best in the future.

April 09, 2011  
Good Job CM!

*"Let the people in power understand clearly that creativity and aesthetics are sacred qualities and there should be no embarrassment for anyone in supporting these."*

Credit must be given where it is due. Criticism, and appreciation, if done honestly then these contribute to betterments. Chotey Mian (CM) was always known for having managed Punjab well during his first stint. His present tenure has been offering a shocking contrast. His visits to hospitals, his walking in the flooded roads, his singing Habib Jalib, all appeared to be gimmicks. If he did any good it got torn down by his smug law minister. Mr. Sanaullah pulled down opponent's commercial plazas, and saved his own! He joined the rallies of extremists and couldn't care less for the bewildered masses.

Now the good Chotey Mian has shown a glimpse of his potential as a concerned administrator. One would really like to see him live up to his earlier reputation. He has now shown genuine concern about a matter of convenience for the public. It is the solutions to traffic problems that have been known as his strong points. Recently he has achieved two things. He has built a much needed parking lot in the 'Liberty' market area. Once the public gets over the initial rejection mindset, it will find the parking plaza a useful facility. It is convenient and sensible to park the cars and avoid congestion. But even more important is the solution to the 'Kalma Chowk' disasters. It was more a device to 'choke' than a 'Chawlk'. Drivers recited Kalima for survival and prayed for getting the

opportunity to cross it. 'Kalima Chawk' was a major culprit in creating pollution and congestion in the centre of the city. At this point a 30 minute wait, with all the engines of the vehicles on and throwing out carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, was a usual occurrence several times a day. Often one heard the ambulances crying for help to the sick because the crossing of 'Kalma Choke' was in the centre of the roads leading to at least six hospitals. What happened to the unfortunate patients is not known. Even the CM must have hard time reaching his ancestral home in Model Town some times. But this should not take the credit away from him.

The CM has also disassociated himself from the Raymond Davis deal. His disappearance at a critical time raised many eye brows, including mine. But let us believe him, because he is an honorable man. (So was Brutus though !) Then, if CM's credibility is not challenged, then the onus of responsibility will again fall on the Law Minister, Mr. Sanaullah ! It is possible that the Law Minister plays a useful role for the good CM and does what the CM would prefer not to do personally. It could be an example of what the famous Oliver North of Iran Contra case stated in the court. When 'Olie' admitted to all the wrong doings and owned the fault, in spite of the fact that he was carrying out the gun running on the orders of the White House, the court asked why he admitted what he was not really guilty of ? Oliver North replied 'I did so because it is my duty to provide a "deniability" to my President when he needs it'. Is Sanaullah doing the dirty work to provide 'deniability' to the boss? Or is he taking advantage of his personal clout and of CM's incompetence?

As a person in charge of the largest province in the country the CM would be well advised to act honestly in the interest of the public. May be that now when he does not share the responsibility with the PPP, nor he has constraints of coalition, he can take some clear and bold decisions. High time he did. He needs to pay attention to the economic situation of the Punjab province. He needs to set his priorities for the next two years before he goes for fresh elections. The improvement in the education system, schools, and the curriculum in the government

schools, the health facilities, the roads, the availability of clean water, research in crop development, so on and so forth. There are millions of things that need to be done if our CM wants to leave a benchmark of service to the people. One of the perpetually ignored subjects is culture, arts and literature. Hardly any CM has shown the confidence to include this subject in his priorities accept late Hanif Ramey. Mostly the CMs have a fear of the rightists' backlash. Let the people in power understand it clearly that creativity and aesthetics are sacred qualities and there should be no embarrassment to any one in supporting these. Give generous financial support to the art organizations like the Alhamra, Majlis Taraqqi e Adab, Punjabi Board, Iqbal Academy and others. These organizations can build character, sophistication and love for the country and its values. It is no less important than 'roti, Kapra, makan'. If one is the need for physical survival the other is the need for dignity. The CM must understand the importance of the tangible as well as intangible. It takes a person of higher understanding and vision to support the intangible, an ordinary person may miss it.

So Mian Sahib, this is your opportunity to do something and not remain 'ordinary'. I don't care if the projects were planned by your predecessor. Even your predecessor should be happy if a good project is completed. This is how nations are built not by rejecting the past but continuing the best from the previous. Politically don't just be happy by being CM for five years and enjoying the 'taika' (show of power), but take pride in those achievements in the national and public interest that you can proudly own before the next elections. Remember, in the final analysis, you will be answerable, not your brother. Develop the tangible as well as the intangible in all fields so you are remembered in kind words, unless you just don't care and are ready to be dumped!

Saturday April 16, 2011

## The Pakistan Arts Council that was — I

*It is said that immediately after independence in 1947, the two 'giants' of arts and culture, Mr Chughtai and Mr Taj, also old friends, got together and decided to form an arts body for the promotion of the arts and culture of a new nation*

*I am sure there are some people still alive who remember the early days of the Pakistan Arts Council — Alhamra — Lahore. Even now the area is the same, located on the Mall Road. However, the building has been replaced and the glorious chinar trees are gone, and with those trees have also gone some traditions and memories.*

*For a large number of people interested in the arts today, the history of this institution is likely to be unknown. A lot of things have changed in Lahore, and so has the Arts Council. But changes form history and, if recorded in time, these are extremely useful archival documents. I recount some of my memories, which may shed light on the history, trials and tribulations in building this institution. It is part of our national heritage and cultural history. But how did I get connected?*

*It was in the 1953-55 session, while I was studying for a BSc in Government College Lahore (now GC University), that an interest in the arts started to get the better of me. I was involved in writing, translations of plays, singing, acting, photography, etc., as an amateur. My earlier interests, hiking, swimming, boating and rifle shooting, were fading away. So it was during this period that my interaction with creative individuals increased. While my fellow students would go home after their laboratory work, I would meet my friends, Zafar Samdani, Fazal Kamal and others, and would head towards the famous Pak Tea House or Coffee House or towards Radio Pakistan at Simla Hill. An interaction with the Arts Council was naturally destined but the Alhamra was not yet a very active body. It was going through the same settlement and 'unsettlement' that followed the post-1947 era. It was early 1957, when I was a student of Masters in Psychology at GC and when I had earned a bit of a name in drama, that I was sent by the principal to meet Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj. Taj sahib wanted to induct fresh blood into Alhamra. It was from this point on that I got associated, first as an actor in a play and then as the in-charge of the drama section in the reorganisation of Alhamra. The reorganisation by Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj took place to revitalise the Council. Mr Taj was the general secretary and Justice S A Rahman was the president of the organisation. The section in-charges were Mr Hayat Ahmad Khan (music), Mrs Anna Molka Ahmed*

*(arts), Mr Feroze Nizami (music classes), Mr Theo Phailbus (photography and films) and Naeem Tahir (drama). Only Mr Nizami and Mrs Ahmed were given some allowances. Later on, Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj became the director of Majlis-e-Taraqqi-e-Adab and Mr Faiz Ahmed Faiz was appointed secretary of the Arts Council. The section in-charges continued to work as before. In 1962, I left for the University of California to pursue my passion — a degree in Theatre Arts.*

*Mr Faiz Ahmed Faiz suffered a heart attack and left for treatment, and the Arts Council looked for a replacement. Since the position had earlier been occupied by luminaries like Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj and Mr Faiz Ahmed Faiz, it carried with it prestige. Several people applied, including me. To the disappointment of some, I was chosen, perhaps because of my foreign training and youthful energy. I stayed there for a decade and learnt about the Pakistan Arts Council and its history that I share now with the readers.*

*It is said that immediately after independence in 1947, the two 'giants' of arts and culture, Mr Chughtai and Mr Taj, also old friends, got together and decided to form an arts body for the promotion of the arts and culture of a new nation. They discussed the idea with Justice S A Rahman and the three went through the necessary steps to muster support and to register the organisation under the Societies Registration Act.*

*During my tenure, I found a most valuable document. It was the 'minutes register' in which the minutes of all the meetings of the board of governors of the Pakistan Arts Council, Alhamra, were recorded since its inception. It was an ordinary register containing the handwriting and comments of extraordinary men! Unfortunately, it has been untraceable since 1980.*

*The board of governors was more or less permanent among the founder members and it included: Justice S A Rahman (chairman), Mian Mumtaz Daultana, Tassaduq Hussain Khalid, Professor B A Hashmi, Abdur Rahman Chughtai, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj and Zafarul Ahsan. The board also included ex-officio director of Radio Pakistan Lahore, the Punjab finance secretary and education secretary. I found out that Alhamra had been inaugurated by the then Governor General, Khawaja Nazimuddin, on December 10, 1949. A sipsanama (inaugural address) caligraphed in Urdu was last seen by me lying in the carpenter's workshop in its original frame about three years ago.*

*The inaugural occasion was the first exhibition of paintings by A R Chughtai. Alhamra's rooms had been decorated by curtains and furniture borrowed from the houses of the elite in Lahore and the paintings were displayed. The building was a large graceful bungalow at the same plot as now but located somewhat set back from the front, about where the music section is located now. Originally, the building was owned by a Hindu philanthropist who had set up a school of dance and music in the pre-independence period. After independence, the then Deputy Commissioner and custodian of evacuee property, Mr Zafarul Ahsan, allotted it to Alhamra. In 1963, when I took over, I found out from the PTO that the land with the building was mentioned as*

being on seven acres. The building was dilapidated and thoughts of renovation were circulating. Mr Faiz had asked an Italian architect, Mr Mario Massina, to prepare a sketch for a new building. That sketch adorned the walls of the secretary's room. But at that time it was only a dream, hard to fulfil!

*(To be continued)*

Saturday, April 23, 2011

### The Pakistan Arts Council that was.. II

At about midnight, a huge storm hit Lahore. Rain and winds blew the stage arrangements away and the ground was filled with water by the morning. Obviously, one would panic because all our preparations had been washed away

In the interim period, i.e. late 1962 and part 1963, between the departure of Mr Faiz Ahmed Faiz and my joining as secretary, the office was held for short periods of time by Mr Mohsin Shirazi and by Mr Hamid Jalal, Director Public Relations WAPDA. Mr Hamid Jalal got the approval of the board of governors of Alhamra to appoint Mr Tajuddin Bhamani as the architect for the new proposed building. The perceived advantage was that Mr Bhamani, being associated with Edward Stone (the world-renowned architect who was designing the WAPDA house), would be able to benefit Alhamra by his experience. Also, he would charge less for his second project in Lahore. Mr Tajuddin Bhamani went as far as doing the preliminary sketch drawings and preparation of a model of the complex of buildings. I had joined the Arts Council as its secretary in September 1963. I displayed the model of the future building in the porch at the entrance to the main building. But, unfortunately, Mr Bhamani died of a heart attack. The council, once again, looked for an architect.

The story of the present Alhamra Complex is a very interesting one and is hardly known to many people. After the unfortunate demise of Tajuddin Bhamani, what I was left with was a 'model' and some preliminary design drawings of the proposed building. I decided to work on a detailed plan for the requirements of a cultural complex of the highest international standards. I sought the help of Professor Edward Hearn of the University of

California. I had worked with Professor Hearn during the construction and planning of the huge cultural complex of the Theatre Arts at the University of California in Los Angeles. I also contacted architect Douglas Honnold who was the chairman of the World Architects Association — I had the good fortune of having known him and his family. I also contacted the British Theatre Architects Association.

Professor Hearn sent me a draft of the technical details, according to our requirements. He specified suggested areas, gradients and light and sound standards. Douglas Honnold and his wife Lydia flew to Lahore at their own expense and stayed at their own expense at the then Nedous Hotel (now Avari) to get the feel of the area and the ambience. They quietly walked around, saw the gatherings and workings of the artists and sent an architectural concept. I also incorporated the suggestions of the British Theatre Architects Association and finally developed a detailed document of requirements and standards to assist the new architect. While we were doing this 'homework', something very interesting happened.

A very high level cultural troupe arrived from the USSR. It was comparable to the level of the Bolshevik Ballet. I was asked to prepare for their performance, which was to be inaugurated by President Ayub Khan. It was an impossible task to match the facilities available in Russia. I could only provide a simple platform of the international measurements for performance, and simple wing space in the lawns of Alhamra. Within 48 hours, and working round the clock, we prepared a temporary open-air theatre with 3,000 chairs. President Ayub arrived one day before to inaugurate the show the next evening and camped at the Government House. We completed everything and went home late in the evening.

At about midnight, a huge storm hit Lahore. Rain and winds blew the stage arrangements away and the ground was filled with water

by the morning. Obviously, one would panic because all our preparations had been washed away. The civil administration helped and we got to work — hundreds of blankets were purchased from Landa Bazaar to dry the ground and railway workers and WAPDA engineers were engaged to repair the stage.

While all this damage control was going on I was struck by an idea. I suggested to the Chairman Pakistan Arts Council, Mr Justice S A Rahman that he should take the president aside for a few minutes on his arrival at Alhamra and request him for funds for an appropriate hall at Alhamra in order to avoid such situations in the future. The facts had proved that Pakistan was ill equipped to fulfil cultural pacts with friendly countries. I thought that the President of Pakistan, Mr Ayub Khan might just agree and our project for a new hall might be funded. Justice Rahman was reluctant to make a departure from the pre-arranged programme. It was difficult for a judge of the Supreme Court to violate the pre-arranged programme and the protocol, but he thought it was okay if a 'young' secretary of the council broke the protocol! I understood. I called Raja Tajammal Hussain, the then secretary finance to the Punjab government, and told him that I was going to attempt a breach of protocol to show the president of Pakistan the model of the new building and request him for funding. Raja Tajammal, a great supporter of the arts, said that the provincial budget was already in the press for printing and was to be presented in the provincial assembly in the next few days, but if he personally heard the president's commitment for funding, he would be able to manage something. So it was agreed between him and I that he would be within hearing distance when I made the 'breach' of protocol! If I recall correctly, the ADC to the Governor, West Pakistan, General Musa Khan, was Captain Zareef and while determining the route and point of reception for the president's entourage, we decided that the president would be received in the porch of the building, about 20 yards before the entrance to the performance arena but about three yards from where the model of the proposed building was displayed. The

reception committee would be constituted of the board of governors of the council and Raja Tajammal, as an ex-officio member, would be included. In the evening, as the president of Pakistan arrived at Alhamra, followed by his entourage, his car was stopped at the porch. A dramatic moment was to follow.

(To be continued)

Saturday, April 30, 2011.

The Pakistan arts Council that was.... (Part 3)

"Who would be the architect? A detailed discussion took place in a meeting of the board of governors and finally the decision was made in favour of the architect from Lahore who was young and would put his heart and soul into the project: Nayyar Ali Dada. The board had, once again, put its faith in the youth."

As the President of Pakistan, Field Marshal Ayub Khan and his entourage arrived at Alhamra, his car stopped in the 'porch' and the Chairman of the Pakistan Arts Council Justice S.A. Rehman received him. The board of Governors was introduced and in the end, me as the Secretary of the Council shook his hand, and, held his hand! He smiled a bit surprised and I quickly said 'Sir may I have a couple of minutes and show you the model of our new building displayed for you right here?' 'Yes, yes, Musa let us look at it'. Gen. Musa replied: 'Sir'. We took a couple of steps towards the model and I blasted out a quick brief ending with the request for funds! The President smiled, looked at Gen. Musa and said 'Musa we must help them'. Gen Musa said 'Yes Sir, we will', I looked at Tajammal, he winked. The deed was done, and we escorted the President to the main arena where the Ambassador of USSR was waiting.

Overnight a provision of first installment of funds of one million was added to the Provincial budget! There is a memorable photographic record of this moment captured by the internationally known photographer Zaffar Ahmed. It was a happy moment, but there were many ups and downs waiting.

The hope of finding funds and actually realizing the dream were heightened. For the proper planning the actual land available to the Council had to be clearly defined. The gutter running through the Alhamra land had to be stopped. I closed it and forced the local administration to provide a decent alternative to the hutments at the backside. I requested the neighbors; carpet factory to stop draining their acid based waste water from carpet washing on to the Alhamra premises. They were there courtesy Mr. Faiz Ahmed Faiz. Mr. Faiz had a larger heart. Next thing was to own the land legally and to have perpetual rights on it for the Council. During that period of time, Sh. Manzoor Ellahi was the Chief Settlement Commissioner. Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj called him and set up an appointment for me. (Sheikh Manzoor Ellahi was Punjab Chief Minister, some years later.) Sheikh Sahib was very helpful and agreed to give Alhamra permanent ownership of the land on payment of the reserve price. If I remember correctly it was about Rs. 325000/- It was a lot of money at that time. In the present time it may be equal to Billions! The council did not have enough money, so the shortage was made up by me and other members by donations. The money was paid to the Government, Permanent Transfer Deed, had to wait for due process to be completed. However it was signed and my signatures were recorded on appropriate documents on behalf of the Council.

Now was the key question to be solved. Who will be the architect? Options were considered and Murat Khan, the Turkish Architect who designed the 'Minar e Pakistan' was also a potential possibility. I talked to Mr. Shakir Ali who was the Principle of National College of Arts (NCA) because NCA had a department of Architecture. He recommended Nayyer Ali Dada who had just graduated. A detailed discussion took place in a meeting of the Board of Governors and finally the decision was made in favor of an architect from Lahore who was young and would put his heart and soul into it i.e. Nayyer Ali Dada. The Board had, once again, put its faith in the youth.

By this time the constitution of the Council was modified and 3 board members were elected from the general membership. If I recall correctly Syed Babar Ali and also Mr. Ishfaq Ahmed were members of the board and possibly Yasmin Tahir was also elected.

I handed over the technical brief and requirements in the form of a booklet to Nayyer and he got to work. Since the designing of the complete project was to be time consuming and the actual start of construction would have procedural steps, so it was decided to prepare a celebrative small memorial with a 'Foundation Stone'. It was designed to be placed in a small wall with a small stage around, in the central lawn. This stage was to be used for inaugural ceremonies and talks. Nayyer designed it in consultation with Syed Babar Ali and myself. The actual foundation stone and the writing on it was to be done by Saeed Akhter, a young artist at that time and an icon now. He decided to make an unusual 'stone'. He wanted the black, the hardest stone 'Sang e Moosa', then cut a smaller space into it, to be fitted by a less than foot rectangle of Marble with calligraphic inlay of 'SANG E BNYAD'. Artistic but hard to make. The consideration behind this design was that it was to be laid by Gen. Musa, so Sange Musa, and since a large stone is hard to handle a small piece of white marble was to be fitted into it for convenience and aesthetic attraction. The date of this 'Foundation Stone' laying ceremony was fixed for Feb. 26, 1969. All preparation were complete. Platform and walls were ready and the stone was to be placed by the governor in two days and we needed to set up the 'Sang e Musa' in the wall. Now Saeed Akhter and me went to collect the finished stone from the shop near Shah Alami gate and discovered to our horror that a speeding truck had rammed into the shop in the night and the foundation stone was lying in pieces! How we got it prepared and laid. the 'Foundation stone' is another story. It was finally laid.

What happened after wards? Why the funds promised by the President and Governor were not released? Who made the 'Foundation Stone' disappear? This story still needs to be told.

(continued)

### The 'Pakistan Arts Council' that was... (Part 4)

"The Pakistan Arts Council ceased to be a private body and stayed 'taken over' and designated by the government as 'Lahore Arts Council'. This status was a climb down for an organisation which had pioneered the awareness of the importance of culture for a new nation"

The laying of the foundation stone for the new Alhamra Art Centre on Feb.26, 1969, brought the multitude of artists in the country, particularly in Lahore, a step closer to their dream since independence.

Following the footsteps of Alhamra, a 'Pakistan Arts Council Dacca' had been established just one year later: Karachi also followed suit. The organization in Lahore was providing the lead in building a complete art centre and we were all very proud. It was a dream about to be fulfilled.

Earlier, in 1964, Nippon Electric Company, NEC, established a small TV station in Lahore. All preparations were done at the 'Pakistan Arts Council Lahore'. I had an active personal association in these initial stages. Later it moved to its mini studio in the premises of Radio Pakistan and was humorously call TV 'khokha' or Cusack. A few years later "TV" was taken over by the Government of Pakistan and I was called to Rawalpindi PTV Headquarters in 1969 and posted as Principal Central Television Institute against a Joint Secretary post in the Ministry of Information which was, I suppose, transferred to PTV. My task was to train all TV incumbents, producers, technicians etc, all over Pakistan, including East Pakistan at that time. I had a group of German experts who helped in curriculum development. The assignment was challenging. Technically the TV station at Chaklala was the training centre of the Institute, but telecasts were also taking place.

In order to cover the whole of Pakistan, I conducted courses in Dacca and Karachi as well. My contact with Alhamra was minimal during this period, although I maintained a lien but the Secretary position was held by Dr. Tassaduq Hussain Khalid.

In 1970, early morning on 19<sup>th</sup> April, tragedy befell our family. Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj Sahib and Hijab Imtiaz Ali were attacked with daggers while asleep in their home at Lahore by unknown assailants. It was about 3 am that Hijab (my mother in Law) phoned me in Rawalpindi while she herself was bleeding and so was Taj Sahib. Yasmin, myself and kids, rushed to Lahore. Taj Sahib was in Mayo Hospital, operated by Dr. Masud, but did not survive. It was a huge loss to Literature, Arts, Culture, Films, and indeed to our family. The whole scenario of our personal life, mine and Yasmin's, changed forever. I continued to work with TV but it was getting increasingly difficult to ignore the family in Lahore. Mr. Manzoor Qadir, the legendary lawmaker, was voluntarily advising on the investigations to find out the murderers, President of Pakistan, Mr. Yahya Khan had constituted a special investigation team headed by DSP Ghani Khan but my presence in Lahore was necessary to give him support. In the meantime the famous national elections of 1970 got scheduled and I was asked to compile data for the round the clock telecast. I researched and put together, in three volumes, the socio-political and demographic analyses of each constituency of East and West Pakistan. After elections, I requested the Managing Director PTV to allow me conduct some courses in Lahore as I did in Dacca and Karachi to enable me assist the family and the investigations. Surprisingly the request was not acceded to! Why? I was shocked at the lack of consideration. I chose to resign and avail my lien with the Alhamra in 1971.

But during the ensuing period, from 1970 onwards, the national scenario went through turmoil. Major political changes were in the offing.

When I returned, a lot of things had changed. Discipline was a casualty. It was typical of the PPP style, and particularly after the fall of Dacca.

A campaign against Alhamra started in 1972. It was promoted by Dr. Enver Sajjad and a bunch of his companions with little experience of 'arts management'. He used to deliver fierce speeches in a thatched tea joint near Simla hill. The joint was known as 'Café de Ghaas Phoos'! Enver Sajjad almost seemed to believe that he was the real Mao Tze Tung. And occasionally incited people to 'Gherao and Jalao' the Alhamra in Bhashani lingo! He succeeded in getting a new Board of Governors appointed by Punjab Government and dismissed Justice S.A Rehman and all founder members. I was again notified as Secretary! But it was hard to work in the conditions of work supported by the new 'Chairman'.

On top of this situation, my mother, under treatment in England, was found to be in a critical stage. I needed leave, which was denied by Enver Sajjad! My mother died without our seeing each other for the last time! It was a grief I have failed to rationalize till date. I felt badly let down and I decided to quit the field of arts.

For me hard times were to follow, including persistent harassment by the new administration of Alhamra.

Some elected members of the board, including Mr. Masud Akhter challenged the takeover in the courts. In any case Dr. Enver Sajjad's board was removed before the completion of its term and replaced by a board headed by Soofi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum, and it included Shoaib Hashmi. I made myself unavailable.

The good thing that happened later, was that the Government started releasing the promised funds. Mr. Hanif Rameh as the Chief Minister took personal interest. However the Pakistan Arts Council seized to be a private body and stayed 'taken over' and designated by the government as 'Lahore Arts Council'. This status was a climb down for an organization which had pioneered the awareness of the importance of

culture for a new nation. The 'membership' also seized to exist and the hundreds of big and small artists, and their supporters, who had spent their life time in the Alhamra and its canteen, felt left out. Neither the government, nor the Governing Council showed sensitivity in this matter. They seemed content to be part of the government and its bureaucracy.

(concluded in part 5)

### The 'Pakistan Arts Council' that was... (Part 5)

"In the inaugural plaque, I had the names of all artists engraved who had ever been associated with the Council, including the founder members and board of governors at completion. This was a memorabilia and a tribute to all those artists, big or small, who had seen a dream and worked for it"

After my appointment in 1963 I started to issue an 'annual report' for members and interested individuals every year. These reports kept the members aware and also created a realistic record. These reports continued up to 1973-4, and were discontinued after my departure.

Later, in 1974 Enver Sajjad's board was removed. After this removal, the Chief Minister of Punjab, Mr. Hanif Rameh provided sufficient financial support and, once again, laid the 'Foundation Stone' for the Hall 1 in...?

Funnily, although all agree that a stone was laid, the stone is not traceable now! Nor any one remembers the date; this includes senior functionaries of the present Alhamra, the architect, and even the builders. !! Another archive gone!

One, indeed, wonders also as to what happened to the stone laid earlier, on Feb. 26, 1969? It has not been seen since 1974!

As the construction was to proceed, the famous Chinar trees were cut off, the historical first abode of the Arts Council i.e. the majestic evacuee building with pillars and verandas, was raised to ground. All elements of sentimental attachments, which were symbols of the life of the arts community of early days, got removed. It hurt many like me.

With some sensitivity and resolve both could be saved. Most nations in the world show concern and take pride in their history and the archives. Why did the Lahirites turn their face the other way?

1974 onwards I had learnt to survive without a 'secure' job and earned my living through trade.

The Zia regime and its oppression was a national tragedy causing havoc to the fiber of the culturally rich and progressive Pakistani nation. To please their bosses some overzealous officers in the government started a clandestine move to dissolve the 'original' Arts Council and transfer the property to Auqaf! The logic given was that the Alhamra activity was not appropriate in the proximity of the Governor's house and Auqaf may set up something better! The real fact was that the new hall was only half built and the PWD wanted to get rid of it by declaring it a faulty design and cover up their misdeeds. Luckily I came to know of it, I filed a case in the court and obtained a 'stay' order. I earned the wrath of the then Governor Sawar Khan and his Government. One of the senior retired Generals wished he would never see my face out of jail! Life was made difficult for me.

But changes have to occur; bad times do not stay forever. The Governor Punjab, Sawar Khan, was changed, Gen. Jillani took over, Secretary Information changed, and Mr. Javed Qureshi took over! Javed Qureshi probably sought direction in my court case. Javed knew me from school, Gen. Jillani knew me since 1965 war time. Government declared that Arts Council will stay as it is. The decision of the Government was praiseworthy. Javed and me, two friends were saved the embarrassment of facing each other in courts. Much more important was the fact that an institution was saved. The new set up in the government desired that I supervise the completion of the hall. Gen. Jillani was sincerely interested in improvement of the quality of life in Lahore. Quickly I was appointed on the board of governors and given the charge of the hall completion. Three persons, Javed Qureshi, Naeem Tahir and Rashid Umar Thanvi, we got to working 24 hrs a day. Intizar Hussain

commented in his column that it seems some 'jinns' have got into the council!

The Hall was inaugurated in less than 6 months of our association. Malika e Tarannum Noor Jehan sang the opening song in the presence of Gen. Jillani, and Javed and I pinched each other to make sure we were not dreaming!

In the inaugural plaque I had the names of all artists engraved who had ever been associated with the Council, including the founder members and Board of Governors at completion. This was a memorabilia and a tribute to all those artists, big or small, who had seen a dream and worked for it.

A few months afterwards when I visited the hall, the inauguration plaque had disappeared and nobody knew anything about it!

The buildings are there but the archival records have disappeared. The minutes register, the foundation stones, the plaque and the 'welcome address' at inaugural etc. Would any conscientious officer recover and preserve these as invaluable sources of history? Yes the buildings are there, where is the history? Where is the spirit?

Also I found in 1981 that the record of drama scripts was piled up and on top of it the water dispenser was placed. The water dripped and scripts got damaged. This was the most valuable record of the drama written after independence.

In 1979 I noticed a marvelous sculpture of Navera Ahmed, 'Mother and Child' kept at the entrance of the make shift open air theatre and was conveniently used for torn half of tickets and some visitor's paan 'peak'!

All that I have mentioned is a reflection of the insensitivities and incompetence of the management. For most civil servants it is not a job

they can take pride in. A civil servant wants to be a Commissioner or something like that.

Arts management and development is a very specialized subject and it is the core activity for building a nation and its image. In the present context the Alhamra managers could at least set up an archival record of their own organization. The book as 50 years of Pakistan Arts Council, is a slightly better version than the distorted publication earlier by a self serving officer. Still no write up from Founder members or early associates is included. Why erode the contribution of pioneers?

Monuments are manifestations of the dreams, resolve, dedication, sacrifices and the spirit of many. Present generations would appear graceful if they acknowledge what good has been done in the past and preserve it.

(Concluded)

Sturday, May 21, 2011

### Obama-Osama drama

"The violation of sovereignty by the US bothers those who have forgotten the violation of sovereignty committed by Osama and his clan and the killing of 35,000 Pakistanis thereafter"

In a market place near the 'Osama residence' in Abbottabad, a visiting journalist asked a young customer in a shop for his comments about the operation on May 2, 2011. The young man said: "It is all Obama-Osama drama." This young man reflected the prevailing mood of cynicism and disbelief related to the operation. The SEALs' helicopters took off from Abbottabad but left so much dust behind that perceptions became hazy.

Was Osama actually killed? Was he really alive up till now? Where is the evidence? Why was he not captured alive? Why was he not photographed dead? How could our airspace be violated? How come the radars did not work? How is it possible that our secret services did not know of his presence for five years? Questions, questions, and even more questions.

Most people tend to forget that the chief symbol of all al Qaeda activities was killed and that he had remained the most important figure in the world of terrorism for over a decade. Instead, they are bewildered by the questions that the 'operation' left behind. The violation of sovereignty by the US bothers those who have forgotten the violation of sovereignty committed by Osama and his clan and the killing of 35,000 Pakistanis thereafter. There were two important statements made that should have cleared some mist. These were not given the weightage they deserved.

One was by our prime minister. It was on the floor of the house that he admitted that the chief of army staff (COAS) had called him after midnight and had informed him of the intrusion. The COAS cannot order any further action unless authorised by the president of Pakistan. The US operation can be presumed to have taken place by covert permission or by silence. This clearly settles the sovereignty question. The major hue and cry on the issue has been made by Osama sympathisers. It is an irony that fateha prayers were offered by some MNAs for Osama bin Laden, but not for a son of the soil, Salmaan Taseer. All such people, who showed concern about sovereignty and underplayed the fact of Osama's capture, are those who have an element of sympathy for him and like to paint the Osama operation as a 'bad' thing. Additionally, they look for political mileage by embarrassing the government.

The other statement was by ex-President Pervez Musharraf. He said it all. He indicated that the 'rogue' elements in the armed forces and ISI may have hidden information on Osama from reaching the decision makers. Therefore, Osama was helped to stay in Abbottabad unnoticed for five years. This is a very dangerous reality. Osama supporters and people with his mindset are entrenched in a major section of our society. This was the reason that an open admission was not made of the covert permission; it was because of fear of a backlash. The government wanted to let things cool down and let the 'leakages' do the job.

Indeed, it is a matter of concern that even the armed forces and ISI are infected with such rogue elements. This seems to be the truth because even the army headquarters were attacked by terrorists who had obtained inside information. There are several incidents that prompt strict investigations to cleanse the ISI and armed forces of the dangerous cells of saboteurs. Such people have been indoctrinated into believing in a 'brand' of Islam that has caused the greatest damage to the real, peaceful message of Islam delivered by the Prophet (PBUH).

It is beyond comprehension that a house was built for Osama, and he resided in it for five years, along with a large family, and remained completely unnoticed! Come on, have a heart. How can this be? There is no doubt about the involvement of those who were supposed to have spotted him. The chief of the ISI came clean by admitting failure. That

was graceful. But this admission should be the beginning of a thorough clean up. It should be done ruthlessly and immediately because such individuals are the real enemies of the sovereignty of the country and its people. These covert supporters of terror have done much damage and will continue to do so unless eliminated.

A survey conducted by an English daily shows some shocking results. It has reported that 50 percent of Pakistanis are unhappy with the elimination of Osama bin Laden. The pro-Taliban propaganda machine has cleverly associated the Osama elimination with the violation of sovereignty and has thus ensured that the Osama operation becomes unpopular. It has also hit the armed forces because they are the ones who cleaned up Swat and South Waziristan. The Osama/Taliban network has tried to gain a mind-war victory. This success will last for a while unless the mist is cleared. It is good that the armed forces took the initiative of talking to parliament. It was a well thought out and honest action, which restored the respect of our valiant forces to a large extent. But more needs to be done in the direction of de-radicalisation of the services and of the establishment in general. The cancer will not be removed unless this operation is done. Islam's fair name has been exploited to the hilt by power seekers and terrorists. This country contains an overwhelming majority of people who are Muslims and have been led by the claimants of expertise in religion. Unfortunately, some so-called leaders of Islam use suspect versions of religion, like Qutubi or Salafi Islam, to serve their power pursuits. The result is a worldwide bad name to true Muslims.

For the purpose of stressing my point, I repeat that the Osama bin Laden operation should not be mixed up with the sovereignty issue. Sovereignty gets challenged every time the government goes out with a begging bowl. It also gets violated when foreigners enter in large numbers and terrorise the nation with suicide bombs.

The pro-Taliban mindset is the greatest enemy of our nation and its sovereignty; this is what we need to fight against, with full power.

Sturday, May 28, 2011

### Is Imran supporting the Taliban?

*Just being against the US and the war on terror is again an indirect help to the Taliban. Most significantly, Imran calling the war on terror as an American war is the standard Taliban slogan. Over 30,000 Pakistanis have been killed due to the Taliban's terror attacks. Is it still not our war?*

Imran Khan has been in politics for a while now, probably for over a decade and a half. His Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is primarily constructed around his person and is backed up by the reputation of his being the captain of Pakistan's cricket team winning the World Cup. Several cricket supporters were surprised at his acceptance speech when he said, "I have won the World Cup..." without acknowledging that it was a team effort. He was the captain, and captain contributes a lot no doubt. It would have been in good grace if he had acknowledged the efforts of the team that he was the captain of. In no case the credit of his contribution could be taken away from him. His second achievement is the establishment of a cancer hospital in the name of his late mother. It is a personal achievement through fundraising after the World Cup success. The hospital enjoys a good reputation and it is professionally managed.

When Imran entered politics, his image was high. He thought he will conquer all, but politics is different from cricket, or even from a hospital. His hospital runs on the contribution of philanthropists and service charges, and cricket needs individual skills. He was offered a share in governance by Musharraf, but negotiations failed due to Imran's overestimation of his strength. He lost valuable opportunity of sharing power and gaining experience. Imran soon appeared lost in politics; people equated him with the style of Asghar Khan and late

Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan. Both of these leaders never obtained 'power', the known pursuit of politics.

Imran Khan appeared to be going through introspection. He was trying to fight against his reputation of being a playboy and his involvement in overseas scandals. Even his marriage with a British heiress was seen with suspicion. He needed to neutralise the critics of the extreme Right. He met the leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami and many other groups of the Right and even extreme Right. He started to wear shalwar kameez on a regular basis. His marriage finally ended. All this convinced the Right and so-called religious groups. Since then he has had increased support from the 'right' political groups and seems determined to hold on to it.

Imran has also worked hard on the non-conventional politicians and the youth. Both of these segments are attracted by his debonair look and fresh approach. He is indeed more educated than most of our politicians. He stands out as an upright person among the of 'jaali (fake) degree' type parliamentarians. His personality is an asset for him

His political stance needs a careful and serious analysis. The main point of concern is that he has never taken a clear stand against the activities of the Taliban. Instead, he has been pleading for a 'negotiated' settlement, knowing full well that all negotiations and 'peace' agreements have been used by the Taliban for the purpose of consolidating and then continuing terror activity. He should have offered to negotiate himself if he was confident of this course of action. The failure of the infamous Swat agreements must still be fresh in the public memory. Imran has never supported the army action. This includes army action in Swat and in South Waziristan. He has not even condemned the attacks on army General Headquarters (GHQ) and, more recently, the attack on the Pakistan Navy Station (PNS) Mehran base.

On the other hand, he is prominent in demanding the blocking of supplies to NATO forces through Pakistan — a step which would help the Taliban. He is against drone attacks. It is true that the drones cause regrettable collateral damage but they also target the al Qaeda and its supporters. The Taliban also demand an end to drones. Imran is

prominently part of anti-US campaigns. True that many American policies have been self-serving, but then it is our responsibility to protect Pakistan's interests against any foreign country, not just the US. Just being against the US and the war on terror is again an indirect help to the Taliban. Most significantly, his calling the war on terror as an American war is the standard Taliban slogan. Over 30,000 Pakistanis have been killed due to the Taliban's terror attacks. Is it still not our war?

Looking at these factors, one is forced to question: what side is Imran on?

He is agitating in Karachi against the supplies to NATO forces, and the drone attacks. He was active with the extreme Right in protesting against Raymond Davis' release. He has been doing sit-in protests in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In fact, the PTI has been doing so many protests that it may be aptly called Tehreek-e-Ehtijaj. Imran's group seems to be joining every protest and playing to the gallery.

This strategy has also given certain advantages to Imran Khan. Consistent 'exposure' is one of these. Perhaps more significant is the fact that he has won over a sizeable portion of the supporters of Nawaz Sharif. This support primarily comes from the Taliban or their sympathisers. So Imran Khan is obliged to toe their line. As a politician he realised that the white collar will not win him an election but the rightists may. They get together, provide street power as well as loud noises, and this works to collect crowds. Imran is the preferred choice of extreme Right also because of his energetic style, which is more convincing than that of Nawaz Sharif; his eloquence is impressive against Nawaz Sharif's limited capability, and indeed Imran is a 'fresh' image as compared to the repeatedly tried image of Nawaz Sharif. He may find it very hard to risk alienating himself from this segment. He also likes to have them because it is quieting down the critics of his flamboyance and flirtations of youth.

Soon there will be the final stage when Imran may need to do some soul searching once again, and decide if he is going to flow with the tide of extremist groups or stand on his own and refuse to be their cover politician.

## Favorite Excerpts

Selected by: Yasmin Tahir.

"The 2008 terrorist act in Mumbai surely needs to be condemned in the strongest possible words, but one wonders why the incident was allowed to happen when all advance information was available. Why?".....March 4, 2010

"There is a very wide gap between the priorities of the 'people' at large and the 'leaders' at large. This may be the cause of the failure of many regimes, including the so-called democratic as well as non-democratic ones."April 10, 2010.

"It is true that Pakistan has been plagued by terrorist networks like al Qaeda, the Taliban and others. But it is also true that India has had a strong and substantial homegrown terrorism for a long time and its intention has been to intimidate the minorities, in particular the Muslims and Christians."April 17, 2010.

"The political right got moral, financial and material support, culminating in promoting jihad in Afghanistan. The groups of moderates, progressives, and the Left were left out as untouchables."May 29, 2010.

"Mr Pillai must have yielded to the Hindutva pressure. He rushed to embarrass his own external affairs minister by blaming Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence of being behind the Mumbai terror attacks."July 31, 2010.

"Sporadic violence perpetuated by conflicting groups is most damaging for a country. It falls short of a revolution and becomes an internal struggle for power by groups with vested interests like ethnicity, religious bias, mafias, and revenge by the have-nots."August 28, 2010.

"We associate victory with national honour. Is this not overdoing things to the extreme? We should be able to take pride in the performance of our team or some special players who make an outstanding effort. Why do we have to link an individual action with the larger-than-life concept of 'national honor'?"..... When we watch a game of cricket, what are we looking for? A good game, a match contested to the best of the team's ability in given conditions, or only for the bottom line of 'victory'?Sept. 04, 2010.

"The most powerful element to start a revolution is a widespread dissatisfaction with the existing situation. Dissatisfaction is rapidly increasing and solutions are not forthcoming. It seems a credible leadership is missing."Sept. 18, 2010.

..... Then there is the much talked about 'silent majority'. Why must it stay a headless mass and just specialize in staying silent? Silence is a demonstration of consent. If it is not consenting, then what is it? Are they a party in crime?Oct. 30, 2010.

Terror outfits exist in many countries. It is wrong to use them for politically expedient covert actions. Terrorists are nobody's friends. Terror backfires in the long run. If governments realize their responsibilities towards humanity it may become a better world to live in."Nov. 27, 2010.

"We need a democratic system which ensures the participation of the distinguished achievers at the decision making level. The persons of known capabilities among technocrats, specialists, thinkers, artists, media men and philosophers must be associated with planning and implementation on a regular basis".Dec. 17, 2010

Women and old people continued to be ignored. Creative artists have been relegated to the position of toys to play with for amusement and are pushed aside when entertainment is not required. Education, culture and the minorities need better attention. A serious look must be given to the so-called Blasphemy Law, which is an instrument of exploitation by the pro-extremists.Jan 01, 2011.

"The religious fanatics have silenced a voice of sanity. If the extremists continue to infiltrate the different ranks of society and its disciplined

forces, then more murders will happen and the sane will continue to lose their lives."Jan 08, 2011

"Islam seeks unity and cohesion among the believers. Then why are the leaders of political parties trying to divide? Why is the word being spread around in favor of a murderer? This is 'radicalization' and this is an effort to divide the polity and to consolidate political clout by providing a 'religious' base."

Jan. 15, 2011

"The silent majority found it convenient to give up their responsibility of learning from the Quran and succumbed to the lethargy of letting someone else claim expertise. This was a critical mistake. Even today substantial amount of hate literature is being circulated by extremist sects in the name of Islam and misleading people."

The 'silent majority' must play a constructive role in critical situations for a nation. Such a situation has developed in Pakistan. It is said that 80 percent of Pakistanis believe in the fact that Islam gives the message of peace.

Jan 29, 2011.

"Benazir Bhutto, in her wisdom, agreed to work with Musharraf because it was the need of the hour. This arrangement did not suit those who are the beneficiaries of the power bonanza after her murder."

Feb 19, 2011

"We do not need to go wild and fire in the air, drive motorcycles at crazy speeds, or do one-wheeling etc, in case of a victory. Nor do we need to smash windows, collapse on our bed, be depressed, miss office and quarrel with friends and family and least of all prepare to insult the cricketers on return in case of defeat."March 26, 2011

"Let the people in power understand clearly that creativity and aesthetics are sacred qualities and there should be no embarrassment for anyone in supporting these "April 09, 2011

## Excerpts:

"There is a very wide gap between the priorities of the 'people' at large and the 'leaders' at large. This may be the cause of the failure of many regimes, including the so-called democratic as well as non-democratic ones. April 10, 2010.

"The political right got moral, financial and material support, culminating in promoting jihad in Afghanistan. The groups of moderates, progressives, and the Left were left out as untouchables." May 29, 2010.

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