

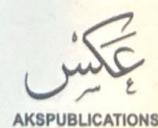


VIEWS, INTERVIEWS *And* PICTORIAL



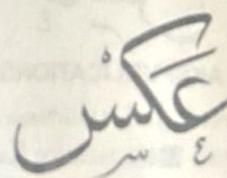
BY
Naeem Tahir

EDITOR
Mehran Tahir



VIEWS, INTERVIEWS AND PICTORIAL

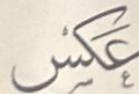
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Foreword



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 un biased manner. It is also an effort by him to correct many a falsehood 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

Foreword



Naeem Tahir is a very well-known name. I knew him as the secretary, Pakistan Arts Council Alhamra, Lahore when he was appointed to this position after the departure of Mr. Faiz Ahmed Faiz. I was teaching in the Law College and was actively writing stage dramas. Naeem Tahir has continued in life very positively and distinguished himself in many fields. To start with, his development of Alhamra Art Centre Lahore, Development of National Art Gallery Islamabad (PNCA), his active association with PTV as Principal Central Television Institute, his contribution to extend Pakistan Television reach to USA and his leadership in Cultural Exchanges and Cultural Diplomacy have been known. He is also Chairman of Unesco Theatre Institute for Pakistan. However, Naeem Tahir has wider experience of life. He has been a successful exporter and Vice President of Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers Association, a successful Industrialist and Chairman of Pakistan Fruit Processors Association and in close contact with politics.

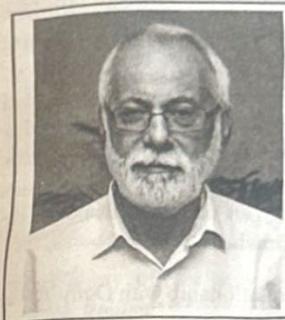
His passion for writing and research has continued all along. His most important research work is one the Pre-History of the People of Indus Valley and he epic stage play "Sail e Rawan" the struggle of freedom in the subcontinent. He continued to write for Radio, TV, and Newspapers/Magazines. He became a valuable contributor as a weekly columnist in *The Daily Times*.

This present collection primarily contains his articles written in the Daily Times since June 2011. I usually read his comments with interest. His writings are objective, constructively critical, and occasionally have a touch of humour and satire. His style makes his articles readable and enjoyable at the same time. With the wealth of experience and exposure to life, he brings a lot to the reader and it is good that at his mature age he has decided to share his experience and thoughts with the readers in Pakistan and abroad. I also love listening to his rare recordings of the verses of Allama Iqbal in unique recitation and musical composition guided by distinguished men like Mr. Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum.

I am sure Naeem Tahir's writings will be read with interest and will be very useful as a chronicle of his times.

Dr. Javed Iqbal

Naeem Tahir in his New Avatar



To my and previous generations of Pakistanis, Naeem Tahir needs no introduction, although I am not equally confident of succeeding generations' 'memory'. So just in case, let me summarise. Naeem Tahir has been a central figure in the cultural life of Pakistan, stretching back to the 1950's a period from which I too can trace his association with my family. When a pioneering group of intellectuals comprising Imtiaz Ali Taj, Mumtaz Daultana, Abdur Rehman Chughtai and my later father, Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice S.A. Rahman decided to set up Alhamra in Lahore in 1949 as an arts centre (currently called the Lahore Arts Council but popularly still remembered as Alhamra), they paved the way for succeeding generations of arts practitioners to enrich the cultural life of the city and the country, amongst whom Naeem Tahir's contributions over the decades to stage, radio, television and film as an actor, producer, director and trainer deserve pride of place.

Little did I know that I was destined to play a small part in helping Naeem Tahir, who was a familiar figure to me and my siblings when we were growing up, to emerge in yet another avatar – a newspaper columnist. Given his rich record in the cultural field (and subsequently his success as a businessman), it seemed to my ever-curious mind, given to new and interesting departures, that the readers of *Daily Times* may have a lot to learn from Naeem Tahir's rich and varied life experience. I therefore, took opportunistic advantage of Naeem Tahir's visit to me not long after I took over as Editor, *Daily Times*, to invite him to write for us. Normally I would have been expected to suggest that he focus on cultural themes given his background, but I am always reluctant to confine writers to one or a few fields. I therefore gave him carte balance to range over a universal array of subjects, following wherever the muse may take him.

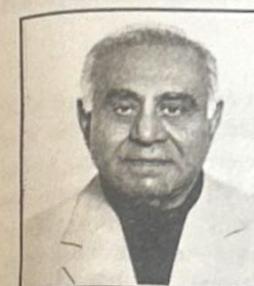
The book in your hand is the second volume of a collection of Naeem Tahir's columns published in *Daily Times*. The first volume, published in 2011, covered his contributions from the beginning, March 2010, till May 2011. The present volume takes up from where the previous one left off, and brings the collection up to date by covering the period June 2011 to November 2013. There is little

cause for alarm on the part of his readers though. Naeem Tahir's association with Daily Times remains an ongoing enterprise. As to the content of his writing, it is difficult always to find an overarching or underlying thread in a collection of weekly columns, inherently an exercise focused on the 'here and now', or what is conventionally referred to as current issues. Only writers with an 'institutional memory' of the country's history, trajectory, and therefore problems can be expected to do justice to inherently complex issues that defy easy and superficial attempts at a solution. To this task, Naeem Tahir brings a richly varied palette capable of painting in vivid colours the lay of the land and the horizon beyond the obvious. The spread of his columns encompasses the most pertinent and serious problems confronting Pakistan as well as nooks and crannies obscured from the general public's views. He plunges into the crises confronting the country, amongst which must be counted, first and foremost, terrorism and the extremist mindset that is the sworn enemy of an enlightened, an educated, cultured and civilized society. Our past claims to such a description can only be characterized today as, at best, a distant memory. Traversing this intellectual and cultural desert, Naeem Tahir's pieces are evocative of and testimony to all that is wrong with our governance, growing intolerance, cultural withering and a descent into an abyss of chaos. None of this will be unfamiliar to readers, but what marks Naeem Tahir out from the doom and gloom tribe (whose numbers grow exponentially by the day) is his optimism, belief in the future of the country, and determination to play his role as a tribune of the people and their rights. And as noted above, this project is far from finished.

I can only wish Naeem Tahir more power to his elbow, a continuing relationship with *Daily Times* and its readers, and good health and long life to persevere on the path taken.

Rashid Rehman
Editor *Daily Times*

Preface



It was in the third week of February 2010 that I called Mr. Rashed Rehman; the newly appointed editor of the *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 newspaper 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 Review'.

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 next 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.

February 18, 2007

Samjhota Express

The Samjhota Express started from Delhi's historical Railway Station on that night. It was almost full with people who had a reason to go to Pakistan. Some were returning after a visit to relatives, some came for marriages, some went sightseeing, some visited ancestral homes, some explored business opportunity and some were visiting shrines. There was happiness, nostalgia, devotion and business interests. Journey from Delhi to Lahore is no ordinary journey; there are emotions attached to it. "Samjhota Express" it is no ordinary train either. It is the symbol of the ambivalent attitude of the people of the two countries who keep playing 'hot' and 'cold' with each other. The relations turn good or bad because of the vested interests. Some political parties, particularly the Hindutva supporters, are not interested in peace between the two countries. The Hindutva sentiments are in line with the extreme rightists in Pakistan and the Taliban mindsets. Both draw their strength from hate and fear and propagate these to keep their vote bank intact. Hindutva wants a religious Hindu identity for India, one cast 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 of normalizing the relations between India and Pakistan in 2007 were against the Hindutva theme and needed to be stopped. So, the plan to sabotage the very symbol of friendship and accord, the train called "Samjhota".

The "Samjhota Express" train of 18th February 2007 was to go on its journey of friendship just one day before the Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan was to continue their dialogue in India and to further the process of normalization. From the point of view of Hindutva terrorists this was the appropriate time to act. They planned to blow off the train and blow off 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, the 'operators' left the train near Panipat, and the bombs exploded soon after their departure. It could have been a timing device or a remote action. Bombs exploded in two bogies and an inferno of fire burnt 70 persons alive! They could not jump out as the doors were locked to meet immigration requirements! The passengers in the

bogie number 10 and 11 were reduced to ashes. The unfortunate victims included children, women, young and old persons, all Muslims. Five or six Hindus or Sikhs also perished. Among the survivors were a husband and wife whose 5 children got burnt. The terrorist celebrated their success. The talks of friendship received a setback but later the two governments showed remarkable determination to continue the parleys.

The Hindutva associates in Sangh Parivar, with immense clout in media and Indian government, flashed the news worldwide that the act of terror was 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 it appears a handiwork of 'Islamic terrorists' from Pakistan. Many believed it because terrorism got associated with Pakistan since 9/11.

This could have been the end of the story, but it was not to be. Haryana Police, in whose jurisdiction the terror had occurred responded fast and tried to follow the 'leads' provided by the Hindutva set up. 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 since five years! They searched for Ghulam Rasul Kashmiri and found out that he had already been jailed for over a month for travelling without ticket! The Hindutva/Sangh Parivar story collapsed. Haryana police then traced the explosive because they found some unexploded suitcases from the train. The analysis of the explosive stated that this was the material used by Indian Army in Kashmir. The Haryana police was getting close to the truth. Truth could have blown up the whole façade and Hindutva terrorist plans would have come to the 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 Haryana Police. It was dumped for some time and they thought that they could happily live ever after.

Then again it was not to be. Tired of inconclusive and suspect investigations of the acts of terror the Indian media started to raise its voice so much 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 cases of terror of the recent past in India. They looked at the Haryana police record which pointed towards some Hindutva groups and soon the evidence was provided by the explosions at Malegaon Mosque on 27th of Ramadan in 2008. The bombs, in this case, were planted on the motorcycle used by Pragya Singh Sadvi an activist of 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. Survival of Karkare and his team meant disaster for these people; his death could be a savior. So Karkare got killed during the Mumbai carnage! But he had actually filed the case in the

court. By now the Indian Government has verified that Samjhota tragedy was the handiwork of Indian terrorists. Swami Asimanand, one of the accused, has spilled the beans. Names of Col. Srikant Purohit and others have come to be known. Some facts of Samjhota tragedy are now public knowledge.

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

July 06, 2012

Pakistan and its Diaspora

The Pakistani Diaspora refers to overseas Pakistanis, who, as Pakistani citizens, migrated to another country. According to Pakistan government, there are around seven million Pakistanis living abroad, with a vast majority of them residing in the Middle East, Europe and North America. Pakistani Diaspora sent remittances to Pakistan of over 13 billion dollars in 2012. That money was welcomed.

Who are these people and why do they leave the country of birth? A majority of these are young persons, but some are of mature age, and some seniors. The young are those who have some qualification, succeed in obtaining respectable jobs in a competitive job market and were found to be an asset by the employers in a developed country. Several of these have made a name for themselves, contributed to the business of their employers and to the economy of the country of their residence. Some have reached top positions. There are others who have established themselves as entrepreneurs and run successful businesses. Few of these flow in the mainstream of the foreign society, and some create a small island for themselves and survive. However, most of them dream of their country and regret that their talent could not be absorbed in their own country. Many of these are doctors, engineers, attorneys, economists, accountants, finance managers and developers. Almost all are nostalgic about Pakistan and given an equal or near equal environment of work and they may prefer their country of birth to work, for its development and for their own fulfilment.

There is another group of persons that is, in fact, larger in number. These people are hardworking individuals who generally hold lower or middle positions or work as labour force. Almost all of these people send remittances to their parent country and hope to return one day. The foreign currency they send is the backbone of Pakistan's economy. Every year \$ 13 billion is a large amount. Without these remittances, the economy of Pakistan will face even more hardship. We ~~badly~~ accept their money. If they come back to the country and invest here, then they are also ~~welcome~~.

~~T~~ if they feel that they can contribute in the management of national affairs and contest elections, ~~their~~ eyebrows are raised. Suddenly, their 'loyalty' becomes suspect. What about all those who do ~~not~~ take dual nationalities but still keep their assets in other countries? Are the millionaires who ~~not~~ taken Pakistan's money out and kept it out more patriotic? The Diaspora works and sends its

very hard-earned money at the cost of their comfort to look after the needs of their compatriots. Who is more patriotic? Do the so-called patriotic legislators not take an oath and do not remember a word of it a few minutes later? Are they all serving national interest over and above their personal interests?

The worst situation that can be labelled against the oath taking of a dual national is in the case of a conflict of interest between the two countries. Let us look at the reality. Most of the Diaspora is in the countries that are friendly to Pakistan and boast of commonality of interest. Even in case of a strong conflict, the situations are resolved in the best interest of both countries. Where is the conflict? Are we afraid of the Indians coming and sabotaging Pakistan's interest? So let it be clarified: India does not allow dual nationality, so there is no case of concern on this count.

Let us look from the point of view that the individuals of Diaspora who may want to contest an election in Pakistan would bring with them the experience and exposure of the system of more developed countries. Therefore, they are likely to contribute positively in decision-making. They can also be of help with their contacts in the other country. This influence can help in trade as well as political understanding. It also needs to be remembered that if such persons enter the country by invoking their rights under NICOP, and not on a 'visa', then, they acquire the 'resident' right in Pakistan. Therefore, they should enjoy all rights without suspicion.

What do other countries do with their Diaspora? Most of the other countries lay down no restrictions. The reasons are obvious. Then where is the opposition coming from? Is it a sense of insecurity, because a Diaspora candidate is likely to be more competent? The Diaspora candidate is very likely to be more educated and with a better understanding of how more developed countries manage their affairs, while some traditional candidate does not even want to graduate from a university. This is a strange contradiction. How many times have the elected really cared about the basic individual rights as guaranteed by the constitution? Have they really protected these rights for the masses? They have hardly ever done so. But, when it comes to entering a legislative body by the Diaspora, they are reminded of this right. And how do the illiterate 'legislators' consider themselves competent to make laws? With no or little education, the best they can claim to understand are the wishes of a certain portion of the voters of their constituency. I say a 'portion', because generally, the winner does not have the majority votes unless it was a one-on-one contest and a 100 percent turnout of voters happened. Impossible. Let us face it: most of those elected are representative of a minority and in many cases, they owe their success to strong-arm tactics. In my opinion, the restriction on the Diaspora to participate in politics and contest election is neither justified nor fair. In fact, it could be harmful.

A ray of hope does exist though. In a recent press report, Mr Zardari and Altaf Hussain have agreed to support equal rights for the Diaspora. These two leaders have the track record of getting things done. Political differences apart, one would wish them success in making the appropriate change in the constitution.

Agreed, Waziristan needs development, but it is needed, evenly, in all areas of Pakistan. If the offer is made to Waziristan terrorists, then the hope that there will be ultimate peace to compensate the 'investment cost' is far from reality. The example will be followed by other 'Have-Nots', including Punjabi Taliban, as a successful blackmail tool. Terror will continue. All that the rebels need are guns, which will be supplied by Pakistan's enemies easily. If this continues then what else is a civil war? What will be the future of Pakistan?

Don't the peaceful citizens and those who subject themselves to the Constitution of the country deserve these facilities before Taliban do? Particularly the healthcare and quality education! The Taliban should in fact pay a price for the reign of terror they unleashed. Only those Taliban and the residents of Waziristan deserve some facilities that convince the nation of being law abiding.

Why only the born-again ex-terrorist are rewarded? If they do not prove their loyalty beyond doubt, then State should apply full force and clear the country of its enemies.

The Chief of Army Staff should make sure that the reward is only available to those who are peaceful, and who respect and adhere to the Constitution of Pakistan. Otherwise the Chief will risk being remembered as a major player in this 'Surrender'. With the history of excellent achievements for the defense of Pakistan our Armed Forces cannot, and should not, let the country set an example for others to organize rebellions and blackmail for concessions.

November 08, 2013

Reshma, melody from 'Wilderness'.

Reshma's voice had that amazing quality as if it was emerging from a wilderness. Her voice engulfed the listener and surrounded it in a melody. She was born in 1947 at Bikaner, Rajasthan in the same village as Mehdi Hassan. She migrated with her family to Pakistan. In time this girl from gypsy singers attained such fame that she was invited to India. Late Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi offered her citizenship and promised to name the major road to her village as the 'Reshma Road'. She politely, in her humorous but rustic manner, thanked and refused by saying "I was a piece of 'taat' (coarse rough cloth for cleaning), Pakistan made me Reshma, (made of silk). I belong to my Pakistan".

I happen to be a witness to her early days. Luckily, I was at a place which was the focus of all cultural and artistic development after independence. It was then known as Pakistan Arts Council 'ALHAMRA'. Now the name has been changed to 'Lahore Arts Council Alhamra'. It is still at the same place ie 68, The Mall Lahore only the word 'Pakistan' has been replaced by 'Lahore'! Pakistan Arts Council was the first organization for the revival of arts after independence. The other organization to follow was, similar in name, in Dacca except the word 'Alhamra'. 'Alhamra' was inaugurated by the Governor General of Pakistan, Khwaja Nazimuddin on 10th of December 1949. The occasion was an exhibition of the works of A.R. Chughtai. The distinguished founder members including Justice S.A. Rehman, Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, Mumtaz Daulatana, Zafarul Ahsan, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and others were present. 'Alhamra' later grew to become a place, where all artists, from performing arts and visual arts, visited almost every day. They sat under the tall trees or on the benches in the subsidized canteen. They sipped tea and talked for hours. This was the ambience of collective exchange of thoughts and a creative process which enriched the minds and spurred the movement of cultural revival of a new nation, and groomed those who became big names and were later respected as 'legends'.

Several years later when I assumed the responsibility of the organization, after the retirement of Mr. Faiz Ahmed Faiz, a dedicated young researcher Mr. Qayum decided to carry out research on

the traditional puppets and puppeteers of Pakistan and I was glad to extend organizational support. Mostly the traditional puppeteers came from around Multan with some young girls singing for accompaniment. Singing started particularly when the famous puppet 'Gohar Jan' began her dance in the court of the Moghul King. It was the usual routine and the puppeteers had a 'Banjara' singing girl accompanying them. In the early sixties of the last century some music lovers noticed that the playback singer to 'Gohar Jan' had a good, noticeable voice.

Some years later, still in 60s of the last century, the late Salim Gillani the Station Director at Radio Pakistan Lahore planned a music concert with me at the Alhamra. I remember it was in the lawn which now is turned into the canteen area of the new building. The guests came and started occupying their seats. Salim Gilani was busy rehearsing with a very simple looking girl in a room, upstairs in the old building. It was a new singer he was trying to coach for public singing. A little later the concert started. Salim Gilani stood in the wings to indicate, with his pointing fingers' the proper point in music and rhythm, for the singer to start. Overall result was amazing. The audience was spell bound with the quality of the singer's voice.

This was the first concert of the great 'Reshma' to be

A new voice of amazing distinction was to join the list of great singers like Farida Khanum, Nur Jehan, Iqbal Bano and their colleagues. Reshma had a distinct and different quality. In time she mastered the lessons initiated by Salim Gilani. She turned from a gypsy singer to a Prima Dona!

Reshma rose in popularity. Her voice was melodious, it had a rare quality of clarity and strength. Her melody engulfed and seemed to resound in the air and in the fields. This came natural to her because she had grown up singing in the open in the 'Banjara' style. No other singer at that time had risen from such beginning to stardom.

Reshma was, a person, most pleasant to be with. She joked, told stories and she was simplicity incarnated. She did not put-up false pretences, she took pride in her humble beginning and treated the memory as her strength rather than embarrassment. She made fun of her own self when being treated as a VIP in local and foreign tours. She was loved, respected and almost adored by persons like Nur Jehan and her contemporaries. Reshma did not have an iota of pride or audacity. She had the greatest of God's gift; Contentment. So she lived, and so she departed. May God rest her soul in peace?

Reshma's admirers will find it hard to reconcile with the loss. In her style she was unique. In her last years of her activity she visited Islamabad. Gen (Rtd) Syed Pervez Musharraf was the President of Pakistan in those times. He was a connoisseur and patron of arts. He extended all the facilities, support and respect to Reshma and asked me to make sure that she is looked after. She spent some hours with me in the National Council of Arts, Islamabad. *She was at her best, she hummed. She sang in the hall, she joked, narrated funny experience of her foreign tours where women drove*

cars and according to her, she couldn't even drive a bicycle! She was loving, charming and simple. She had no pretences. She generated a trail of rustic voices in female singers in India and Pakistan.

Reshma will not go 'unsung'. Reshma will be remembered for a long time.

November 16, 2013

Peace talks and Hypocrisy

Hakeemullah Mehsud was struck by a drone and died. This time it was real and not a rumour. He is in fact history. The aftermath of his death revealed many realities that need to be noted.

On the death of Mehsud, more noise was made by some politicians than the killer drone did with its missile or even by the clan of terrorists making protests. The worthy Interior Minister has been in the lead and was closely followed, almost neck and neck, by Mr Imran Khan. Mr Interior Minister seemed to be trying to prove that he was 'more loyal than the king', i.e. Nawaz Sharif, and Mr Khan is hellbent upon confirming his image as a Taliban apologist.

The Interior Minister was so upset that he was willing to place (in the public eye) the US-Pak relationship on the line. The Prime Minister acted with more grace and did not show his reaction. Surprisingly, he did not lose his cool. Was the Interior Minister trying to upstage the Prime Minister? It could be. They have been saying it often that 'anything is possible in politics' (this is certainly true of the Pakistani brand of politics). The Interior Minister's greatest admirer, surprisingly, was found in Mr Khan, who wholeheartedly praised the former's speech in the National Assembly. However, reports indicated that the National Assembly members were 'not amused' by Mr Khan's rhetoric of stopping NATO supplies. More recently, Mr Khan has not been taking up the subject of NATO supplies, as he must have realised the impact of ground realities. Perhaps the most revealing factor is the growing lack of credibility of Mr Khan and his leadership.

One needs to think about Mehsud. Who was he? What did he stand for? Do the so-called 'peace talks with the Taliban' actually suffer from his being eliminated? Mehsud was against any negotiated settlement and the real stumbling block in the way of anyone who desired peace. 'Peace' was counterproductive for him and his sponsors. His sources of funding would dry up. No one would spend a penny on him if he was trying to strengthen the Pakistani nation. His supply of arms would stop. The share from drug smuggling and gun running would stop. His status as a warlord would end. He was successfully chastening the terror outfit under the Islamist garb and an atmosphere of peace would let people think and may even help them learn the true Quranic lessons. No. Peace would be fatal for all his sponsors, supporters and financers. The whole game of destabilising Pakistan and using its weaknesses would fail. Therefore, no response was

forthcoming to the offer generated by the All Parties Conference (APC). The government either did not understand, or it wanted to show to the mainland political associates of the Taliban that it was trying. The two political parties, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had contested elections on certain factors, one being on the negotiations for peace with the Taliban. It suited the Taliban and their supporting political parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Jamiat-i-Ulema-e-Islam as well. The alliance of the Taliban and the main political parties in Pakistan was suitable to the real sponsors of terrorism during the election campaign. It provided time for further preparations and to develop new strategies. But the government had to take steps to deliver 'peace' to the nation after the election victory. The whole drama of the APC was played and the Taliban invited for talks.

Promptly, the offer of talks was ridiculed by the Taliban. They called it non-serious and meaningless. Then they added injury to the insult by attacking in Swat and killing a major general and a colonel in an ambush.

The likes of Chaudhry Nisar, the interior minister, must have wondered where to hide their embarrassed faces.

Next, a lesson was to be taught to Imran Khan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, and the most dastardly attack on the church was conducted, killing hundreds of innocent men, women and children.

I am inclined to think that these attacks were made by special back-up units planted within the Taliban by the sponsors of terror. They wanted to ensure the failure of the 'peace' talks. All Taliban groups could not be privy to the real agenda of the sponsors of terror. Thus the 'special units' acted to ensure the agenda of 'sponsors'.

The government quietly offered the 'terms of peace', which were more like terms of surrender, as I have written in an earlier article. But nothing made any difference. Even the 'surrender' was not enough! The APC parties were stunned and quiet.

Hakeemullah Mehsud wanted to have nothing to do with the negotiations. But Mehsud was also on the hit list of the US, in addition to that of the Pakistan army. He was a sworn enemy of Pakistan and its armed forces. He had attacked the army establishment, including the GHQ. He had escaped attacks on him. But the day had come. A US drone spotted him and Hakeemullah Mehsud was no more.

This was suddenly seen as a face saving opportunity by the Interior Minister and the APC parties. They could shift the blame for the failure of the talks to the US drone attack. Hence, they made as much noise as they could.

All hypocrisy and cover up.

The nation must understand that there cannot be any negotiated peace, as it does not help the purpose of the terrorists. The only option for the Pakistani nation is to unite and support the armed forces as one united country, one nation, to eliminate insurgency and the terrorists. Then remove

the genuine grievances of the people in the deprived area. The writ of the government should be enforced and the 'B' areas should be all equally and fairly treated as part of one country.

December 2013. "RADIO" The Real Pioneer

Broadcasting in Lahore started in a small way with a transmitter installed in the YMCA building on the Mall. This was in 1928 i.e the previous century. It was later shifted to the house owned by Sir Fazle Hussain near 'Simla Pahari', on the road leading to the Governor's house, in 1937. It was at this location where broadcasting stars were born before independence and after independence. At the historical inauguration on Dec.16, 1937 the 'days artists' were Ustad Barkat Ali Khan, Inayat Bai Dheruwali and Gohar Sultan. Talker was Sir Sheikh Abdul Qadir and the announcer was S.A. Hameed. The Lahore station was on its way to give to the subcontinent most of the great performing artists who made their name and reached stardom.

In retrospect the broadcasting came to Indian sub-continent in March 1926 when The Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC), a private Company was formed. On 23rd July, 1927 IBC started a station at Bombay, and made the beginning of organized broadcasting in the sub-Continent. It was followed by Lahore radio station in 1928. Bombay and Lahore were at that time the hub of performing arts. Lahore had the additional advantage of being a city of intellect and education, so it deserved, on merit, this pioneering role. In March 1935 Government of India created the Office of Controller of Broadcasting under the Department of Industries and Labour. In August of same year Mr. Lionel Fielden assumed charge of first Controller of Broadcasting and in 1936 Delhi radio station was opened. Mr. A.S Bokhari Station Director Delhi became Deputy Controller of broadcasting on July, 1936. Mr A.S. Bokhari was a close friend and college fellow of Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj from the Government College. They were both known writers and A.S. Bokhari used the pen name 'Patras'.

On June 8th 1936 the name of Indian State Broadcasting Service was changed to 'AIR' or 'All India Radio'.

Lahore was the centre of artistic movements particularly the performing arts. Around Lahore lived-persons like Om Parkash, Uma Kayshap (later filmstar 'Kamini Kaushal'), Balraj Sahini, Dev Anand, Shamshad Begum, Surinder Kaur, Malika Pukhraj, Poet Hafiz Jallandhri, who all had a stint

with Lahore Radio at some time or the other. Commercial film had started in Lahore. There were several studios churning out films. Even the first international film of silent era, 'The loves of a Moghal Prince' based on Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj's 'Anarkali' had been released was made in Lahore with the partnership of UFA company of Germany. Unfortunately, the film is untraceable though its posters and credits are seen on internet. It shows Imtiaz Ali Taj in it as an actor also, along with Mr. Rafi Peer and 'Patras'.

The live theatre movement was still alive and the period of Agha Hashar and others was not yet entirely over. But with the decline of traditional theatre companies the talent looked at film and radio as their future sponsors. The situation was ripe in Lahore and almost all distinguished and talented writers and performers, particularly Musicians and actors, started to get associated with 'Radio'. Radio had a large reach; it could be heard anywhere and everywhere. If the performer or the production was good every household would recognize it. Stars from radio began to emerge. The popularity of the 'Radio' grew. To own a 'Radio Set' was a matter of prestige. The popularly called 'Radio Set' was placed at a place of prominence in the house and listening to radio was a daily routine. It gave news, music, drama, talks, features and a lot more. The Lahore Radio had a pick of writers, directors, actors and directors employed with it. The great advantage of the presence of this distinguished group was fully availed by the participants. For actors the perfection in diction was ensured. A team of experts checked the pronunciations. They were helped in understanding the plays and the character they played. Since every emotion was to be communicated through voice only, the actors had to take up the challenge and learn to use, modify, or completely change their voice persona for the character. Sultan Khosat the veteran actor was known to have played normal male characters as well as the child 'Ulteypultey' and many times as an old woman. Mohni Das (later Mohini Hameed) was versatility at its best. She was an actress who could hold your attention by her vocal expression for every minute she was on air. She sang for children as 'Apam Shamim' and copeered programs for children. The tradition of storytelling to children was later upheld by Iffat Sultana. During the turbulent times of August 1947 Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj rose to the occasion and Lahore Radio played a great role of social service. He started the program "Pakistan HamaraHae". It was meant to communicate with the migrating multitude. He volunteered to link the program with field service of recovering abducted women and joined the teams to do so. Through this program he appealed for donations of the articles desperately needed by refugees. The success of the appeals was such that materials were over supplied. The leader of the caliber of Gandhi himself congratulated Mr. Taj on this service through 'Radio' and wished Taj was an Indian! Mr. Taj later continued his social message in his talks 'Panchminut ka liyae' a series of 5 minute message.

I was associated with Radio in Lahore much later, in mid-fifties, and I found it a great learning experience. I was lucky to be in the setup of those who still upheld the old traditions. At that time Mr. Mehmood Nizami was the director. There was Razi Tirmazi, Izhar Kazmi, Ch. Bashir, Shad Amritsari, Raja Farooq Ali Khan, Aminur Rehman, Bazle Haq Mehmood and a host of others.

There were also very knowledgeable announcers/compères like Akhlaq Ahmed Dehlvi who responded to listeners letters and Mustafa Ali Hamadani who made the first announcement at the moment of creation of Pakistan and Mohyuddin. On top of it there were some distinguished producers from 'outside' like Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, Rafi Peerzada, Zia Mohyuddin, Ishfaq Ahmed (historical 'Talqeen Shah') for drama productions. All of these people provided me with a learning opportunity and enabled me to broadcast from most of Pakistan's Radio Stations.

Music was perhaps the greatest of Radio's attraction. Listeners could get everything they wanted. Classical, popular, or devotional music, all were available. Roshan Ara Begum, Nazakat Ali/Salamat Ali Khan, Amanat Ali/Fateh Ali Khan, Iqbal Bano, Farida Khanam, Umrao Zia Begum, Instrumentalists Sharif Khan 'Poonchwaley', HyderBuksh, Shaukat Hussain, Sain Marna, Babu Khan, Siraj Ahmed Qureshi, and Kaley Khan, and the actors like Sheikh Iqbal, Mohammad Husain, Haseeb Malik, Mrs Haseeb Malik, Sabira Sultana, Khurshid Begum, S.M. Saleem, are only a few names amongst a galaxy. Ofcourse not forgetting singer Reshma who was entirely the discovery of Mr. Salim Gilani at Lahore from amongst the gypsy singers.

I recall an incident about Sain Marna. He was a 'Saeen' completely lost in his own world but no one could match his recitals of 'IK-Tara', the single stringed instrument. At one occasion he was booked as an 'Artist of the Day' for a particular day of the month. He was to appear in several chunks throughout that day. Saeen Marna came to the gate of the 'Radio Pakistan' on that day, and took a paan from the vender at the gate as usual. The vender congratulated him for being the 'artist of the day' as an honor. 'Saeen' was pleased and happy at the honor, but he disappeared and the producers couldn't find him anywhere near about! The radio producers had to make emergency alternate arrangements; the Director Mehmood Nizami was also very upset. Three days later Saeen Marna made his appearance wearing a very decorative, fancy 'kurta' (shirt) and ready to perform! Nizami gave him a bit of his mind for having disappeared. Saeen Marna did not understand the administrative hassle he had caused and the subsequent attitude of the Director. He said to the director 'I don't like this. I went to have a special kurta made for your program and still you are angry! Now I am not going to play for you, I will sit outside the studio and play in the lawns for grass hoppers and not for you!' Mr. Nizami realized that Saeen Marna has his own world and it did not relate to the realities of administration. But Saeen Marna was one and only of his caliber. So Mr. Nizami rushed to the engineers, laid special cables and sent microphone to the location in the lawns where 'Marna' was playing for 'grass hoppers' completely absorbed in his creativity! He may not have even realized if he was being broadcast! But Nizami had grown beyond personal vanity and provided the experience to the listeners. Such was the relationship between the team of administrators and creators.

Later in 60s Yasmin Tahir introduced the Western Music in association with Mr. Kroders. Yasmin also copeered 'Fauji Bhaiyon Ka Program' and the first 'call in' audience participation program, '52292'. It was introduced by Mr. Salim Gillani and assigned to Yasmin. Yasmin introduced the new FM 101 programming for Radio, and copeered it, and finally, the daily 'Sat Rang', during

her 30 years dedicated services to Radio." Sat Rang" was a unique program of about one hour daily, and Yasmin was the single compere talking to the listener as a friend.

There were many other programs of top popularity like 'Dehati Bhaiyon ka liya' with Mirza Sultan Beg, as 'Nizam Din', in his inimitable coarse voice representing the rustic tiller of the lands. Also not to be forgotten is writer/humorist/actor's 'Qazi ji' of Shaukat Thanvi.

Lahore Radio even maintained its contact with listeners in India through a regular program produced by Riaz Mehmood.

The memories of the 'Radio experience' are unending.

Great artists were introduced and developed by it for its audience. There is hardly any great name in literature or performing arts who does not know a gratitude to the 'Radio' for its support.

The traditions of the old 'Radio Station' from the Fazle Hussain building changed with a move to the new 'Broadcasting House'. I made some recordings for the archives with the cooperation of its dedicated Director Mr. Shamsuddin Butt. The great Sufi Tabassum, A.Hameed, Intizar Hussain, Nasir Kazimi and other colleagues like Akram Butt, Islam Shah, Raza Kazmi, Yasmin Tahir, continued to uphold the great traditions for some time. But there were new challenges. The greatest being the TV in 1964. The role of Lahore Radio during the war of 1965 and Nur Jehan's voluntary contribution are part of its proud history.

The old guard has mostly faded out now. But still radio has such lovingly dedicated individuals as its Director General Ms. Samina Pervez, Director Programs Ms Nayyar Jamal, and Director Lahore Station Mr. Raza Kazmi that the outlook is optimistic. It is an expression of pride, and dedication that they have decided to celebrate the anniversary of Radio in Lahore. I congratulate them and they need to be heartily congratulated by all old and new associates. 'Radio' has a huge reservoir of creative artists, big names of past and present are Radio's assets and a strong bond still exists between all of them. These are such assets which cannot be claimed by any other institution. It is the 'Radio' which provided the stream of creative individuals to Pakistan TV and it sustained it for a long time. At the time in late 60s when I became the first Pakistani Principal of Pakistan Television Institute I found that most of the inductees had a background of radio broadcasting. It was true at all stations including Dacca where I conducted courses on sports coverage for TV. I often wonder why the Pakistan Broadcasting Service did not start a TV network of its own as the BBC did. It is still not too late. Radio can support a TV network better than many an upstarts in the field. It also needs to discover new avenues like cyber space and electronic social media.

There is no doubt Lahore 'Radio' is the 'MOTHER' of the electronic media in Pakistan and it deserves the respect and support that is due to a 'mother'.

Driving from Walnut Creek to San Francisco on freeway 680 I could not help noticing hundreds of crosses in white on the slope of a hill near Lafayette train station. I was curious and wanted to know more. The Lafayette Hillside Memorial is a collection of crosses, accompanied by a large sign in Lafayette, California. The crosses are intended to serve as a memorial for US soldiers killed in the Iraq war, with the sign containing a running total of the death count. Prominently displayed was the figure 6,815 in December 2013. The disabled and injured are not included in this count. If the number of dead American soldiers in other conflicts like Afghanistan, Yemen and other places like Libya, Lebanon, Syria, etc are added, the toll could be staggering.

January 3, 2014

6,815 dead so far

Driving from Walnut Creek to San Francisco on freeway 680 I could not help noticing hundreds of crosses in white on the slope of a hill near Lafayette train station. I was curious and wanted to know more. The Lafayette Hillside Memorial is a collection of crosses, accompanied by a large sign in Lafayette, California. The crosses are intended to serve as a memorial for US soldiers killed in the Iraq war, with the sign containing a running total of the death count. Prominently displayed was the figure 6,815 in December 2013. The disabled and injured are not included in this count. If the number of dead American soldiers in other conflicts like Afghanistan, Yemen and other places like Libya, Lebanon, Syria, etc are added, the toll could be staggering.

Death of dear ones leaves scars on the emotions, whether you are American or non-American. The disabled and injured continue to suffer for long. What happens to the dear ones after the departed soul is indeed painful and tragic. If those dead who fought the American soldiers or died in crossfire or friendly fire or in collateral damage are all added up, the figure may run into several thousand. As an example, the aftermath of American actions in Afghanistan and its fallout in Pakistan has left over 40,000 dead. These 40,000 also had families and loved ones. Equally tragic are the fractures in the fabric of society of these countries, which are unending. The byproduct: suicide bombings, the promotion of Salafism and extremists, Islamist emergence and so on. These tragic developments continue to take their toll in fracturing settled societies.

The hill overlooking State Route 24 in Contra Costa County is owned by 81-year-old Louise Clark, widow of Johnson Clark, a local developer and World War II veteran. Clark and Jeffrey Heaton, a long-running anti-war protestor, erected the monument in late 2006. It stands there inviting people to wonder if war is the only solution to human security! It questions the decision taken as a consequence of the 9/11 tragedy. The death toll of 9/11 was far less than the deaths caused in the name of securing American lives! Was it one of the worst decisions taken by politicians in the history of governance?

In the wake of 9/11, George W Bush, along with Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld, a true believer in full spectrum dominance, set out to liberate or pacify the Islamic world. The US followed Israel in assigning itself the prerogative of waging preventive war. Although depicting Saddam Hussein as an existential threat, the Bush administration also viewed Iraq as an opportunity. By destroying his regime and occupying his country, the US would signal to other recalcitrants the fate awaiting them should they mess with or defy Uncle Sam. On ground it meant you hit the other guy first, if possible. Failing that, whack him several times harder than he hit you; not just an 'eye for an eye' but both eyes, an ear, and several teeth, with a kick in the groin thrown in for good measure. The aim of these retribution operations was to send a message: screw with us and this will happen to you. This message Bush intended to convey when he ordered the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Unfortunately, Operation Iraq Freedom landed the US in a fix. The US occupation of Iraq triggered violent resistance in many areas of the Middle East. The insurgency in Iraq along with its Afghan sibling, gave the American army fits.

I am inclined to believe that a government of Democrats in USA would not have been carried away by the anger caused on 9/11. What could have been the underlying factors that forced the Republicans and their supporters to do what they did? Many analysts believe that it provided a cover for the desire to establish US hegemony over the world, particularly in the areas rich with oil resources and to have strategic advantages. George Bush made it worse by calling the retaliation a 'Crusade'. He reminded the people that the war had a religious hang up to it. The US is a large country; it could have found alternate ways of protecting its people. The huge costs borne by the taxpayer could have been diverted to internal development and improving the lot of US citizens. It could have become a model of welfare and peace. Since the decision taken to enter wars, more than a decade has passed and the drain on US resources has very adversely affected its economy. Worst of all, the US has lost its goodwill in many parts of the world and created enemies for a long time. Even the good work done by the US in other countries is not earning the goodwill it should have. Pakistan is an example.

Pakistan has perhaps suffered no less than any other country. Pakistan's problems started with Dictator Ziaul Haq's decision to enter the war in Afghanistan in support of the US policy. That was a critical time. What course would history have taken if Pakistan had not involved itself in that war? Very likely the Soviets would have gone back. In any case the emergence of fundamentalism and the Taliban may not have occurred and Pakistan could have continued as a progressive and enlightened nation. After 9/11 Pakistan was left with hardly any choice.

History records the worst decisions as well as the best decisions by the people at the highest level of governance. Such decisions determine the course of history. At the dawn of another New Year let us all take a reflective pause and learn from history. There is no better teacher for the people in governance. I pray that the leaders in Pakistan as well as the world over would realise the moral responsibility to try and make the world a better place for those living in it.

SECTION B: MATERIAL WORLD AND HUMAN BEINGS FROM PICTORIAL

February 9, 2014

Think about it (I)

How long is the 'Musharraf bashing saga' to continue? There must be a limit to irrational hatred and self-serving accusations. Where is this aggression against the former president and army chief coming from? There are the following primary groups: military haters, extreme rightists who include terrorists, Taliban, al Qaeda and similar groups, people with personal vendettas and those who jump onto the 'hate bandwagon' and enjoy 'negativity'.

The relationship of civilians with the 'uniform' is ambivalent. One factor is the symbolism of discipline. Most of the civilians in Pakistan are individualistic and do not care about discipline. Their behaviour in traffic is the most obvious example. Uniform also symbolises 'authority'. In the case of the armed forces, the authority is strong and beyond the control of the civilians. The civilians do not like that. Recall the great demand for the removal of the 'uniform' championed by Maulana

Fazlur

Rehman!

Matters were worsened by the dictatorial rule of Ziaul Haq. He destroyed the whole fibre of a free society with lashes, death penalties and the cruel judgments of the martial law courts. These courts were also rampantly corrupt to make matters worse. Lashes were ordered and, in the side rooms, bargains were made for a price to reduce the number of lashes. Worst of all the treatment meted out to Bhutto made his supporters particularly adverse to the military in general.

All the above has some validity but analysis is required. The lack of discipline in civilians is a regrettable thing and only shows how irresponsible we are as a nation. We do not observe discipline as a 'protest' or perhaps feel great only when violating the law! Show offish and heavy-handed behaviour is what landlords, politicians, the rich and powerful like to display. This is not something we can take pride in. On the other hand, a military man takes an oath to lay down his life in defence of the nation and the country. He/she protects the honour of civilians and is ready and vigilant at all times. Such civilians, who consider the duty of the military men to be just because they are paid for it, commit an almost blasphemy in my opinion. There is one life an individual has and it is too precious for any money. A shaheed (martyr) lays down his life only by the command of his heart and love for the nation and country. Civilians need to remember the services of the army men in every catastrophe, let it be war, floods, earthquakes or epidemics. It is the armed forces that respond and succeed, not the civilians. I can go on, but I do want to stress the fact that, for the health of a nation, it is important that full acknowledgment and respect be

afforded to the men in uniform. Our attitudes must change if we have to build Pakistan as a nation. Exceptions should not be made the rule. All army officers are not Ziaul Haq. Civilians are no angels; they fully collaborate with wrong doings when any army man is involved.

In the present context, the behaviour of the so-called civilians, particularly the opinion makers, the lawmakers and some lawyers, has been such that one's head hangs in shame. When some people in the nation show short-term memory and anger against their benefactor then one is reminded of the saying by Hazrat Ali (RA) "When you extend help and kindness (ehsaan) to someone then beware of his evil (shur)". Musharraf saved this country from total economic disaster, from a potential caliphate, from rampant destruction of all kinds of discipline, including legal disciplines, and raised Pakistan to the status of 'next 11' economically progressive nations. He fought against terrorists at the risk of his own life, brought respect to the green passport holder throughout the world and finally kept the currency strong enough at Rs 68 to the dollar. He raised the level of education, planned to have all major universities in the world set up campuses in Pakistan, paid attention to our rich cultural heritage and brought in foreign investments.

The angry lot against him forgets all this. All the good is forgotten and imaginary evil is remembered. People in Pakistan need to realise that leaders are a rare breed. There are very few who can put the country onto the road to progress. Musharraf did.

The next group that hates Musharraf is composed of the extreme rightists, terrorists, Taliban, al Qaeda and similar groups. At no cost would they have Musharraf. They know that their whole game will fail if Musharraf is allowed to control the destiny of the nation. This group is well organised, almost exactly on the pattern of 'Hindutva' in India. Hindutva in India has a strong presence in civil bureaucracy, very strong presence in the media, effective presence in the armed forces, educational institutions and almost complete control over the moneyed classes, and the city of Bombay. Of course, their strongest are terror wings like Abhinav Bharat, Jagran Manch, Jan Sangh, Shiv Sena and many other, large and well organised terror wings.

If one looks carefully, the Hindutva equivalent, the 'Islamists' in Pakistan, have the same pattern. Hindutva wants a total Brahmin Raj. Islamists want 'Salafi shariat'. Please take out time to look closely at what is happening to Pakistan. Musharraf is the rock the enemies want to destroy. I quote a very relevant portion of Humayun Gohar's recent article: "Pakistan is on fire. Terrorists have the run of the country while our rulers are mannequins in show windows to create the illusion that we have governments while terrorists run the store. Is Pakistan in terminal decline?" The opposition to Musharraf is no mystery. Musharraf stands to support progressive thought, economic development, the well-being of the people and the country, and he stands for Islam, not 'Islamists'.

(To be continued)

February 18, 2014

Think about it (II)

It always pays to take stock of situations and to look at one's own hangups. One can move more gracefully to one's ideal image and goals in this way. This is true of nations also. Nations achieve greatness by critically looking at themselves and carving out new goals. China is a living example. The larger interests and national causes must take precedence over personal vendettas and priorities. In the case of Musharraf, some people hold intense personal grudges and hatred. Primarily, the present prime minister and the former chief justice can be said to be in that category. There could be a host of others. If someone works hard to reconstruct, some flowers may get trampled. Musharraf tried to build the country and may have stepped on some toes but humans have been endowed by God with the ability to rise above themselves. The main people with personal vendettas are the sympathisers of the two individuals already mentioned. They are joined by others who had personal axes to grind or those who like to be identified as anti-army stalwarts.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, with the strength of largely Punjab-based support, may have matured to be farsighted and may have gotten over personal insecurities. He will need to grow even taller and get over the hurt that his period of confinement and exile caused him. Nawaz was 'dethroned' while he was close to possible 'Caliphate'. He was misled at that time by overzealous self-serving supporters; such supporters even attacked the Supreme Court but he has shown some maturity now, and one can expect major strides from him. However, as a politician, he would want to make sure that Musharraf is no more a threat to his power. I have no suggestion of a way to do this. Perhaps his rise to maturity and greater leadership quality may win over Musharraf.

As far as I know, Musharraf will help anyone who sincerely works in the interest of Pakistan and its people. He has the experience, vision and ability to determine the right course. If Nawaz Sharif has the same in mind then the only impediment in the way is 'personal vendetta'. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is being wrongly advised to proceed with a 'treason' case, which has little validity. It has no credibility because it does not fulfil constitutional requirements. It aims to isolate Musharraf and let the abettors go free. Times change and if Nawaz continues the vendetta, a day may come when he will be tried in court and the same yardsticks will be applied to him. They may even be applied on the members of the trial court and the ex-chief justice. Many jurists, including

an ex attorney general, have solid legal basis to declare the trial court and the whole process illegal, and a violation of the constitution.

Nawaz Sharif will be wiser, and respected, if he puts the national interest first. He should not be exclusive but inclusive. He should ensure that the nation is not further divided. The country's fabric is in shreds. The ethnic divide is at its extreme. Terrorists want to change the constitution and bring in Salafiism. In fact, they are paid to ensure instability and chaos. Nawaz must not alienate himself from the armed forces and ex-army men. These are very dedicated individuals and he will have their support if Musharraf is treated with the respect he deserves and are consulted to rebuild the country.

Achieving the position of prime minister is no goal in itself. The previous government hardly did anything for the people of Pakistan; it was content and proud to just be there for five years. These are no goals – it is ridiculous to consider them as satisfying. The process of democracy brings leaders to serve the country not to just roam around in grand style and show off. Nawaz has the opportunity to become a meaningful leader and not a shortsighted politician. He must identify the sycophants against Musharraf and take the larger view.

Then one also needs to look at the 'bandwagon' travellers. They are a combination of turncoats, opinionless followers of the short-term 'rising stars', fashion talkers and advantage seekers. These groups have no loyalties, philosophies or character. They will praise and praise louder than others. They will approve the person they think is a new star and will dump him/her with the same efficiency. They invariably mislead politicians. Such persons are found in every walk of life like in the media, civil services, religious groups, professionals and in civil society in general. Their goal is either a short-term benefit or to be part of the 'mainstream' of opinion. I have seen such people supporting Musharraf as loud as their throats would permit, and talking against him as soon as he was out of power. They add their voices only to increase the noise.

For serious minded and nationalist persons who have the good of the country at heart it is time to ask, "Is it not enough?" Must he be treated like Caesar? Or is that the destiny of all those who bring glory to a country and its people? No. We are not medieval Romans; we are Asians with as much a tradition as the Indus Valley. We must know better. It is time that we put an end to injustices and personal vendettas, resulting in 'anti-Musharraf' hysteria. We must recognise his remarkable contributions, rather than remember personal differences of opinion. He is a symbol of sincere leadership, army discipline and national prestige. He brought good times to the nation and confronted enemies courageously. Respect is due to him and to the armed forces of the country.

(Concluded)

Journalism and Publishing are two interrelated fields of activity. Journalism is the process of collecting, analysing, evaluating and presenting news and other information to the public. Publishing is the process of producing and distributing printed or electronic material to the public. The two fields are closely related and often overlap. Journalism is the source of news and information for publishing, while publishing is the means of disseminating news and information to the public.

April 09, 2014

Measure of Men

History is a continuous process of record making, but there are landmarks to remember. Individuals show character in unusual circumstances and show what metal are they made of! In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. *"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."*

Such a moment appeared in Pakistan's history on 31st March 2014. This was the date when Pervez Musharraf, the former President of Pakistan and also the Former chief of Army Staff was asked by the Court to appear in person in the case instituted by the Nawaz Government against him for his violation of the constitution of Pakistan. It is not appropriate for me to comment on the validity of the case because I expect the court to decide that. I do not appreciate the people, particularly the politicians, and their cronies in the media, to keep on commenting while the case is in the court. Such comments tantamount to influence the judges one way or the other.

On 31st March Pervez Musharraf was in the hospital under treatment. His doctors did not permit him to take the risk of appearing in the court. His legal team also advised against it so strongly that they refused to appear. It was a test for Pervez Musharraf. He as an individual took the decision to appear in the court. He did so at the risk of his life. He appeared in the court, because of his respect for the law, for the Constitution of Pakistan and belief in his innocence. His action is a landmark in the history of Pakistan. It is especially so because a dictator had, in late 70s, Gen. Zia, openly said 'constitution is a small bunch of papers which can be torn to 'pieces''. In total contrast Pervez Musharraf bowed before the constitution and law and set an example. Nation can take pride in this distinguished person and in itself for having such a man of courage and integrity. In his short statement he denied the charges and also made it clear that he is not a 'Ghaddar', he has been true to the oath and risked his life several times in the defense of Pakistan. March 31st will also go down in history as a day of landmarks because the bench of Judges in the court also rose to the occasion and clearly showed their resolve to uphold justice. It seemed, after a long time, that 'justice may appear to be done'. The judges reciprocated and confirmed that the case is not of 'Ghadari' even the prosecutor endorsed this, and the Bench removed all restrictions on the movement of Syed Pervez Musharraf, and allowed him to travel inside or outside the country at will as his constitutional right. The Bench also exempted him from appearing in the court.

Graces and dignity shown by Syed Pervez Musharraf was reciprocated in equal proportion by the Bench. This is the measure of great men, both the accused and those on the seat of justice. Great decisions are made by men of great character who do not bow to the 'maslehat' and behave with honor and dignity even if it is at great risk.

The Court then provided an opportunity to the Nawaz Government to stand up and reciprocate the example of honor and dignity which was established in the court on 31st March 2014. Some people use the cliché that the court threw the ball in Nawaz's court. I believe it offered a great opportunity for Nawaz, and his government to act equally gracefully and earn the respect of the nation by removing the name of Pervez Musharraf from that questionable Exit Control List (ECL) and let Musharraf travel to meet with his ailing mother who is aged 95 and is admitted in a Sharjah hospital in an emergency situation. There was every reason to do so because court had clearly supported the constitutional right of the freedom of movement for Musharraf. The court had also said that he was not required to appear in the court. On top of that there was the reason of human compassion. Also to be remembered is that Musharraf had assisted the Nawaz to visit his ailing child in London and for Shahbaz to get treatment. They were issued passports on priority basis and contrary to the understanding between Syed Pervez Musharraf and the Saudi guarantors, Sharif brothers were allowed to travel to Europe and USA.

In view of the background stated above, it was generally believed that Mr. Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, will rise to the occasion. That he will read the signals of the court and the public sentiment and issue immediate orders for the lifting of the ECL and let Musharraf take the journey he needs to take. Thereafter the Prime Minister could proceed to pay attention and attend to the other matters of extreme national importance.

But this was not to be. A letter from a section officer of the Interior Ministry sent a brief letter of refusal to remove Syed Pervez Musharraf's name from ECL without giving any convincing, specific, reason!!

This refusal reflected on the strength of character of the man currently occupying the position of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

There can be explanations that Prime Minister's political party did not agree! It is also known that the two most influential members, Mr. Shehbaz Sharif and Mr. Ishaq Dar were in favour of removing the restriction of ECL. Mr. Nawaz Sharif seems to have succumbed to those who could not rise above their personal grudges, like KH. Saad Rafiq, and KH. Asif. It was an opportunity to show character, to let justice take its course, and to rise above the ordinary. Quoting Plato: *'The measure of a man is what he does with power.'*

Where would Nawaz place himself?

April 10, 2014

Taliban Trap

•Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; Humpty Dumpty had a great fall....

Under the leadership of Ch. Nisar Ali Khan, the negotiating team and the Pakistan Government have met the fate of 'Humpty Dumpty'. This is not the first time that 'politicians' have tried 'negotiations' for peace. This is also not the first time that these 'Humpty Dumpty' types have had a fall. But this time 'All the kings men and the horses' may not be able to put Humpty back together again, because 'kings horses' are reluctant and content to only 'observe'.

It is baffling that the so-called wise politicians fail to understand the strategy of the terrorist outfits. They have fallen into the trap not once but several times. But wise men like our interior Minister stay convinced that they know better! Before the month of cease fire was over, media man, Raza Roomi was attacked, Billawal was threatened, Airports came under threat and above all Mazar Qaid and Iqbal, symbols of Pakistan, are also threatened. This is as far as the fate of cease fire goes. The recent meeting between the two sides is a gross failure. Terrorists refused to release Taseer or Gilani and gave a fake list of their prisoners to the Government as homework. Maulana Samiulhaq and Ch. Nisar may put up cosmetic touches of hope, but the failure is obvious.

Since the wisdom of the politicians is not working, may be a common sense perception will help.

The Taliban/Terrorist consortium is headed by Mullah Fazlullah, who lives in the safe haven of Kunar. Kunar is the province of Afghanistan where the whole operation against Pakistan was planned under the expert advice of the top echelons of Al-Quaida in 2004. Kunar provides a safe, un-noticeable, entry into the Pakistan's Swat state area. Readers may recall how deeply the terrorists entrenched themselves in the Peochar mountains of Swat. They had several kilometer long caves in which they stored ammunition, set up a hospital, and a guerilla plus suicide training set up before these were noticed. Mullah Fazlullah is a strategist; he organized a donkey mounted mobile transmitter system for communication among his terror groups, controlled the mosques, and ordered ruthless attacks on schools. Lal Masjid strategy worked and all those released were recruited by him. He trapped the politicians into negotiations in Swat. Politicians ran begging for peace. But as soon as he had re-organized, Mullah Fazlullah threw out the Political negotiators and started the bloody onslaught in Swat valley. It was the Pakistan Army who had to be called

institution respectable or not. The members of the Parliament at this time are 'milking' the nation while the members of the Armed Forces are giving their blood to the nation!"

So far there is no sign of remorse or any admonishment from the Prime Minister. The anti-army sentiment is not new. Politicians take every opportunity to discredit them and sometime provide lip service in their favour. Same is happening now. There are a couple of statements by other ministers meant to be only anesthetics to relieve the pain caused to the soldiers. But the pain is there and the cause is the hatred nursed by the politicians because the armed Forces are the only institution which can take them to task in the line of their Constitutional duty and stop them from destroying the country. If the present government really respects the sacrifices and professional ability shown by the armed Forces then nothing short of action against the violation of constitution by some members of its political party would be satisfactory. If Gen. Raheel Sharif had not taken cognizance of his men's sentiments, he would have failed in his duty and loyalty to the troops. He, in fact, reflected the sentiments of majority of civilians as well. An opinion poll on a major TV network showed that 86% of the public felt that Armed Forces were unduly criticized.

Some politicos cry horse praising the virtue of Democracy. I wonder what the true democracy in their minds is. I am sure it is not the kind of democracy that we are experiencing. This is the result of massive rigging. The whispers are no more whispers. Imran Khan is talking about it. MQM is talking about it, Ch. Shuaat is clear about it, and so on. Yes Democracy should be respectable democracy if it reflects the true wishes of the people. The strength of democracy comes from the support of the votes of the people, not from paid agents who fill up the boxes, and not from ethnic terrorists who make people vote under oppression. I do not agree that even the worst form of democracy is good. It is a self-serving statement of those who would perpetuate the worst form.

It is a situation of emergency being faced by the nation at this moment. Politicos have failed to understand the strategies of the insurgent terrorists. Terrorists used the month of March and are now planning a takeover of Islamabad. They are now more organized. They failed at Lal Masjid and now must have improved their plan. The government has been informed of this development by its own sources and newspapers have made the public aware of it. If the insurgents and terrorists are ready to attack and take over the capital of the country then is it not an emergency? If this is not considered an emergency then the government is only waiting for surrender by consent. May be Sharmila Farooqui's question asking "Is Ch. Nisar Pakistan's Interior Minister or the Advisor of Taliban?" is correct. Or may be a similar question needs to be asked about the whole government set up.

Finally, the question is what the call of duty is in this situation for the Armed Forces under the Constitution of Pakistan? Would they have a slumber or is it a wakeup call for action?

May 08, 2014

Armed forces-- Support for the Constitution

On May 1, 2014, Daily Times published a banner headline on its front page that said. 'Surrender or get ready for operation, army tells rebels'. The army chief in this statement spoke for all who hold this country dear and respect the state and its constitution. I must admit that General Raheel Sharif has successfully rebuilt the image of the armed forces as loyal, dedicated and honourable. If some previous examples of being browbeaten by aggressive politicians or subjugation due to temptations were continued, the men in uniform would have been reduced to little more than shoeshine boys. General Raheel Sharif's statement says enough but means even more. It clearly reminds pro-Taliban terror groups of the no-nonsense attitude of the Pakistan army. This is significant enough support for the constitution and the state. It also supports democratic principles enshrined in the constitution. It is a warning to those sleeper cells of the terrorists who have found their way into the National Assembly, the civilian government, the media and elsewhere.

Recent months have painted a clear picture for how a social and media psychological war has been conducted by the 'Goebbels' of the terrorist set up. True Islamic values have been substituted by the aggressive 'Islamists'. They have promoted neo-Islam theories and concepts to create sectarianism and to justify terror acts. Unfortunately, our politicians, including the current set up, do not understand the role of the armed forces in our country. They repeat, like parrots, that all the ills of today are because of some years of military-dominated rule in Pakistan. They condemn the 'uniform' and they condemn even the civil services. It is true that Yahya Khan's ambition and incompetence resulted in a great loss but let us not fool ourselves by ignoring the reality that he was working on the 'advice' of some very, very, important politicians whose ambitions were served by severing a part of Pakistan. After Ziaul Haq, the country was thrown onto the road towards doom. Zia used religion and sectarian conflict to the hilt and destroyed the integrity of the country by entering a war that he should have stayed away from. However, here again, several familiar politicians were seen kissing Zia's hands, leaving no stone unturned in praise of his policies. The majority of upstart civilian politicians, particularly those who were spoonfed by the two worst military tyrants, run hoarse praising their part and running down only the military men. The worst of them do so indiscriminately. They forget that General Musharraf pulled the country out from near bankruptcy. He returned the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) loans and showed us the road to self-dependence. He even enabled the country to give financial aid to some

Central Asian Republics with Muslim majorities. He provided the masses with work opportunities, as well as a measure of dignity to overseas Pakistanis.

If our rulers with military background were not angels then the civilian rulers were no angels either. Let it not be forgotten that the judiciary validated every military takeover. Maturity demands a dispassionate analysis and not outright condemnation. Worst of all is the propaganda against the total institution of the defenders of the country. The majority of the people of this country holds the armed forces in high esteem and respect their resolve and sacrifices. The dignity of this institution must be upheld and this is one of the messages of General Raheel Sharif.

A message is also there for the media. Media men and women should not get carried away with scandalous material. They have a social responsibility that should not be sacrificed in the name of freedom of expression. Freedom must equate to the extent of responsibility exhibited. The measure of freedom relates to the measure of responsibility. If freedom is used for corruption, blackmail, distortion and sensationalism then it must be taken notice of. Some of our media persons have consistently indulged in these activities. Some have even been consistent spokespersons of terrorists. Is that in any way 'responsible'? I do not believe that such media persons are unable to distinguish between the teachings of the Almighty and the version of Islam hailed by the terrorists! I am sure they know better and their support for terrorists is for other reasons. Such men and women mislead the people who trust the media and should be answerable for the misuse of their freedom.

General Raheel Sharif has actually supported democracy and has shown the way for a responsible democracy to earn institutional support. But do we have a true democracy? What kind of democracy do we have, when it is ridden with allegations of mass riggings in elections, where the names of some members of the election commission and the head of an interim government are in the headlines for their alleged involvement in massive rigging and where the judiciary ducks the question of investigation? National experts, technocrats, men of learning and overseas Pakistanis go unrepresented here. The lower and upper houses of parliament are filled by a large number of persons accused of holding false educational degrees, among other crimes! There is no educational requirement for being a 'lawmaker' while a peon cannot be recruited without basic education! What kind of 'democratic' Assembly has emerged in this situation?

May 21, 2014

Media Mess-(I)

Media, particularly electronic media, has a lot of dirty linen to wash in public. This was inevitable because freedom without responsibility is the road to disaster. A group that moves fastest may take over others for a short triumph but it also moves fastest to the end i.e. disaster.

I wrote about the media issues before (DT. May 15 2010, July 9, 2011, Jan 19, 2013, March 2, 2013, Aug. 31, 2013). Most of these articles had specific pointers to help media decision makers to think and revise their course of action. What should I say 'deaf ears' or 'summun Bukmun...'? Little heed was paid. The road to disaster continued to be followed. One major disaster has arrived now, more will come. Some serious thinking and policy decisions need to be made by all concerned stakeholders, NOW.

Freedom of expression? No one denies that this is basic human right. But do any 'rights' come without corresponding responsibility? Certainly NOT. The whole issue must be thoroughly understood that no freedom should be available without corresponding sense of responsibility. In case of the TV channels all are guilty of irresponsibility. It starts from the government of the time and includes PEMRA, Channel owners, editorial managers (if any), anchor persons, political parties, individual participants and the advertisers.

PTV, the standard bearer for a long time, started to lose its hold because the governments misused it for their benefit only. Gradually the hunger of the concerned beneficiaries increased and they enjoyed the attention obtained from TV coverage. As they wanted more and more the menace of favoritism entered and merit got ignored. The PTV administrators' survived and progressed on 'Khushamad' and the institution started going south. The other killer was the Government's black out of opposition or other points of view. If a window was available to express their differences from the government, then the responsibility to public would have been fulfilled. This was not to be. Once the patrons, in this case the government functionaries themselves, indulged in the moral corruption of favoritism then all doors to various kinds of corruptions opened, and there was no stopping of the destruction of the institution and the demise of PTV authority and respect. Promotions, demotions, appointments were all to become disappointments for the competent.

Room for other channels was felt for the so called 'freedom' of expression on demand of intellectual journalists and was supported by opportunity seekers in commercial ventures. The pressure increased and the government's regulatory authority was allowed to issue TV licenses to

other interested bidders. Till the time the new licensees were limited to business professionals there was a possibility for PEMRA to monitor the activities. However the earlier new channels were dependent on the vast archives and experience of the PTV professionals. Some questionable deals for an access to the vast PTV archives took place. The matter did not stop here. Pressure from cross media giants finally succeeded in making the government succumb. Large groups of Newspaper owners got the licenses. Thereafter the government's will to control weakened and the government issued wholesale licenses and contented itself with the fees earned by the Pemra in granting licenses. This was a critical mistake. It backfired in two ways. First it gave a huge power of communication and control over public opinion and consequently the power of blackmail. Second it started an unhealthy competition to attract advertising revenues and the TV channels cut each other's throat in getting advertisements. This situation transferred a lot of power to the advertising companies who had little understanding of aesthetics and social responsibility of a communication medium. The mistake of over licensing was not the first one by government functionaries. One example stands out when there was over licensing for agro-based industries. In late 90's so many licenses were issued that the agro based industries collapsed, unethical practices found their way and many went bankrupt. Licensing by the government must be assessed on the basis of the size of the market, resources and the market. Otherwise the cut throat competition gives rise to unhealthy practices, and corruption, in a bid for survival.

The TV channels also behaved like industries and the ills crept in. The main source being the advertising revenues. TV channels sacrificed the ethics and morals for survival. The creative, socially relevant, messages in the dramatic content reduced and the popularity and 'ratings' called the shots. As responsible owners of the powerful TV medium the owners needed to educate the viewer and watch the content of the productions. This editorial role almost disappeared. The dramas reduced to family squabbles. Then the cheap imported programs started to flood. This adversely affected the local producers. The channels went to the extent of disrupting good local content half way and releasing imported content as replacements. Imported contents are mostly cheap because such programs had recovered their expense and made profit elsewhere. For foreign producers such releases in Pakistan were a bonus. In the terms of business, Pakistani commercial channels became the 'dumping' ground. In the absence of anti-dumping laws, which are applicable in other countries, Pakistan's viewers got a mix of programs which violated their national threshold of ethics and even morality. The glamour became the main attraction. The socially relevant content became irrelevant. PTV which took pride in its plays and was respected throughout the world for its quality drama in preference to Indian film, lost its hold.

The next casualties were the programs for discussions. The content of socially beneficial discussions with educative quality was replaced by political discussions. The commercial interests of the owners as well some anchors reduced the political discussions to political bickering. The bickering became fun to watch for the ordinary viewer and the 'ratings' went high. So more and more of this poison were dispensed. Some of the channel owners, and compere/anchors, found a large opportunity for blackmail, favoritism and political clout. They felt the power to pressurize a sitting government or destroy a politician or government functionary.

(Continued)

May 31, 2014

Media Mess –(II)

It became a hay day for unethical functionaries of television channels. Very likely, large amounts of money exchanged hands. It became a free for all. Television power could do anything. It could intimidate the civil machinery, politicians, businessmen and all such groups. Money could be extracted in every way. Plots were allotted to many. Sometimes such plots were under individual names, but it is said that one media tsar had acres of prime land allotted in the names of his employed journalists and took it back from them to build a crazy palace. This tsar intended to engage robots to pick up the towel in his one kanal bathroom and bring it to his bathtub! There were others who took full advantage of their media power, particularly those with cross media ownerships. The trend encouraged those who did not have the complete range of the cross media to develop their media power, and those who did not have newspapers took declarations to start papers. Again, here the fatal fault was the government's incompetence to foresee the power and to understand that such power would have corrupting influence. Most of the media entered a mad race. One group became the leader of sensationalism and wielding its power for financial advantages, others willingly or unwillingly followed to compete and get their share of the booty. Few held their graces and seemed to take backbencher position.

With a huge rush of so-called 'current affairs programmes', the standards of neutrality by compères evaporated and each compere promoted some 'agenda' for suspect reasons. Sometimes subtle but at other times naked support to even terror groups was provided on one pretext or other. Pro-terrorist actions were appreciated, and those who acted in their favour were given the gift of maximum media coverage. In a recent period of time, when some courts were identified as publicity hungry, some media functionaries took full advantage in encouraging and publicising court decisions that fit their agenda and pocket. A free for all continued without consideration as to what happens to the country and its populace.

Gradually, sensitive viewers started to notice the tilt. They recognised the trends of different anchors/compères and gave them a license for having a 'point of view' or playing 'devil's advocates'. However, soon the viewers started to suspect these intentions and grew to realise that a certain agenda was consciously and persistently being pursued by some leading media houses. The media group currently in the spotlight seemed to be the leader. Some favourite 'agendas' included: running down the current civil government or supporting it selectively, supporting Indian

products and policies, running down Musharraf and his era, supporting imported cultural software and ignoring home products, and promoting all negative news in the state to create disgust and unrest in the viewers. This is only an incomplete list and newer 'items' were added as and when required.

A regrettable tactic employed was to encourage the political representatives of different parties to come on live television, shout and even resort to vulgarity in their physical expression. This, in the eyes of the hosts increased the intensity of the programme, provided interesting 'heat in arguments' and consequently higher ratings, and of course the financial benefit by increased advertisements in the programme. It happened quite often that these programmes had longer 'breaks' for advertisements and lesser time for the actual programme. One single ad was repeated in the same programme and in the same 'break' to complete the total for billing to the advertiser. The over-advertising was not limited to current affairs programmes, it extended to entertainment as well. Popularity at any cost seemed to be the goal because it brought in revenues. In the process, little attention was paid to the important role of the media to carry out its social responsibility of providing wholesome content to the viewer.

Attracted by the low cost of second-hand imported programmes, the channels gave a 'londa bazaar' (flea market) of programming to its viewers. The limits prescribed by the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority's (PEMRA's) rules were openly violated and the so-called 'autonomous' PEMRA preferred silence or turned its face to something else. Why? The question needs an answer. PEMRA, the main control authority, is dominated by nominees of the government! Could these nominees be in league? Could they be corrupt? Or incompetent? Or were they being forced to toe a policy line? Answers to all these questions must be sought.

As of now, the mess has reached its highest point. The media group under the spotlight felt so high and mighty that, after browbeating all and sundry, they moved forward to try their tactics on the armed forces. The media organisation's game could have been well calculated. They sensed a gap between the civil government and the armed forces so they used it. They felt a definite difference of approach towards the terror groups. While the Nawaz Sharif government and its allies favoured negotiations with the Taliban and its terror groups, the armed forces wanted preconditions attached, like the terror groups' acceptance of Pakistan's constitution, its democratic values and commitment to Islam, not Islamism.

The terrorists consider the armed forces an enemy while Pakistanis hold the armed forces in very high esteem. There was uproar in the public over what went down with the media group. The other channels, which were already suffering because of the media group's policies and dominance got together in condemnation. The ministry of defence objected and several political parties masses took exception. Then an entertainment show belonging to the television channel of the same media group made the thoughtless mistake of matching a religious qawali with an actress's marriage. The public in general, and cable operators in particular, were annoyed. Religious segments were infuriated and the matter went to the courts.

(To be continued)

June 03, 2014

Media Mess - III

While the media mess is now squarely in the courts, the government support to Geo and the reservations of the ministry of defence are backed by the public. The shortcomings of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) are being exposed. It is important that we put our heads together and try to find a common sense system of checks and balances. The major actor in the whole affair should have been PEMRA, which is at this time divided. The division is clearly between government-nominated board members and the private members. The private members recommended the closure of Geo, Geo Tez and Geo Entertainment while the government members were absent from the meeting that took this decision. The government members who are all civil servants and government nominees will act according to the wishes of the top boss. Prime Minister (PM) Nawaz Sharif has said that he will not let Geo close. The PM probably knows that this is not a very popular move with supporters of the army, yet he is still taking this stand. Can PEMRA play a role? Probably not, because the government has failed to appoint a chairman so it is headless.

In these circumstances the media regulatory work was obviously not being done. So some channels, in fact most of them, violated the PEMRA code blatantly and got away with it. No notice was taken if public sensibilities and sensitivities were violated. Advertisements as a source of revenue were chased. Viewers' patience was tested by long and repeated 'breaks'. Sometimes it seemed as we are just seeing commercial adverts with short 'breaks' for the actual programmes! Viewers were forced to move to BBC and other foreign channels to avoid the hammering by commercials. Obviously Geo got the most mileage. Finally enough was enough and the armed forces/ministry of defence filed a complaint. In the future corrective measures must be taken. The laws pertaining to PEMRA must be revised in the light of recent experiences. But more important is regular and effective vigilance over the TV channels. PEMRA should not be reduced to collecting fees and favours. All TV channels must strictly follow an agreed editorial policy. The editorial policy must be in conformity with PEMRA laws and PEMRA should monitor them on a daily basis. PEMRA needs to be equipped to do so. Each channel should provide the recording facilities for their day's programmes and pay a monthly monitoring fee. A PEMRA supervisory panel should check on a daily basis that the editorial policy is followed. If violations occur, a warning and appropriate fine should be imposed immediately. PEMRA also needs to grow out of just government and political composition. It must engage an effective number of intellectuals,

scholars, researchers and specialists to provide intellectual and technical input. Revenues and revenue sources definitely need declaration. The owners, employees and associates must be under the radar to check signs of sudden riches. This is extremely important to control illegitimate funding. The annual balance sheets must be scrutinised. Any channel that does not pay taxes promptly must be closed down without exception. If they show losses, government audits should take place and if the losses are for more than three years, the channel should wind up and the investors should look for some other business. TV channels should stand alone as companies and not be taken as loss-making propositions, absorbing profits from other ventures of the sponsors. This is the case in many situations as the owners transfer the advantage of the media setup to other businesses and escape paying taxes.

It is also important that a policy be devised as to who can qualify to be an anchorperson. Newcomers may or may not be good. The integrity of the anchor is extremely important. No anchor should use the media facility to directly or indirectly promote his personal agenda. This is not and should not be his role. The prime responsibility of the media owner and media functionary is to the public. Information mediums must play the role of responsible information, education, entertainment and general awareness for viewers. They need to help viewers to grow in understanding life and its responsible ways. They need to promote tolerance, hard work, responsible behaviour, decencies, courtesies, good humour, awareness of international communities, and religious understanding including Haqooq Allah (rights of God) and Haqooqulbad (rights of man). This is only an indicative list. A complete sense of social responsibility must be displayed in a pleasant way and not in boring sermons. Such is the demand of skills from media persons. They must work as leaders in building the character of individuals and of a respectable nation. Unfortunately there has been more hooliganism than sharing of knowledge. Anchors are mostly unprepared and rely on asking "How do you look at it?" This is a favourite escape cliché of most of the unprepared interviewers.

A review must also be made of the size of the market. Advertisements being the sole revenue source, it should be assessed as to how many TV channels can be sustained by this source. All channels that are not sustainable by these revenues will look for shady alternatives and that must be blocked. The rating system needs to be expanded and parameters redefined. Healthy content should be factored into decision-making and advertisers should be educated accordingly. Finally, PTV and the Broadcasting Corporation must take a lead role and get out of their defeatist role. They have traditions, accumulated skills, systems and archives of extreme national significance. Governments should stop using these as only government organs. In reality these organisations live on taxpayer money and should work for popularity in the public in a responsible and decent way.

(Concluded)

June 19, 2014

Democratic Revolution is required (1)

More than ever before this question is echoing everywhere: Where is the country going? It has gone down so much that now there is no more time to lose.

This question is on the mind of all, may it be young, old, male or female. Everyone is concerned, deeply concerned and in fact worried, very worried. All individuals in the nation want an acceptable quality of life. Neither living below poverty level nor living in luxury is acceptable. A minimum decent life, good governance, justice and security is desired. Over last sixty years this goal has not been achieved. Quality of life for most citizens has gone from bad to worst. Even simple existence and staying alive, is now at stake. 'Democracy' and dictatorships have failed. Dictatorship is unpredictable, therefore more hope had been pinned on 'democracy', which has failed. The failure is not of the concept of democracy, but of the *polluted brand of democracy* that Pakistan imported from Britain and tried to plant in Pakistan. It did not flourish. Its roots are totally moth eaten now. British and Pakistanis are different people, with different traditions, heritage and governance requirements. British are a combination of Monarchy, Lordships and Commoners. Pakistanis are commoners with no need for Lords or Monarchs. Unfortunately many of our 'elected' representatives have dreams of being Monarchs or Lords. *This is not the pattern of democracy suitable for this country.*

A highly respectable friend has been kind enough to share some researched material about recent elections. I quote:

In 2008 PPP got their 124 seats to become the largest party by getting just 13% of the eligible vote bank of 85 million voters. PMLNs mandate of 91 seats came from a DISMAL 8.3 % of the Eligible votes. And PMLQ, got their 54 seats through 10% percent of the eligible votes. Yes, they got more votes than PML (N). So the three largest parties got approx. 80% SEATS through 30% of the ELIGIBLE VOTE. 70% PERCENT PEOPLE REJECTED THEM either through non participation (60%) or voting for others (10%). So really any party which can “game” and “buy” the system through “rural electable” pre poll rigging, every dirty trick, including partnering with their worst enemies (Qatil League and PPP, MQM and ANP etc) gets into power.

The 2012 election was no different. PMLN officially got a mere 17% of the registered vote to brag about their heavy mandate of 126 seats from the 272 up for grabs. This notwithstanding the now

widely accepted fact that massive rigging got them a minimum of 30 to a maximum of 60 seats. So even if one were to accept these official ECP numbers, even then a WHOPPING 83% percent registered voters of Pakistan have rejected the PMLN either by voting against them or not voting. Look at some of the other parties. PPP takes 8% of the registered vote for 33 seats, Imran Khan's PTI 9 % of the registered vote (more than PPP) for their 28 seats. But wait look at this. MQM gets 3% of the registered vote for 19 seats and Maulana Diesel Rehman with 1.7% of the registered vote swings in 11 seats and enough to blackmail everybody.

So all a party needs is about between 13% to 17% of the registered Vote; however which way they can, rig, cheat, bribe, and then rule with impunity for 5 years.

Our Electoral process and system has to change otherwise we will continue to get the "rotten" eggs back in power who do not have the intent, the passion and even more importantly the skills, capability and capacity to deliver results. It has been estimated that the National Assembly seats rotate amongst 1246 people.

So it is clear that we will continue to be held hostage by dynastic politics and see sights of Bilawal hailed as the future "peoples" leader. Or a Hamza raising his finger like a Mussolini, as if taunting this spineless nation for their absolute sheep like acceptance of their exploitation. Or a Mariam Nawaz, pretty and charming as she is, nurtured as the next heir apparent and silently but viciously vying with Hamza for the Sharif legacy." Unquote.

The most important fact in this quote is that the current 'democratic' rule is the rule of a small minority and does not reflect the majority of the people. I did point out the irrelevance of our democratic systems before. (Thinking of Democracy, Daily Times, Dec. 10, Dec 17, 2010) Now the issue has hit the nation in such a strong way that if the 'silent majority' continues to be silent then it can only be interpreted as a 'silence of death' or collusion. A 'change' has to come if the nation and the country needs to survive. If worked out with clarity of mind, sincerity, and determination and supported by mass action by all segments of power, then it can be peacefully achieved. If the situation is allowed to deteriorate further then it can go out of hand. Watch the signs of lawlessness and increase in crime. Attack on Karachi airport is a recent example. If this situation is allowed to persist then there will be total chaos, collapse of law and order, anarchy, turf fights and bloodletting etc. The Justice system, a pillar of democracy, has unfortunately failed to deliver. Most of the members of the assemblies are ineffective. The loyal armed forces are luckily intact.

I repeat there is no time left to wait. Commonsense must prevail and the 'democracy' must be made to reflect the will of at least the majority of the people. Relevant decision making must be available at the door through local governments, Justice system must be quick and fair and welfare of people be held supreme.

We must, therefore work for a 'democratic revolution' for salvation of the country. Following are some thoughts for achieving this goal as prompted by commonsense. Men of greater wisdom can, of course, make improvements.

(continued)

June 20, 2014

Democracy is required (2)

To develop a better democratic system, we need to learn from the examples of other countries and from some bloodless successful revolutions. Even now a process of revolutionary changes is continuing in Thailand.

Our basic problem starts with the 'constituency' politics. The constituencies can be controlled by influentials through dubious ways, and with a minority support thus obtained, 'successful candidate' pockets a share of national power. The power to make decisions in truly national interest must only remain with those who have at least a 51% backing of the national electorate. Even such individuals with 51% or more, in other countries, seek fresh mandates by referendums on critical issues. In Switzerland even the design of a national highway went through a referendum. This was essential because public money was to be spent on it. The Head of the government, must be the leader who has had at least 51% vote and therefore the confidence of the real majority from all constituents. He should make larger democratic consultations when necessary.

For the purpose of bringing democracy at the doorsteps the most significant system is that of Local Governments. It is presently done away in self interest because the MNAs and MPAs want to control the funds and the power to perpetuate themselves. Otherwise this system actually meets the needs of the people and is the basis of a true democracy. It must be revived forthwith.

The Province as administrative divisions on the basis of inheritance from the British Raj is open to questions. With population touching 180 Million, the division of the Provinces needs immediate revision. It should be seriously considered that all 27 traditional divisions be treated as 'provinces' and the Fata, Pata, etc should also integrate and be treated as 'Provinces' of one country. There should be no 'B' areas where the writ of the government is inapplicable. All Pakistan must be one country abiding by its Constitution and Rule of Law. All law enforcing agencies including the Armed forces, Police, Rangers, levies etc. should ensure the internal security and defense against external or internal aggression. Since the law enforcing agencies and Defense establishment, have a major responsibility therefore these must be adequately represented in the major decision makings on the national as well as provincial levels. Particularly in matters related to the security issues.

The role of religion has been misinterpreted, exploited and turned into a source of division *instead* of unity. This needs to be reviewed and the power of religion used to make the nation inclusive of all and not exclusive. The Quaid's speech on the 11th August 1947 to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan should provide all guidelines.

The participation of women needs to be effectively ensured.

A constitutional way is to be determined for membership of the assembly on the basis of *proportional representation* for general members. However effective participation of Women, Experts in different fields, and the Diaspora must be ensured by fixing quotas. The National Assembly makes laws and must be composed of persons with experience, scholarship as well as representatives of the people. Therefore these must be people of distinction. The political parties nominating such individuals in each category must extend full support and advice to their nominees.

These are major conceptual changes that must be done to ensure good governance and the welfare of the people. In brief it means 1. Direct election of the head of the state at a minimum 51% electoral vote obtained. 2. Local body elections. 3. Proportional representation in the National Assembly on the basis of votes obtained. 4. New Provinces on the basis of all Divisions, Fata, Pata and other areas. Will of the government needs to be applicable, with no B areas. 5. Assemblies consisting of women, public representatives, specialists and qualified members of diasporas.

How to achieve all this? Nothing can be achieved without the help of God Almighty and since the intent of all this action is to improve the lot of his beings, 'HIS' blessings can be expected. However, no blessings can be expected unless the humans make every effort in all honesty. Therefore, if the 'commonsense change' through 'democratic revolution' is to successfully happen, then all of us, literally 'ALL OF US' have to fully contribute. This is most relevant and essential for the institutions like Judiciary, Establishment, Political Parties and Nationalistic Religious Groups and, very important, the civil society.

This "Revolution" should NOT be aimed at any revenge, any personal vendetta against a group, or even any particular individual. It must maintain its focus to implement its objectives for the betterment of people and the country. The state of affairs has deteriorated to such an extent that there is no time to lose. 'Silence' by the majority at this time is a crime. All have to contribute their time, energy, funds and influence. If everyone makes a determined and honest effort then *salvation of the nation* and the country can take place with the blessings of God Almighty.

A thought provoking article 'Electoral And Governance Reform In Pakistan' by S. Haider Raza Mehdi (www.changeskills.com) has been in circulation. He has clearly and with some intensity expressed his thoughts for the urgent need for change. I quoted him partly earlier. His closing remarks are: "So I don't know what Imran Khan and Qadri saheb and others have up their sleeves. But one thing is for sure that if change has to come then they must create a Tahrir Square like situation and we hope it will lead to a better Pakistan."

I wonder if any one party can achieve such a result. I do not know if it needs a 'Tehrir square' or D Chowk. What I pray is that the 'Change' should be bloodless. What it does need is a collective

national effort. All stake holders in Pakistan must show the will, determination and practical effort and even offer sacrifice to salvage the country.

(concluded)

June 30, 2014

Bloodbath in Model Town and after..

It was a state of shock that kept me from writing on this ghastly tragedy before now. June 17, 2014 will go down as the blackest, bloodiest day, in Pakistan's history. Everyone who had access to the TV must have seen the police firing and the killing of civilians in a most ruthless, direct fire, by Punjab police. So far 16 lives, including 2 women and one unborn, have been extinguished and about 85 are injured. It was all in broad day light, in front of all TV cameras, fully recorded with no way to hide. The Minhajul Quran establishment was riddled with bullet marks, the mosque inside had bullet marks, even the bed rooms of Mr. Qadri's house had bullet marks and shattered window panes.

Was this all because the police wanted to remove the regular speed check barriers? No. This reasoning has no credibility. Obvious reason was to scare Mr. Qadri and those who support his program of reforms. Most regrettable was the ignorance being shown by 'Khadim e Ala'. How can such a ghastly event take place under the nose of the Chief Minister, with his camp office 200 yards away in Model Town, and continue for hours without his knowledge? 'Khadim e Ala' as he likes to call himself, has now been branded as 'Qatil e Ala'. All the good work that he may have done in the last six years is now drowned into the drain of blood from his own countrymen, women and children. Ignorance or involvement, he must resign in either case, and then brought to justice.

The police mafia employed seems to have closely studied the act of Brig. General Dyer in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, and perhaps took inspiration from a more recent killing saga under the supervision of Narinder Modi in Indian Gujrat. Dyer, in his trial said he would 'do it again' if necessary due to his loyalty to the Crown! Narinder Modi rode the wave of hatred and escalated himself to become the Prime Minister of India. Our 'Monarchs' have taken inspirations from them, and of course they have practiced a royal style of governance, and living, for a long time. It is said that MR. Nawaz Sharif has a personal collection of all Moghal emperors' photos. I do not know how far this is true but his style indicates his source of inspirations. Plus, the fact that a large number of family members have been posted at the key positions in the national and Provincial Governments in Punjab is also the familiar "royal" style of trusting only the family.

Monarchs believe in destroying the uprisings. So PML(N) royalty dealt with the Model Town case. Suspecting that Qadri's organization was getting ready to protest against bad governance, the

'Monarchy' decided to nip the evil in the bud. But they miscalculated. Even the Zardari's party, which used to be a People's Party or a Bhutto party, had to break its silence. Zardari very aptly said that Nawaz was elected to be a Prime Minister in a democratic set up and not crowned as a 'Monarch'.

So far PML (N) has completely failed to deal with the popular dissents democratically. They have frustrated Imran Khan by ignoring recount of 4 NA seats as a sampling to check if there was rigging and mishandling, nor have they taken any real step for electoral reforms. The neglect has confirmed public suspicion that PML(N) has something to hide. If their hands were clean, and they honestly believed in democracy, then they should have set up fully empowered committees to probe and ensure that no rigging takes place in future. They should have ordered the electronic voting system for future. None of this was done, so public is convinced of the PML(N) involvement in the massive rigging. Their so-called mandate is suspect because they got only 16% of the registered electoral vote. They maneuvered more seats, thanks to the constituency system. The public dissent and poor government performance strengthened the stand of PTI and Imran declared a long march to the capital on 14th August to bring 'freedom' to the country. Obviously the freedom is meant to start after the removal of PML(N) government.

Mr Qadri will soon announce his 'march of millions' as 'Tehrike Inqilab'. The colossal mishandling of the Model Town affair has hastened the end of the current 'Monarchy'. It brings shivers even to recall the brutality on June 17, 2014. This was all done under the supervision of the Punjab police. The 'most obedient servants' of the royalty rushed to crush the possible opposition, and gave a blood bath to fellow countrymen. Followed by a sham investigation and by not letting the aggrieved party to even lodge a complaint. The aggrieved are taking to streets in search of justice.

But this Monarchy cannot last. The day is near for divine justice. People's rule and true democracy will prevail. Pakistan Awami Tehrik (PAT) and Imran's PTI, have similarities of agenda. But PAT's followers and the masses also see blood of innocent people on the monarch's robes. Over 100 families have been shaken because of the Monarchs' bullets, leaving dead and injured behind. The millions following Dr. Tahirul Qadri showed remarkable discipline last time and not a leaf was broken, this time it can be different. The blood has changed the mood. There is a limit to patience and the slightest provocation can turn the crowds out of control and Mr. Qadri or Imran Khan may not be able to control. The multitude of people demand the resignation of the PML(N) monarchy, and an interim set up to ensure justice, make constitutional changes, and hold free and fair elections. If resistance is ordered and police force is used then all these 'Kings Men' will fail to save the Humpty Dumpty monarch and there will be blood in the streets.

Before more bloodshed occurs, the only way for a peaceful transaction will be through an intervention by the Armed Forces.

August 10, 2014

March, March and March.....

This is the season of 'Marches'. Tehrik e Insai's 'March of Azadi', and TahirulQadri's 'March of Inqilab'. There may be other marches. Are these marches bringing "*Ides of March!*" as Shakespeare said?

The result is likely to be known in this month of August. The 'Royalty' failed to act democratically and now it is trying to *contain* the agitations by "Containers"!! At the time of writing this article there are 36 steel containers lined up on the road in front of my house in Model Town. This is in less than a kilometer between my house and the old estate of Sharifs. The Model Town area is to be under siege until the 18th of August. These steel containers and some more are meant to block all roads leading to Minhajul Quran. There are several hospitals in this area but the patients do not seem to matter.

Ultimately who will march out is unknown. Neither is known as to who may march in. The government in its 'royal' style had no democratic move to settle issues by negotiations. They opted for bullets, arrests, and 'Containers'! More democratically oriented parties like PPP and MQM ran hoarse trying to solve the matter by negotiations but to little effect. It is so late that even if the negotiations are offered these may be of no avail. It should have been done before the tempers went high, before blood flowed in the streets. Now all non-agitating political parties will need to take some sides to stay alive. Mostly these parties are sympathizing with the 'marchers'. The Government of Sharif may concede something to Imran but it may turn out 'too little too late'. However the government seems to be determined to subdue Qadri and PAT by force. He is the most dangerous because he talks of 'people', common man, musawat and all such things which are poison for royalties. So far whole sale killing of workers and arrests are going on. Would it turn into a sort of civil war? A rebellion by the people?

A huge vacuum in power structure is beginning to take place. All law enforcing agencies are tasked to control the mobs. The logistics are affected because the transports have been ordered not to ply and take people to Islamabad to protest. Police is engaged in all kinds of oppression strategies. Business is slowing down with these measures. KPK will be engaged in supporting Azadi March. Punjab is involved in obstructing Azadi March and suppress Inqilab March. Main cities like Karachi have their law and order problems. Rest of the life, health, business, welfare, education,

transport, justice etc. are all moving to a halt. Government is in itself now a party to 'Pahyya Jam'. In this state of governance, the vacuume may become so significant that it will need to be filled.

Who will fill the vacuum? Would it be revolutionary mobe? Or would it be a 'Democratic Anarchy' disciplined by leaders of 'Change'? Or would it be a soft change with the support of establishment? Or would it be March in by boats?

All these options are open. Some change seems inevitable. How peaceful it would be depends on the sagacity of the protagonists involved. The defenders on the back foot, the government, have not shown any sagacity so far, and one wishes they do. They should grow beyond their egos and the self hypnotic chant of the 'mandate'. The so called mandate is challenged and it must be understood. Suppression by the police and bullets aggravate the situation and not improve it. If the PML(N) is so confident of the 'mandate' then why be afraid? Let there be electoral reforms, let there be constitutional changes, let there be local body elections and return victorious. If PML(N) wins again without the help of ROs and rigging everyone will be satisfied and the result will give a shut up call to all dissidents. Such courage is needed to avert crisis. Such courage comes only from great leaderships.

Unfortunately the present leadership in the government has lost all opportunities. They should have accepted Imran Khan's demand of audit in 4 constituencies. Now under pressure they are offering even 8 constituencies. Seems too late. Imran demanded electoral reforms. This demand should have been accepted without losing minute. Now the PML(N) is setting up committees under pressure. Local body elections should have been held long time ago, but the greed of holding Local Body funds prevented it and caused serious violation of the Article 6 of the constitution. This delay has alienated the masses who have no democratic decision making available at their door. They should have never, never, taken the oppressive attitude against Dr. TahirulQadri. They should have realized that if senior Mian Sahib had helped a very young Qadri, then it did not give a license to the younger Mian Sahibs to expect illegal actions by Qadri on their behalf and to twist religious fatwas in their favour. Dr. Qadri by his scholarship and effort holds a position of respect, and his following is all over the world. Diverting his plane, shooting and killing his supporters, blockading and not even letting him register an FIR is exactly like a landlord treating his 'muzara'. People in general sympathise with the underdog and PML(N) has lost the sympathies of the masses.

Here is a commonsense way out. The present government should agree to resign and set up an Interim Government with the consent and agreement of the protestors. PML(N) as a political party may negotiate its representation in it. The Interim Government should be given the task to attend to the demands forthwith and make necessary changes in the electoral system, constitution and so on and so forth. All irritants, including harassment of Pervez Musharraf should be stopped. The arrangements should be guaranteed by the establishment, particularly the armed forces.

I hope this voice is heard by the 'wise men'; the containment by 'containers' is abandoned, and country and the Pakistani nation is put back on a road to progress.

August 28, 2014

A Long March

What has been happening in Islamabad is unprecedented. Most noticeable is the strength and presence of women in this huge effort by the Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to bring a real change in the country. While the outcome of the protests is not yet known, as I write these lines on August 28, there is no doubt that women in Pakistan have shown their determination and commitment. I have been to the Islamabad protest venues and have met their leaders and supporters. There is no doubt that the number of supporters is unprecedented. When I wrote my articles 'Democratic revolution is required — I' (Daily Times, June 20, 2014) and 'Democratic revolution is required — II' (Daily Times, June 21, 2014), I was not aware that such a mass of people was of the same thinking. It is continuous bad governance, nepotism and favouritism that have brought the masses to the edge.

It is Dr Qadri and Imran Khan who had the ability to activate and move the populace. What Dr Tahirul Qadri and Khan are proposing is for the benefit of the country. The message is correct even if some people have differences with personalities. Let us see the message even if we have reservations about the messengers. How can anyone justify the broad daylight massacre of men and women in Model Town on June 17, 2014? How can anyone justify the massive rigging suspected in the previous elections in May 2013? Finally, how can anyone believe that a fair, impartial inquiry will be held under the authority of those who are the suspected culprits? If the suspects are innocent then they should not have any fear of investigations. The reluctance to let impartial investigations take place creates further doubts. Even the first information report (FIR) ordered for recording by the Lahore High Court was thwarted. Why?

The crowd of protesters included thousands of women in both groups. The PTI protesters give the impression of being from middle-income groups and the PAT protesters are largely from lower income groups. However, both have a large number of women, families, men and children who have braved hardship for over two weeks for a 'cause'. This may not have been possible if women had not contributed in such large numbers. This fact has encouraged men as well. It also provided the media with a convincing and even surprising depth of public support. Government representatives sneered at the number of protesters but that is not the point. It must be understood that in no mass protest can everyone in the nation come onto the streets. Each person present in

the marches represents a large number of the members of society. The government has been in denial mode and it will not work. One can see the total determination on the faces of women and men who have obviously burnt their bridges.

No nation can ever progress without the full participation of females in matters of life. Unfortunately, for a long time and even now, sections of our society have tried to suppress women. On the other hand, all records show that the rising force in the country is now women. They perform better in education, they are performing better in professions and have shown greater honesty and integrity. In Bangladesh, the most successful microfinance bank trusted women in extending loans to them and the women responded to that trust. I have always believed that the future of humanity would be better if women shared full responsibility. Men have been unnecessarily burdened since the time of the pharaohs. The concept of male superiority is prevalent. Men took upon themselves more than they should have and loved the macho image. They are now fatigued as a gender and it is good for men to feel that they can share responsibilities. Personally, I have seen that my mother, who was part of the first batch of medical doctors in the subcontinent, helped build up a family I can take pride in. She qualified in the second decade of the 20th century and pioneered education for girls in the family. One can see that in a family where the mother is educated and working, a better family is raised. Women have almost always shared the family's responsibilities in one way or the other; in villages they all share the work in the fields and at home. They mostly go unacknowledged. But now it is time that the nation, particularly men, learn to respect the contribution of women in the progress of the family and the nation. By this substantial support in a vital national issue of great importance, the women of Pakistan have shown that they are aware and responsible. They have shown that a decadent system is unacceptable and that they must join, and even be the leading force for revolutionary change.

The current protest is on two important issues: killings and rigging. In fact, it is for a much larger cause. It is for better governance and justice. This struggle rejects old fashioned, feudal dominance. Now the requirement is for an efficient state with social justice and economic progress for all, governance according to the contract in the constitution. The constitution of a country is not the 12-page book that Ziaul Haq said is "a piece of paper". It is a social contract. Constitutions can be changed to meet the needs of the nation by due process but the constitution of a country needs application in full and not in part. The present government and several earlier governments have failed to follow the spirit of the constitution. The present government too is only using it to hide behind and cover its misdeeds. This will not work. The politicians, the establishment and the public must understand this 'revolution'.

September 10, 2014

Royalty and courtiers—(I)

It is a popular anecdote that during the French Revolution a huge crowd had assembled and shouted slogans outside the royal palace. The king and queen looked out the window and asked the guard, "Is this a revolt?" The guard replied, "No sire, it is a revolution!" Almost the same picture has been painted by our 'royalty' and 'courtiers' in the joint session of the National Assembly and the Senate of Pakistan. Almost all the speakers have competed in defending jamhooriyat (democracy). They feel it is a revolt and not a revolution supported by the people. It is amazing that these courtiers have failed to realise that democracy is in no danger! Is the demand for free and fair elections against democracy or does it strengthen democracy? Is the demand to bring the culprits of the Model Town massacre to justice against democracy? Or would it result in justice and confidence in democracy? Is the establishment of smaller administrative units for better attention to the people, against democracy or would it strengthen a democratic system? Is the demand to hold local body elections under the constitution something against democracy? Will it strengthen democratic institutions?

Demands by the protesting thousands require discarding corrupt and outdated systems and bringing in a contemporary modern system of governance. The royalty and the courtiers have failed to understand and, without exception, have harped on about defending democracy and the Prime Minister (PM), not realising that they have completely missed the point. In over one week of deliberations of the joint session, not once have the demands of inqilab (revolution) or insaaf (justice) been studied in detail. Protesters had to become aggressive, out of control, marching onto the PM House and the National Assembly, before one demand was conceded, that too because the courts ordered it and neither the royalty nor the courtiers could stop it. That was how the first information report (FIR) against the suspected killers of Model Town was registered. But that is not enough.

Similarly, some parties agree that the 2013 elections were rigged. Some of the constituencies audited so far show thousands of unregistered votes and, in places, almost 60,000 votes more than the number of registered voters. Would an investigation not strengthen democratic traditions? These are the major demands that our royalty and courtiers do not even want to look at. They just shout, show their loyalty and practice oratory to please the 'monarch'. The monarch sits with a

smug smile at the end of the front row and appreciates the loyalty of his beneficiaries. It is a club that has members, friends and families. They take turns at governing, call it democracy and get together to defend it.

The people who need the fruits of democracy, equality, justice, civil rights, food and shelter are out in the cold and sneered upon as if they are from some other country. Some of the courtiers advocate a strong hand and ask the monarch to turn them away. They feel these people, by protesting, are encroaching upon the holy territory of the feudal and the rich. They talk of saving the system! Why? Because the present constituency-based system, ridden with corruption, benefits them. Why can the system not be improved to give fair representation to the masses? Why can the system not be improved to share decision making with experts, men of distinction, overseas Pakistanis, women and minorities? It is a shame that the joint session and the members present have failed to look at realities. The rule of the feudal and the rich is interpreted as democracy. Tax evaders and bullies compliment themselves by calling each other democrats. The economy is in a shambles. The middle class, the backbone of the nation, is being pushed into poverty. Basic facilities like power, healthcare, education and housing are out of reach. Remember the French Revolution started because the rich and clergy refused to pay taxes and the poor were starving. The monarchy was rejected. It faced the consequences and, finally, some years later Napoleon captured power and declared himself emperor.

So far, the armed forces have shown grace and have insisted the politicians solve their issues. The politicians have to wake up before it is too late. According to a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader, no serious discussion on the issues took place in the first 20 days of protests! If the government was competent and the monarch sensitive to the demands of the people the matter could have been sorted out four months ago but the monarch and his courtiers sneered, tried to suppress and kill, and underestimated the possible consequences. They are still hoping that the protesters will get tired, feel defeated and go home. The protesters are not showing any signs of obliging. A time approaches when the masses will lose patience. Even if some go home, they will neither forgive nor forget because their friends have laid down their lives. Is that what the monarch and his courtiers want? If it is so then they are making the mistake of a lifetime. The negotiators must make a bigger effort and not just enjoy the media exposure that they are getting. Issues must be settled sooner rather than later, before the bushfire becomes a fire in the whole jungle. It is not a limited revolt; it is a revolution to change the quality of life and bring in better governance.

September 12, 2014

“Royalty” and “Courtiers” (II)

It is said that at the time of French Revolution a huge crowd assembled and shouted outside the Royal Palace. The King and the Queen looked out of the window and asked the guard “Is this a revolt?” The guard replied “No Sire, it is a Revolution!”

Almost the same picture is painted by our ‘Royalty’ and the ‘Courtiers’ in the Joint Session of the National Assembly and the Senate of Pakistan. Almost all the speakers have competed in defending ‘Jamhooriat’ and insisting that Nawaz Sharif should not resign. They feel it is a revolution and not a people supported revolution.

It is amazing that these courtiers have failed to realize that Democracy is in no danger! Is a demand for free and fair elections against democracy or does it strengthen democracy?

Is a demand to bring culprits of Model Town massacre to justice against democracy? Or would it result in justice and confidence in democracy?

Is the establishment of smaller administrative units for better attention to people, against democracy or would it strengthen a democratic system?

Is the demand to hold Local Body election under the constitution something against the democracy? Or will strengthen the institution?

So on and so forth.

No demand of the protesting thousands in Islamabad and of millions at homes is a threat to democracy. In fact these demands require discarding corrupt and outdated systems and bringing in contemporary modern system of governance. The ‘Royalty’ and the ‘courtiers’ have failed to understand and, without exception harped, on defending ‘democracy’ and the Prime Minister, hardly realizing that they have completely missed the point.

In over one week of deliberations of the joint session, not once have the demands of ‘Inqilab’ or ‘Insaf’ been studied in details. Protesters had to become aggressive, get out of control, march to PM house and the National Assembly, before *one* demand was conceded. Even that because the courts ordered and neither the ‘Royalty’ nor the Courtiers could stop it. So the FIR against the suspected killers of Model Town was registered.

But that is not enough. The suspected killers, if in power, will never allow fair investigation to take place. Therefore, they must step aside from power for the period of investigation. Is this an unfair demand?

Similarly all parties agree that the 2013 elections were massively rigged. Some of the constituencies audited so far show thousands of unregistered votes and at places almost 60000 votes more than the registered voters. Again the protesters suspect the PM to be involved along with some functionaries and his ‘Courtiers’. Is it unfair to ask them to step aside for the duration of investigation?

If he concedes then would it not strengthen a democratic tradition?

These are the major demands which the ‘Royalty’ and the ‘Courtiers’ do not even want to look at. They just shout, show their loyalty and oratory to please the ‘monarch’. The monarch sits with a smug smile at the end of the front row and appreciates the loyalty of the beneficiaries of the corrupt system. It is a club which has members, friends and families. They take turns, call it ‘Democracy’ and get together to defend the sham democracy. While people who need the fruit of democracy, equality, justice, civil rights, food and shelter are out in the cold and sneered upon as if they are from some other country. Some of the ‘courtiers’ advocate a strong hand and ask the Monarch to throw them away. They feel the people of Pakistan by protesting are ‘encroaching’ upon the holy territory of the feudal and the rich. They talk of saving the system! Why? Because the present constituency based system, ridden with corruption, benefits them? Why can the system not be improved to give fair representation to masses? Why can’t the system be improved to share the decision making with experts, men of distinction, Diasporas, women and minorities? It is a shame that the joint session and the members present have failed to look at realities and just ganged together to protect personal interests in the so called ‘democracy’. The rule of feudal and rich is interpreted as democracy. The tax evaders and bullies compliment themselves by calling themselves “democrats”. The economy is in shambles. Middle class, the backbone of a nation, is getting pushed to poverty. Basic facilities like power, health care, education and housing are out of reach. Remember the French revolution started because the rich and clergy refused to pay taxes and the poor were starving. The monarchy was rejected. It faced the consequences, and finally, some years later Napoleon provided the leadership and ruled.

So far armed forces have shown graces and insisted on the politicians to solve the issues. The politicians have to wake up before it is too late. According to a PTI leader not even a serious

discussion took place on the issues in the first 20 days of protests! If the government was competent and the 'Monarch' sensitive to the demands of the people the matters could have been sorted out four months ago. But the Monarch and his courtiers sneered, tried to suppress and kill, and underestimated the possible consequences. They are still hoping that the protesters will get tired, feel defeated and go home. Protesters are not showing any signs, a time can approach when the masses lose patience. Even if some go home they will neither forgive nor forget because their friends have laid their lives and the lives of protesters are gradually getting not worth living. Is that what the Monarch and his Courtiers want? If it is so then they are making the mistake of their life time. The negotiators must make a bigger effort and not just enjoy the media exposure that they are getting. Issues must be settled sooner than later, before the bushfire become a fire in the whole jungle. It is not a limited revolt, it is a revolution to change the quality of life and bring in better governance.

October 02, 2014

A "Resolution"!

This is about a 'resolution' that resolved nothing. In the second joint session of the Senate and the Parliament, they gave us more of the 'same thing'. They bent forward and backward repeating 'Constitution' and 'Democracy'. Neither of these were the issue!

The session wasted everyone's time. Individuals, said to be the representatives of the people, reaffirmed that they had almost nothing to do with the people at large or their problems and predicaments. They spent all their energies in trying to dissuade the PM from resigning if he ever thought of it. He had no intentions anyway, but the individuals present wanted to assure the king of their loyalties. Obviously they were interested in continuity, not so much of democracy as of their personal benefits. Status quo suited them because they had been in office not long enough to cash on the targeted benefits and the recovery of election expenses. Their rejection of the popular protests on the constitution avenue and on the country wide streets had no significance. Not one person tried to examine the demands with any seriousness. Holding of local government elections, providing of the basic necessities as in the constitution, and ensuring law and order or making justice available did not seem to be the demands within the constitution! The members and particularly the controversial Prime Minister went all the way to condemn the protests as if these were from people they did not want to know about. Some courtiers did their best to make the loyalty of the protesters as suspect. They propagated as if holding any sort of meeting in London was almost a crime. Forgetting that their own supporters, the Prime Minister, their families and friends, frequent England and other countries and hold all kinds of political meetings. They also forgot that a large amount of the national wealth has been transferred overseas by the persons these courtiers were supporting.

The white wash committee on election reforms, headed by a dear family member of PM, is looking at trivialities. They have shown concern on the quality of ink and printing which is a triviality. They are just looking at those weaknesses which they can cover and declare everything to be fine. Conveniently ignoring the main ploy used by the Returning Officers (ROs). This is where the system of rigging had been perfected. There are reports by some 'horse's mouths' that locations were pre determined where the ballot boxes were to be taken en route to the ROs, and replaced by the boxes prepared to get the results announced later. That is why many people could not believe the results. There are also firsthand accounts that the figures at the tabulation table were changed

by adding a zero in the end or some such number! Stubbornness to not to investigate by credible committees, and not to let the FIRs get registered raise eyebrows. What moral ground is left for the rulers? The nation expected that demands and accusations by the protesters were seriously analyzed in the 'joint session' and meetings held in response to the demands of the protesters to end the crisis as quickly as possible. Instead the game of patience was played. *The members* in the house were comfortable and only complained of the crowd outside. One wishes that *the parliamentarians* had some feeling that there were thousands in the crowd suffering in the open, and that the parliamentarians had some realization that the crowd was of their countrymen. There were also the millions watching the crowd with sympathy and hope for future. The parliamentarians' showed an inexcusable insensitivity. The only exceptions were those few from the opposition who took personal initiatives to try to resolve. But these opposition members had little support from the royalty and its supporters. MQM spoke in qualified support of new provinces for Administrative improvement and asserted that Sind should be part of this change. Seeing little positive support they chose to walk out. Royalty was more concerned in trying to paint the protesters as villains who caused the visit of the Chinese President to be postponed. China is Pakistan's historical friend but it watches its own interest as well. The expected agreements were no financial gifts to Pakistan. These were funding at a very high interest rate. In any case most of the loan would have stuck to somebody's figures in Pakistan.

As I am writing, news has appeared on TV that some election record of 2013 has caught fire while stored in the Government Central Model School! Would it not raise suspicions?

The Government seems to have taken upon itself to resolve the issues. There will be nothing better than that and both sides. PAT, PTI and the government, must adopt positive attitudes. The government must give up its smugness and stop publicizing that army has no interest. Whether army takes interest or it doesn't, army is always aware and its opinions must be respected because such opinions are well considered and valid. For the present the army has advised the politicians to resolve the issues politically. They must do so before the 'revolution' goes out of control. There can be an end to patience on any side; therefore, sooner a solution is arrived at the better for the country. The nation wants a change. Change in VIP culture, change from corruption, change from injustice to justice, and change from sectarianism to tolerance and so on. Our representatives in the assemblies must think of the people. Here is a strange example of insensitivity: the nation is reeling because of shortage of electricity; many people want to use the nature's gift of sun and benefit from meeting their needs from solar power. The Governments in several other countries give financial support for homes and businesses who want to turn to solar power. However, our government has applied 30% duty on equipment for solar power!! This is just one example.

Change is no doubt the call of the day.

April 15, 2015

The Clinton Chrismas

The US election is important for the people in the US but it also affects the rest of the world. It is a country that still tries to stay within constitutional limits and abide by the law but the first Bush election was a shocking exception. Counting of ballots in that election reminded one of the rigging practices in Third World countries. Some friend has put on YouTube an old telecast of the Bush election covered by me for TV viewers on a US network. It refreshed my memory how the state machinery was slowed to avoid the recount of votes and how delays were accepted by the US Supreme Court, and George W Bush was declared successful. Much later, the count indicated that Gore should have won. What happened in the Bush administration included the horrors like 9/11 and the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and the rest of the world. These decisions brought the US to the brink of bankruptcy. The policy of deterrence was set aside and the policy of aggression adopted. The fallout was left to be managed by the successor. Obama, faced with the disastrous situation left behind for him, has been busy with repairs and repairs do not give spectacular results. Therefore, some disappointment in his performance set in and his ratings came down to 44 percent. Such ratings are not good for an incumbent president who is to contest for the next term.

The drop in Obama's popularity is exactly what the Republican Party and their candidate, Mitt Romney, would want to see. Romney is a Christian Mormon by belief, and he has some positives to his credit as the governor of a state. His choice of vice-president is very popular. Working on the 'negatives' of the Obama term, the Republicans appeared to be presenting a better alternative, although historically, an incumbent president is rarely denied the second term. The American public mostly realises that to achieve some progress on a national level a president needs eight years to plan and achieve. In their campaign, the Republicans have perhaps chosen to distance themselves from George W Bush as he has not yet been invited to speak in the campaign. On the other hand, the Democratic Party is making full use of the great asset it has in the former president, Bill Clinton. He has the credit of bringing extraordinary prosperity to the people. He was people-friendly and avoided conflict in arms. He tried earnestly to bring peace to Palestine. He is a thinker and an orator. Clinton is a rare combination of being a philosopher and a pragmatic political leader. His sincerity, charm and charisma are incomparable. Michelle Obama had also spoken very well on the first day of the Democratic Convention. The second day started with a comparatively lesser known speaker, Ms Elizabeth Warren, a senate hopeful. Ms Warren's address brought a most

pleasant surprise for those who did not know her enough. She proved to be a great speaker to set the tone for the convention on that day. Then Clinton appeared to address and the delegates were electrified. Of course, Clinton carried the day. His smile, personal charm and the deep study of events match his exceptional personality. Clinton spoke for about 45 minutes and kept the viewers spellbound with his deep analysis. Clinton had studied the 'objections' and 'weaknesses' that the opposition was trying to exploit against Obama's performance. Clinton analysed each point logically and supported the actions that Obama had taken to improve the situation. He went at length to elaborate the effects of the unnecessary wars that the USA had committed itself to. He convincingly stated the effects of the drain on the economy and the consequent hardships to the people in the US. He strongly defended the right of the people to medical attention and the support to senior citizens. He committed to the continuance of the Medicare system. In short, he established the fact that all appropriate steps were being taken for the betterment of the people, especially the middle class and the poor. He objected to the extra facilities promised to the super rich by the Republicans. This is where the difference lies between the two political parties. The Democrats believe that government has a role to ensure implementation of policies that improve the living conditions of the people in general and, particularly, in the lower and the middle-income groups. Therefore, they ensure improvement of facilities for better education for all by funding scholarships, healthcare, housing, etc. The Democrats believe that the tax contribution should be essential for all, including big business and the super rich. On the other hand, the Republicans believe that big business and the super rich should enjoy tax cuts and, consequently, it will be in their interest to expand and provide jobs, and improve conditions for the workforce. The Republicans hope that individuals will help society in their own interest while the Democrats believe that government should have a role to ensure the public interest. Historically, the masses have benefitted more when the Democrats ruled. Clinton defined the future policies clearly and provided undeniable logic for the necessity of a second term for Obama to ensure success of the policies put in place during the last four years.

After Clinton's charismatic speech, Obama's ratings started to improve. Bill Clinton is a campaigner. He has not stopped at the Democratic Convention. He is continuing to campaign. Obama's ratings have gone up to 51 percent after a long time. Clinton has contributed and felt responsible for the party and its philosophy. Will the Pakistani political parties show such commitment to the welfare of the masses? If they do so in the next elections, whenever held, it would herald a change towards responsible democracy.

April 15, 2016

Election time

It is election time in the USA. It may soon be election time in Pakistan. The elections in the USA are fixed on some dates and there is no speculation. In the USA a term finishes at the scheduled time and a new government takes over in the following January. We are different in Pakistan as far as the schedule is concerned. It is very flexible, unpredictable and sometimes even nonexistent here. The voting for the US election takes place in the first week of November every time and the president takes over in January. It is a system with little speculation about it; the speculations are limited to the contestants, not the system.

In Pakistan, everything is a guessing game. Recently Manzoor Wassen made an announcement of the 'schedule' of elections for the National Assembly in 2013. He announced that the existing assemblies would be dissolved on January 18, 2013 and the elections would take place on April 4, 2013. Wassen's schedule could be a 'feeler'. It is coated with the 'good news' of the election but loaded in favour of the PPP as April 4 is a date when emotional voters think of late Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. The feeler is intended to assess the reaction from other political parties. If there is none then it will work for the PPP.

Why do we not take a step to get rid of the speculation about the election dates? We should consider the dates of the previous election schedule for this time as well. The new assembly was in place in March and it is very suitable as a month of the Pakistan Resolution. In any case, an announcement should be formally made by the authorities empowered by the constitution, not by individuals.

In the USA, there has been practically a two-party system forever. The people have seen the two parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, at times very close to each other's agenda, and whenever this has happened, the country has progressed and the working relationships have been good. In recent times, President Clinton's governance brought well being to the nation. As the agendas and attitudes of the parties drift apart, problems appear and the people suffer. This particularly happens when the worldwide policy changes from 'deterrence' to aggressive proactive action. The policy of deterrence avoided wars with the Soviet Union and wars between Pakistan and India. The policy of aggression involved wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Basically, Democrats are inclined towards a policy of deterrence but the Republicans like more aggressive

solutions and one heard words like 'Crusades' from the Republican president from Texas. Reacting to 9/11's destruction in which some 3,000 people died, the effort to avoid the recurrence of such a tragedy has seen over 50,000 dead bodies in the 'war on terror'. The wars initiated by the Republican Party were inherited by Obama. So in the current political scenario he is being blamed for not having achieved much. The Obama administration has been practically incapacitated by the fallout and debris of the previous policies. In the interests of the people of the US, it will be helpful and even healing if there is greater understanding between the two parties and they design policies for the common people and not just influence groups. Pakistani politicians have made people suffer ruthlessly, favouring the influential, with the result of the downfall of the country. It is time that the USA stops imitating the third world! It started with the suspect election victory of Bush. If the trend continues, the USA will keep going downwards because the politicians and their parties have not succeeded in keeping national interest above party or personal interest in many cases.

The Democrats will be content with nominating the current team headed by Obama while the Republicans have nominated Romney as their candidate. Romney is a multimillionaire, accused of not paying his taxes correctly, and keeping his wealth in off-shore islands. This sounds familiar to Pakistanis as something common with their political big wigs. Romney's wife Ann and Romney's running mate Paul Ryan are very vocal and popular in their party. Romney will rely very heavily on these two. Republicans are accusing the Obama administration of non-performance and for not being able to keep their promises. This again sounds familiar in Pakistan's context. Obama's defence is that he inherited two wars and a high level of inflation and borrowing. Pakistani politicians are also blaming the previous government for getting a poor inheritance. It seems like a blind imitation by Pakistanis. While Obama actually inherited huge problems, Pakistani politicians got the country in a good condition economically as well as with over 19,000 megawatts electricity potential. Obama's performance falling short can be understood because of inheritance but Pakistani politicians' failure can only be understood due to incompetence, corruption and poor governance.

As I watched the Republican Convention, it seemed that there is only a faint hope of the two parties rising above themselves and operating for the betterment of the people. Republicans openly support the rich, and believe that the private sector can solve all problems. The Democrats are traditionally known as the friends of the middle class and the poor and therefore they support state help. This is interpreted by some extremists as communistic credentials of the Democrats. Nothing new, this happens everywhere.

All countries have the very rich, the rich, the middle classes, the poor and the weak. The state needs to look after all of them. The law-abiding rich are a great asset, others can be turned into national assets with long term policies. The US is likely to be better off giving Obama another term. Four years are not enough to clear the mess he inherited. The next four years may see the country taking a turn towards improvement. The situation in the US can be redeemed. But it is difficult to make this statement for Pakistan. Pakistan needs a major change to get back on track

April 18, 2016

Blasphemous rag of a film and the world reaction

A mentally sick person earned the curse of the Almighty by making a rag of a celluloid piece, of which he and his companions should be ashamed. It is said that even the actors did not know the intent and the objectionable pieces were dubbed in. One of the actresses of the film has filed a case. It is also said that the film maker made it on a shoestring budget on a few million financing — a crook, an immoral person all along. His name should be marked as a symbol of utter degradation and shame.

Nakoula Basseley Nakoula (born 1957) is an Egyptian-born US resident who is thought to be the writer, producer and promoter of *Innocence of Muslims*. He is a Coptic Christian with past criminal convictions and a history of using aliases. On July 2, 2012, a Sam Bacile, who was later identified as Nakoula, posted English-language promotional trailers for *Innocence of Muslims* on YouTube. After the trailers were dubbed into Arabic and posted on the Internet in September 2012, riots and protests erupted in many countries.

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria is the official name for a large Christian church in Egypt and the Middle East. It may be noted that many churches call themselves 'religions' and should not be included in the general category of 'Christians'.

Nakoula has been convicted several times and served jail terms. The script of this rag was said to have been written in jail and mostly shot in his house. He is now absconding and his house has been put on sale.

This is not the first time that a criminal has committed conscious blasphemy. Nor can it be assured that it is the last time. This raises the most important question of how should the ummah behave or react in such situations. Protests were held throughout the world, wherever Muslims inhabit and people with a fair sense of respect for each other's beliefs. Let us look at how widespread it was. Here are some of the places:

Mombasa, Mauritius, Nigeria, Niger, Somalia, Sudan, Sao Palo, Rio de Janeiro, Canada, United States, Brazil, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Netherlands, Norway, Russia,

Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, UAE, Australia, and a few others. These are 59 countries and innumerable cities and the extent of protest and expression of anger is wide. In Pakistan, many Christians took out protest rallies.

Here are some reports indicating the nature of action by the protestors, which is similar in most places except Pakistan.

"Several hundred Muslims, many waving banners and shouting execute people who mock Islam, rallied outside the US embassy and Google offices in Bangkok. The demonstration saw a brief scuffle as protesters tried to surge towards the US embassy, but police said it passed largely peacefully with no one seriously injured."

"Thousands of angry Muslims have marched in Kolkata to protest an anti-Islam film produced in the United States. Police officer Rajashri Roy says the protesters chanted 'Down with America'."

"Demonstrations and violent protests against the film broke out on September 11 in Egypt and Libya, and spread to other Arab and Muslim nations and some western countries."

"In Libya, the demonstration was infiltrated by extremists with pre-planning and resulted in damage and the killing of the US ambassador."

Generally, the mobs showed their anger within a degree of discipline in the rest of the world, but Pakistanis made an exception of themselves. Here is the report of Daily Times of September 22, 2012:

"Angry and violent protests plunged the country into chaos on Youm-e-Ishq-e-Rasool (PBUH) on Friday as at least 25 people were killed and hundreds injured in addition to widespread damage to private and public property in nationwide protests against a blasphemous, anti-Islam film. Fuming protesters fought pitched battles with police and law enforcement agencies in Peshawar, Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and several other cities. At least 20 people, including three policemen, were killed and more than 130 injured as violent protests erupted in Karachi after Friday prayers. The angry mobs also set ablaze four cinema houses on MA Jinnah Road, six banks, four police mobiles, two armoured personnel carriers, two restaurants and various automobiles in different areas of the city. Reports said that people continued looting the banks and other establishments for several hours. Two fire brigades engines were also set ablaze. Thousands of people were part of the rallies, which headed towards the US consulate to lodge a protest against the blasphemous movie."

Demonstrations were held outside Memon Mosque in Bolton Market, Preedy Street, Banori Town and Golimar. Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan took out a rally from Regal Chowk; Jamiat-i-Ulema-e-Islam from Banori Town; Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen from Nomaish Chowrangi and Jamaat-e-Islami from Masjid-e-Rizwan in Federal B Area. The stone-pelting agitators smashed windowpanes of several vehicles and blocked Shahrah-e-Faisal for traffic by setting tyres on fire.

In Peshawar, five people, including an employee of a private TV channel, were killed as several hundred protesters set ablaze four cinemas and the city's Chamber of Commerce, and damaged plazas, shops and vehicles.

Clashes between police and stone-throwing protesters also occurred in Islamabad. At least 55 people, including nine policemen, were injured in the unrest. The crowd included a 5,000 strong contingent of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, Jamiat-ul-Islam and Sipah-e-Sahaba. Police clashed with demonstrators in several areas of the capital, including in front of a five-star hotel near the diplomatic enclave.

In Lahore, demonstrators gathered on major roads, including Circular Road and The Mall, and burnt tires, shouted anti-US slogans and demanded hanging of the film producer. Protest demonstrations were also held in Faisalabad, Multan, Bahawalpur, Chakwal, Jhelum, Hyderabad and many other cities."

The serious matter is that the extreme parties have singled themselves out as the most irresponsible. Damage in all cities was the handiwork of the motivators who wanted to prove their street power more than the protest against the film. These parties need to understand that their supporters have neither served the cause of Islam nor served their country by killing their own countrymen and damaging national assets.

April 19, 2016

Malala, father, family, friends and the people of Swat

Hats off to Malala and to those who are the real symbol of a people's struggle against the tyranny of misdirected clergy. Many may not know the role of the people of Swat in fighting the forces of terrorism, but it is something each Pakistani can be proud of.

When al Qaeda and its supporters sneaked in from the Kunar province in Afghanistan several years ago, they made their secret camps in Puchar. Puchar is an uninhabited valley in Swat. It was connected with the rest of the world by an ancient, rusted, 'temporary' connection between two hills called a bridge. The place suited the secret activities of al Qaeda because they could blow up the bridge whenever they needed to, and hence, remained safe. Al Qaeda needed a place of 'safety' because the international forces against it had entered the Kunar province and its presence there could have been spotted.

In Puchar, al Qaeda tried to promote their brand of religion they called Islam. It was the most aggressive version developed on the thinking of the Salafis and Tayyabis. It was not in the spirit of the teachings of our Prophet (PBUH). When the word went around that there were forces getting organised to 'protect' Islam, the al Qaeda/Taliban ploy, the religious leaders were contacted. In the Swat area. One tribe was known as the learned tribe in matters of religion. The thinking of this tribe was true to the peaceful spirit of Islam, and it was generally followed in Swat. The tribe travelled through the unkind mountain trails, jungles and camped with al Qaeda preachers for some days. They had discussions, and finally decided to return because they could not accept the al Qaeda version of brutal killings, falsely called 'jihad', and its accompanying means of destruction. That was the beginning of the conflict in the territory of Swat and for its people.

Al Qaeda built up its biggest forts in Puchar. They had several kilometer long tunnels full of explosives. They built tunnels as hospitals to treat the wounded in their future war with Pakistan's peacekeepers. They built training camps and suicide schools, and adopted the practice of beheading people.

All that was being done while the political front of the group became active with the support of some militant elements. For a long time, the people of Swat were alone in their resistance. They suffered individually and collectively, but they followed their beliefs and fought for their right of freedom of thinking for themselves. The struggle began much before the rest of Pakistan woke up

and realised what was happening to a part of their country in the name of 'Islam'. Those terrorists were against education and establishment of law and order. Their main targets were centres of education, particularly education for girls, and the law enforcing agencies.

The situation deteriorated to such an extent that the biggest 'Heliborne Operation' after WWII had to take place to clear Puchar even partially. The army had to move in; the people of Swat had to be evacuated for the fight and were brought back only when the army had defeated the enemy.

The army action happened much later. Time was lost in fruitless negotiations by some politicians. Then militants from Laal Masjid, Islamabad joined the Taliban. The people of Swat — men, women and children — continued resistance.

Malala stands out as the symbol of the great fight of the people of Swat against the tyranny of the Taliban. We know this great individual and her family now, but there must have been many that the world did not recognise or who have not been able to live to this day. Malala has been inspired by her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai — an educationist and a poet — who in turn had been inspired by Khushal Khan Khattak, the great poet. It is interesting that these revolutionaries have something common with Mao who was a poet himself. Malala was shaped in large part by her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, who is a school owner and an educational activist himself, running a chain of schools known as the Khushal Public School, named after the famous Pashtun poet, Khushal Khan Khattak. Malala stated to an interviewer once that she would like to become a doctor but her father encouraged her to become a politician instead. Ziauddin referred to his daughter as someone very special, permitting her to stay up at night and talk about politics after her two brothers had been sent to bed.

At the beginning of 2009, Malala had a chance to write for BBC Urdu when her father, Ziauddin was asked by Abdul Hai Kakkar, a BBC reporter out of Pakistan, if any girls at his school would write about life under the Taliban. At the time, Taliban militants led by Maulana Fazlullah were taking over the Swat valley, banning TV, music, girls' education, and women from going for shopping. Bodies of beheaded policemen were hanging from town squares. At first, a girl named Aisha from her father's school agreed to write a diary, but then the girl's parents stopped her from doing it in the fear of a Taliban reprisal. The only alternative was Malala — four years younger than the original volunteer — and a student of class seven at the time. Malala wrote often while many schools were destroyed; and finally, Pakistan army took action. She wrote, "It is only when dozens of schools have been destroyed and hundreds of others closed down that the army thinks about protecting them. Had they conducted their operations here properly, this situation would not have arisen."

Malala, with her family, has shown the way to change and almost a revolution. The world has been shaken up. By shooting at her, Taliban have shot themselves in the foot. Her blood has woken up the conscience of the people in Pakistan. But beware: the Taliban supporters are already busy in damage control. Some of Taliban supporters, like Maulana Fazlur Rehman, are shamefully trying to underplay her sacrifice. Pakistan needs the courage shown by Malala to save the country from destruction by Taliban.

April 19, 2016

Women's vote

The election commission is said to have made it mandatory that a 10 percent women's vote must be cast in every constituency; otherwise the election from that constituency will be invalid. To begin with, I want to welcome this decision. The newly appointed Election Commissioner has shown a sense of responsibility to the voters and this step, if implemented, would make democracy healthier.

Now let me analyse for my readers as to what it means in term of elections. The best turnout of voters who actually cast their votes is usually 40 percent of the registered voters. There is no hard and fast rule but the assumption is based on historical data. This percentage includes genuine and/or rigged casting of votes. If we take the number of 40-percent as the votes cast in the coming elections in a particular constituency of 200,000 registered voters, then the requirement of 10 percent of the registered women's vote to be cast would actually mean that there would be 20,000 women's votes in the ballot boxes. Let me explain. Take an example that in constituency X the number of registered voters is 200,000. The numerical 10 percent of this number will be 20,000 votes. Now if 40 percent votes are cast, the number of total votes cast will be 80,000. If in these votes cast is included the 20,000 women's votes, the actual percentage of the women's votes in the total votes cast will be 25 percent, simply because 20,000 is 25 percent of 80,000.

If this principle is strictly followed, any candidate elected to the assembly will have an approximate support of 25 percent female voters, otherwise the election will be null and void. This decision of the Election Commission adds a measure of credibility to our 'sham' democracy plagued with all kinds of rigging. This decision of the Election Commission ensures that about 25 percent of the women, who have equal rights according to the constitution as well as the holy book, have been heard in the election process.

However, although I appreciate the decision, I wonder why the Election Commission could not make women's voting compulsory in the proportion that is registered in the constituency. In case a constituency has 35 percent of registered voters as women, why could this percentage not be the proportion to validate the election in that constituency? Maybe I am expecting too much for

starters, although such a decision would have been fair and the independence of the Election Commission against the pressures of vested interests would have been established beyond doubt.

My experience is that mostly it is the so-called 'rightist' element that lacks faith in the power of decision making by women. It is generally the rightist element that is infected with the curse of male chauvinism and considers itself superior to women in intellect as well as physique. History has proved both these assumptions wrong. Women are capable of greater physical endurance than men and have proved to be intellectually competent in many fields of life.

I am not here to establish the superiority of one over the other, but to consider women inferior in general is almost criminal. Therefore, if democracy of sorts is to be practised in Pakistan, many kinds of revolutions need to take place and one of these is to recognise equal status for women in the electoral process.

I understand that some political parties resisted the decision of the election commission and they are still against it. I would like to comment on their attitude briefly. On the surface, there seems no reason to be against the decision of the Election Commission, but the seekers of political power have their own preferences. The political parties on the 'right' are generally composed of people who are sceptical about women being equal to men! In their domestic behaviour, most of these people prefer their women to be subservient. This attitude is common with landlords, and they dominate the political horizon. The general attitude of the right and male-dominated society is to keep women suppressed and not to let them have power or a sense of equality. If women vote, then such politicians fear that their vote will be cast in favour of more enlightened candidates who understand the correct social status of women. Therefore, the women's vote is not welcome for them. If the history of the polling booths being disturbed is analysed, it will be quite evident that the usual target is female polling booths. The idea behind attacks is to scare them away, particularly so in constituencies where contests are close. I have personal experience of trying to salvage women voters and candidates' representatives in the only election of local governments allowed by the tyrant Ziaul Haq. I had to rescue women holed up in a polling station in Model Town, Lahore, and surrounded by belligerent, gun-toting youth of a religio-political party.

The recognition of the women's vote and ensuring its casting to validate the election in a constituency will have a restraining effect against strong-arm tactics and will force the candidates to respect the views of the female population. However, I believe that the beginning is smaller than desirable. At least 15 percent of the vote cast would have been a good beginning. Anyway, I hope that the Election Commission holds its own and does not succumb to the pressure of some parties.

April 21, 2016

Musharraf is here, believe it or not!

It was flight EK 606 of Emirate Airlines that took off from Dubai and reached Karachi on time on March 24. Pervez Musharraf was on time in another way too. He had promised his supporters that he would arrive within a week of the interim government. He fulfilled his promise. At the time of departure from Dubai, it was a scene to witness. Hundreds of people gathered to bid farewell and to shout slogans for his long life. About a 100 bought ticket to fly with him. Musharraf individually met all. All persons accompanying, as well as Musharraf himself, wore the Imam Zamin for good luck and protection. Begum Sehba Musharraf saw him off. One wonders what sentiments she must have had and how much she must have prayed for his safety. On the other hand, Musharraf was relaxed.

Musharraf arrived among many concerns of his well-wishers. He had threats to his personal security, as the Taliban had issued a fresh threat, stating that several hundred had been deputed, including sharp shooters and suicide bombers to kill Musharraf. He had legal cases and warrants of arrest, all waiting for him. His supporters at airport were restricted by security agencies, yet about 10,000 were present, and he addressed them. The crowd was demanding a show of 'fist' as power. He prayed for Pakistan and moved to his hotel. An interim bail had been granted by the Sindh High Court and that gave him a breather. Soon the TV showed that Musharraf was travelling to his hotel with full security and protocol. He is entitled to the security as a former president and chief of the army staff; government fulfilled its responsibility.

But the task ahead of Musharraf is not easy. His party is only two years old, and the its organisation is not tested. He still has to deal with court cases, and he also has to finalise the APML candidates for elections. A challenge is presented by the election commission's strict regulations. Will the APML be able to contest in a substantial number of National and Provincial constituencies? This is yet to be seen. The chances of emerging as party with a substantial number can only be through some miracle. However, he may align with some other parties that are convinced that a change of leadership is essential for Pakistan. He may also have some understanding with such parties that believe in the betterment of the middle class and working classes. He is not likely to have anything to do with the feudal or dynastic parties.

Musharraf's priorities as he declared to the media are: improvement in law and order, and in the economy. There is credibility to his plan due to his past performance. He took over when the country was on the verge of bankruptcy and on becoming a failed state. He successfully turned it around. A large number of people still remember that and consider him their 'saviour' to be.

Musharraf has declared his intention to contest for the National Election from Chitral where he built the Lowari Tunnel and connected it directly with Pakistan. He may also contest from Karachi. There are other options under consideration. He lodged at the Avari Hotel under heavy security, but he did walk around in the lawns and lobby, and could freely be seen by people in the breakfast lounge.

I had decided to stay until the confirmation of his bail on the 29th. There were all kinds of apprehensions; he could be denied extensions, he could be arrested. He had declared that he was ready for all situations. On the 28th, I got a viral infection in the lungs and I was in a bad shape. My desire to watch the court proceedings, and the consequent drama appeared jeopardised. Thanks to my doctor I improved but still had very low energy. But soon my desire to be a witness to a momentous event took the better of me. I got up and left for the Sindh High Court minutes before Musharraf's departure. His security vehicles were arriving and soon the route would have been closed.

The entrance to the Sindh High Court was crowded by the supporters of the APML. Banners and slogans of 'jeevay (long live) Musharraf' were noticeable. The hearing of cases was scheduled in court number one and four on the second floor. Both these courts are at each end of the corridor, and the corridors were packed with people and many 'black coats'. The buzz was around that the Chief Justice was in Karachi and a guessing game about results started. Suddenly, the black coats in the corridor rushed to court number one as the case was to start there. I could not match the pushing and pulling and was left behind while the door was closed. But I was able to be at a vantage point to observe. As Syed Pervez Musharraf was taken into the court through a secret doorway, some black coats started shouting against him. I could hardly believe that these sober looking men had so much lung power in them. They were shouting 'Bail naheen jail' and some other derogatory slogans. As they stopped for a breath the other parts of the crowd started shouting in favour of Musharraf. It was quite a scene, which continued for a while. Black coats making such rowdy noises in a court area seemed strange. Anyway, as soon as the bail was extended, the shouting black coats disappeared! A similar show later occurred in front of the court No.4, and silence followed once again as the extension of bail in Akbar Bugti and Benazir Bhutto cases was granted. After this the suspense was over, the APML and Musharraf were on their way to contest elections.

By the time I was concluding this article it was reported that the APML candidates were filing nomination papers for every National and Provincial constituency. Meanwhile, government in Islamabad became restrictive and placed Musharraf on the ECL. It seems like a tug of war between the former president and the 'neutral' government has started.

April 21, 2016

Of Returning Officers and the blank

Two surprising things have happened in the ongoing election process. One, the controversial conduct of the Returning Officers, and, the proposed addition of a 'blank' space on the ballot paper for those voters to stamp who have no confidence in any of the contestants listed therein. The Returning Officers (ROs) have been appointed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The ECP has wide powers supported by the constitution of Pakistan, and it chose to appoint the ROs from the judiciary as the judiciary is expected to be fair. So the judges from various status and seniority were assigned the task. Unfortunately, the conduct of some of these ROs from the judiciary has been shocking. Many of these ROs have faltered and exposed the stuff of which some 'judges' are made!

There are weird stories in circulation about the questions asked by these ROs (otherwise judges) to determine the suitability of the candidates under Articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution of Pakistan. One lady applicant for a seat in the assembly was asked her age. To start with, a gentlemen should not ask a lady's age in good grace! But instead of relying on the ID card, he asked her age. She said she was 35 years old. He did not believe her and asked her to turn around and show her face to all present in the room and asked them if she looked 35! Regrettable. Then another RO asked a candidate as to how many wives he had. This is a completely irrelevant question, to which the candidate said he had three wives. Our RO did not stop here. He further asked which one was his favorite wife and if he actually spent more time with her! Unbelievable. Perhaps the worst and most shameful question was asked by another RO who asked the a lady applicant this question: "What are the days in a month for a woman when she is exempted from saying prayers?" Absolutely shameful question. The lady appropriately retorted and said, "You ask your mother this question." Such ROs have no business to be there. Another Returning Officer rejected the papers of Mr Amir Ayaz because he could not understand the article written by Ayaz and interpreted it against the 'ideology of Pakistan'.

The questionable conduct of such ROs continues. Some of them, in fact, several of them, have appointed themselves as guardians of religion and morality! They ask questions about Islam and individuals religious practices as if they were teachers in a madrassa. Such officers ask for recitation of several Quranic verses and details of religious principles, which should be none of

the business of an RO. The EC would have done better if a standard set of questions was provided and the questioning was not left to the discretion of individuals. These Returning Officers are, after all, human, who get swayed by their mindsets. Let us also not forget that several of these are those who have let almost all terrorists under trial free for one reason or the other. I regret to say that the choice is one of the glaring oversights of the EC. There is good justification for the protests being launched by major political parties against the behaviour of the ROs. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) is reported to have stated, "...the latest process of scrutiny is a witch-hunt aimed at harassing and humiliating candidates..." HRCP further says, "...this deliberate and planned abuse of the process appears to be a bid to complete Ziaul Haq's agenda to accommodate extremism into the mainstream of politics..."

If this time the EC fails then the major onus will be on the misconduct of the ROs.

The other controversy is about the blank square or box in the ballot papers. I understand the move was made by a registered political party for the inclusion of such a box in the ballot paper. Initially the application was accepted but soon afterwards the idea was dropped. No open debate took place for inclusion or exclusion. It is said that such blanks are included in the ballot papers in several countries like Canada and Bangladesh. What does a blank do? A blank provides the opportunity to a registered voter to express his decision not to support any of the listed candidates. This expression can be limited to a constituency, but if a large section of the electorate puts its stamp on the blank, it is a comment on the system of selection of candidates and the matter assumes an importance of vital significance. The election loses its credibility and validity.

The blank records the opinion of the so-called 'silent majority' as long as this category takes the trouble to go and stamp the blank. I thought, and considered, the provision of the blank a good, constructive decision. But I noticed that some thinkers, whom I respect, had reservations and they seemed happy that the implementation had been withheld. The logic put forward was that the blank may be used to sabotage the electoral process. They fear that militants and extremists may flock to stamp the blank, and thus sabotage the electoral process. This may be true, but then how does the majority express its dissatisfaction with the current exploitable electoral system, a system that is open to rigging and control by the landlord, the super-rich, the corrupt and the influential? A system that has no provision for the distinguished persons of the soil who cannot run a campaign, but can contribute immensely for the betterment of the country and people, of which scientists, educationists, economic specialists, intellectuals, researchers, writers and so on are examples. The present system elects 'lawmakers' with little educational qualifications, or with forged documents. Can it be relied upon? The elected become the lawmakers! What kind of joke is that with the nation?

Doesn't this system need an overhaul? An appropriate legal/ constitutional cover needs to be provided to the blank.

April 21, 2016

The Black Brigade

They may have some resemblance to the Ninja Turtle cartoons, but they are not harmless *like* them. These are persons clad in black, holding large batons (danda) and daggers, and they attack at will. They are aggressive and programmed into a ruthless warrior mode. They kill and get killed. It is said that these are females from the Laal Masjid, Islamabad, but it is possible that some males may have donned that attire as one of their leaders did in July 2007 to escape from the mosque.

They reappeared last week well-equipped and 'supported'. There were *pickups* and ladders to support their action, the action being the destruction of the election campaign banners of two candidates, Dr Amjad and Syed Pervez Musharraf. They remained unchecked and the TV networks, particularly the new Capital TV network covered them at length. They were climbing the poles, they were supported by pick up vans, and they had large batons in their hands. They were beating the posters and the photographs, they were trying to pull these down and cut the ropes with the help of large daggers.

The black burqa brigade is not unfamiliar to Islamabad. It is also familiar to many outside Islamabad. A famous sculptor made life size sculptures of a group of these danda-bardar (baton-carrying) brigades at the inauguration of the National Art Gallery in Islamabad. These black burqa-clad persons played a prominent and very visible role in the support of the famous terrorist action from the Laal Masjid in 2007. These black brigades stood on the top of the roofs of the Laal Masjid and the adjacent Children Library. This black brigade had unlawfully captured the Children Library and refused to vacate it. They made it a part of the Laal Masjid terror camp. Said to be students, they were well-trained in combat.

In the month of July 2007, the Laal Masjid occupants had worked out their strategy against the government of Pakistan. The two brothers from the Laal Masjid, Aziz and Rashid, were in regular contact with al Qaeda leaders, particularly Tahir Yaldochiv and Sheikh Essa. Sheikh Essa was an Arab member of the al Qaeda who was fluent in Urdu and Pashto. The two brothers regularly received a flow of directives on strategy. By 2007, Laal Masjid had become an al Qaeda powerhouse in the federal capital of Islamabad, directly in the face of the ISI and the GHQ. All

appeals to vacate or surrender met with deaf ears. The strategy of attacking video shops, Chinese workers, kidnapping of policemen, burning of video shops were all actions to test waters.

"... Pakistani intelligence sources were reporting to the Presidency that Laal Masjid was demanding the enforcement of the Islamic Sharia but in fact it was playing mind games under instruction from al Qaeda..." (Inside Al Qaeda, Salim Shehzad, Page 161).

By the time the Laal Masjid 'Operation Sunrise' started, the two brothers had severed relations with their spiritual head. They had refused to accept the appeals of the Imam Kaaba, Mr and Mrs Abdul Sattar Edhi; the head of the Wafaq-ul-Madaris, politicians like Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain, and of course, repeated appeals from the government, and particularly from President Musharraf.

The occupants inside included members of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa, formerly known as the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, and Harkat-e-Jihad-e-Islami of the controversial jihadi leader, Qari Saifullah. The biggest grouping of militants belonged to the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed. The complex always had close affiliation with Jaish, but the first sign of its physical presence came when on the third day of the conflict the militants handed over the body of a man described as a journalist from a local newspaper. It was later revealed that he had been carrying a fake identity card and was identified as Maqsood-ul-Mehmood, who used to work for a Jasih-e-Mohammed publication and was cousin of the banned outfit's supreme leader Maulana Masood Azhar.

The plan was to hold as many as possible from leaving the Laal Masjid complex in response to the government appeals and keep them as human shields. The Black Brigade was assisting ferociously. What happened during and after the operation is well known. Even Benazir Bhutto and the Afghan president Hamid Karzai supported the operation. The escapees joined the terrorists in Swat and the larger uprising as per the plans of the al Qaeda started.

Some years have passed and the memories are getting muddled. The actual newspaper archives still keep the records and are source of many truths. But politics has changed and it is found useful by several politicians to back off from their stands in July 2007. They are trying to gain sympathies of the rightists, the extremists, and the terrorists. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, and the religious parties are all in the good books of the Taliban. Now it is the election time and the right moment to re-visit the pledges of the Laal Masjid. Therefore, the appearance of the Black Brigade, the Danda Brigade or Ninjas, whatever you like to call them, is no co-incidence. It is very likely a planned strategy. They hated the Pakistan People's Party government as they hated Musharraf. Both resisted terror as best as they could. They also resisted the enforcement of the Salafi brand of Islam and the schools akin to it. No doubt there is a majority of Muslims in this country but they believe in the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and do not believe in sectarian divide and conflict.

The appearance of the Black Brigade needs a serious notice. Is it there to show its power to the political parties and to get their support? Are they testing the strength of the government and its will to control? Are they building, and regrouping, in the time available during the interim government with a limited mandate?

The reason can be any of these or all of these. Whatever the reason, the people of Pakistan and their law enforcement agencies will be committing a blunder if they do not watch carefully and act before the malady, symbolised by 'Black Brigade' becomes fatal this time.

April 22, 2016

Flyovers, underpasses and the mess

Smooth flow of traffic is a story of the past. The province of Punjab is in the grip of roads, flyovers and underpass construction mania. Almost all major cities, and in particular, Lahore and Rawalpindi are going through a phase of such extensive re-routing that one does not know how to reach one's destination. To top it all, there is a recent announcement that preparations to help people go from one point to the other are not going to serve all objectives. For example, the well-known Kalma Chowk in Lahore, which has construction going on all around it, is likely to create new problems. The planners overlooked the fact that the two major towns, Model Town and Gulberg, need a reasonable link. Now more underpasses and flyovers need to be constructed in this area to link the two towns.

It is also being said that Chief Minister (CM) Shahbaz Sharif in his habitual frenzy ordered the PC-1 for his 'development concept' to be prepared practically overnight, and it was approved literally first thing in the morning. When the Sharifs want to do something they go after it and have it done. There is no doubt the project was going to need a colossal amount of steel. But the steel supply could not have posed a problem because the chief minister has industrial connections with groups that can meet all these needs.

Citizens are advised by advertisements to be patient, praise the chief minister, watch hundreds of his cheerful photos and hope for the 'best'. The best keeps on slipping from the target dates. In the meantime, people's vehicles have started to rattle because they have to cover distances on bumpy under-construction roads. These vehicles are contributing massively to air pollution. Journeys have become longer and longer due to traffic congestion, incurring more waste of petrol or diesel. More fumes mean more health hazards. Of course, the most important is the huge waste of valuable time.

I do not know about others, but I have seriously thought about my personal financial situation. There was a time five years ago that I could drive a reasonable 1800 cc car and fill up the tank in under Rs 2,000. Then, the price kept on rising but my income did not. Therefore, I decided to get a 1600 cc car and still felt that my social status was not devastated, but the cost of fuel stayed nearly within my limits. Then came the phenomenal rise in prices and the detours required by the

obsessive road developments, further complicated by hours of being stuck in the congestion of traffic, I reviewed my financial situation and bought an 800 cc small car. This is now my means of transportation, which stays within my means. The income has not tripled, expenses have. I am moving from a middle class 'sufaid posh' (white collar) to someone struggling to survive. I may have to seriously consider the motorbike or scooter option soon. In fact, a two-wheeler has great advantages in mobility through traffic, like the economy of fuel, and of course, one can load the whole family on it and go for a picnic.

Returning to the transport facilities planned by the Mr Shahbaz Sharif, I must gratefully recognise the additional option after the two-wheeler option. Of course, the Metro Bus! So, this is the futuristic idea of the CM. He has foreseen that with the rising prices the population will have to consider the metro bus to go anywhere. He has also shown great farsight in connection with the coming elections. The project will leave with him massive funds to prepare for the next elections. Contractors can be also given the good advice to show their support for the PML-N. This will be all in the larger interest of the country. It is so because all great politicians have amassed millions of dollars to make sure they continue to serve the poor masses. They even stack up huge assets overseas to ensure their continuance of service. They also make every effort to keep those overseas Pakistan out of the loop of power in the country because who knows what devastation to the system may be brought by the dual nationality status. However, the money they sent amounting to several billion dollars is okay and acceptable, but not the sender of the money.

I digress again. It seems my mind has been deeply affected by the twists and turns I have been taking on the roads to go anywhere. Living in Model Town, I need to enquire every morning about the changes in the routes. Sometimes, one has to travel a few miles in the opposite direction and then make a U-turn. This is simple, but when you also have to go through the potholes, and your vehicle gets ready to be sent to the workshop, the development work starts to hurt.

The development work has also changed the face of the traditional city of Lahore. This city has had a character known for several centuries. The Central Model School, the Government College Lahore, the lower courts and several such buildings have archival value and symbolise an era in history. I am sure a way could have been found in planning the Metro Bus that minimised the damage to the classical ambience. The old cities in the world are protectively preserved for tourism, nostalgia and to keep the memories alive. The city of Berkeley in California does not allow any change in the exterior because hundreds of thousands of students return to the familiar surroundings of their youth. Will Lahore retain its character in future? This is a question that must be answered.

I can only hope that the ambitious Metro Bus and the new road layout will make some ultimate sense and be of use to the people. The traffic problems needed to be addressed, and I hope the solution sought by the CM works.

April 22, 2016

Is it CEC's sense of humor?

Recently, the personality of the CEC has become a subject of some TV shows. At least one anchor is most concerned. But there are others also. Some of the things quoted are funny.

In a TV programme this week a very senior journalist on phone from the USA mentioned an interesting story. It goes like this: our wise journalist of 'chirya' fame was in a book show in Karachi some weeks ago and there he met with the CEC. This is of course before Mr Najam Sethi assumed the charge of Punjab chief minister for about 40 days. In the show under reference, it was narrated by a distinguished journalist, Mr. Sehbai that Mr Fakhruddin G Ibrahim, the CEC, asked Mr Sethi, "Are the General Elections actually going to be held?"

Watching the TV show the anchor person, and Mr. Babar Awan the other participant, appeared to be taken aback and so was I. But later I wondered if the CEC's question could be treated as a joke. I don't know what response Mr Sethi gave in response, or what his chirya reported, but I think the question is not just a joke. It is a reflection of the state of cynicism in our nation. Even the Chief Election Commissioner who is bound by the Constitution of Pakistan, and who has accepted the responsibility to do so is so uncertain that he has to ask someone else about the situation of his own assignment. Unfortunately, it also reveals a lack of confidence of the Chief has in himself. It is he who should be dispelling the doubts and make people confident of the application of the system. Why is he in doubt? If the story narrated by Mr Sehbai is true then our respected retired jurist needs to ponder a bit.

Another story is taking rounds. This time again it is the CEC. It is said that the CEC was in a reception where, on his way out, he met a very impressive army general. So the CEC met him with courtesy and asked him to convey his best wishes to General Kiyani. The CEC did not realise that he was giving this message to General Kiyani himself!

All such buzz is around because of the advanced age of the Mr Fakhruddin G Ibrahim, fondly known as Fakhru Bhai. I hate discrimination on the basis of age. In fact, I am against any kind of discrimination, but unfortunately age discrimination and gender discrimination are most prevalent. This is particularly so in jokes. There are many jokes at the expense of female gender, old age etc. However, the fact is that our CEC is advanced in age, perhaps 87 years of age. It is not the ideal

age to take big challenges, and, holding 'fair and free' elections is the biggest ever challenge. One wonders if he actually realises how serious this assignment is!

Unfortunately, Mr Ibrahim came across as a very frail person when he found it difficult even to read the name of the interim prime minister in front of the TV cameras. He struggled. He was prompted and still he did not know if the name was Khosa or Khussa or Khoso. On help from his staff he settled on Khoso and so the name of the interim prime minister became known. The interim prime minister wouldn't be complaining, and must have understood. He himself is said to be 84 and highly experienced.

One wishes the interim set up and the CEC the best of everything. We wish them success for their good, and more so for the good of the country. But I cannot help saying that these choices are, once again, a failure of our politicians. The seasoned politicians take pride in having completed the full constitutional term of five years, but they could not locate a few capable and competent middle-aged people out of the whole 200 million of population who could conduct the elections? No technocrats, businessmen, professionals, scholars, management specialists etc.? There are several, civil or military, retired persons of recent years also. There must be some lawmakers, attorneys of character. Someone could be trusted. Even the names suggested by the politicians could not acquire consensus and the good old Fakhru Bhai had to intervene. All this speaks of the distrust, and cynicism rooted in the national polity. Politicians are allergic to the armed forces, but still they need their help to conduct the elections. In fact, the only guarantor of the polling booth safety can be the armed forces. What goes on prior to the voter entering the booth and afterwards is not what the armed forces can take care off. In fact, all rigging happens before or after. The Chief Election Commissioner promises 'free and fair' elections and I would like to hope that he knows what he is talking about. He needs to understand that it is not only the polling day, the dye for rigging gets cast much earlier. Lot of people believe that a dye in favour of the 'status quo' has already been cast. It is very likely that the people of Pakistan will have more of the same thing again. The parties of 'change' like the APML, TI, MQM are trying their best, but so are the 'status quo' parties. My perception is that no one in this country is satisfied with the performance of the outgoing national and provincial governments. In fact, people are completely fed up. But they will not see a 'change'. Fakhru Bhai or the new set up may prove irrelevant.

People will have to be pro-active now without delay; watch their interest; recognise the tools of rigging, and destroy them. If the people for 'change' are late this time then they may be 'late' forever.

- the CEC I can only say that its task is no joke, it is a very serious challenge and so it is for the day interim governments.

April 22, 2016

Long March aftermath

Allama Dr Tahirul Qadri started the 'Long March' to Islamabad from Lahore on January 13 and arrived in Islamabad the next night. There are different figures about the number of people in the march that are being circulated. In a conservative estimate, the actual number of men, women and children, braving the weather at the D square and on Jinnah Avenue, was not less than 150,000. It is also noteworthy that the numbers did not reduce with the passage of time and actually increased because new groups joined in. People were determined to stay until their demands were met; they were in high spirits and knew that 'change' was the only answer to the miserable quality of life they had been pushed into in the last five years.

The crowd was composed of many individuals who were not part of the Minhaj-ul-Quran set up. However, they were there because the demands by made by Dr Qadri reflected their feelings and experiences. His speeches and histrionics may have not impressed all but his demands did.

The unfortunate thing in the aftermath is that most of the TV anchorpersons, columnists and his opponents criticised the person and personality of Dr Qadri. They hit the messenger carrying the message of the people but ignored the importance of the message. I feel this is low calibre criticism. The message is the most important. If the demands were not fair, constitutional, and truly reflective of the sentiments of the people, then the political parties in government would not have bowed down. They delayed and hoped that the long march would fizzle out, but there were no signs of that. People in the sit-in were determined, resolute and peaceful but ready to face all eventualities. The message finally went 'home' only on Dr Qadri's final ultimatum when the risk of a physical conflict arose.

At that point, the 'democratic' spirit of the parties in government woke up, thanks to Chaudary Shujaat Hussain's efforts. Ultimately, the ruling parties agreed to the demands. What were the demands? Here are these briefly:

- 1) The National Assembly shall be dissolved at any time before March 16, 2013, (due date), so that the elections may take place within 90 days. One month will be given for the scrutiny of nomination papers for the purpose of the pre-clearance of the candidates under Articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution so that the eligibility of the candidates is determined by the Election

Commission of Pakistan. No candidate would be allowed to start the election campaign until ^{pre} clearance on his/her eligibility is given by the Election Commission of Pakistan. (This demand was agreed and accepted as it is.)

2) The treasury benches in complete consensus with the Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) will propose names of two honest and impartial persons for appointment as the caretaker prime minister. And that the proposed names will be forwarded after consultation with all stakeholders and not by just the PPP and PML-N. (It was agreed that the caretaker prime minister would be proposed after consultation with all parties and finalised in consultation with Dr Qadri; thus, this demand was also agreed upon.)

3) Issue of composition of the Election Commission of Pakistan will be discussed at the next meeting on Sunday, January 27, 2013, 12 noon at the Minhaj-ul-Quran Secretariat. Subsequent meetings, if any, in this regard will also be held at the Central Secretariat of Minhaj-ul-Quran in Lahore. In pursuance to the agreement, the Law Minister will convene a meeting of the following lawyers: S M Zafar, Waseem Sajjad, Aitzaz Ahsan, Farough Naseem, Latif Afridi, Dr Khalid Ranjha and Humayun Ahsan to discuss these issues. Prior to the meeting of January 27, the Law Minister, Mr Farooq H Naek, will report the results of this legal consultation to the January 27 meeting.

4) Electoral Reforms: It was agreed upon that the focus would be on the enforcement of electoral reforms prior to the polls on:

A. Articles 62, 63 and 218 (3) of the Constitution B. Section 77 to 82 of the Representation of Peoples' Act 1976 and other relevant provisions relating to conducting free, fair, just and honest elections guarded against all corrupt practices.

C. The Supreme Court judgment of June 8, 2012 on the constitutional petition of 2011 must be implemented in toto and in true letter and spirit.

5) With the end of the long march and sit-in, all cases registered against each other shall be withdrawn immediately and there will be no act of victimisation and vendetta against either party, or the participants of the march.

In my opinion, it is a tribute to Dr Qadri, and the ruling alliance that some issues of serious public concern were settled, and a hope of a more credible democratic government in the future could be entertained after the next elections.

The most disappointing reactions were the targeting of the person of Dr Qadri. The hate campaign was led by the PML-N and its satellites. They find fault with his dual nationality, mannerisms past contradictions, sources of funding, even his looks and gestures. I find such reactions very petty. Let us look at the message, not just the messenger. The message is beneficial to the country. The message is supported by millions who do not want to suffer the painful outcome of the previous elections: no power, no gas, no employment, no law and order and so on and so forth. Dr Qadri showed the resolve to lead a strenuous, unparalleled long march, and achieved the result without the loss of one drop of blood or damage to property. What does it matter if anyone finds fault with his mannerisms or looks? He may not even contest the elections! I believe that he

accomplished something that other political leaders could not, and that is bothering his opponents. He did not lead the long march to set up power plants or gas pipe lines; in my opinion, he went there to create 'hope' and that he did.

April 22, 2016

The New Year and change

The New Year 2013 is here for all those fortunate individuals who have survived so far. Good luck to you. As the calendar has changed so has the political atmosphere. This year is special for Pakistan. It is, therefore, necessary to look at the possible future scenarios.

At the time of writing this article, a large movement is building up for 'change'. AllamaTahirulQadri held a mammoth congregation at the Minar-e-Pakistan and demanded electoral reforms before the next elections. The size of the congregation was so large that it was thought to be in millions. In his speech, he gave a deadline and announced a 'long march' to Islamabad if his demands were not accepted. The 'long march' is scheduled for January 14.

There are several reasons for the massive response AllamaQadri received. The public is so disappointed by the mismanagement of the present federal and provincial governments that it just cannot tolerate them anymore. An effort to bring a change is felt to be desperately needed.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had been using the slogan of 'change', and it got some public support as well, but as it moved on, its ability to change kept losing its credibility. The last straw on the camel's back was the declaration by the Taliban that they find Imran Khan acceptable with some others like the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam, Jamaat-e-Islami and the PML-N. The populace of Pakistan, already wary of the Taliban, started to move away after this information.

The APML of General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf started to fit the bill as his condemnation of the attack on Malala was clear. He does not support the Taliban at all and he has an analytical, nationalistic, and enlightened approach. Many Pakistanis thought that Pakistan could do better under good leadership. Some started to move towards the APML. The period of Musharraf's governance left nostalgic memories and some people felt that they would be better off under different leadership. People hoped that the change would be for the better.

These were some of the factors that worked in AllamaQadri's favour. However, the resources, the skill in political management and media handling by his party cannot be underestimated. Such a well-organised publicity campaign and management has rarely been seen.

AllamaQadri's sudden appearance after a long time gave some people the impression that it was 'God sent' help for the miserable people of Pakistan. For some time, the federal and provincial governments seemed stunned. They could not believe the extent of discontent. If they were aware of the public frustration, they did not expect that someone could rally the masses together. They thought that they could keep Musharraf away by political manoeuvrings and underhand tactics of typical old-fashioned FIRs and mudslinging. They had assessed Imran Khan, prepared a counter-offensive and hoped to control the elections to govern for another term. But the thrust by AllamaQadri, until then unknown, changed the scenario completely.

What does AllamaQadri stand for? He is known to have an 'inclusive' approach in religious matters rather than an exclusive one. He supports harmony in different religious segments against discord and animosity perpetuated by the Taliban and pro-Taliban political and religious segments. He definitely wants a change in the electoral system to free people from the stranglehold of the landlords and wealthy politicians. What he has not spelled out so far is how he wants to do it.

It is my guess that Allama Qadri may seek an electoral reform favouring 'Proportional Representation' as against the winner take all approach. In proportional representation, every vote matters and is reflected in the National Assembly. The highest recipient of votes gets the votes for the party. The others also get the vote for their parties and seats in the assembly are divided in proportion to the overall votes received by a party. AllamaQadri may demand the armed forces and judiciary to supervise the voting to avoid extortion. He may also demand an interim government of consensus at a wider level and not limited to only an agreement between the ruling parties and the opposition. If my guess is right and he succeeds in achieving these things, then we may even see a new era of change.

The Tehrik Minhaj-ul-Quran of AllamaQadri has so far received unconditional support from the MQM, which is the most disciplined and organised party of the country. Its support lends a great deal of strength to AllamaQadri's narrative. The APML is the other party that has announced its clear support to reforms. Both these parties are contributing manpower to the march. The PML-Q announced its support, but it is not participating in the march.

Surprisingly, some sectors of the media are busy finding fault with the movement generated by AllamaQadri. They harp on minor things like his dual nationality, prolonged absence from the country, etc. What do all these objections matter if his movement does good to the country?

As I am writing this article, the MQM chief, Altaf Hussain has raised an interesting point. He has reminded people that in 1947, Quaid-e-Azam took over as the Governor-General of Pakistan, a 'Dominion', and his oath contained allegiance to the British Crown. Does this mean that he was not loyal to Pakistan? Nothing could be more ridiculous. The dual nationality issue is ridiculous in any case. Pakistan survives on the billions of dollars sent by expatriates and the insecure members of the National Assembly do not want them to compete in higher political positions! It is only a ploy to keep persons who are more competent out of power.

Mass movements start unexpectedly. The basic requirement is intolerable conditions when the masses believe there is nothing left to lose. This is the reality now. Pakistanis have lost electricity, gas, income, security of life, jobs, education, the environment and so on. They are losing self-respect and the image of a workable nation. What more is there to lose?

April 25, 2016

Negotiating with terrorists

Once again, some political parties have offered 'peace' negotiations to the terrorists, and once again, they have received a slap in the face. In fact, more than a slap, a bloody gift of dead bodies.

The Awami National Party (ANP) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa held an All Parties Conference (APC) and decided to invite the Taliban to negotiate. It may be remembered that the veil of Islam that the Taliban wore to deceive the simple, religious-leaning people of Pakistan has been shredded to pieces by the combined statements of the country's ulema and mashaikh. The true face of the terrorists is thus exposed.

The so-called 'peace negotiations' offer led by the ANP was the most disappointing act of opportunism. The ANP has, for a long time, bravely confronted terrorists and earned the respect of the nation. This sudden U-turn could only be opportunism before elections. And who is the one receiving this offer? Who is the authorised leader of the terrorists? What authority does he have from so many independent operators? What is their relationship with the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)? These are not the only questions, there are many more:

a. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has called for the top three politicians of the country, namely Mian Nawaz Sharif (PML-N), Maulana Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F) and Syed Munawar Hasan (JI), as guarantors from the government. Who is going to be the guarantor for the TTP?

b. The offer of talks has come from Ehsanullah Ehsan, who has always accepted responsibility for various terrorist attacks, including attacks on the security installations of Pakistan on behalf of the TTP, slaughtering soldiers and killing high-profile politicians. Will Ehsan and other TTP leaders face the courts for gruesome acts they have been committing/accepting?

c. Presence of a convicted murderer Adnan Rashid with Ehsanullah Ehsan, while the latter offered talks, speaks volumes about the seriousness of their offer. Would Rashid be handed over to the government to fulfil judicial/legal requirements?

d. In their 'message for peace', the TTP vowed to attack another political party (MQM), besides labelling Pakistani soldiers as 'murtad'. This probably conveys that they would continue deciding

who is right and who is wrong and violence would continue. In such circumstances, would negotiations be successful?

e. Who was responsible for the failure of earlier peace agreements? Did the TTP ever fulfil its obligations in accordance with various clauses of former agreements?

f. What is the TTP's mind on compensation for loss of life and property that occurred during the decade-long terrorism?

g. Will the TTP still attack girl's schools in FATA/PATA or try to kill Malala Yousafzai when she comes back?

h. Does the TTP look for some policy by the government of Pakistan for seeking state amnesty?

i. Will the TTP be ready to disband their outfit if the negotiations are successful?

There are several other points to be seriously thought about:

1. Would dialogue with militants who have killed thousands of Pakistanis in suicide bombings, beheaded soldiers and bombed schools not amount to surrender by the state to them? Wouldn't it amount to selling the blood of thousands of men, women and children who have fallen victim to the insane violence?

2. Has the objective of the TTP, i.e. enforcing their brand of Islam, been achieved? If not, how do they intend perusing their agenda in future? What is the real agenda behind their offer?

3. The TTP has not announced to renounce violence or lay down arms against the state. They have not announced to accept a democratic form of government. In such circumstances, what will be the outcome of such negotiations?

4. If assuming that all terms of the TTP are accepted by the government of Pakistan, would the TTP wholeheartedly accept the constitution of Pakistan and the writ of the government and renounce violence against the citizens of Pakistan? If not, would a compromise not amount to legitimising violence?

5. What is the basic motive behind calling for the top three politicians of the country as guarantors?

6. What formula do the political parties supporting negotiations have in their mind? What will be the role of the TTP in future decision-making? Who will compensate/give justice to the relatives of those who have been killed by the TTP?

7. Will society at large accept murderers, convicts and terrorists going scot-free as a result of conciliation or dialogue?

8. What will be the effect of dialogue on the anti-TTP militant groups like Ansar-ul-Islam? Would it lead to infighting between various groups in order to prove their superiority?

9. How can the people of FATA, who have been the worst affected, be included in such negotiations as stakeholders?

In the last few weeks, the nation has gone through a renewed scene of horror and killings of the Hazara community. Terrorists strongly tried to fulfil the age-old dream of Pakistan's enemies by creating communal animosity.

The Hazara Shias acted peacefully, but firmly, in demanding justice. One takes the hat off to their discipline and patience in extremely trying and provocative circumstances. Even the spineless government of Pakistan was forced to take some measures. If this government does not succeed in stopping the atrocities committed by the LeJ, then this government has no moral or legal justification to rule the country. In such a case, this government must resign. It has failed in every field — the economy, law and order, welfare of the people and other matters related to it. It is known that the terrorists are clearly identified. Then why is there delay? Why is the political elite not ready to give full support to the armed forces to confront the terrorists? They want to cling on to their vested interests. They want to cling on to their benefits and comforts. It must be clearly understood that it is not only the ruling political parties who are guilty, the so-called 'opposition' and the 'guarantor' parties, in particular, are equal partners in crime. If they do not understand then they will not be clinging to their power base; they will only be clinging on to the mass of dead bodies of innocent citizens.

April 26, 2016

Interim government, before and after

By the time this article is published, it is possible that an interim government of Pakistan may have been sworn in. It is also possible that it may not have happened! It is interesting to know as to what has been rumoured before the 'interim government' and what can take place afterwards.

At the time of writing of this article, a host of names is cropping up as potential prime ministers of the interim set-up. The list started with the name of Honourable Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid and two others. Mr Mehmood Khan Achakzai's name also appeared. It was followed by a host of other names. Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan volunteered to become the interim prime minister and solve all problems facing the country in a very short while! Recently, some lesser known names have been coming up. Finally, six names were under consideration. It is also said that Mr Tahirul Qadri will have to make a nod. This was an arrangement agreed upon after the 'Long March'. There is not much talk about it anymore. The consent and agreement of all political parties, the opposition, and government seems like a very tall order. These parties are known for only agreeing to disagree! However, the only compulsion that may keep them together will be that if they do not arrive at consensus then they lose their right at midnight of March 16, 2013, and the responsibility of nominating an interim prime minister passes on to the Chief Election Commissioner via first the parliamentary committee.

In such a situation, some legal experts think that a prime minister will need to be there without any gap as a constitutional requirement. Now either the parliamentary committee does it or the Chief Election Commissioner does it. Some legal minds say that the election commission can take up to a maximum six days to nominate the prime minister. So there are options and complications and the matter is not as simple as some may have thought.

Once the interim government is in place its prime responsibility is to hold 'free and fair' elections according to the constitution of Pakistan, which is again a very tall order, and there will be very few lucky candidates who pass the test of Article 62 and 63. However, the interim government will need to take care of the 'day to day' affairs as well. This includes law and order and the economy. They will also need to pass the budget, which is to be presented in the month of May. These are no small tasks. In reality, the interim government will need to shoulder all the

If the interim government needs more time, then what? The requirement that elections should be held within 60 days, poses another problem. The month of May is most important for the agriculturalist community, which forms over 65 percent of the population. May is the month when crops are to be cut and saved. It is a very busy month for agriculturists, and it is very challenging for them to give preference to election campaigns. Again, a case for the postponement of elections to a later date revolves in several minds.

There are also talks about an arrangement between the two major parties to manoeuvre matters in a way that they retain power. It is said that in the post-election scenario there is some understanding to give the prime minister's slot to the PML-N and let Mr Asif Zardari continue as president. This will indeed be far from the change that many political parties like the PTI, APML and Awami Tehrik of MQadrat are looking for. This will mean more of the same thing as in the past five years. Generally, it is felt that the people of Pakistan have been disappointed by the performance of the current national and provincial governments and they want a change for the

In short, uncertainty and even turbulent times may be ahead. The people of Pakistan have been disappointed by the performance of the governments in the democracy of the last five years. Many have doubts about the sustainability of the present democratic system. Maybe it does need to evolve, the fact that it is overburdened by instrumental landlords, Wadars, Khans and Sardars, money laitis and gun mafias is hard to deny. A free and fair election will mean that these influences be controlled and competent candidates come forward. Also to be considered is the very high cost of electioneering, which has become far beyond the means of an average individual. Furthermore, the Diaspora is deprived of meaningful participation in the electoral process. Given all these factors, what results can we expect?

people expect clean and capable persons to run the country and make it move forward. They want end to the ethnic and religious divide. A religious state is a phenomenon under question, and to the disruption and compromise of sovereign rights are not acceptable. Terrorism is being undertaken having no religious sanction at all. It is a game played by foreign and local mafias for stabilisation and to prevent development and progress of the nation. There is wide awareness in public and they can see through things. The Election Commission government will at a crossroads. They may lead to an era of prosperity or chaos and gloom. Let them not

The Election Commission of Pakistan is expected to ensure a free and fair election and it must succeed in doing so. All forces, armed or civilian, need to help and support this effort. We as

It is also true that in spite of the announcement about the doubts about his return still exists. The mist has not entirely cleared, it will only clear when he is actually here and steps onto the soil of Pakistan.

The real threat is to Musaharraf's life from terrorists. However, he believes that life and death is in the hands of the Almighty and as long as he lives he wants to serve the country and its people. For Musaharraf, this is almost the only chance to play a democratic role. He is boardring the last bus to heaven and as long as he lives he wants to serve the country and its people. For Musaharraf, he believes he can turn the country around as he did a decade ago. One would like to wish that the people suffered too much and for too long. A change for the better has to happen, and Musaharraf believes he can do better rather than later.

ervey Mushtarrat in his press conference in Dubai announced that he would arrive in Pakistan within one week of the installation of the interim government set up. He has tried to clear the mist of incredibility about his return to Pakistan. Answering a representative of the media he said that is earlier dates were postponed on the advice of his party members and now they have announcedously asked him to return soon after the swearing in of the interim government. The logic seems clear. It is hoped that the interim government will not have its own axe to grind and it will treat him neutrally. His Party, the All Pakistan Muslim League (APML), expects to have a level playing field during elections. Prior to that, all kinds of political arm twisting has been going on such tactics are not new, like registration of criminal and civil cases, confiscation of properties, mudslinging, discrediting the good work of the predecessors, etc. The polity overhauled by andlords, power barons, and other such individuals have always used tactics to discourage and grieve genuine and educated persons out of the political fray. Mushtarrat, in his press conference and

Usharrat is coming home

April 26, 2016

nation must mature and entrench the democratic traditions. The faults in the current democratic system notwithstanding, this is the only system for change and it should be protected. There are, no doubt, challenges to the system and many feel that it has failed. But is it the system or governance that has failed? Primarily, it seems to be governance. Law and order and the economy are the biggest casualties. There is very little to commend. Perhaps the handing over of Gwadar port for management to China, the agreement of gas supply with Iran are the few things that give hope. Some provincial governments, particularly Punjab, have tried to alleviate a few problems. Punjab has concentrated on resolving traffic and transport issues in the urban centres, which is good. However, much more needs to be done in all other areas like health, poverty alleviation, power generation, law and order, education and so on.

On a national level the role of the overseas Pakistanis needs to be treated fairly. The Pakistani Diaspora is in a large number. Away from home their attachment with the homeland becomes extremely strong. They save every penny and send it to Pakistan. Last year's figure was an astounding \$ 31 billion. This flow of funds has been the mainstay of Pakistan's economy. What do these individuals feel when they are told that they cannot participate in serious decision making in the country? Even a system to help them vote is not well organised. Why is it so? Why do we suspect their loyalty? Are we slaves to the systems in India? In the United States, the Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger, once an Austrian citizen, served a full term.

Why are we shy of using our experts? If a distinguished doctor, engineer, economist, researcher, diplomat or any other expert can help the country, why should he be deprived of holding a position of high responsibility? Are we so insecure to feel that a member of the Diaspora will run away with the country's assets? Then why is their financial contribution acceptable? Are we trying to keep internationally recognised expertise away and live in our pool of mess? Also look at it from the perspective that a large number of our 'law makers' are ill-educated and some even have fake degrees. Do we want to perpetuate this situation and shy away from contemporary knowledge and expertise? Pervez Musharraf supports the rights of the Diaspora to the fullest extent and has proposed even reserved seats for them, which is a good step.

I think it is time that we grow out of phobias, stop mudslinging and covert activities, shed the clichés of 'dictatorship' and try to bridge the divide. The country has suffered because of 'exclusivist' attitudes. There is a divide in religious sects, regions, colour, young and old, languages, biraderies and so on. A nation is built by inclusive attitudes, by taking pride in human and material assets, and their optimum use.

It is time we broadened our perspective and if Musharraf can contribute to the betterment of the people and the country, it should be encouraged, and the same goes for anybody who is sincere, capable and honest.

April 26, 2016

The interim government awaited!

In my article last week, I looked at the options for the appointment of the interim prime minister and his cabinet. An interim government could have been in place on March 16 or 17 if sharp differences in the opinions of the treasury and opposition had not taken place. But a consensus was not to be! While this article is being written all constitutional options are being exhausted and it is possible that by the time it is published, at least an interim prime minister may be finally in place. It is generally believed that political parties are not likely to reach an agreement and the Election Commission of Pakistan will need to pick up a name from the list considered by the Parliamentary Committee. Whether there are real differences or it is a 'nurakushti' for public consumption is part of the buzz around. Openly only one deal has been talked about; that if the Pakistan People's Party gets its choice as the Punjab interim chief minister then the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz can have its choice of the federal position of the interim prime minister or vice versa. There are other rumours to add to the spice in the menu.

It is also said that the delay has been caused because the current political powers want to hold on to their positions until after March 24. This is interpreted by some as the desire to control the March 23, 2013 jalsa scheduled at the Minar-e-Pakistan by Imran Khan of the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf. The other desire is to create maximum hurdles at the time of the arrival of the former president Syed Pervez Musharraf in Karachi on March 24. This is the way of politics here! How can the Election Commission control these kinds of riggings? Neither Khan nor Musharraf will change their programmes. Musharraf has already proceeded for Umra and he will catch his flight on the 24th to Karachi. Musharraf's visit to Saudi Arabia is also interpreted as an assurance from one of the most powerful supporters and friends of Pakistan. It may result in committing safe passage and freedom to Musharraf on his return. He also plans to visit the Mazar-e-Quaid the same day. As he has been granted bail in the cases he will be free to move about. Khan is holding his major gathering after the intra-party elections at Minar-e-Pakistan Lahore, and he will not change his plans. Any attempt to disrupt these programmes will be an obvious interference and reflective of the insecurities of the men in power. If we want democracy to flourish then the politicians in power and in opposition have to learn to ensure a level playing field for all. The Election Commission has also given the schedule for filing of papers by candidates. The date of polling has

been announced as May 11, 2013. The only remaining decision is the interim prime minister! If the interim prime minister takes over by the publication of this article then the stage is set.

As far as the people at large are concerned they have hopes for 'change'. They want change and any effort to force a status quo will take that 'hope' away and nations cannot survive without hope. For some reason, there is prevailing cynicism about the actual holding of the elections. Several people for some reason doubt if elections will be held at all. Could there be any solid reason?

One factor is mentioned that the law and order situation will deteriorate fast during the interim government because of its limited powers. It is yet to be seen as to what will be the effect of the boycott and 'sit in' by the Pakistan Awami Tehrik of Dr Tahirul Qadri. There is no doubt that Dr Qadri has the following to make his protest visible and impressive. This time he may not rely on assurances by the government of the time. The credibility is lost.

The latest case filed in the court by the veteran politician Dr Mubashar Hassan points at huge funding intended to rig the elections.

Could these factors create an effect that postpones the elections? So far it is anybody's guess. Can a constitutional way be found to justify postponement of elections and extension in time? If it happens at all then it will open a whole new Pandora's Box. Extensions or postponements will then be expected for a fairly long time. The logic will be that country's economy and law and order is in such a dire state that actions to correct this situation must take priority over elections. The fact is that the majority of the people may even show little love for elections if their life continues to be miserable. Any government that helps them survive, or alleviates their miseries will be more acceptable than an unpredictable election result.

While one hopes for the nice things like the strengthening of democracy to happen, it is also necessary to look at the ground realities of the conditions prevailing in the country and the challenges faced by its populace. The sailing may not be as smooth as it appears on the surface. There can be turbulences ahead.

As I reach the closing of this article, there are strong rumours circulating that on Saturday an interim prime minister will be nominated and it could be Mr Ishrat Hussain, the former Governor State Bank of Pakistan or Justice Khosa. The readers are likely to know the selection this Saturday. Que sera sera...whatever will be, will be!

March 09, 2018

Is Modi doing us a favour?

Almost certainly not! Modi would not do us a favour to save his life.

The recent happening that I am referring to you is clear from news in the Daily Times of 9th March 2018 page B5, which reads as under:

"Modi appoints committee of scholars to prove Hindus are descended from India's first inhabitants".

What is he trying to achieve is not as innocent and harmless as it may seem to be.

It is cover to steal the heritage of Indus Valley. For centuries the Hindutva believers have done so. They succeeded for some milleniums but ultimately the world historians were forced to re-write the history books when Harrappa and Moenjodaro were discovered and the Harrapp/Indus Valley Civilization was recognized. The perspective completely changed. It was the defeat of the Hindutva believing Arian descendants. They had propagated that before 1500 BC was a dark period 500 years and then the Arian/Hindus brought the 'light' for the rest of the world. There is no denying the contribution of the Arians who had arrived from the caucuses. Arians preserved some wisdom and culture of the Indus Valley people but denied the ancestry. This is what Modi is now trying once again to consolidate his hindutva support.

Men like Modi, Trump, Netanyahu, and, Zia ul Haq cannot be written off or intellectually rejected by calling them 'Mad'. They may be mad but there is method in their madness and they are focused and cause long term harm. Such people align with extremists of the 'right', generate hate and negativity and use these powers to perpetuate their control. They continue their 'mad' rule and leave a damaged society, living in fear, for a long time. Close to our experience: Zia transferred power to half educated mullahs NOT, real religious scholars who understood the message of tolerance, peace and love. He 'gifted' Madrasahs to continue to inject the half backed poor young people into the society. These youngster had little understanding of the message of Almighty but assumed power on the basis of *memorizing* without comprehending. Such individual end up using pseudo religious power and damage the society, as well as the individuals, without guilt. The politicians use such groups for their perpetuation indiscriminately. The damage is done.

The Indian scholars would know the reality. For Modi it is an effort to tell the world about the cultural superiority of Hindu class. Some Hindus are indeed very highly cultured but that should not mean that their culture is inherited from the millennia for all. Hindus. Cultural heritage has little to do with their culture.

It is very likely that local inhabitants at that time were compelled to be subjected to the Brahmin Class System but all followers were NOT the original inhabitants of the Indus Valley. Nor even the converts granted a respectable Hindu class.

The interpretation of the Indus language will resolve the issue of the first language the humans used for communication. So far it is estimated that it is Proto Brahvi or Proto Sareiki. There is commonality of some words with South Indian languages like Tamil but the link can be more clearly established after studies of Sanskrit in the region. So far, Sanskrit, surviving with the Aryans in around 2000 B.C. is the only organized language. It has little to do with Hinduism, it has a lot to do with the migrating Aryans tribes which came in large waves and established hegemony over the original population of the Indus Valley. The Rig Veda is estimated to appear around 1500 BC and contains several verses describing how the Aryan Gods overpowered the ugly original inhabitants. Rig Veda is also the first book that indicates the emergence of new 'Gods' and the religion Hinduism. It is believed that prior to that era it was the society was regulated by the belief of Female Goddess. The Aryans introduced the concept of male superiority and the concept of verma, the complexion superior.

If the Indo-European language is interpreted as one of greatest contribution to humanity's pool of knowledge, Pakistan should wear this crown. If serious attention is shown then UNESCO will

Second: we must invest in getting the Harappan language interpreted. Lot has been done by Prof. Parpola and several other scholars but we need to resolve the matter to reach conclusions. The way to do this needs investment. Probably 10 Million Dollars will suffice to engage and facilitate the world scholars/researchers in ancient languages to collect enough material from Indus/Mesopotamia trade communities, additioinal excavations, and the seals, to put together the language alphabets and read it. Partly the language symbols have been understood but more evidence is required to confidently interpret.

To win this battle our scholars, and government functionaries have to do much more. Armed forces can defend physical frontiers and it is not their area to defend intellectual, historical and cultural frontiers. Victory or failure will be of civilians, politicians, government functionaries, researchers and intellectuals. How do we re-assess our selves and reconfirm our position to the world. First, we need to publicize in everyway the symbols of our heritage. The finds from Mehargarh, Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro and other places should not remain just museum pieces. The importance and significance in world culture must be fully brought forth. The replicas, NOT originals must be made under security supervision and scholars should be sent on lecture tours around the world with these exhibits. It is a pity that the figureline from Mohenjodaro which was decided to be the owner ship of Pakistan at the time of the division of India has never been publicized. While India has made it a point to publicize the figureline of their share and thus asserted their ownership of the asset. We must take all such symbols out of the 'baselements' of the museums and these should be brought to the knowledge of the world expert.

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Modi may succeed in creating the impression he wants to create, because the original inheritors of the Indus Valley have shown no interest. Hindus Valley area is 95% in Pakistan and include Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, and over 100 other towns. The only town of importance in India but the formalities are not completed to give it UNESCO protection. This symbolizes the low level of intellect taken by the agencies responsible to ensure the status of our valuable heritage. Heritage to a nation is like a parentage and family tree of an individual. It shows the depth of its culture and civilization. Some misconceptions and misrepresentations have confused the nation. The so called preachers of religion feel that the people of Pakistan should connect themselves only with Islam a matter of faith and belief in Allah's instructions discipline their lives in accordance with the message revealed in Quran e Pak through the last prophet Mohammad Sallaloh o Aleh e Vassallam Islam does not ask you to deny your heritage! Beliefs can change, genetics cannot. Heritage is like the genetics of a people. An Arab remains an Arab before accepting Islam and after accepting Islam. People of the Indus Valley will remain the people of Indus Valley whether they were pre religion eras or Hindu Era or Buddhist era or Muslim era. Therefore the heritage is a different and a very strong factor for pride of a people. We, Pakistanis must get rid of the confusion and own our heritage without fearing a conflict with our religion.

When we own heritage then we should defend then we take pride in it and tell the world of our leadership. The Modi philosophy is own the whole of our heritage and take the cultural leadership of the world. While in fact we are the owners of the whole and so called, Hinduism, shares a part of the world. Modi is trying to trap us by claiming Hindu ownership and encourage us to think of only Muslim ownership. We should not be trapped. The whole of Hindus Valley heritage is of the people in Pakistan and let him claim the share of Hinduism. He will get caught in his own trap.

with religion. Religions introduce some rituals and some practices for life and after life. No one should try to steal the historical facts of heritage for political reasons and the under cover of religion..

I hope the point is understood, and those in the civil power become aware of the cultural superiority or cultural ownership that Modi is trying to achieve. If we wake up and successfully save our heritage, the heritage of Indus Valley Civilization, then Modi may be considered to have done a favour by waking us up.

March 17, 2018

70 Years of culture in Pakistan

The first ever initiative to develop the expression of culture was made in 1948 in Lahore. The expression of a people's culture is made through its arts i.e. the visual arts, performing arts, crafts, folklore and language

I have always wanted to share my observation and experience of Pakistan's cultural evolution and trajectory, but due to certain life events and hectic nature of my routines, it took me a lot of time to narrate it.

In 1947, the only issue was of physical survival. Those who survived the bloody migration, needed settlement in their new land. The creation of Pakistan had come with its own setup and innate ingredients that all post-colonial and newly independent nations have in common.

There was another segment which ran after claims, right or wrong, and grabbed the leftover of the migrating rich.

This was the second segment of the mix. Then there were those who claimed that only they have a right to religious authority and must obtain positions of influence irrespective of what Mohammad Ali Jinnah was saying. These three mixes dominated the society of the earlier part of the seventy years and from this mix was to emerge from the 'Culture'.

Culture is not created in a vacuum; it emerges from a society. The culture, in turn, gives birth to a 'civilisation', as the scientists on the subject have determined. The other major and extremely influential element in the development of 'culture' is heritage. The new nation had the distinction of having the heritage of the humanity's first civilisation, the 'Harappa Civilisation' also known as the 'Indus Valley Civilisation' which developed in continuity from 8000 BC. Whatever emerged later on, and what we are talking about, developed on the historic bed of Indus Valley, Arian waves, Buddhism, European/British, and the Islamic background.

I have explained all these factors for us all, to understand what could have taken place in the field of the culture of this land if left on its own. But it is for the leaders and government to encourage development and give it a direction.

As for the Pakistan Government participation is concerned, I will try to narrate all the steps taken as far as I know. Then it is for you to evaluate as to where the nation and society stand.

The first ever initiative to develop the expression of culture was made in 1948 in Lahore. The expression of a people's culture is made through its arts i.e. the visual arts, performing arts, crafts, folklore and language.

Two persons must be remembered for this initiative. These were Mr Abdul Rahman Chughtai a man of international fame in visual arts and his friend Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, a man of international fame in performing arts. They thought of setting up an institution dedicated to the promotion of the Arts in the new nation to give it an identity. They met likeminded persons, like Justice SA Rahman, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, MrFaiz Ahmed Faiz, MrZafarul Ahsan and some educationists and civil servants and resolved to form 'Pakistan Arts Council' at Lahore.

They were allotted premises at 68 The Mall Lahore. A building, which most likely, belonged to Rai Bahadur Saran Das was named 'Alhamra'. It is said that before independence, this building had been dedicated by the owner to run a school for teaching dance. The Alhamra was inaugurated by the then Governor General, Khawaja Nazimuddin, on 10th December 1949. This was the beginning of governmental support. It was followed by the Pakistan Arts Council at Dhaka and Karachi and Peshawar on similar names. These organisations had a token of financial support from the Pakistan Government. More organisations grew later on.

Soon a commission was appointed by the Government, in Gen Ayub Khan's times, which included men of distinction and vision, like Justice SA Rahman and Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, and representatives from all provinces of Pakistan to give recommendations on how to develop arts in Pakistan. The subject of 'culture' at that time was part of the Ministry of Education, and it was headed by Mr SM Sharif. The recommendations were accepted and a countrywide network of art organisation came into existence. They continued to work as best as possible. It is not in the scope of this article to evaluate their achievements. At this time the Pakistan Government also took a major decision to build up cultural relations with friendly countries. These organisations contributed in this program of cultural exchanges while it was in a nascent stage. I was appointed to be the Secretary of Alhamra after MrFaiz Ahmed Faiz had left due to health problems and I had returned from the USA after my graduation in Theatre Arts. While I was concentrating on the development of local programs and planning the new building for Alhamra, a very major decision regarding international cultural relations was taken. Pakistan decided to build people to people friendship with China. This was a very major assignment. I was given the challenge to build up, and train a troupe truly representative of all parts of the country. I found it also necessary to understand the Chinese revolution and the post-revolution nation. After appropriate research and lot of training in creative themes and compositions, and a great deal of cooperation from East Pakistan, and particular help from the Bulbul Academy a troupe was put together with 46 members of the top performers and the thematic ballets created by me. We toured for 5 weeks and the reports by the Chinese Government and Gen Raza, Pakistan's ambassador gave glowing tributes which are part of the Government records. There have been numerous other exchanges which I am aware of or have been actively associated with. The details of these programs are beyond the scope of this article.

Al-Hafsa-students

In 1970, MrFaiz Ahmed Faiz was appointed the Chairman of a commission on culture to advise the government for the future course of action. This commission made comprehensive recommendations. It suggested an organisational chart, recommending the establishment of 'The National Council Of the Arts' as the top organisation and all other organisations to fit into the chart. Each province was to have a 'Provincial Organisation' linked to the National Council and so forth. The National Council Of the Arts Act 1973 was passed thereafter. MrFaiz Ahmed Faiz was eased out and given a larger title and bureaucratic influence took over the National Council of The Arts. No major development took place for a long time and I presume routine matters must have continued.

In 1996, KishwarNaheed, the Director General at that time, succeeded, after great effort, in getting land allotted from Benazir Bhutto for the National Council of the Arts, where it exists today. It remained a pathetic site for a decade. In August 2007, in the times of Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf, I, as the Chief Executive of the Council, succeeded in completing the building of the Art Gallery and Center for Performing Arts. The architect, Naeem Pasha and Project Engineer Col Mohammad Amjad worked with full enthusiasm to achieve the target. It can be rightly called a landmark in the history and a symbol of Pakistan Government's interest.

However, it should not belittle the great effort made by the 'Loka Virsa' in an extremely important area. With persistent efforts by Uxi Mufti and his colleagues, the Loka Virsa Museum started to develop.

There are many other government-supported organisations which should be considered. The Government in itself went through changes by setting up an independent Ministry of Culture and then making a combined Ministry of Information, Heritage and Culture.

I now want to leave the Government effort alone and let us look together at the private initiatives. It is by a private initiative that Noor Jehan, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Roshan Ara Begum, Sadequain, Ami Minwala, Faran Tahir, Chinoy, and many others reached excellence. It is the continuance of Melas and Urs which represent the free spirit of the people and see them in jubilation or ecstasy. This is people's effort which is highly productive but also very highly threatened.

I said 'threatened' and I mean it. They are threatened and even 'terrorised'. The segment of society engaged in creative arts, particularly the performing arts is looked down upon. The so-called 'pious' majority of the society finds them unacceptable. A boy or a girl from the so-called 'good family' is not supposed to marry any performing artists. An actor is at best enjoyed as an entertainer not really respected as a thinking person.

This is social terrorism.

The extreme rightists in our society would declare a photograph as 'haraam', and sometime later, hustle to get their face into the camera range.

A so-called 'Alim' would declare the use of loudspeaker as 'haram' and later on buy the most powerful speaker for his address.

Hundreds of thousands of 'Madaris' would come into existence but one film training institute would not.

The majority of madaris teach an extremist version of Islam. There is hardly any emphasis on 'Haqooqulbad'. They induct millions of young radicalised individuals into society and keep influencing it. They create a bed for various levels of terrorism and sleeper cells. The soft targets are those involved in arts and culture.

The decision maker is the 'rating system' which is flawed and influences the quality negatively. The advertiser and therefore 'capital' has taken over. If 'culture' is to be understood, respected and a nation is to be built then the national leadership must know how to do it and decide to do so. In the past 70-years, there has been some attention to this, but much more is required.

Lal Masjid rules, and is built quickly. It is supported by Government but the Pakistan National Council of Arts and the National Art Gallery have to wait 21 years.

The one dedicated to preserving musical treasures is called a 'mirasi' with contempt. This particular attitude sums up the powerful minority of conservatives in the society. 'Miras' means 'heritage'. This powerful section looks down upon those who are preserving some heritage. It is not just an unhealthy but a very sick segment of society which needs to learn to respect and own the national heritage. We need to own the fact that we have the heritage of the Harappa / Indus civilisation. We are from the land that brought culture and civilisation to all humanity. We have failed on Government Level, as well as on private level to even have 'Harappa' original site properly preserved and recorded in the world conservation list.

Our existence, particularly cultural existence is the target of extremists. I cannot call extremists and terrorists as Muslims because they are as far from the message of Islam as anyone can be. We must understand they are traders of fear. They do hardly mention the God who is 'Rahim', and He who loves HIS creation. Who is 'Jameel' and loves 'Jamal', who does not allow the killing of one by, other, who insists on, forgiveness, and allows living according to one's beliefs and, who repeatedly says that "I have not appointed you a 'Darogha' over others".

I could go on, but this should be a sufficient indicator of what I mean.

We need to do much more.

Our politicians and leaders need to take a greater responsibility. They are lawmakers. I request them to understand that jalsas, emotional speeches, and rallies will not develop the culture that we need.

Only a massive revision of the educational system and the textbooks can do it which imparts an understanding and value of heritage, and young people taught real history and not brainwashed with distorted history. They need to understand that message of Islam reached the sub-continent through Bibi Pak Daman and Data Sahib much before any warrior entered Sindh. They need to understand that all arts originated in the Indus Valley, and the whole world benefited from these. They need to know that no archaeologist has found an instrument of war or signs of conflict in the Indus Valley civilisation before the arrival of Arians. We have thousands of years of a tradition of

peace, hospitality and humility. It was this peaceful nature of the people that they welcomed the message of Islam.

These are some of the elements of our great heritage.

If 'culture' is to be understood, respected, and a nation is to be built then the national leadership must know how to do it and decide to do it. In the 70 years, there has been some attention but much more is required.

Finally the role of media in the development of arts and culture. Traditionally, near the time of freedom, Radio pioneered. It promoted arts and artists and took pride in high-quality content and programming. On the arrival of TV a great thing happened; which is that the artists started to have a decent means of livelihood. A career could be possible and some respectability was available.

Now there is a free for all. The 100 plus channels do more damage to society than the good. The leaders behave obnoxiously sometimes and make a fool of themselves. Mostly the content of their conversation lacks solid reasoning expected of them.

The decision maker is the 'rating system' which is flawed and influences the quality negatively. The advertiser and therefore 'capital' has taken over.

The 'channels' have shown little sense of social responsibility.

They continue to repeat useless 'breaking news' repeatedly. They pick up on the worst and sensational and repeat it a million times. The channels propagate depression in the society. They do not understand this creates anxiety, dissatisfaction, anger and disappointment in large numbers. This starts reflecting on the individual behaviour. A common example is the road rage and intolerance.

Our leadership has to take cognisance. Our elected representatives must understand this responsibility and raise their voice. Their voice is not meant for just 'AvayeeAvay ... sada so and so ... avayeeavay' They are custodians of our trust and they must perform in supporting the real culture.

Well designed, balanced education is the most important means. Currently, it is most confusing. Our national and mother tongues are fading. These form the roots of heritage and culture. There is a real threat to the script. We need to take a decision about the script whether roman or Persian/Arabic is to be promoted. We need to learn from other countries who have survived these threats.

Nations are built on the quality of education and dissemination of quality information. National understandings are built by letting its scholars be present in foreign universities to create an understanding of our national character and culture. We all know that most of the seats for Pakistan in the international universities are vacant.

Our national culture needs to be owned and identified in the perspective of our heritage. We all need to take the responsibility to preserve and promote.

In 70 years we have done some, but much more is required to be done. Of course, the major responsibility is to the decision makers. They need to analyse with the help of experts, chart a course of action, and do what needs to be done. A well thought out basis needs to be identified and then all of us collectively should build and take pride in our culture and arts and the character of our nation.

April 17, 2018

A "Zainab" will be raped and murdered again.

Unfortunately, so it seems.

In February 2018, the tragic story of an under ten years old Zainab hit the headlines. Zainab was raped, murdered and thrown in a garbage dump in the city of Kasur.

Civil society, media persons, almost every one, was shocked. In the media some were genuinely concerned and disturbed and many used it as a sensation for 'ratings' and for advertisement revenue on electronic media.

Zainab was an innocent, charming child of about eight years. Her parents seemed religiously inclined. Her parents left for Umra leaving her at home with some people, probably relatives and friends.

Umra is a sacred wish of Muslims but it is not a part of 'Haqooqullah' which means rights due to Almighty. On the other hand, taking care of children, is a priority in "Haqooq ul Ibad" which means rights due to fellow humans and on top of these are rights towards children and parent. As far as I understand the Almighty indicates that fulfillment of 'Haqooq ul Ibad' must take priority. Why could the parents not take their child along? Parents were not going on a honey moon! If Zainab was along she would have been initiated into Muslim sacred places. Finances don't seem to matter because her ticket would be just ten percent. I find it hard to understand the mindset of such parents. It seems hard hearted carelessness unless otherwise proved. They were punished and will suffer all their life for the neglect and heartless carelessness.

When the whole world cried on the tragedy of Zainab a CCTV, street camera, recording appeared showing Zainab holding the hand of someone and playfully walking in the street. She was probably holding the hand of her predator. After this Zainab's body was found in the garbage dump.

Society shouted, it screamed. There was nothing more urgent than the tracing of the rapist killer. For once it seemed that the conscience of the society had woken up. Many journalists looked in depth. The molestation of boys also got attention also, which was otherwise a routine matter and almost forgotten. The depth and organization of this criminal act was spotted and found to be much more organized, more spread out and almost a big business.

There was so much noise that even the otherwise sleepy government functionaries woke up from their slumber. Politicians were being accused by media. Social Media even spotted people from the government party to be shareholders in the morbid pedophile business. The business seemed deeply rooted with international connections. The torture, rape, killing were filmed and were the source of enjoyment of the sick, very sick minded people, round the world. Investigative journalists indicated that centers of business were many but Kasur seemed to be the biggest. The Zainab tragedy resounded and would not go away. The pressure built up to the extent that Punjab politicians, Chief Minister and the bureaucracy was forced to take action. DNAs of several suspects were collected. All media and society demanded action from the government and punishment for the culprit. Society desired exemplary punishment. Some desired public hanging. All focus was on punishment and revenge by the society. Finally culprit was identified. Case was brought to court and accused, one Imran, was ordered to be given death. He was suspected to be a part of a mafia. Imran appealed against it but appeal was rejected.

Silence has followed since then. The mafia is not in focus. Nobody knows what happened to the culprit. Media got busy with usual scandals and political bickering. If a mafia was involved it escaped focus. Life was as usual again.

The morbid illness of the society will continue to exist. No long term measures have been designed. Another 'Zainab' and possible many innocent girls and boys will be molested, raped and murdered in days to come. Members of the society and authority are out of focus and pedophiles will get back to their business with more caution. That is why I say:

"A 'Zainab' will be raped, murdered, and found in garbage".

There is no doubt that the culprit MUST be given exemplary punishment. All his accomplices should be caught and the law should be implemented firmly, and publicised to create an example, a deterrent.

All this must be done but this is not all. Much more is required.

The recurrence can be avoided if those who are responsible for social peace, and law and order have a resolve to remove or, at least reduce, the basic illness in the society with long term measures. The crime is committed sometimes due to born mental defects. Unfortunately, most of these mental disorders are created, by the society. These are mostly initiated by the mistreatments of the young by elders.

How does the criminal intent and mental disorder develop?

I would like to refer my readers to an article in Daily Times of February 28 by Mr. Aamer Sarfraz entitled "Psychopathology of a serial killer" on page A6. As a specialist Mr. Sarfraz made a very valuable contribution in understanding the article should be read in entirety by all those who want the crime to be checked. I quote 2 paragraphs:

"Imran's frustration with his lack of progress in a naqabat career grew over the years along with the sexual abuse he had suffered as its price. After puberty, he becomes a fringe member of this group who now trapped other victims but prostituted themselves if short of cash. They also

watched porn together and planned to make videos of their victims and sell those on the Internet as an alternate career".

The criminal Imran Ali narrated the details of the crime unemotionally to Mr. Anwar Sarfraz. He brutally killed without any feeling at all. Dr. Sarfraz did an extremely valuable service to the society as a professional psychologist and deeply appreciated it as a student of psychology myself. His concluding paragraph also needs immediate attention.

Quote "Imran Ali is a heartless, manipulative individual with blunted emotions, impulsive inclinations and inability to experience guilt or remorse." "at a subconscious level, he was perhaps trying to punish his family, the society and the law enforcing agencies for robbing him of the childhood due to his innocent wish to be a 'naqeeb'. Psychopaths and serial killers may also have some damage to the frontal lobe, hypothalamus and limbic system of their brain....." Unquote.

The case of Imran Ali the serial killer is much beyond repair and the right action is to implement the law and the death sentence be executed as soon as possible. It should be done in a way that it is seen as a deterrent for all such criminals. Several innocent girls are still being raped and killed. "Zainab" is a symbol. In addition, many young boys are meeting similar fate. The sexual abuse of boys goes mostly unnoticed. Boys are abused in a very large number and mostly by those who claim to be protectors of religion. Society jokes about it! Is it a Joke? See the product of this misuse in Imran Ali!

As far as social conscience is concerned, the response is disappointing. The matter of Zainab got the attention of the civil society. So much noise was made that even an otherwise sleepy bureaucracy, and absent minded politicians were jolted. Police ran about and found the culprit. Case was presented to the court and death sentence was announced. Then the appeal was rejected.

Immediately the civil society went back to its slumber.

There is hardly any mention of what happened afterwards. Although more cases of rape and murder are being reported. Is the matter being hushed up? Is the money and power taking control of the conscience of the society? What happened to the journalists? **Has the crime mafia taken control? It seems so.**

So if I suspect that more 'Zainabs' will continue to be raped and killed is a very likely scenario.

However I would not like to believe that this can be what society is willing to tolerate. As yet I am not disappointed in the conscience of the society to this extent. It may be close but not yet there.

Let me humbly contribute as to what needs to be done.

The intensity of quick action taken in the case of Zainab must continue. All such criminals must be identified throughout the country and brought to books. The law must be VISIBLY implemented. It is not known as to what happened to so publicized criminal Imran Ali! In the short term what we need is an operation like 'Zarb e Azb' and "rad ul Fasad" throughout the country.

In the long term we need to set up a board of psycho Analysts, therapists, educationists, religious scholars and legal experts, to initiate a policy of social reform. As Aamer Sarfraz points out that we are "living in a society that is increasingly religious and considers sex education a taboo, at the mercy of the police who are inefficient and frequently complicit"

The growth of energy in the young must be recognized. It is a fact that energy is part of the growth that almighty gives to the humans and all living beings. The 'libido', the energy of the sexual drive as a component of the life instinct, is part of it and the families and societies must recognize and sublimate it as their duty. Rejection causes frustration and anger. Exploitation like in the case of Imran Ali ensures criminal behavior and unconscious hate for society. Awareness of the energy in growth, and youthful consciousness, is an essential part of individual's life, and the society should design educational programs and domestic awareness in elders for the understanding of it. Religions aim at improving human attitudes and making a better society. If any claimant of religious understanding causes damage to society then he/she is unknowingly failing in its duty. All media-men, at all levels including writers, comedians, owners, and advertisers cannot be absolved of their social responsibility. Careful evaluation of the effects of short-term financial gains must be made. It should be ensured by all individuals that by their action the long-term interest of the society is not compromised.

April 20, 2018

Tackling rape menace

We need another 'Radd-ul-Fasaad' against rape and rapists

In February 2018, the tragic story of an under ten years old Zainab hit the headlines. Zainab was raped, murdered and thrown in a garbage dump in the city of Kasur.

Civil society, media persons, almost every one, was shocked. In the media some were genuinely concerned and disturbed and many used it as a sensation for 'ratings' and for advertisement revenue on electronic media.

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Society shouted, it screamed. There was nothing more urgent than the tracing of the rapist killer. For once it seemed that the conscience of the society had woken up. Many journalists looked in depth. The molestation of boys also got attention also, which was otherwise a routine matter and be identified throughout the country and brought to books. The law must be strictly

almost forgotten. The depth and organization of this criminal act was spotted and found to be much more organized, more spread out and almost a big business.

There was so much noise that even the otherwise sleepy government functionaries woke up from their slumber. Politicians were being accused by media. Social Media even spotted people from the government party to be shareholders in the morbid pedophile business. The business seemed deeply rooted with international connections. The torture, rape, killing were filmed and were the source of enjoyment of the sick, very sick minded people, round the world. Investigative journalists indicated that centers of business were many but Kasur seemed to be the biggest. The Zainab tragedy resounded and would not go away. The pressure built up to the extent that Punjab politicians, Chief Minister and the bureaucracy was forced to take action. DNAs of several suspects were collected. All media and society demanded action from the government and punishment for the culprit. Society desired exemplary punishment. Some desired public hanging. All focus was on punishment and revenge by the society. Finally culprit was identified. Case was brought to court and accused, one Imran, was ordered to be given death. He was suspected to be a part of a mafia. Imran appealed against it but appeal was rejected.

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May 25, 2018

The Indian media invasion

There are 79 channels operated by cable operators 'without license'! It is a complete free for all. These unlicensed channels can do whatever they find popular, sensational and seductive. PEMRA has no control

Physical and geographical borders are to be defended by the armed forces. Who defends invasion through media?

PEMRA? No. It has been rendered helpless by legal rigmaroles and corruption. Ministry of Information? It is at the end of its tenure!

ISPR? It is concerned, but can't take direct action.

So our cultural and intellectual borders are almost open to the tactics of our 'friends': Modi and Co. Hot wars are mostly out of fashion but cold wars through economy and culture are in, and more effective. Golden opportunity for invaders to exploit.

India has completely banned Pakistan actors, and shows. A Pakistani is not even allowed to participate in a seminar. Muneeza Hashmi was recently sent back.

Let us look at what is happening:

A few days ago, a friend visited me from a major city of central Punjab and was telling me about the arrangements of the marriage of his friend's son. While discussing arrangements the bridegroom asked 'when do we take 'pharey'?' My friend had a big laugh because 'Pharey' is a typical Hindu custom during marriage ceremony. Groom and bride take rounds around fire while traditional 'Ashloke' for the success are recited by the Hindu priest.

I could not laugh. I cannot blame the 'bridegroom' either. This is what the groom had learned through the media he watched in Pakistan.

According to PEMRA website there are 77 licensed TV channels. There may be more if the size is updated. Under the license they can show a total of 10 percent foreign content of which percent can be Indian. There are 79 channels operated by cable operators 'without license'! It is a free for all there. These unlicensed channels can do whatever they find popular, sensational and seductive. PEMRA has no control.

The terrestrial, official channel, PTV, can only be heard snoring. Its programming is dull and uninteresting and its officials couldn't care less.

Please estimate the size of exposure: 40 to 50 percent on 77 'legal channels' and 100 percent on 79 illegal channels!

The invasion Israel. It needs to be checked, analysed and stopped. It is affecting Pakistan's economy and culture adversely.

How is the economy affected? Let us understand it.

The TV channels rely mostly on their revenues through advertisements. We are all familiar with the annoying announcement "Time to take a 'short break', stay with us". The 'break' is usually longer than the clip of the program you have watched. The longer the breaks the happier the channel owner! The break brings in money which is the owner's major concern. The 'break' shows advertisements which are mostly made in India and show Indian stars. The Pakistani producers, directors, technicians and actors are ignored. The sponsors pay through Dubai, get mass produced by Indian companies for two countries, make these available in Pakistan and TV channels accept these happily. Adverts are repeated endlessly; Indian faces become household names. Pakistani companies lose their earnings and TV screen is 'refaced' by replacing Pakistani faces with Indian faces. Local advertisement producers lose business and the Pakistan government loses tax revenue. There is no law that addresses this problem and Pakistan Electronic Media Authority (PEMRA) is not provided with any effective law to check this 'invasion'.

Morality? Who cares when money can be made? Who cares if Pakistani producer loses the opportunity, and actor loses the much needed finances. The business of TV advertisers and the channels is to make money, the more the better. Social responsibility is not relevant. It is easy for the advertiser to buy commercials from the bulk made in India at a low cost and release it to local TV channels.

The actual 'program mix' of the legal channels, as mentioned earlier, is far from within the terms of the license. Most major channels, with the exception of perhaps only one, average 45 percent foreign content is in violation of the conditions of contract. It happens in the prime viewing time, leaving little or no room for Pakistani productions. So again, exposure to Pakistani faces, issues, social conditions and culture, is replaced by the Indian. It has cultural effects, economic effects and something further. In the international market, traditionally, Pakistani drama was rented from stores and it competed with Indian films. In several instances, the Pakistani drama was preferred on the merit of good acting and good subjects. The Indian invasion intends to change the situation and make the Indian subject and faces so familiar to foreign customer that it accepts the Indian drama because of a short supply of new Pakistani drama.

Where is our sense of honour, dignity, and patriotism? Is it sold for easy money? Or are we willing to develop the Pakistan industry? Surely the market will expand, quality will improve and viewership enlarged if you concentrate on home products, rationalise pay structure, invest in training, acquire equipment and provide exposure opportunity. Government provided protection to so many industries like sugar, cotton, agriculture, cars and so on. Why is it not done to the production industry of showbiz?

Government recently declared film making as an 'industry'. Does this mean that it will be allowed same support and financing opportunity as provided to other industries like sugar, cotton and steel? Government must recognise the needs of media production requirements. The situation is alarming. Recently a production company which produced seven serials last year was constrained to produce only three and therefore downsized itself by relieving many employees and disengaging contract workers.

Surely the market will expand, quality will improve and viewership will grow if you concentrate on the local industry, rationalise pay structure, invest in training, acquire equipment and provide exposure

There is need for all concerned to analyse the issues and develop a rationalised program for all types of productions for the TV industry. It includes advertising, drama, music and other shows. The prime time must be exclusively reserved for Pakistani productions. In the prime time, which is 7 pm to 11 pm, no foreign productions should be shown. Drama serials need special attention. The dramas are seen by the members of the families at home. These should be aimed at making the masses aware of the social issues and cultural values of the people of Pakistan. It is different from seeing a film in the cinema house where the ticket is purchased with the conscious intent and the viewers are different from a family at home.

TV production is a subject in which social psychologists should be actively consulted and the scripts developed with a sense of social responsibility to educate, inform and reform. Language and content should be given adequate consideration. Old systems adopted by Radio Pakistan and early PTV days have lot to learn from. Messages and content presented on a strong medium like TV is similar to entering someone's home and talking to the inmates. It needs to be disciplined. 'Strangers' should not enter without permission. Indian values should be treated as 'strangers'. If we do not allow the crossing of physical borders without check then we should also be vigilant about what enters homes and minds of the populace. So far it looks like an open invitation to pollute. The so called 'current affairs' programs are filled with bickering that creates poor example of politicians. Language is distorted. So called 'entertainment' programs are Indian. What are we providing to the people who sit at home?

Some attempts by PEMRA to correct the situation have been either half-hearted or got stalled by legal procedures.

There needs to be a serious review of all aspects and educationists, social scientists, serious creative individuals, writer, actors, producers and lawmakers must be engaged to develop a firm policy. The channel owners, advertisers must also be consulted. But illegal channels must be done

away with, and their blackmail must be faced. If there are responsible cable operators then they should perform under an appropriate license.

Other than the long term measures suggested above, immediate short term measures should be taken to strictly implement the current PEMRA laws and terms of licenses. It will be necessary that courts take cognisance of the urgency of the matter and avoid providing loop holes by extending long 'stay orders' in cases of violations of existing PEMRA laws.

A ray of hope has been seen in a recent court decision but it is limited to the period of Ramazan. Long term measures are needed. It seems finally the matter will be solved by conscientious courts. 100 percent programming of unlicensed cable channels and 50 percent of licensed channels is feeding Indian/foreign programming into Pakistani homes. Is it slow poisoning or fast enough to destroy the national fabric? We all have to take cognisance and check, may it be civil or armed 'establishment', civil society or justice system. Please hear the wakeup call.

June 27, 2018.

Media Industry, a look back

Television was formally introduced in the country in 1964. Prior to that Radio broadcasting was the only mass contact medium. In the past two decades, radio and particularly television industry has rapidly grown. Now there are countless TV networks. There has been a rumor that more TV licenses may be granted. While it is good that licenses to private TV channels are issued, the policy is faulty in some ways. *I feel more issuing more licenses will spell total disaster.*

My feeling is not a layman's gut feeling. It is supported by my years of exposure and association with this field. Prior to launching Pakistan Television Corporation, a technical team from NEC TV Japan, arrived in Lahore. I was, at that time, Secretary Pakistan Art Council, Alhamra which had become the hub of all those connected with Arts, particularly the "Performing Arts". The NEC Team comprising of Aslam Azhar, Fazal Kamal, Muhammad Nisar and Durrani arrived in Lahore, stayed at the Hotel near Simla Pahari and immediately Fazal Kamal called me. I still remember his words "Naeem the TV Team is here and we need your help and support." *It was a call from an old friend.* All support was provided including introductory parties and get together with writers and artists at our home, and a temporary office at the Alhamra. The NEC TV 'PILOT' project was successfully completed and launched on November 20, 1964. I was the first Pakistani "Principal of Central TV Institute at Chaklala from 1968 after the contract of Pak Government with the German Company ZDF expired. I continued for 3 years. The Rawalpindi/Islamabad TV station operated on the Central Television Institute (CTI) facilities. I was inducted in the Federal Ministry of Information as a "Joint Secretary", and 'loaned' to TV for training of all the staff with the support of local and foreign instructors.

More than half a century has passed, and my engagement with this industry has continued. I have seen the industry from different sides i.e. as a writer, actor, producer and director. In addition, I have also had the opportunity to manage large sized businesses in the Carpet Industry and the Fruit Processing Industry. Plus I was the COO of ICTV USA; the first URDU/ENGLISH network in America.

Therefore, it is worthwhile, as a veteran, that I look back at the policies and the performance of this 'Industry' over the years, and share with you some of my thoughts on why I feel that we are headed towards a disaster. My focus in this article will be on understanding the television industry, assessing the challenges and suggesting some solutions.

For any industry to prosper and stay viable three elements are important. 1 - Adequate supply of the 'material' to be sold, which is "Production" 2 - Effective marketing set up to sell and 3. Adequate sales to maintain a healthy cash flow. So the elements are Production, Marketing and Sales.

So let's talk about the Production to begin with.

Production for any non-media business would be e.g. medicines, surgical instruments, garments, cars etc. On the other hand, a media Production Company would have television serials, series, sitcoms, documentaries, sports shows, films, news, discussions, etc. as its products. Now if you carefully read the lists of products by a non-media business and media business, you can see that a non-media company deals with tangible items, whereas media deals with intangible items. These intangible items deal with the collective psyche of the society. It has power to effect and change individuals as well as the society. This is why the world wide belief is to define the responsibility of TV Broadcasting to be as "information, education and entertainment". This objective should be carried out with a sense of social responsibility.

After the initial licenses the upcoming issues should have been studied and resolved but additional "cross media" licenses to print media owners were issued, this added further complications before consolidation. Now we need to review; look at the character and different issues and the potential of the TV channels in particular. Then chart a course of action for future before deciding to expand.

The TV industry is a different from cinema. In a cinema, people go to see a product of their choice, they pay for it and sit in a hall where different groups are present. TV reaches homes; it interacts with families and influences the society, therefore special attention to it justified.

TV Media Industry seeks to market its 'product' and gets its cash flow from 'sponsorships' and advertisements of other industrial products. The Media Industry's 'product' is either planned by itself or acquired from contracted 'producers'. All productions use, as its raw material, some creative individuals. Producers engage writers, directors, actors and technicians which may be called its 'raw material' resource.

To make the TV Industry viable and to avoid oversupply, and consequent cut throat competition, the market potential of sales revenues as well as supply of product must be balanced.

A responsible Media Policy for licensing needs to be made after assessment of: 1. Quantum of production potential. 2. the standard of marketing set ups, referred to as "channels". 3. Potential of advertisement revenue.

To monitor and regulate the activities of the Industry a body known as Pakistan Election Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) exists. The licensed "channels" need to be monitored to ensure that the licensees remain within the limits of their social responsibility and the law, and perform to provide 'information, education and entertainment'. PEMRA, as the regulatory body needs to ensure the availability of the data to make correct decisions.

The licensing needs to relate to the potential size of the market. Pakistan has about a 20 million population. It is acquiring TV sets as fast as possible. So there are a very large number of households which own at least one TV set. Business houses publicize to promote their products, they need this large market. Most business houses compete to have their share of business and therefore advertise on TV.

To assess the market potential and the audience mix professional companies set up systems for the assessment of the popularity of the programs and these are known as 'rating systems'. The results obtained by the rating systems work as guidelines for the advertiser to decide as to which programs to advertise in and the frequency of the advertisements. This feedback also effects the decision making of the TV channel as to the kind of program it needs to buy from the 'producers' to make a saleable mix attractive to the advertisers. So 'Rating' provides the research results which hold the key to programming.

Since 'Rating' is a key to important decision making, we need to have a closer look at the present system in Pakistan.

The present "rating" system is a mystery. It is managed by a private organization and results are said to be manipulated for considerations. Therefore this rating system needs to be replaced forthwith. It can never provide the necessary data for guidance in programming. It misleads. For example if it reports that the dispute between Mother in Law ("saas") and daughter in law ("Bahoo") is found interesting then a whole lot of production companies will try to meet this requirement. If it reports that indecency in speech creates interest, then that will become the trend. So on and so forth. How far these trends can be followed is to be regulated by a sense of social responsibility. The real issue is that the rating is based on very limited sampling which is not fully representative. Also it MUST NOT be in the hands of private organizations, because these may have temptation to manipulate if more money can be made by a malpractice.

The possible alternative to be considered is a modern rating system based on a much larger and appropriate sampling which receives the satellite signal, the terrestrial signal, and even measures the internet viewing. It would be better if the responsibility is taken by two public organizations namely PEMRA and PTV jointly and the results are made available to all licensed channels. The cost of this set up is not something that needs to be discussed here, however it can be self-supporting. The result will guide the PEMRA in advising a program mix and to ascertain the number of type of licenses to be issued; for example for current affairs, composite entertainment, sports, or other specific subject. The assessment of the size of market, and the number of TV sets is not hard to know and can be determined from license fees.

I am not fully aware of the mechanism applied to assess the volume of the advertising revenues. But tax revenues and professional advertising organizations should be able to help.

Next important study has to be of the programming mix and the production resources. Programming mix needs to be primarily based on the input from the rating system. What will need to be specifically done is that the basic principle: "Information, education, entertainment" is strictly observed and a decent balance is maintained. Of course all segments of society including males, females, children and minorities are to be adequately catered for in the program mix. Radio

Pakistan had engaged distinguished people like 'Patras' Bokahari, Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, Tabassum, Akhlaq Ahmed Dehlvi and other scholars to ensure the quality of content in the program and such advice ensured the basic principle of providing healthy 'information, education and entertainment' to the society. Media affects the society and if every kind of popularity is made the basis of programming then limits of decency can be violated.

Current program mixes are damaging and destroying national values. There is presentation of political programs of poor quality. These have deteriorated to bickering, cross talk, even 'fisty cuff' and abuses in some programs. The viewer looks at its leaders, and respected TV personalities, behave in a foul manner and concludes that such behavior is OK. Gradually it becomes a social norm. Presently the programs of political orientation are trying to do everything, comedy, conflict, analyses, promotion of point of views etc. This mix up cannot be advisable.

The media also chooses to show all kind of 'negative' events. A fire somewhere, a murder, rape, corruption, miseries and so on, are repeated, and repeated endlessly. ONLY BAD NEWS is considered news. It results in creating anger, intolerance, disappointment, depression etc. This is extremely damaging and destroys the society and its faith in the country. There is no doubt that lot of good also happens every day, there are events and actions which could build national pride and feeling of wellbeing. These should be reported. The Civil society should be given a balanced view so it gets confidence in its systems and values. The quality and understanding of arts and culture and heritage is another ignored sector. Good programs for children are almost non-existent. In the entertainment programming also, a review is required. Female face and character is over exposed and not necessarily creating female respect. The male and female stereo types are repeated. Quality literature of individual and collective insight is a casualty. So is the heritage of performing arts in different forms. The archives of performing arts seem to have no place in current programming mixes. Programs for children are given little attention. So the subject of program mix needs a detailed review..

Production potential: after determining the size of the market, and the number and kind of licenses to be issued, the next, and perhaps the MOST important step, is to organize the production set ups for the size of Media Business.

Presently there are several 'production houses'. Some of these are 'in house' set ups of channels. 'Hum' follows this policy. Some others also have strong links with channels. Then there are 'freelancers' who produce with some understanding with a channel, and some who just take a chance. An organization by the name United Producer's Association (UPA) exists. This production sector needs most attention of a regulatory body. The discipline achieved between the licensed Channels and Production houses is the key to the health of the Media Industry. The other major contributors are the Advertiser and Performer. However the Channel and Production houses occupy the Centre Stage of the health platform. I am inclined to suggest that Production Houses should also be 'licensed' by PEMRA as the TV channels are. If these two are regulated and firmly supervised, the other constituents of the industry will get disciplined. Currently there are serious problems cropping up between channels, producers and talent.

Most of the producers have complaints about the conduct of actors or non-fulfillment of the terms of the contracts by channels. Actors complain of nonpayment. The technical crew has no institutional training, and is almost totally learning on the job. To license the "Production Companies" their scrutiny of experience or training, financial strength, and awareness of the social responsibility to select appropriate content must be kept in mind. The long experience of Radio Broadcasting up to the 60s and early days of PTV could provide some guide lines. Contracts between Channel and Producer and between Producer and talent must be standardized. Producers are very likely to run into cash flow problems in case of Channel default or some other circumstance. Such cash flow problems upset schedules and completely put off the talent. The creative process and creative personalities should be given reasonable consideration, respect and honor, because sensitivity is the basis of their creativity. They are usually more sensitive and this fact MUST always be borne in mind.

Here I am tempted to make a suggestion. All recognized industries use Banks and banking facilities to ensure cash flows. No industry or trade can work without banking relationships. The systems of Bill Purchase, Letters of Credit, Use End L/Cs are common practices to ensure cash flows. If the Government recognizes the Media Industry and Film Industry then it needs to notify the banks and State Bank accordingly. The commercial banks will indeed put some requirements of standards and securities before extending financial facilities. This is fare. But on the part of the Government, it must give some start up support to let the industry grow. I experienced and used banking facilities in my export business and in my Industries and therefore I am speaking from my personal experience that the relationship with banks can be built up and the industry can flourish. It is very likely that the Media Industry will have lesser chances of default as compared to some other industries. But the setting up of licensing of producers will be the first step to ensure the quality.

A good thing has happened that the Actors have also set up a National organization as "ACT". So the constituents of the Media Industry are already aware of the need to organize and streamline the working systems.

As Pakistan Television is the 'Mother' and the Radio Broadcast the 'Grandmother', of this industry, these two have a very special role to play. It has been a serious oversight that full advantage of the accumulated experience, archives and systems has not been brought forward. 'New' is attractive but if the 'new' has a strong base to stand upon; it grows and develops better and with grace and wisdom. The PTV and Radio both failed to retain their lead role and now they are in an "also ran" position. Re-planning and restructuring is required for both these institutions to play a significant role in the industry.

The current level of programmers in PTV can be assessed by a simple example. Due to my association, and a soft corner for PTV I decided to give the first offer to PTV of one of the best content/production from our production house. We offered a series of dramatic programs with a selection of subjects including comedy, romance, suspense, etc. based on scripts of Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj. A production of Taj Sahib's famous comedy "Kamra number 5" was sent as an example. The series was titled "TAJ CLASSICS". I kept waiting for a response from PTV. I started the production of other episodes in anticipation. YOU CAN IMAGINE THE LEVEL OF THE MINDS OF DECISION MAKERS FROM THE RESPONSE THAT I RECEIVED.

Extract from PTV Headquarter letter of April 08, 2009:

Quote "It is to inform you that said play has not been approved by the Committee"

So, the 'wise' Committee disapproved Mr. Taj's play. Subsequently, *the production of this, "TAJ CLASSICS", was successfully shown by a prestigious private channel.*

I was extremely disappointed in the PTV decision makers. Later I was told inside stories which I hate to repeat.

PTV can regain its glory and media leadership if a complete re-structuring is carried out. IT CERTAINLY CAN BE A LEADER IF THERE IS SUPPORT OF THE POLITICAL WILL AND HAS A COMPETENT MANAGEMENT.

Government recently announced a culture policy and a film policy. Film is a part of the *industry* but different from TV and Radio. These 'Policies' will need a separate review.

There is also an important role of the Media Industry in improving cultural understanding and creating international relations. Several countries have powerful and dedicated organizations set up with expert advice to use the media industry in enhancing the national image. TV productions and Films plus live shows are important instruments of Cultural Diplomacy.

In short: The Media Industry in Pakistan needs much more specialist attention than given so far. The Civil Servants and Politicians should help. NOT DICTATE. The state should not use it only for promoting the policies and the persons of political incumbents of a particular period. The accumulated experience of the better performers and veterans in Culture, Literature and Media need to be benefitted from as Radio Pakistan and PTV did in early days. Media Industry needs immediate attention to play its role. There is no shortage of talent and experience. This region historically had a leadership role and it is very much capable of performing again if the political will and resources are available for support. Let us not forget that even the first international film of the silent era was made in Lahore in 1928.

July 01, 2018

A look back at the media industry

This region's media industry historically had a leadership role and it is very much capable of performing again if sufficient support is provided

Television was formally introduced in Pakistan in 1964. Prior to that, Radio broadcasting was the only mass contact medium. In the past two decades, radio and particularly, television industry has rapidly grown. Now, there are countless TV networks. There has been a rumour that more TV licenses may be granted. After years of experience in this industry, I believe, while it is good that licenses to private TV channels are issued, the policy is faulty and will lead to a disaster.

More than half a century has passed, and my engagement with this industry has continued. I have seen the industry from different sides i.e. as a writer, actor, producer and director. Therefore, it is worthwhile, as a veteran, that I look back at the policies and the performance of this industry over the years, and share with you some of my thoughts on why I feel that we are headed towards a disaster.

For any industry to prosper and stay viable three elements are important. Firstly, adequate supply of the material to be sold, which is production, secondly, an effective marketing setup to sell and lastly, adequate sales to maintain a healthy cash flow.

Production material for a media company includes television serials, series, sitcoms, documentaries, sports shows, films, news, discussions, etc. as its products. These intangible items deal with the collective psyche of the society. They have the power to affect and change individuals as well as the society. This is why the worldwide belief is to define the responsibility of TV Broadcasting to include: "information, education and entertainment". This objective should be carried out with a sense of social responsibility.

After the initial licenses, the upcoming issues should have been studied and resolved but additional cross media licenses to print media owners were issued, this added further complications before consolidation. Consider the potential of TV channels in particular, then chart a course of action for the future before deciding to expand.

The TV industry is different from cinema. In cinema, people go to see a product of their choice, they pay for it and sit in a hall where different groups are present. The content from TV reaches homes; it interacts with families and influences the society, therefore, paying special attention to it is justified.

The TV media industry seeks to market its product and gets its income from sponsorships and advertisements of other industrial products. The product is either planned by itself or acquired from contracted producers. To make the TV Industry viable and to avoid oversupply, and consequent cut-throat competition, the market potential of sales revenues, as well as, the supply of the product must be balanced.

A responsible media policy for licensing needs to be made after assessment of production potential, the standard of marketing setups, referred to as channels, and potential of advertisement revenue.

Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) was established to monitor and regulate the activities of the industry. The licensed channels need to be monitored to ensure that the licensees remain within the limits of their social responsibility and the law, and perform to provide information, education and entertainment. PEMRA, as the regulatory body needs to ensure the availability of data to make correct decisions.

Licensing needs to relate to the potential size of the market. Pakistan has a population of about 200 million people. And this is a population that is acquiring TV sets as fast as possible. So there are a very large number of households which own at least one TV set. Most businesses compete to have their share of the market and therefore, advertise on TV.

To assess the market potential and the audience mix, professional companies setup systems to assess the popularity of the programs and these are known as rating systems.

The results obtained by the rating systems work as guidelines for the advertiser to decide as to which programs they should advertise in and the frequency of the advertisements. This feedback also affects the decision making of the TV channel as to the kind of program it needs to buy from the producers to make a saleable mix attractive to the advertisers. So rating provides the research results which hold the key to programming.

The present rating system is a mystery. It is managed by a private organisation and results are said to be manipulated. Therefore, this rating system needs to be replaced. It can never provide the necessary data for guidance in programming and is misleading. For example, if it reports that family disputes between the mother in law and daughter in law are interesting, then production companies will try to meet this requirement. If it reports that indecency in speeches creates interest, then this will become the trend.

How far these trends can be followed is to be regulated by a sense of social responsibility. The real issue is that the rating system is based on very limited sampling, which is not fully

representative. Also, it must not be in the hands of private organisations, because these may have temptation to fabricate the results if more money can be made through malpractice.

A possible alternative to be considered is a modern rating system based on a much larger and appropriate sample size, which receives the satellite signal, the terrestrial signal, and even measures internet viewing. It would be better if the responsibility is taken by public organisations, namely PEMRA and PTV, jointly, and the results are made available to all licensed channels.

The cost of this setup is not something that needs to be discussed here, however it can be self-supporting. The result will guide the PEMRA in advising a program mix and to ascertain the number of type of licenses to be issued; for example for current affairs, composite entertainment, sports, or other specific subject. The assessment of the size of market, and the number of TV sets is not hard to know and can be determined from license fees.

The basic principle of providing information, education, and entertainment must be strictly observed and a decent balance should be maintained. Of course, all segments of society including men, women, children and minorities are to be adequately catered to in the program mix. Media affects society and if every kind of popular trend is made the basis of programming then limits of decency can be violated.

Current program mixes are damaging and destroying national values. There is over presentation of political programs of poor quality. These have deteriorated to bickering, cross talk, even fisticuffs and abuses in some programs. The viewers look at the leaders and respected TV personalities behaving in a foul manner and conclude that such behaviour is acceptable.

Gradually, it becomes a social norm. Presently, the programs of political orientation are trying to do everything, comedy, conflict, analyses, promotion of point of views etc. This mix up cannot be advisable.

The media also chooses to show all kinds of negative events. A fire somewhere, a murder, rape, corruption, miseries and so on, are repeated, and repeated and repeated endlessly. Only bad news is considered news. It results in creating anger, intolerance, disappointment, depression etc. This is extremely damaging and destroys society and its faith in the country.

There is no doubt that lot of good also happens every day, there are events and actions which could build national pride and feeling of wellbeing. These should be reported. The civil society should be given a balanced view so it gets confidence in its systems and values. The quality and understanding of arts and culture and heritage is another ignored sector. Good programs for children are almost non-existent.

The media industry in Pakistan needs much more attention than it has been given so far. Civil servants and politicians should help, but not dictate solutions. The state should not use it only for promoting their policies and persons

After determining the size of the market, and the number and kind of licenses to be issued, the next, and perhaps the most important step, is to organise the production setups for the size of media business.

Presently, there are several production houses. Some of these are in-house setups that belong to the host channels. Then there are freelancers who produce their work through some understanding with a channel, and some who just take a chance. This production sector needs the most attention of a regulatory body. The discipline achieved between the licensed channels and production houses is key to the health of the media industry.

I am inclined to suggest that production houses should also be licensed by PEMRA as the TV channels are. If these two are regulated and firmly supervised, the other constituents of the industry will get disciplined. Currently, there are serious problems cropping up between channels, producers and talent.

Most producers have complaints about the conduct of actors or non-fulfilment of the terms of the contracts by channels. On the other hand, actors complain of non-payment.

The technical crew has no institutional training, and is almost totally learning on the job. To license the production companies, their scrutiny of experience or training, financial strength, and awareness of the social responsibility to select appropriate content, must be kept in mind.

Producers are very likely to run into cash flow problems in case of default or some other circumstances. Such cash flow problems upset schedules and completely put off performers. Those involved in the creative process should be given reasonable consideration, respect and honour, because sensitivity is the basis of their creativity.

All recognised industries use banking facilities to ensure cash flows. If the government recognises the media industry and film industry then it needs to notify the banks and State Bank accordingly. The commercial banks will indeed put some requirements of standards and securities before extending financial facilities.

But on part of the Government, it must give some initial support to let the industry grow. It is likely that the media industry will have a lower chance of defaulting, when compared to other industries. But the setting up of licensing of producers will be the first step to ensure the quality.

A good thing has happened that the actors have also setup a national organisation, known as ACT. So, the constituents of the media industry are already aware of the need to organise and streamline the working systems.

Pakistan television is the 'mother' and the radio broadcast the 'grandmother' of this industry; these two have a very special role to play. It has been a serious oversight that full advantage of the accumulated experience, archives and systems has not been brought forward. 'New' is attractive but if the 'new' has a strong base to stand upon; it grows and develops better and with grace and

wisdom. Re-planning and restructuring is required for state TV and radio institutions to play a significant role in the industry.

The government recently announced a culture policy and a film policy. Film is a part of the industry but different from TV and Radio. These 'Policies' will need a separate review.

There is also an important role of the media industry in improving cultural understanding and creating international relations. Several countries have powerful and dedicated organizations set up with expert advice to use the media industry in enhancing the national image. TV productions, Films, and live shows are important instruments of cultural diplomacy.

The media industry in Pakistan needs much more attention than it has been given so far. Civil servants and politicians should help but not dictate. The state should not use it only for promoting the policies and the persons of political incumbents of a particular period. The accumulated experience of the better performers and veterans in culture, literature, and media need to be benefitted from.

There is no shortage of talent and experience. This region historically had a leadership role and it is very much capable of performing again if the political will and resources are available for support.

Let us not forget that even the first international film of the silent era was made in Lahore in 1928.

July 29, 2018

Pakistan, "Welfare State"

A dream we have seen for 70 years. A foundation laid by the Profit PBUH. A *vision given by* Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Now Imran Khan promises to implement. God bless him.

Imran's victory speech left many speechless. He spoke from his heart. He was not like so many of our leaders who get hoarse calling 'AWAM, AWAM, AWAM' and then forget them as the first thing when in power. Imran has grown from the play boy, from a self-centered individual, from directionless U turn politician to a mature leader who has charted his course of action and admitted that his inspiration is the Prophet (PBUH) and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. He could not have made any better choices.

A 'STATE' has no reason to exist if it is not for its people. If it does not serve its population it has no "reason d'etre". That is why massive brain drain and migration takes place from Pakistan. We treat our diaspora as an export commodity NOT as national wealth to be enabled to contribute.

But Imran's *promise* is not going to be enough. He has to take 'visible' steps. Otherwise he will not be forgiven. It is good that he is abandoning the Prime Minister's *Palace* in Islamabad. Move is symbolic of his intent. He would deserve a Palace when all Pakistanis can afford Palaces.. An interviewer asked Chairman Mao Tse Tung "Are you against Capitalism?" Mao said "NO, we will be capitalists when each Chinese has Capital". So it is from the People's Republic of China which I visited in 1965 during the life time of Chairman Mao. Imran is willing to learn some lessons from China as well. So far everything seems right and he deserves to be supported by all nationalists. His statement in his opening speech about the rights of minorities is refreshing. Pakistani government has miserably failed to serve its minorities. Once a people are recognized constitutional minorities, they become the responsibility of the 'State'. So did our profit say.

Imran said some interesting things about foreign relations. These did not seem to be thoughtless and crammed parts of a speech. He promised to 'mediate' between Muslim majority countries. So did our Prophet (PBUH) declare after establishing the State of Medina. Prophet preferred civilized

negotiations and discussion to brutal use of arms and blood shedding. Imran extended the same message to India as well. Indian politicians must understand that they cannot suppress the will of Kashmiris forever. Indian politicians need to stop measuring their popularity on terror in Kashmir and an anti- Pakistan narrative. The people of this land lived in peace together for millennia. They want and need peace and if Indian politician and Pakistani politicians don't work for it then they commit a social crime. States need to live in peace and promote good relations between their people and not indulge in terrorism as India and USA have been doing recently.

Quade Azam in his famous address of August 11, 1947 to the Constituent Assembly clearly said that "Corruption" and "Favoritism" destroy the country. Nothing can be truer but, on the contrary, a shameful example in our country has been provided by some rulers of the past.

In his concept of building the "Welfare State" Imran will need to refine his thoughts and work out a detailed program. The generic label "Serving the poor" is not enough and has become a cliché used by all those politician who attained power by exploiting the masses. Different sections of the populace have different needs. They need to be served accordingly. Some things like health, housing and education are the obvious ones. There is also a mention of the young by all politicians. **WHAT THEY FORGET IS THAT THERE IS ALMOST 10% OF THE SENIORS POPULATION ALSO.**

Seniors in the country are those who have spent their best years in serving the country in one way or the other. Help the young by all means, they are your future but a country and a nation is nothing if it does not respect its past. Therefore needs of the 'Seniors' must to be examined, categorized, and met to let them live honorably and contribute on the basis of their experience and health as long as they can. Many seniors are tested, quality human beings and can make a lot of contribution if they are NOT added to 'junk' after 60. In USA hindering the work or refusing work to anyone over 60, because of age, is a punishable crime unless there is a physical issue. While building a 'Welfare State' a great deal of hard work is required. What was disappointing in Imran's speech was his lack of awareness of our Heritage. Pakistan is humanity's oldest civilization. It is a country from where the world can learn. He didn't mention anything about Culture and Arts and sports either. If he had mentioned, then he would have been the ONLY leader in our history to show an awareness of the power of culture and sports. Imran is a distinguished sportsman himself and I do entertain the hope that he will pay culture and sports the attention these deserve and use these to build a better national image.

One can see many political parties grumbling and putting the blame for their loss of votes on something other than their own shortcomings. They blame Election Commission, mysterious powers, conspiracies and so on. All these excuses are familiar and cut no ice. All political parties must show maturity and a national spirit and contribute in nation building. 'No political victimization' has been promised, and let us believe it. Let us feel confident that it is our country

and if it becomes better, enriched, respected and esteemed, we all will share the honors and walk with dignity.

Finally, I wish to remind Imran that South Punjab has supported you and they have expectations of a Provincial Status. It is also an administrative necessity for the country.

July 31, 2018

THE MAYOR, Lahore Metropolitan Corporation, Lahore.

Dear Sir,

Please refer to your letter Nr.334-cpro/mcl Dated 04-07-18. (Copy enclosed)

We are very pleased to know that the Lahore Metropolitan Corporation has decided to name the crossing between Abbot Road and Empress Road facing Shimla Pahari as Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj Chowk.

The family of late Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj sincerely appreciates the decision taken by LMC. It is a befitting tribute to a great personality who has made undeniable contribution to society, literature and Arts. His famous play "Anarkali", his writing "ChachaChakkan", and hundreds of others, won international recognition. These are also included in courses at educational institutions. Mr. Taj is a subject of research and thesis in many universities in Pakistan and abroad. His own research on classical literature is an invaluable national asset.

Mr Taj was a devoted social worker. He was son of Shamsul Ulema Syed Muntaz Ali who set up the first major publishing house in the subcontinent under the name DarulIshaat. This publishing house lead the campaign for emancipation of women through the magazine "Tehzib e Nisvaan" and for the education of children through "Phool"; and supported by hundreds of publication. The books of the publishing house were donated to the Punjab libraries after the assassination of Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj in 1970.

At the time of independence Mr. Taj headed the campaign for rehabilitation of refugees and recovery of women through his Radio program PAKISTAN HAMARA HAE,

Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj was first awarded a PRIDE OF PERFORMANCE and then later SITARA E IMTIAZ in recognition of his services.

By dedicating the said crossing in his name the LMC is doing something that it can take pride in. We, the family of Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, fully support you and give our wholehearted permission to name the said crossing as Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj Chowk.

Yours truly,

Yasmin Tahir (Sitara e Imtiaz) daughter.
Naeem Tahir Son in Law. 122B, Model Town Lahore, Phone 03334638010.

Cc: Mehmood Tamanna, CPO, Lahore Metropolitan Corporation.

September 04, 2018

Emergence of the 3rd political force

Despite the risk of annoying the justice system, I have no hesitation in saying that Justice is not available to most.

The long awaited 'third force' has successfully emerged. It has happened under the very dynamic leadership of Imran Khan. The nation has welcomed it wholeheartedly. Syed Pervez Musharraf repeatedly stressed the need of a 'third force' because of the 'royal' conduct of the two parties namely PML (N) and PPP. The democratic slogan was being used by the two parties to promote their dynasties and it seems that both these parties had an understanding on the issue. Ex-president Pervez Musharraf could not develop the third force himself because of several constraints however untiring and determined efforts of Imran Khan have rescued the nation from the clutches of the two parties and their corruption.

The challenge Imran Khan faces is not small. He, Imran Khan, has complete cognizance of the magnitude of the challenge, but his team needs to be made aware of it.

Some members of his initial selection have made mistakes. Small mistakes, but fully exploitable by his critics. As the sharp cookie of PML-N Saad Rafique said that the new government has been providing laughable material every day for the last ten days. Mostly the contribution to the 'laughable' material is being made by his stalwarts in the 'information' sector. The comments about the use of helicopter and about Nargis the actress were totally uncalled for and a responsible officer should have been cautious. I don't expect the level of maturity that Imran has from all his party members. Bhutto also suffered from the attitude of some of his upstart ministers that discredited the 'revolution' that Bhutto had promised.

However, I expect him to do better than Bhutto. Imran will do well if he briefs his team members occasionally and makes them conscious that the old traditions of show off, protocol, and high handedness are not expected of his team members. The Manika case is an example.

On the other hand serious understanding and support is required from the media. I believe that most of the media persons, anchors and analysts, are capable of overcoming the challenge of

bringing the 'change' that the country needs, provided they bring the change in themselves and avoid yellow journalism.

Imran Khan must look for specialisation beyond his party members. Now he must consider the whole nation as his party to support his agenda

In the last thirty years three generations have learnt to behave after the PPP and PML-N model. The show off, corruption, personal aggrandisement and following the rich and powerful and serving their personal interests has been the unfortunate model. Some persons in Imran Khan's party will need to re-learn and grow up. We as a nation must show the patience and give Imran Khan the three months that he has asked for.

So far the signs seem good. Imran Khan has bridged the gap between the civil and military. His priorities of improving the economic situation of the country, police reforms, and relations with neighbours including Iran, are significant and one can see the signs of a real Pakistan. It seems reasonable to call it Naya Pakistan but the fact is that the vision of Imran Khan is no different from the vision of the real Pakistan of Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah. Imran Khan is attacking 'corruption' and 'favouritism' head on. Quaid-e-Azam clearly pointed out these two to be the greatest enemies of nationhood.

While Imran Khan is busy with matters on national priorities, soon he will need to, and he should look at, several other issues. The most important of which are Human Rights.

In Pakistan rights are generally denied even to the majority, leave alone the minorities. A respectable nation cannot be built like this. Rights are usurped by the influential. Despite the risk of annoying the justice system, I have no hesitation in saying that Justice is not available to most. Justice is manipulated by those who know how to do it. Cases remain pending for years some even extend to 25 to 50 years without closing. And unfortunately corruption is prevalent at different levels of the justice machinery, as well. The current Chief Justice seems conscious and well-meaning. This is a good time. Imran Khan should fulfil his agenda against corruption and include restructuring the justice system in its cooperation with the Chief Justice.

Senior citizens are a marginalised community just like women and children. However there is a tendency to talk about the youth all the time while ignoring others. While the youth must be granted state assistance, it does not absolve the government of its responsibility of looking after other segments of society. Just because we appreciate the Metro Bus system does not mean that the government is absolved from the responsibility of providing better education and healthcare.

Imran Khan has provided 'hope' to all, and he will need to pay attention to 'all'. His predecessors, the so called champions of democracy only used the dream of democracy to perpetuate their power and dynasties. Army rule was rejected and the public was constantly brain washed against it. All national ills were blamed on the 'dictatorships', which is far from reality. If closely analysed, these democrat civilians have caused as much damage as the so called dictators. I am inclined to admit that some so called 'dictators' did better than so called 'democrats'. The 'dictators' have a major advantage in selecting their teams. Dictators are not forced to oblige their party members for allotting influential positions. Dictators are free to choose, from the best among civilians or army men, the best person for the job.

It could be an educationist, a scientist, an expert on heritage and culture or an economist. Incidentally the so called 'democrats' have never realised the importance of heritage and culture. Imran Khan must look for specialisation beyond his party members. Now he must consider the whole nation as his party to support his agenda. One possible way would be to attach an expert 'advisor' to his party ministers wherever needed. Ministers can continue to promote the 'party' image while the specialists can provide the expertise required for improving workings of that institution.

The Prime Minister Imran Khan can find many persons of outstanding record in senior citizens who have the energy and knowledge to contribute, he can find such experts in the diaspora who left due to lack of opportunity and he can find such people in minorities without prejudice. Let his party members understand that specialists are not politicians and they are not interested in political power. A true scholar, specialist, expert, finds satisfaction in his or her contribution and achievement, not in a reward or award.

September 13, 2018

An Irresponsible opposition

Mr Prime Minister, the nation supports you, do not fall prey to seasoned and the self-serving 'opposition', who want you to fail. People have rejected them and supported you. Pakistanis want you to succeed, so have the courage to stand by what is right

The opposition parties, led by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and joined by the likes of Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman's group and 'Hamnaw' protested and threatened to launch a campaign against the inclusion of Professor Atif Mian in the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) nominated by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). EAC was to find ways to improve and stabilise the Pakistani economy which is on the rocks. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), sensibly, refrained from joining the so-called opposition. The protesting 'opposition' exposed itself in many ways. Most important, for its lack of respect for the Constitution and the spirit of Nationhood as described by Quaid-e-Azam. Are equal rights to all Pakistanis not guaranteed by our Constitution? This protesting group opposition has also violated the basic Islamic principle of care and regard for its minorities.

This protesting group disregarded the sacrifices given by the valiant members of the minority community in our armed forces who laid their lives defending national freedom. This protesting group also forgot the support that members of the Ahmadi Sect gave to Pakistan in the international field of science and foreign relations.

The matter of religious belief and conflict has been an issue for a long time. It was settled by declaring the members of Ahmadi sect as a 'minority' in Pakistan. This decision should have settled the matter once and for all and the society should have moved on.

Nobody has the right to deny the Ahmadis the right to be and to live. For PML-N the motivation must have been to cleanse itself of earlier accusations of trying to change constitutional provisions. The motivation for other 'protesters' may be to try and embarrass Imran Khan and PTI. These are short-term objectives. Experienced politicians of these groups should focus on long-term national objectives. What are their plans to improve the water situation? How do they propose to improve the economy? So far the conduct of 'protesters' is of irresponsibility.

On the other hand, I also feel disappointed by PTI's conduct, its spokesperson, and even Imran Khan. Is this a U-TURN? Is it a strategic compromise to serve economic priority? Is it lack of clarity of belief within PTI? Or is it just the usual political trick of not meaning what you say during political campaigns?

If Imran Khan can take a stand against corruption during his campaign then he can also stick to his principles in this case. He committed to supporting minorities in his opening speech. If he has already forgotten this then he is liable to forget other issues which got him elected in the first place. This 'back off' has revealed a weakness to commitment. Have the people of Pakistan, once again, been fooled by the election rhetoric? I hope not.

Nobody has the right to deny the Ahmadis their fundamental human rights. For PML-N, the motivation must have been to cleanse itself of earlier accusations of trying to change constitutional provisions. The motivation for other 'protesters' may be to try and embarrass Imran Khan and PTI.

I want to ask the Prime Minister and cabinet why did they fail their oath? Only if PTI had found credible evidence against Dr Mian involved in anti-state activities, only then would the withdrawal be justified, however, this was not the case. Opposition parties namely PML-N and Muttahida Majlis-e- Amal, demanded to remove a member of the minority community from the Economic Council, which was an unconstitutional demand! Why did PTI cave in?

Internationally PTI has also sent the wrong message. Two experts have lost faith and already resigned, others might be thinking to do so as well.

PTI should forge ahead with courage and determination, and do what is best for the country.

If someone tells the government on social media to keep Pakistan economic secrets from an 'Ahmadi' then please have the sense to ignore it. There are no secrets in the world anymore. We open our belly to IMF and other agencies for loans, don't they have a complete insight into our economy. Such social media rhetoric only highlights only small-minded prejudice against minorities.

Mr Prime Minister, the nation supports you, do not fall prey to seasoned and the self-serving 'opposition', who want you to fail. People have rejected them and supported you. Pakistanis want you to succeed, so have the courage to stand by what is right!

October 02, 2018

Water Conservation – Short Term Solution

Water is one commodity that cannot be generated but only conserved.

Allah Tabarak says in Quran,

We (Allah) send down water from the sky in measure and lodged it in the ground and we certainly are able to withdraw it (Sura 23, 18-19 Verses). "

The above verses are explaining the complete water cycle i.e., water fall, penetration of water in the soil and evaporation phenomenon.

Some scientists conjecture that millions of years ago some celestial body comprising of water collided with earth caused depressions on about two thirds of earth surface and left water in these depressions.

Two recent studies of global water resources provide us with well researched quantitative description of water cycle.

It is estimated that annual evaporation from the continents is 70,000 cubic kilometers. Against this the total precipitation received by the continents is around 110,000 cubic kilometers. The effect of hydrologic cycle therefore is to transfer about 40,000 cubic kilometers of water from the oceans to the continents. Most of this is returned through river links, about one third as Base Flow and two thirds as Flood Flow. Of the 14,000 cubic kilometers Base Flow, about 5000 cubic kilometers are located in uninhabited regions, so that the effective world water resource is 9000 cubic kilometers per year.

It is estimated that this water resource base can furnish the water needs of 20-25 billion people provided this resource is prudently conserved and applied.

The Indus River and its tributaries provide some 181.3 Bcm (147 MAF) surface water. Out of this some 130.8 Bcm (106 MAF) i.e. 72% is being diverted into the canal system, meaning thereby, we are either wasting or losing about 28% of surface water. As a matter of fact it is 28% of water that requires to be conserved.

Pakistan up to this point of time has only two large storage dams, Tarbela and Mangla. Total original storage capacity of these two dams is 17.5 MAF. However, this storage capacity due to siltation has reduced by about 33%.

It is needless to say that water conservation for Pakistan is not only the crying need of the hour but a matter of survival. We shall have to construct large storage reservoirs. Construction of large dams involves lot of money and long gestation periods. For example Diamir Bhasha Dam construction cost is about 15 to 17 billion dollars and a minimum of 12 to 15 years construction period. On the other hand experts say that by the year 2025 Pakistan will literally be starving for water. To meet this grave situation we shall have to find some sort of short term solution towards water conservation till such time we are able to build large storage reservoirs.

The only plausible solution to meet this emergent situation is to conserve water by creating sub surface storage reservoirs through augmentation of ground water aquifer. This phenomenon neither involves large expenditure nor any gestation period. Although sub surface storage is no alternative to surface storage, since surface storage provides hydroelectricity, continued water flows through downstream waterways for irrigation and flood control, yet it is an alternative which can reduce or eliminate the necessity for surface storage and would provide use of an aquifer system for temporary storage of water. For example, water stored underground during times of high stream flow can be withdrawn during times of low stream flow.

Artificial recharge is the planned activity of augmenting the amount of ground water available through works designed to increase the natural replenishment or percolation of surface waters into ground water aquifers, resulting in a corresponding increase in the amount of groundwater available for abstraction. There are a number of methods through which sub surface water conservation can be achieved which are not only cost effective but of no gestation periods.

These methods are discussed as below:

- 1- Sand dams and sub-surface dams store water under the ground. A sand dam is a small dam built above ground and into the riverbed of a seasonal sand river. Sand accumulates upstream of the dam, resulting in additional groundwater storage capacity. Similar to sand dam a subsurface dam obstructs the ground water flow of an aquifer and stores water below ground level. Sand dams and subsurface dams are suitable for rural areas with semi-arid climate in order to store only seasonal available water to be used in dry periods.
- 2- A check dam placed in the ditch, swale, or channel interrupts the flow of water and flattens the gradient of the channel, thereby reducing the velocity. In turn, this obstruction induces infiltration rather than eroding the channel. Check dams could be designed to create small reservoirs, without the possibility of silting. Such check dams or delay action dams are most suitable in hill torrent areas. These can be built with locally available material and labour.
- 3- Spreading Basins: This method involves surface flooding of water in basins that are excavated in the existing terrain. For effective recharge highly permeable soils are suitable and maintenance of a layer of water over the highly permeable soil is necessary.

4- Recharge Pits and Shafts: Conditions that permit surface flooding methods for artificial recharge are relatively rare. Often lenses of low permeability lie between the land surface and water table. In such situation artificial recharge systems such as pits and shafts could be effective in order to access the dewatered aquifer.

5- Recharge wells: Recharge or injection wells are used to directly recharge the deep-water bearing strata. Recharge wells could be dug through the material overlaying the aquifer and if the earth materials are unconsolidated; a screen can be placed in zone of injection. Recharge wells are suitable only in areas where thick impervious layer exists between the surface of the soil and the aquifer to be replenished. These are also advantageous in areas where land is scarce. A relatively high rate of recharge can be attained by this method.

Advantages of subsurface dam: Compared with a surface dam, a subsurface dam has the following advantages:

- 1- A subsurface dam does not submerge land in contrast with a surface dam because it stores water underground. Therefore, it does not seriously damage the environment, nor does it cause social problem such as the forced migration of local people.
- 2- A subsurface dam does not lose reserved water by evaporation because water is stored underground and there is very little evaporation, in contrast with a surface dam that often loses a significant amount of reserved water due to evaporation in dry season in arid or semi-arid areas.
- 3- Reserved water using a subsurface dam is of fairly good quality because it is stored underground, and it can be used like ordinary well water, in contrast with using a surface dam that tends to proliferate, parasites, anopheles that transmit malaria, and germs, and requires purification for domestic use.
- 4- In general, a subsurface dam is more stable than a surface dam from the viewpoint of dynamics because it is buried underground, and thus does not need maintenance. Even if it breaks, there is no damage to the downstream area because the breakage occurs underground.
- 5- Shallow groundwater consumed via a subsurface dam system is renewable because it is charged with rainfall. Therefore, subsurface dam does not exhaust water resources.

In view of the foregoing the only quick, short term, inexpensive and reliable solution to water conservation is sub surface storage till such time we are able to construct large reservoirs. Action as proposed above if found feasible would need further studies and surveys to locate suitable areas and local indigenous material and works to trap surface flows for conservation in sub surface storage.

October 04, 2018

Humans as heritage

The Behbood schemes, if carefully reviewed and improved, can prove to be truly helpful for the elderly and can fit into the scheme of making the country a social welfare state as intended by the Prime Minister

We save forts, places of worship, and old cities, the whole world preserves its monuments. But it is also recognised that 'humans' are an important part of the heritage. Some individuals are like forts of courage, and struggle. Many humans are like cities knowledge and wisdom. Most of them are those who pass on traditions as parents, scholars etc. In the current social set up these human monuments of heritage are the older people. The United Nations (UN) proclaimed a holiday on October 1, 1991, to acknowledge and to raise awareness about the factors and issues affecting the older generation.

The recognition of Senior Citizens and their needs has taken place in almost all civilised countries including India. In Pakistan 'The Sindh Senior Citizens Welfare Act, 2014', was passed. This bill passed by the Sindh Assembly is comprehensive and is cognizant of all relevant factors. However, the implementation of the bill is sadly lacking.

In addition to this, a bill was introduced in the Senate as 'The Islamabad Capital Territory Senior Citizens Board Act, 2017'.

Prime Minister Imran Khan, in his much appreciated opening address promised a 'welfare state' that would create hope for the nation. It will be beneficial for all of if the subject of Senior Citizens is comprehensively reviewed.

The elders should continue to be socially relevant. A system of 'honorary magistrates' could be introduced to help government functionaries and local bodies. Some could be included in advisory capacities set up by the departments

The issues that need to be highlighted are medical, economy, dignity, contribution to society and lastly housing. Firstly, medical cards should be available to all seniors irrespective of age. These medical cards should be valid in all government supported hospitals, clinics etc. They should cover the doctor's fees, hospitalisation, investigation, procedures etc. In case the card holder wishes to

be treated at a place other than the government supported facility, then the card holder should be asked to contribute 25 percent or more of the total cost.

Secondly, there is a minority of seniors who have private resources and they are not dependent on government facilities. There are also elders who are entitled to pensions, provident funds and other benefits from their employers. Their needs may be different from others. However, a substantial number is dependant on investment schemes provided by the Government through National Saving Centers.

The most relevant scheme for the seniors are the Behbood Certificates. These certificates are available for a 10 years term at a time, and the profit is free from income tax deduction. The rate of profit is also higher than other investment schemes anywhere. However, there is a limitation on the amount that can be invested. The current limit is 50 lacs.

The Behbood schemes, if carefully reviewed and improved, can be a truly helpful scheme for the elderly and can fit into the scheme of making the country a social welfare state as intended by the Prime Minister.

However, this can be improved by focusing on the best rate of profit which was earned in 2008. It was 16.8 percent per annum but it kept being reduced. This scheme is most relevant to provide a hassle-free, secure and legal source of cash flow. This cash flow helps the elderly in meeting day to day expenses and to not be entirely dependent. But the downward revision of profit rates, and the higher cost of living and inflation are counterproductive and discriminatory. It is recommended that the rate of interest must be maintained at which it was in 2008, and considering the inflation and the higher cost of current living, the limit of investment be should, in fact, be increased to at least 100 lacs, and preferably 150 lacs per investment. This would provide about RS 150000 per month to the elderly and enable them to live life comfortably and with dignity. Furthermore, the Government Pensioners can draw a greater benefit if they have the funds to invest because then, they can buy the certificates twice.

Thirdly, the senior citizen's dignity and contribution to society also needs to be underscored. The elders should continue to be socially relevant. A system of 'honorary magistrates' could be introduced to help government functionaries and local bodies. Some could be included in advisory capacities set up by the departments. Moreover, they could be made members of clubs at concessional membership fees, and some with distinguished experience could be engaged as consultants for a national advisory committee.

Lastly, the issue of housing is also very important. In most of the civilised countries, including India; seniors who own a house are provided the facility of 'reverse mortgage'. Which means that these elders can live in their house, but have to mortgage the house for an estimated life expectancy. At the end of the term of the mortgage, they can keep receiving an amount and after their demise; the immediate family has the option to pay back the loan and retain the house. This enables the elders to live in their house until the end.

Other elders who do not own a house should be provided subsidised housing and care. It should include nursing if required and medical benefits. In India, it is mandatory for the children to look after their parents to provide love, affection, care and a sense of security. If the young fail to do so

it is mostly treated as a cognizable offence. Furthermore, in eastern societies family is still respected. Moreover, in our society Islam is used to highlight the importance of 'Haqooq Ul Ibad' which the young should be made aware of.

Elders, spend their best years taking care of the young by providing them security, guidance, education, care and love. In their old age, the seniors ask for the same.

These suggestions are based on the better values prevalent in the world and in line with religious guidelines. Indeed, my suggestions can be improved in their implementation and methodology, but cannot be and should not be ignored. I, as a member of Pakistan Seniors Citizens Association which is affiliated with the United Nations Elderly Network and other international organisations, feel that Pakistanis as a nation need to fulfill their responsibility.

It should also be remembered that the generation which is the subject of this article is the generation which was involved in the struggle to make Pakistan an independent nation.

October 26, 2018

Rapist Hanged! Now??

On Oct.17 the rapist and killer of innocent Zainab and several other little girls was hanged. Law took its course. Angry society has cooled off. BUT HAS THE SOCIETY BEEN CURED? NO THE MALAIS IS THERE AS BEFORE.

Punishment must be carried out but the process should not end there. There are several questions to be answered. Zainab's father is said to have witnessed the hanging. Does it satisfy him? Does it absolve him and Zainab's mother, of the neglect shown by them by proceeding for Umra leaving the child unprotected at home? Why did they not take her along? Who was supposed to take care of her? Were they able to do so? Do they know how to take care of a child specially a girl child? Did the rapist's father know how to take care of his child? The father of the rapist Imran fell grossly short of his responsibility. Such parents must realize that Allah Taala forgives 'Haqooq Allah' but NOT 'Haqooq ul Ibad'. It was a part of 'Haqooq ul Ibad' that Zainab's parents should have taken her along or taken proper care for her to be looked after. It was part of "Haqooq ul Ibad", for the father of the condemned and hanged Imran, that he should have taken care of his son and saved him from being led astray.

The, now hanged Imran, was interviewed by a distinguished psychologist when Imran was convicted. Mr. Aamer Sarfraz diagnosed the reasons of Imran becoming a criminal. I refer to Mr. Aamer Sarfraz article "Psychopathology of serial killer" published in Daily Times of Feb.28,2008. The child Imran had a normal wish to become a 'Naqeeb'. A "Naqeeb" is a prominent position in the mosque. He could be a 'moazin', prayer leader, or Naat Khan or a Qari. But in his desire to learn these sacred, respectable business, the 'teacher' abused him. His psyche was continuously damaged and self respect was injured. So the energy of youth got diverted. Growing libido energy pushed him in another direction. He was getting criminally dominant and remorseless. Unconsciously the revenge of his insults and frustrations. He ended up as the criminal that the court found fit for hanging. Imran is gone and his victims are gone. The Malais remains. If nothing concrete is done then the social system will produce more predators and more innocent souls will suffer.

As a society we should not stop at hanging. Case studies must be made. The psychotherapists must come forward. This is the time to act. Not to just draw salaries and go home. Create awareness. Hold seminars, Advise on practical ways of bringing up mentally healthy children. The

responsibility lies also on parents and religious leaders. Many religious leaders are known to be against family planning. I am afraid this attitude is mostly because the men want unrestricted license to sexual pleasure. They propagate that God Almighty will take care. What about the responsibility that the Almighty has given to the humans? There needs to be firm and extended campaign to help religious 'leaders' to understand the psyche of the young and the responsibility of the elders. Parenthood must also be understood. The desire to have a child is mostly there in married couples but they need to understand in moral, social, and financial terms the responsibility that parenthood brings. The parents like those of Zainab and Imran did not deserve to be parents. They neglected their children and must be made responsible. Of course the state must take responsibility as well. State must make it obligatory for those who intend to marry to learn the responsibility of parenthood. In many countries the expecting couples go through lessons for responsible parenthood. The parental care and responsibility must be fully understood before the start of the process of procreation. All religions introduced a marriage system for peace in society and for realizing a sense of responsibility. In all systems contract of marriage secures the right of the child. In modern society fresh thinking is required to ensure child's healthy physical and mental growth.

So far there is no collective sign of awareness. When the Zainab case was in the news lot of people felt their conscience was disturbed. But the focus unfortunately was on punishment only. People accused the government of inefficiency and neglect, even involvement. This reflects an immature mind with little depth. Punishment is a deterrent not a cure. To cure or reduce the illness much more is needed and only some of the steps have been indicated. Study should also be made of the countries where such crimes low. We cannot always justify by saying that such crimes also occur in USA and UK etc. These countries should not be our role models and if such crimes occur there we don't need to follow. We will need to evolve systems of education, training, understanding and treatment in our social context and here the role of educationists, religious scholars, doctors and jurists assumes the key importance.

Media has played a disappointing role. A totally negative role. Role of electronic media is essentially negative or commercial. This institution has damaged the society in many ways. In this case, they focused on punishment only. They used the crime for sensation and for higher rating and getting commercials to improve their finances. There was little sense of social responsibility. Responsible media should have made an in depth study of the complex problem, shared it with viewers and made them aware of the potential dangers. A responsible electronic media should have collected experts to do series of programs for parents and society to handle the 'young' in a more responsible way. TV, the most important part of the electronic media, should have held discussions on how to sublimate the libido energy of the young. TV is seen and it still has a bit of credibility although several anchors and participants are bent upon destroying it asap. The electronic media should either play a responsible role for society or quit. Reporting on NAB and political discords and all negative news only create anxiety and lack of faith. We need faith in the society and ourselves. We need to build a healthy nation in 'Naya Pakistan' or 'Real Pakistan' whatever it may be called. To achieve this objective we need to pay attention to the young, and the whole lot of attitudes between men and women, sexual relationships, and responsible caring of the infants. Stop treating babies as a byproduct of sexual pleasure only, and a burden afterwards.. Neither God nor Society can forgive that.

I sincerely hope that some conscientious organization, a government ministry, an NGO, or Sociologists hear the call of those 'Zainabs' who are next to be raped and killed and the cry of those young boys desirous of becoming a 'Naqeeb' or some-how distinguishing themselves, to end up on gallows.

October 28, 2018

Rapist hanged, now what?

As a society we should not stop at hanging. Case studies must be made. The psychotherapists must come forward. This is the time to act. Not to just draw salaries and go home. Create awareness. Hold seminars, Advise on practical ways of bringing up mentally healthy children. The responsibility lies also on parents and religious leaders

On October 17 the rapist and killer of innocent Zainab and several other little girls was hanged. Law took its course. Angry society has cooled off. But has the society been cured? No. The malais is there as before

Punishment must be carried out but the process should not end there. There are several questions to be answered. Zainab's father is said to have witnessed the hanging. Does it satisfy him?

Does it absolve him and Zainab's mother, of the neglect shown by them by proceeding for Umrah leaving the child unprotected at home? Why did they not take her along? Who was supposed to take care of her? Were they able to do so? Do they know how to take care of a child specially a girl child? Did the rapist's father know how to take care of his child? The father of the rapist Imran fell grossly short of his responsibility.

Such parents must realize that Allah Taala forgives 'Haqooq Allah' but NOT 'Haqooqulbad'. It was a part of 'Haqooqulbad' that Zainab's parents should have taken her along or taken proper care for her to be looked after. It was part of "Haqooqulbad", for the father of the condemned and hanged Imran, that he should have taken care of his son and saved him from being led astray.

The, now hanged Imran, was interviewed by a distinguished psychologist when Imran was convicted. MrAamer Sarfraz diagnosed the reasons of Imran becoming a criminal. I refer to MrAamer Sarfraz article "Psychopathology of serial killer" published in Daily Times of February 28, 2008. The child Imran had a normal wish to become a 'Naqeeb'. A "Naqeeb" is a prominent position in the mosque.

He could be a 'moazin', prayer leader, or Naat-Khawan or a Qari. But in his desire to learn these sacred, respectable business, the 'teacher' abused him. His psyche was continuously damaged and

self respect was injured. So the energy of youth got diverted. Growing libidinal energy pushed him in another direction.

He was getting criminally dominant and remorseless. Unconsciously the revenge of his insults frustrations. He ended up as the criminal that the court found fit for hanging. Imran is gone his victims are gone. The Malais remains. If nothing concrete is done then the social system will produce more predators and more innocent souls will suffer.

As a society we should not stop at hanging. Case studies must be made. The *psychotherapists* must come forward. This is the time to act. Not to just draw salaries and go home.

Create awareness. Hold seminars, Advise on practical ways of bringing up mentally healthy children. The responsibility lies also on parents and religious leaders. Many religious leaders are known to be against family planning. I am afraid this attitude is mostly because the men want unrestricted license to sexual pleasure. They propagate that God Almighty will take care. What about the responsibility that the Almighty has given to the humans?

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There needs to be firm and extended campaign to help religious 'leaders' to understand the psyche of the young and the responsibility of the elders. Parenthood must also be understood. The desire to have a child is mostly there in married couples but they need to understand in moral, social, and financial terms the responsibility that parenthood brings.

The parents like those of Zainab and Imran did not deserve to be parents. They neglected *their* children and must be made responsible. Of course the state must take responsibility as well. *State* must make it obligatory for those who intend to marry to learn the responsibility of parenthood. In many countries the expecting couples go through lessons for responsible parenthood. The parental care and responsibility must be fully understood before the start of the process of procreation.

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We need to build a healthy nation in 'Naya Pakistan' or 'Real Pakistan' whatever it may be called. To achieve this objective we need to pay attention to the young, and the whole lot of attitudes between men and women, sexual relationships, and responsible caring of the infants. Stop treating babies as a byproduct of sexual pleasure only, and a burden afterwards.. Neither God nor Society can forgive that.

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Nov. 02, 2018

It is the last generation now

On the basis of this record the total surviving generation over 80 is just about 0.2 percent as some of these must have passed off between the census and now. So the number survivors is about 400,000, including me.

How could you realize it! Life is busy and time passes very fast. So do the 'elders', they don't just pass they 'pass away'.

I am talking about the generation which is now over 80 years of age. There is special significance to this generation in the context of our country and that is why it is important to talk about it, and think about it, before they are all gone.

As of 1 January 2018, the population of Pakistan was estimated to be 199,031,265 people. This is an increase of 2.10 percent (4,099,417 people) compared to population of 194,931,848 the year before. In 2017 the natural increase was positive, as the number of births exceeded the number of deaths by 4,335,284.

On the basis of this record the total surviving generation over 80 is just about 0.2 percent as some of these must have passed off between the census and now. So the number survivors is about 400,000, including me. I survived cancer in 2005 and with God's blessings completed the National Art Gallery as a humble contribution.

Who are these Super Seniors? These are your parents, or grandparents. You would know if they are sick or healthy, economically self-sufficient or with a begging bowl! Are they a burden or an asset? These questions are to be responded by the family. But not only the family. The state must take responsibility as well.

State must take responsibility for more than one reason.

1. This is a reason accepted around the world because such persons made whatever contribution they could in their life time and any decent state looks after their physical, financial and other needs.
2. The most important in the context of Pakistan. This is the last generation who were part of the struggle of the independence; made sacrifices, and saw the blood shed during migration.

It is the remainder of the generation from which 14 million were displaced, 2 million were killed and an equal number was raped, and injured. This is the generation which bowed and kissed this land, licked the wounds and, with courage and little resources went forward to build a free country. This is the nation who saw and followed the Quaid e Azam. This is what makes this 'last generation' unique in the world. This is the generation which saw blood drenched trains, houses on fire and bodies on the streets. These are the people who shared whatever they had and tried to heal the wound and rehabilitate. Finally these are the people who are witnesses and can tell the whole story of the struggle and sacrifices made for independence. Remember many are already gone. Intizar Hussain, Hamid Akhter, Mehdi Hassan, NurJehan, Reshma, Hijab Imtiaz Ali, AR Chughtai, Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, Hanif Ramey, Habib Jalib, Ustad Daman, Justice Shahabuddin, Cornelli and many other sensitive persons are already gone. God bless their souls. Several may go in this decade. We need to locate them, honour them, record them and give them a status and position of respectability. Their experiences are no 'tales', these are realities to learn from.

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This generation of Super Seniors has no voice. They are not political activists. They don't have the energy. They can't come to the politicians or civil servants to be heard and wait outside their door. This should not even be expected or required if the 'nation' the 'state' fulfills its responsibility.

What is the responsibility of the 99.8 percent of the rest of the nation and their government running this State of Pakistan?

There are claims of making a 'welfare State', there are claims of making a state like "Medina". These are all good intentions and give some hope. But to fulfill these pledges. I suggest to form a committee of Seniors and Super seniors to analyse the needs of this 'last generation'. Fulfill their needs on priority but also record their experiences. The good, and/or the bad, experiences during independence movement. All of these. Don't just record the versions of the politicians of now and then. There was much more in life than the political experience. I have been asked to record my experiences by archive collectors

the world over. But my experiences were limited to me as an individual. *There are as many stories from as many individuals that are alive today. These stories are your heritage and history. Don't lose it; these people will not be there for long to tell the tale. There are also openers of evil deeds, but also eye opener of courage and bravery and respect for human lives and value of friendship. Some people without caring for the religious associations risked their lives to protect the persons of other faiths. The experiences of minorities must be given special attention.*

To look after the various aspects of the Super Seniors I would like to *suggest* some steps that may be considered by the decision makers in the present government.

There should be an organization/committee set up to determine the **actual numbers** male/female survivors.

1. Analysis be made of their status, needs and contributions to the country.
2. System be devised to fulfill their financial, medical, housing needs, **and to make them participate usefully in society.**
3. While some facilities exist in the form of National Savings investments, these should be upgraded for Super Seniors as soon as possible and preferably before the end of the year 2018.
4. Super Seniors be allowed to take a reverse mortgage if they own a house and the banks should be given instructions accordingly.
5. The distinguished Super Seniors should be consulted in decision making at different levels of government to benefit from their experience and maturity.
6. Special health cards are issued which should enable them to seek medical help. If they are not satisfied by the government hospitals they should be provided the medical help of their choice at a contribution of 25 percent by the senior.
7. If housing is not available to the seniors then adequate and clean senior housing provided by the government with assisted housekeeping.
8. Media and libraries should be instructed to contact such super seniors to record their experiences of independence struggle, migration and settlement.
9. The off springs should be instructed to provide emotional and physical care as a religious duty and be made legally responsible. Incidentally such laws exist in India.

10. If some seniors possess any extraordinary skill, or art, then arrangements should be made to help them pass it on to interested students. This would mean scholarships to students.

These are only a few suggestions but when a 'Committee' is formed then lot more can be listed by collective thinking.

The basic idea is to bring the benefit of the experience to the nation and provide dignity and comfort to the Super Seniors. These Super Seniors are in a very small number and to take effective steps the government does not need to look to IMF or World Bank! These are our ancestors and if we can't provide for even such a small number then it is a matter of great shame. I have no doubt in my mind that it is only a political will that is required, NOT an aid. If the political will is there and the urgency is felt, all actions can be taken successfully.

While I am trying to make a case for the Super Seniors because of their limited expectation of life span, I do feel that government also needs to rationalize and improve upon the existing assistance to all Senior Citizens because they have also done whatever they could and need support in their old age.

I write with conviction but several times I feel that these words are falling on deaf ears. Writings appear on the pages of a worthy newspaper and, later, find room in the waste paper basket. Because, the decision makers, politicians, as well as civil servants, have little interest in public opinions. They have a casual look at the 'headlines' and the rest is of no interest. They are always in a 'meeting' and avoid public. Most of them attend to offices to be able to draw their salaries; only few try to make their salary a 'rizqe halal', by serving the community.

I try and do my duty in response to my conscience and hope the readers will cooperate and play a part in whichever capacity they can. There is great power in collective action and this is the only way to make any headway. The action is needed NOW. Not after the last generation is gone, it will give them no satisfaction.

November 4, 2018

Supreme Court must be fully supported

Do whatever lawfully you can and not assume silence

Supreme Court's esteem has risen much higher in the eyes of all responsible citizens of Pakistan and the rest of the world by their recent decision.

THE JUDGES HAVE SHOWN COURAGE TO DO JUSTICE.

This is what the nation expects of them. If the judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan bow down for considerations, or fear, or expediency then that will be end of the country, the nation, and people's integrity.

The 3 judge bench pronounced Aasiya Bibi NOT GUILTY. This is how an Islamic State should be. The judgment is most convincing. The Islamic traditions are upheld and appropriately quoted. The decision is unanimous by 3 judges, written by the Chief Justice Mr. Saqib Nisar himself, and concurred by Mr. Justice Asif Khosa. The old judgment was on extremely weak basis, and unfortunately, under some sort of pressures of interested groups.

There are several important parts in the judgment of the Supreme Court which are illuminating and clearly show that the judges have full understanding of Islam and its teachings.

Mr. Justice Khosa observes:

"....It was revealed that 'blasphemy' had been committed (if at all) by the Christian appellant after her Muslim co-workers had insulted the appellant's religion and had injured her religious sensibilities only because she believed in, and was a follower of, Jesus Christ. According to the HOLY QURAN, a Muslim's faith is not complete till he/she believes in all the Holy Prophets and Messengers of Almighty Allah including Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) and all the Holy Books of Almighty Allah including the Holy Bible.

From that perspective insulting the appellant's religion by her Muslim co-workers was no less blasphemous."

In their detailed judgment, the court has made several references to the teachings of Quran and the Prophet (PBUH). The judges are more than aware of the religion Islam and the Constitution of Pakistan. Justice Saqib Nisar has very comprehensively summarized that "Supreme court belongs to ALL Pakistanis".

Salman Taseer was courageous and a protagonist. Pakistan lost him, but he will be remembered for his conviction, and supreme court decision vindicates him. God bless his soul!

It is also very important that the role of the present political government be appreciated. The Prime Minister rose above political pressure, exigencies and compromise and said what he needed to say. He said that the Supreme Court decision must be respected, law should take its course, and public property will be protected. State will assert its will and perform its duty. The prime Minister rose above compromise, and asserted on the principle.

THIS CAN BE A STATEMENT BEFITTING 'NAYA PAKISTAN'.

One has been disappointed by the weaknesses of the previous governments which bowed to blackmail, failed to control damage to property and business and let the terrorists and extremists rule. It is suspected that some of the extremist groups became allies of some wings of the government, and played a destructive role on the behest of enemies of Pakistan. Such weakness of those governments eroded the public faith in the local brand of democracy, the governance and its corrupted institution. The thinking public was disappointed.

The present government has shown the strength by not bowing down to the demand of the street urchins to place Aasiya Bibi on ECL. Why demand that???? Why an innocent person is to be restricted? Do these street urchins realize the pain of a mother living under fear of death and not being able to look after her children for several years? Why do these extremists want her to say something which she does not want to say against the Holy Prophet? Just so that they can score a point? Or to please those who fund them? Or just by total brainless emotionalism? The time has come that the religious leaders realize their responsibilities. They must expel and expose those who have entered their groups wearing garbs and promoted by forces which are anti-Islam and anti-Pakistan. Such are those who incite people on self-immolation, suicide, and disturb national peace. These are the elements that all religious leaders and particularly managers of 'Madrasahs' must watch out against. These are enemies of the country and the government must act forcefully. Fortunately PM Imran Khan has shown that intent.

From a larger perspective, the religious leaders need to tell their followers as to what is nearer to God Almighty? Forgiveness? Generosity? Large-heartedness? Tolerance? OR, Revenge? The choice is clear. The life of the Prophet (PBUH) clearly indicates the understanding that all religions MUST be respected, in particular the "AHLE KITAB".

Unfortunately, like many other religions, Islam is also exploited by opportunists and terrorists. They wear the garb of religion and hurt humanity. Pakistan has suffered huge losses and an irreparable loss in the case of the murder of Mr. Salman Taseer. Salman Taseer was a highly educated person, with solid family background, and successful professional and public life, but murdered by an extremist. Salman Taseer was courageous and a protagonist. Pakistan lost him,

but he will be remembered for his conviction, and supreme court decision *vindicates him*, God bless his soul.

The rumors are spreading that a suspect, an illiterate religious leader, is inciting people to violate the law of the land. He is making appeals to 'rise (or 'sink') to worst behavior and confront the law and the state. Who is he? How does he claim to be a Muslim? He is one of those who brain wash youth to commit suicide. This is NOT allowed by Islam. This person is promoting 'fasad' and must be made an object of the 'Rud e Fasad' action. The 'simple' in Pakistan get misled and exploited by these 'Islamists'. No more. Time has come, for citizen loyal to the country and religion, to defend the constitution and the rule of law.

All patriots, all Pakistanis it is time to protect your ideology and not be on lookers only. Do whatever lawfully you can and not assume silence. A silent onlooker is a passive partner in crime. Let us all support the Supreme Court and the law enforcing agencies in this situation. God bless you.

November 23, 2018

Is your account safe in the bank?

I think the financial insecurity caused by different kinds of frauds through bank accounts, particularly when done at a large scale, as done recently, is terrorism. It should be treated as terrorism and the affected should be compensated forthwith to restore their confidence in the banking systems.

There were times when people and families kept valuables at home for safety. They kept 'safe' boxes, but then the thieves developed their techniques and found ways to crack the safe boxes. If anyone in the house resisted, he or she was injured or killed. But for the thieves it was messy and risky and the traces could lead the police to them. Thus, some crooks inducted servants or informers to inform the dacoits of an opportune time to commit the dacoity. On the other hand, several people kept dogs and guns and tried to save themselves from the thieves. Realising the need to keep valuables safe, the banks introduced 'lockers' to replace domestic 'safes'.

Almost every family kept jewelry and extra cash in the bank 'lockers'. All this was working well although sometimes breaking into lockers was reported. People mostly kept their cash in bank accounts, which could be personal or business accounts. The transactions from the accounts were generally considered safe. It was good for a long time, but not anymore.

Repeated reports have been in the newspapers about bank frauds. All kinds of frauds. Most common are ATM frauds, special technologies have been developed by gangs for this purpose. Criminals have invented ways to steal the pin code. These techniques vary from installation of hidden cameras to an installed 'reporter' which is hidden and connected with a distant computer.

There is another group of thieves which specialize in copying signatures. Huge amounts not just in millions, much more than that is miss-appropriated. The scale is such that it cannot happen without the involvement of some functionaries in the banks. The rumour is that in Islamabad some specialists are available to forge signatures.

Also consider money laundering, up to billions. This is a large scale fraud against the government directly. Can it have been done without the involvement of a bank functionary?

It is not just hear say or sensationalism. I have personally experienced this. My signatures were forged and my savings of about seven lakhs were cleaned out. All legal actions have been taken. 6 years have passed, FIA and courts and the banks have been approached but to no avail. Banks and all others, pay little attention to such a 'small' amount. For them it is 'small' not for me, and a crime is a crime for all, small or big. For me these were savings of years.

The fact remains that the account holders are at risk. The risks include fraud, **money laundering** and hacking. Many countries protect their customers by providing insurance coverage to a certain limit. Such protected limits cover mostly the accounts of common men and families. In Pakistan, account insurance will be the best way to restore the common man's confidence in the banking system.

In my case, the FIA even caught one of the two culprits but let him go until they caught the second one. What can I expect from law enforcing agencies? In front of the FIA investigator, some workers indicated that a bank employee was involved but the FIA officer did nothing.

What does all this indicate? Your account is not safe. Especially, if it is not a **very active account**. I believe frauds cannot happen if banks are vigilant. Our bankers, some of them, are either failing in their duty or they are intentionally involved and getting a share of the loot.

What is the role of the State Bank?

The State Bank of Pakistan issues instructions to commercial banks, and among these, there are some intended to safeguard the account holder's interest. Not much attention is paid to these circulars. They sit in the files it seems. It is a sad indication of the fall of professional standards and sense of responsibility. At all levels only 'formalities' are completed.

On ground improvements do not take place. It is an unfortunate part of the general deterioration of working standards and professional responsibilities. It is a natural consequence of the policy of appointing 'favourites' and not the competent. When the whole system is based on pleasing the 'boss,' then services deteriorate. The rewards don't come from service to customer; they come from service to the 'boss' by following his valid or invalid desires.

The fact remains that the account holders are at risk. The risks include fraud, money laundering and hacking. Many countries protect their customers by providing insurance coverage to a certain limit. Such protected limits cover mostly the accounts of common men and families. In Pakistan, account insurance will be the best way to restore the common man's confidence in the banking system. If banks had this cover, then people like me would have been compensated and saved from running from pillar to post seeking remedies. It is most irresponsible that the bank's account holder who relies on the security and service of a banking institution is left alone to run for recovery and/or face hardships.

The large scale bank frauds of recent months and years need to be looked from another angle as well. Particularly because criminals of foreign origin are also involved and advanced technologies are employed. Particularly, in breaking through the ATM systems. I say this as my thoughts turn to the COAS recent statement on 'hybrid' conflict. What is the essence of terrorism? It intends to

create insecurity, lack of faith in law and order in a country and thus in its government's ability to provide safety. Look at large scale bank frauds.

Don't these serve the same purpose without physical bloodshed? Losing one's savings of years, as in my case, causes the same sense of insecurity and lack of faith as a bomb blast at a distance. I think the financial insecurity caused by different kinds of frauds through bank accounts, particularly when done at a large scale, as done recently, is terrorism. It should be treated as terrorism and the affected should be compensated forthwith to restore their confidence in the banking systems.

December 1, 2018

"Kartarpur, the corridor of love"

He presents Gurdwara is built on the historic site where Guru Nanak settled and assembled a sikh community after his missionary travels. The present gurdwara is built on the site where Guru Nanak died on 22nd Sept. 1539.

Indeed, it is a corridor of love. The real base of religion is love NOT hate. It is the exploiter who uses religion to create hate among humans. An exploiter can be anyone, politician, a so-called religious leader, a greedy business influential, a power seeker in profession, or somebody just 'sick'.

I am speaking on the basis of personal experiences. In 2005, I was diagnosed with kidney cancer and was to go through a challenging surgery. My eldest son and his American wife thought to pray for me. They visited Churches, Gurdwaras, Temples, and other religious places and requested them to pray for me. They all did. God almighty listened as He does. The surgery was successful and the life of a human was saved.

Before Partition/Independence the relationship between various religions, within good humans, was very common. Those who believed in God, as a symbol of love, loved each other as His creation.

As a young boy before partition, I went through some unforgettable experiences. I was 6 or 7 years old. My mother, one of the first female doctors in the subcontinent, was in charge of the only Government hospital in 40 villages around Ali Raza Abad. We were allotted a 'haveli' for residence. It needed repairs. Laborers started work. The team was headed by a Sikh mason who was probably from a nearby village, named Bhoptian, entirely populated by Sikhs. As a child I fancied fun in jumping from mound to the planks and back. As I jumped the Sikh mason noticed and in a flash he jumped and caught my hands while the plank caved in, I could have fallen from the roof of the Haveli to the floor which was almost 40 feet down. My savior, at that time did not think of my religion, it was an act of human love.

In 1947, there was a lot of tension and the residents of Ali Raza Abad or Bhoptian could not remain aloof. The real issues were economic and social, but were being exploited through religion. Bhoptian was Sikh village, headed by Sardar Bahawal Singh. His son was Dilawar Singh. Dilawar

was my friend and we were almost the same age. With the increase in tensions, the residents set up a system of watch on both sides i.e. Bhoptian and Ali Raza Abad. Ali Raza Abad, and the 40 villages of Qizilbash state, were managed by Darogha Sahib and his family. So the watchmen reported to Darogha Sahib in Ali Raza Abad and to Sardar Bahawal Singh in Bhoptian. Several false alarms were raised, but nothing happened, no body attacked anybody. One day the watchmen reported that Sardar Bahawal Singh is coming to Ali Raza Abad! Darogha was informed, but soon it was reported that there was NOBODY with the Sardar! Sardar Bahawal Singh was riding alone. So it was! Sirdar Bahawal arrived, knocked at the door of Darogha's haveli. Darogha extended the usual courtesies and asked Sardar Bahawal Singh about the reason for his sudden visit.

Here is the real crux of the situation. Sardar Bahawal said "Darogha Ji we have lived here for centuries. This is the only place we know. All of you are the ones we meet. The people here are like our family. We have decided NOT TO MIGRATE. We have decided to remove the religious barrier. We all believe in one God Almighty. So there is little difference. From now on, all my residents in Bhoptian have become Muslims."

Darogha got up and embraced Bahawal.

Everyone lived happily ever after. This is the power of love.

As nations grow, they need to prioritise humanity. The Kartarpur Corridor is one such sign of maturity on behalf of Pakistan. This facility for the Sikh Community has been talked about for a long time. The Kartarpur Corridor is a border corridor between India and Pakistan. It will connect holy shrine of Dera Baba Nanak Sahib, located in the Indian part of Punjab to the holy shrine of Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Pakistan. This is where Guru Nanak Sahib spent the last ten years of his life. Main goal of this 'corridor' is to facilitate the crossing of religious devotees from India to visit the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur. It is located in Narowal District Pakistan, only about 4 kilometers from Pakistan-India border.

In year the 2000, Pakistan agreed to allow Sikh pilgrims to visit the shrine without the need to present a passport or visa by constructing a bridge from the Indian side of the border to the shrine. The present Gurdwara is built on the historic site where Guru Nanak settled and assembled a sikh community after his missionary travels. The present gurdwara is built on the site where Guru Nanak died on 22nd Sept. 1539.

The government of Pakistan in September 2018, unilaterally decided to open the corridor before the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak for visa free entry of Indian Sikhs from India to Pakistan. The step was welcomed by the across the world

The call for a visa free Kartarpur corridor is an old, persistent demand of the Sikh Community. The move was first mooted during the then Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1999, while Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf approved the idea in 2000. Later, substantial amounts running into crores were spent to restore the gurdwara. However, the Indian Government changed stances several times and once even suggested that long distance telescopes should be installed within Indian border and pilgrims should see the shrine through those only!

The government of Pakistan in September 2018, unilaterally decided to open the corridor before the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak for visa free entry of Indian Sikhs from India to Pakistan. The step was welcomed by the Sikh communities across the world.

Government of India had shown reluctance but, finally, it approved the building and development. Navjot Sidhu, Imran Khan and Gen. Bajwa have played the key role. It has been termed as 'corridor of peace'. However, Indian government still wants its goodwill 'contained' within its limits and avoids peace in general. Indian Government, presently, is composed of the right wing. Some of the constituents belong to the world's oldest terror organization 'ABHINAV BHARAT' which killed Gandhi.

However, we must ensure that the corridor peace is not exploited for other nefarious purposes.

December 23, 2018

Noor Jehan — the unforgettable

Zile Huma called me on the phone and said "The doctors have strictly forbidden mama from singing on stage because of her heart condition. It can be a matter of life and death. She doesn't want to refuse you under any circumstances

It was the 23rd of December 2000, according to the Muslim Calendar it was the 27th of Ramazan, the night when the doors of Jannat are open for all. The luckiest breath their last on this night of forgiveness when all such people are promised Jannah by the Almighty. Noor Jehan had some time before recorded a song 'Dum da kiBharosa, Dum avaynaavay...' which was probably released in 2000.

The song was recorded earlier and followed an unpleasant interaction with the financer who was disrespectful and threatening. Noor Jehan was a very bold, defiant and self-respecting person, she snubbed the man so hard that he had to tender apologies but she refused to sing any other song in his film. Strange coincidence it turned out to be. Noor Jehan was at that time conscious of her growing health problems. But did not make these problems known to public. I requested her to sing in a show in Dubai and she accepted. However, Zile Huma called me on the phone and said "The doctors have strictly forbidden mama from singing on stage because of her heart condition. It can be a matter of life and death. She doesn't want to refuse you under any circumstances. Please talk to her about her health". I did and found out that Zile Huma was absolutely right. Prophetically her song "dum da kibharosa...." (You cant trust your breathing, it may or may not be there at the next moment...) had been recorded. It so happened that while recording this song she had sung her last song with prophetic lyrics. On 23rd Dec. 2000 she had gone to the Almighty for her eternal life in heaven. She left a vacuum in this material world which can never be filled. Never.

Soon after, she came to of the threat to her health, she decided to record her 'will' and called me to be a witness.

In around 1997 she sold her house in Gulberg. It was almost on the Liberty round about. There is a huge commercial building at that spot. The road from Liberty Market in Lahore to Hussain Chowk is appropriately named as "Noor Jehan Road".

In 1971, I was designated by Government of Pakistan to arrange Pakistan's participation in "First World Song Festival in Tokyo". Entry was restricted to the best in the world and high standards were laid for the participants. I worked for weeks, day and night. Noor Jehan was our best bet. Many recordings were made. On the other side of the border Lata Mangeshkar was expected. Finally one composition was selected which explored the great range of singing that Noor Jehan had. It was "Shahbaz karey Parwaz..." by Nazir Ali. We participated. Lata had not arrived. Noor Jehan was selected among the best of the best in the world and her song was included in the album of final 11 songs. It was the last week of November 1971 and politically difficult times.

Dacca was under military action and we were to return via Dacca. When we arrived in Dacca the Pakistan Army commanders requested Noor Jehan to sing for the injured personal in the hospital. She did. She was always very nationalistic and supportive. She was asked to stay on for a few days and visit some hospitals. She was willing but I was very apprehensive. So I requested her to travel to the Karachi according to my plan along with all members of the troupe and conclude this assignment.

We stayed the evening in PC hotel. An air attack took place and a bomb dropped near the hotel. All commercial flights were discontinued. In any case if we had stayed on in Dacca then we would have been prisoners of war for a long time. Dacca fell soon afterwards.

In Pakistan Noor Jehan sang for the valiant forces as she did in 1965.

In year 2000 March, I met her for the last time in Karachi. She had been ill for a long time. Because of traffic issue I arrived two minutes late at her daughter's house. She was waiting, dressed in her favourite pink sari, leaning against the bannister of the staircase in the lobby. She knew my habit of being always on time, she expressed surprise. I apologized. We moved to the sitting room. Her doctor, nurse, and her cousin, Majeeda Bibi joined us. Noor Jehan wanted to talk at leisure. She was asked repeatedly to go for rest. She wouldn't. Finally, she asked me again to write her life story and I promised. Then the meeting ended. We were never to see each other again in life time.

On the most sacred day, Noor Jehan, left for her final abode. Her charity, her love for humanity, her devotion to the country, her love for intellect, her determination to protect her respect, and whose sincere devotion to friends, is known to many.

A song that she sang was "gayaee gee dunyageetmarey..." So true.

God bless her soul. Noor Jehan was 'Malika' and she will remain a 'Malika' in the creative world.

February 9, 2019

Reviews on 'Bhai Bhai' — the plot is smooth with no loopholes

Sam Shepard's iconic comedy 'True West' came to life at the Karachi Arts Council when the versatile Pakistani-American Hollywood actor Faran Tahir, directed and acted in the play with his brother Ali Tahir and Bulbulay's Hina Dilpazir. The stage plays titled "Bhai Bhai" featured only four actors with Faran Tahir and Ali Tahir becoming a continuous part of the play that lasted for two hours. The dialogues were developed by keeping in mind the audience, for each word seemed to be placed in it after thoughtful reflection. The plot of the play was smooth with no loopholes. At some parts of the play, the characters used the back story to explain the current situation, which worked like a charm. Immaculately translated by Faran and Ali, the play did have some dragging moments but they were necessary to build up for the next scene. While Ali's dialogue delivery was suave, Faran on the other hand, showed his powerhouse vocals when delivering dialogues especially when arguing with his brother. At some points, his high pitch voice reverberated across the arena and at other moments, his voice was calm and smooth. Faran, who has played significant roles in Hollywood productions such as 'Iron Man', 'Escape Plan', 'Charlie Wilson's War' and 'Elysium', has also played Shakespeare's "Othello" which was a crucially acclaimed performance.

"Bhai Bhai" is about Ali who plays Boney, a sophisticated, mature, screenwriter trying to make a big name for himself and earn revenue by selling his scripts on Netflix. Faran, who plays Buddy, is street smart, often steals that he refers to as borrowing and has his own way of dealing with life's problems that contradicts with Boney's philosophy of life. "Bhai Bhai" effectively relates to the audience for the play has been translated by adding elements of our society but not dwelling too much on the trivialities of life but focusing on aspects that retain the value of the play. Each of the play's scenes began abruptly but that was the essence of the play. The dialogues added pieces to the puzzle leading to the climax of each scene and eventually to the ending that displayed the acting prowess of the two brothers.

Hina Dilpazir plays the mother of two brothers who makes her entry during the latter part of the play but immediately sends the audience into laughter frenzy with her witty one-liners. Also, part of the play is a character, Zaigham or Ziggy, a producer who can help Boney's script become part of Netflix but Buddy befriends him by narrating to him his story that is weird, to say the least. Ziggy's roles are played by Waleed Zaidi and on some days played by Aamir Qureshi, son of Pakistan cinema's legend Mustafa Qureshi.

of Savarkar was consolidated in India in the 1920s. It followed an explicit ideology of Hindu nationalism, exemplified by 'Hindu Mahasabha'. It was distinct from Gandhi's message of peaceful coexistence. Savarkar's philosophy earned the support of Hindu chauvinists. The symbolic leader of this Hindu chauvinism today is Mr. Narendra Modi who has the position of the prime Minister of India with the support of Mahasabha. He follows the extremist line officially and thus tries to consolidate his support.

In the present times Abhinav Bharat is led by Savarkar's grand Daughter Himani Savarkar. She is also related to Nathuram Godse who killed Gandhi. Narendra Modi, a believer in Hindutva, an open extremist, killer of thousands in Gujarat, is trying to consolidate his position for the next elections which are not too far in India. His party leadership is based on the blood of thousands of innocents. The new act of terror at PULWAMA is supported and organized by the sponsors of Modi. Pulwama terror act was strategically organized by Hindutva. However, it is unfortunate that the progressive Hindus of India are being suppressed now. The Muslims and all minorities are living under fear. It may be recalled that Sikhs were harassed, killed and tortured as well. The demand of Sikhs for their constitutional rights was treated as an uprising. During that period, killing of their leader and attack on Sikh sacred places occurred. The inevitable backlash was revenge. Nobody has ever gotten away after insulting Sikhs. This situation could have been better handled by the Congress Government. Indira Gandhi yielded to the pressure of extremists and took actions she should not have and consequently she lost her life.

The Indian Government's extremely arbitrary and unconstitutional conduct towards Sikhs is a long story of Hindu extremism. The Hindutva concept is same as the Arya Samaj doctrine. This doctrine believes that India is a sacred land of Hindu Aryans. The fact is that Aryans only came in oppressing numbers between 3000 and 2500 BC. The Aryans suppressed the locals as described in detail in the Rig Veda, then absorbed the knowledge of Indus Civilization and called it Hindu wisdom. The Hindu Wisdom classified humans to upper and lower classes. The Arya Samaj Doctrine exposed itself in 'Satyarth Prakash' in which it throws slander on all other religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism.

In short: intolerance and terrorism form the basis of Hindutva and its current leader is Narendra Modi. How can anyone expect something better from him? He needs to save his political base by using extremist actions and he has succeeded till now. His support is dwindling because of Pakistan's open arm policy and willingness to hold dialogues on difficult issues. The opening of the corridor for sikh pilgrims has added fuel to the fire. How can Modi join in friendship? He thrives on hate! With the recent mass murder engineered in Kashmir, he has used the technique of immediately putting the blame on Pakistan. He got results of strengthening hate, and suppressing goodwill between the countries. he enlightened and sensible Indian communities believe in good human relations but when their thinking is under attack by extremists, they cow down. How long will this continue for? The solution can only be found by the Indian populace.

March 12, 2019

Kashmir carnage

The bloodshed in Kashmir is an ugly 'routine' that the world conscience seems to have learnt to live with. The marks of the gun palettes on innocent faces have so far not effectively woken up the conscience of the individuals or the organisations who claim to protect the human right. The United Nations is the biggest disappointment. The UN is like a court jester, in attendance in the court of the powerful.

Kashmir is 'occupied' by Indian forces. Even the ruler did not give it away to India in 1947. The relationship between India and Maharaja's Kashmir was limited to certain subjects like foreign affairs and currency. India used excuses to post heavy military units and build its hegemony. The UN proposed referendum has been constantly denied. The will of the people in the occupied Kashmir is yet to be determined. The innocent populace in search of the freedom expression gets shot. There is blood of the young and old in the streets of Kashmir; generation after generation and decade after decade. UNO observes! What for?

The main villain is the government of India. Indian government and the parties in power have used Kashmir as a toy to play with to win electoral support. None has shown the statesmanship of standing with truth and humanity. It was expected of the Congress, but it failed miserably. Congress was considered to be the symbol of secular Indian thought. But it failed to rise to the challenge and cowed down under the pressure of the extreme right Hindutva. It needed the rightwing vote and tried to show its commitment to them by suppressing Kashmiris and their demand for plebiscite. Each political party contesting for Indian government used suppression of Kashmiris to show their loyalty. The Kashmiris hardened their struggle and Indian political parties increased the suppression and bloodshed. Narendra Modi crossed all limits.

He went further and targeted Pakistan as an 'enemy' because it supports the legitimate demands of the Kashmiris. Modi thought that his failed government will get support if he goes a step further and threatens Pakistan. His public statements were worse than those of a street thug. He must have thought that callous bloodshed in Kashmir combined with brow beating Pakistan will consolidate his voting strength. He must have been shocked when he ended up with a bloody nose.

In the recent conflict, Modi's government lost both militarily and *diplomatically*. If the same voices, highly respected in India, are heard then it is a shame that a secular country is ruled by such a bigot with outdated ideas in the modern world. Hatred and armed oppression are a failed combination. Love and justice for humanity have much greater power. Extremists rely on the power of hate and lose, but godliness is in love and it always wins. Maybe India is ready for the emergence of a third political force with a more contemporary and broader political vision. People of the subcontinent, in particular, can only progress in peace and with love and respect for all. Pakistan has clearly extended a hand of friendship to India and taken the lead. Modi will be remembered in history if he becomes part of a peaceful solution to Kashmir. He does not realise that. But surely, he can if he has the vision and not a slave of extremist thoughts. At least he should realise that even in the Kashmir accession contract, the Maharaja of Kashmir retained most of the rights for himself and Lord Mountbatten committed that the Indian government will facilitate the determination of the will of the people.

If India wants to work for peace then they have a workable option in place. A *draft proposal* was made in August 2004 by the then President of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf. This proposal was being seriously considered by all the relevant parties including Kashmiris, Indians and Pakistanis. It is worth looking at it at this point.

The Musharraf solution to Kashmir includes the following: demilitarization or phased withdrawal of troops, no change of borders of Kashmir. However, people of Jammu & Kashmir will be allowed to move freely across the Line of Control, self-governance without independence and a joint supervision mechanism in Jammu and Kashmir involving India, Pakistan, and Kashmir.

These points were generally accepted as a good starting point. This basis was said to be worthy of consideration by Vajpayee and Kashmiris. This makes it evident that all the concerned parties and a mediator could have taken it further. The most important advantage would have been prevention of bloodshed and restoration of peace. It would have further made the state ruled by civilians instead of some ruthless military might.

Clause 3 provided a saving grace to both rival claimants i.e. Pakistan and India and clause 4 was perhaps the more complicated one but a basis for better understanding between India and Pakistan. I feel Modi should study it because by bringing peace to Kashmir, and between Pakistan and India, he would win the heart of the millions of peace loving and secular Indians. But does he have the ability?

It's simple to see the consequences. Peace between India and Pakistan and resolution of Kashmir issue will ensure peace in the region. It shall open the opportunities of trade and tourism. Similarly, India has attractive tourism destinations. It would encourage international investors to set up trade and industry in the region. Particularly in view of the abundant human resource, and even natural resource, available in the subcontinent. People of the subcontinent are traditionally hospitable and interaction with tourists will help achieve better understanding. We can contribute to a better world if peace is prevalent.

The ball is, in fact, in the court of the Indians. They need to develop a contemporary thinking for the betterment of South Asia.

April 02, 2019

Travel by train

When I was young, which is a very long time ago, a train journey had a romance about it. It usually occurred during the summer holidays. People in my age group, which are said to be less than 40000 in the country now, may remember the 'holdall' or "Bister Band", prepared for the journey. The usual routine was to spend summers at a hill station. I am talking of middle class of the society. Other classes of the society had other reasons, like business, employment etc. But a 'hold all' or a similar 'thing' was necessary. For those who are not familiar with 'holdall' it is better that I explain. It was a specially designed bag of canvass material with pockets for clothes, blankets, shoes and other necessary things that one may need during the stay at the destination. The holdall was packed and rolled and tied up with leather straps. It thus became a baggage roll that a 'Qulee' i.e a railway porter in the red uniform, could carry for you to the compartment where you had reserved your seat. Families booked complete compartments. Since there was no air conditioning in those days a tub was placed in the compartment with a block of ice in summers. The affluent travelled in the first class usually and a ticket was bought for the 'servant' who had a separately designated compartment. The British had set up systems for the comfort of 'Sahibs'. There were indeed a lot of 'brown sahibs' following the system. The servant would come out of his compartment to check if the sahib or his family needed anything when the train stopped at any station. Some stations were famous for some merchandises. For example Wazirabad for knives, Multan for clay work, Nagpur for oranges and Mathra for 'paera' sweet and so on. The families particularly children looked forward to pass through such stations and get the novelties of their choice. The station products were acquired as gifts for the would be hosts as well. The journeys were usually long and at an average for 24 hours. Therefore, games of cards, ludo and 'paratha' and 'shami kabab' were the most popular games and snacks to be carried. It was a long 'picnic' and romance was added by the landscape, river crossings, jungle greenery, and large green fields.

Now it is different and those who have travelled then and now would know the difference.

Trains have now become much faster throughout the world and some of those are extremely comfortable and have a new level of romance. I have travelled on some in Europe and USA.

After almost 40 years or so I had an urge to experience the train journey in Pakistan once again and see the difference. The 'renewed' Railway Minister, Sh. Rashid makes a lot of noise but also does some work. Especially so, in the Railway department. So in January this year I decided to go to Karachi by a much hyped 'business train' from Lahore. Booked my seats, made no conventional holdallie. "bister bund" or tiffen career of paratha and shanis, because it was said that Air conditioning was provided and there was 'dining car' with the train.

So, looking to renew a romantic adventure we arrived at the historical Lahore Railway station. This historic railway station, where the film "Bhawani Junction" was made starring Ava Gardner and Stewart Granger, was in a sorry state. It had no discipline or decorum of the past. It was not clean and jumping on to the railway line and crossing to the other platform was a routine.

We waited for the train which seemed to have been delayed from the scheduled arrival time. Finally, it arrived. We could not identify the section we were holding tickets for, but the "qulee" knew and shoved us into a compartment and announced that it is a make shift train. The original train was stuck at Rohri station and this 'contraption' was put together by the Railway workshop to serve us, poor ticket holders. We were also informed that the air conditioning is not likely to work and there will be no dining car and therefore we should buy our food from the khokha at the station.

So, this was the first leg of the 'romantic' journey. On the way we were treated by the ugly sight of city waste throughout the journey on both side of the track. The colour of the kachra stacks slightly changed with the size of the town around. We realized that Pakistan Railway track was providing useful service of 'kuchra dump' through the country. The Kuchra was dominated by plastic bags, generally known as "shoppers".

We were happy to have survived the experience and decided that this 'once' was enough.

So, a month later when I needed to go Karachi, I opted for air travel. But on return my options got limited. There was a sort of an emergency situation because of Indian adventurism and air services were not available. So instead of indefinitely waiting for the political situation to normalize, it was important that I be with the family. A friend arranged a train ticket and I had to be back to the Karachi railway station. The train was a little better this time although it was no model of comfort or luxury. I got a seat in a compartment where there was no one in the beginning but later a few persons walked in. They seemed surprised to see me as one occupant. It was later found that this particular compartment was meant for the Manager of the train and his colleagues. I felt a bit awkward but the Manager seemed very hospitable and wouldn't let me go. He insisted that I stay. It was exceptional hospitality and I was personally looked after by the Manager who had

recognized me and my background. He shared his home food, prepared breakfast for me and arranged comfortable bedding. Indeed, I deeply appreciated the gesture. However, the railway department does need to improve substantially. The "Shaikhees" of the Minister Shiekh will not suffice. Railways are a key transport system in a country. There are hundreds of reasons including cargo transportation, defense uses, and usual public movement. The whole thing needs to be carefully improved. Railways were the first disciplined department of the government during British Raj which had public service as its base. All systems started from railways even a standard amount of 'rishwat' for some favours. The waiting rooms were clean and the Qulees' courteous and well trained. The platforms were clean and nobody crossed the railway lines and instead used the designated crossings or bridges. I am sure that the Minister remembers all this and is also capable of raising the standard. The Manager gave me an astonishing and pleasing inside news. He said that since last six months, all employees have voluntarily rejected taking 'rishwat' because of a call of conscience. I was most impressed. All does not seem to have been lost. There is some hope.

In short, the service needs improvement as a routine, Train compartments should be made comfortable, toilets given a lot more attention and the landscape on both sides be improved and riden of the waste. From a tourist point of view train is the best excursion for seeing the country landscape. No doubt we have a lot of beauty beyond the mountains of city garbage around the railway lines.

Let the beauty be enjoyed by the train travelers.

August 09, 2019

Where should the old go?

One expects the new government to show better sensibilities than its predecessors. If Mahathir at age 93 can run for office — and win, then why can't we use our seniors?

It is fashionable in politics to talk about the youth, women, and children. In case of an accident it is reported that "49 persons died, there were 6 women and 2 children among them...". The other 41 dead died as one should, and matter not. Unfortunately, the media has shown little ethics or responsibility.

I am trying to bring your attention to determine the status of the senior citizens in the new "welfare state" being promised to the nation.

The United Nations Fund is recently said to have highlighted aging as the most significant population-related issue for the current century. In developed countries, particularly the "welfare States", the needs of senior citizens at various levels have been recognised. This effort is by and large missing from Pakistan. The percentage of seniors in our country is nearly nine per cent, which means there are about 18,000,000 seniors that must be recognised as humans needing attention.

My special concern is individuals who have worked hard in their lives and managed to live with a measure of dignity but find difficulty after reaching superannuation. My other grave concern is those who are part of this century's improvements and maintain good health, have experience and are willing to contribute to the nation but face age prejudice. Several countries have removed the age bar for retirement. Seniors that can and want to work, should not be discarded because of age.

National Savings schemes are beneficial for individuals as well as the government. The most helpful scheme for seniors is the Behbood Savings. A deposit in this scheme for entitled seniors helps them survive without being dependent on anyone. In the beginning of this century the rate of profit and the limit of investment per person seemed reasonable. However, the so-called democratic governments reduced the rate of profit drastically without giving an alternative to the seniors who chose to invest. The new government must rationalise this. Two things must be done immediately. The ceiling of the individuals' investment should be raised. This action will help the

government improve its liquidity and will also help seniors earn a profit without risk. The rate of interest which had been reduced should be brought back to the level of at least 2003/4 to enable the seniors to meet the current inflation.

The experienced and distinguished seniors, who have contributed in the past and hold good reputation, should be involved in nation building programs. The attitude of discarding old is like wasting and ignoring our heritage.

The experienced and distinguished seniors, who have contributed in the past and have good reputations, should be involved in nation building programs. Discarding senior citizens amounts to wasting and ignoring our heritage

One expects from the new government to exhibit better sensibilities than its predecessors. If Mahathir at age 93 can run for office — and win, why can't we use our seniors? In 2007 a draft of "Senior Citizens Bill" was introduced but our democratic representatives thereafter paid no attention to it. However, the proposed Senior Citizens Bill may take months to pass. Therefore, some immediate steps will be necessary. A Senior Citizens Council should be formed. It can help in formulating policy proposals, conduct research, and develop comprehensive proposals. Behbood Savings should be restored, and the limit of investment enhanced. A health card be introduced for all. Option be given to apply for a gold card or platinum card at a small premium which should enable the senior to get health care of their choice.

Seniors have a key role as caregivers to the young. To help young parents groom and teach the growing younger population. Make the young aware of good traditions, values, literature, history and much more. These are things that can be learnt at home in a loving surrounding. This imparting of knowledge and experience is voluntarily done by most seniors or grandparents but if formally supported by the society and the government it will reach higher importance.

The examples are created at the top. If the top leadership is corrupt then corruption becomes the order of the day. If the top leadership is sensitive and responsible than the nation follows. The choice is with Imran Khan and his colleagues.

Articles Published in *Hilal Magazine*

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The defenders

When a person joins the armed forces and dons its uniform a commitment is made. The commitment is to defend the country and to serve the nation at all times of need and to be prepared for the supreme sacrifice. In the uniform is the heart of a civilian which has chosen to lay down his/her life, if need be, in protecting the nation and the country. These are special individuals. They have an extremely noble cause. They are not mercenaries. Mercenaries fight and take the risk in consideration for material and personal gains only, but national armed forces have much higher objectives, beyond material gains. Therefore it is a primary responsibility of the nation to support them and meet their requirements to enable them carry out their solemn pledges. No financial expenditure can buy the hearts of a person if he/she is not motivated to serve to the extent of laying down the life and making the supreme sacrifice. As a nation we have the same ideals and same commitments. So the nation, the civilians and the army are no separate identities in essence. The civilians must carry their share of the responsibility as army personnel carry out theirs. It is important that the symbol, *the uniform*, is respected and no one should ever pass a derogatory remark about it. On the other hand the person in the uniform must be always mindful by his/her conduct that the dignity of the symbol is not undermined.

Some individuals politicize the 'uniform' and target it by criticism for the achievement of their vested interests. This is to be condemned. *Difference of opinion can occur with individuals but not with a discipline*. Civilian politicians in particular, need to understand the role of a national army and treat it with the respect it deserves. On the other hand the 'civilians' are not to be looked down upon either. There are individuals with differing outlooks in the civilians. Civilians are not indoctrinated the way the armed personnel are. The difference needs careful understanding and both have to have the tolerance and respect for each other's point of view. Having differences is natural and also essential. These provide learning opportunities from different points of view.

I have had several exposures to work with armed forces. Starting in mid 80s I was the Chief Organizer of the National Horse and Cattle Show in Lahore for almost ten years continuously and I found working with armed forces very satisfactory because I needed discipline and rehearsals to run the show smoothly. It was a 'National' event and it was watched in several parts of the world and therefore it was an important image maker. I was conscious of this significance. As a disciplined and trained director I have full realization of the importance of rehearsals and discipline

in creative work like calisthenics with children. The Armed forces rehearse, and discipline is natural to them. The Armed forces presented bands and the tattoo shows. To me when a movement occurs on the ground in full view of spectators it has to be aesthetic and attractive and therefore falls into the category of 'Calisthenics'. Army personnel also believe in rehearsals and discipline and so we got along well. I had the same experience as a Director of the segments at the opening of the South Asian Games (Sarc Games) in 1989 and in 2004. My creations in these events were something new because no one outside of China or Korea even attempts to create calisthenics. I had done that in National Horse and Cattle Show and I wanted to make new creations for the 'Games'. So several times the process 'invented' by me was completely incomprehensible for the army organizers, but I found out that they had the patience to listen and make an effort to understand. We could have frank discussions, better than in a civilian environment. Here every one applied the mind to the best of his/her ability and tried to achieve the goal. It was refreshing and the dedication of those involved was remarkable and their sincerity in meeting the requirements for the success of a national challenge was commendable.

Armed Forces and the 'soldiers' always rise to the occasion. The natural disaster of Earth Quake is an example and more recently the Armed Forces' response to the challenge of terrorism, again, to the devastation by floods are evidences that our Armed forces are always there as the 'Defenders'. The history of the country is full of the valiant acts of bravery by the army personnel. They have taken 'Jame Shahadat' in saving the lives of all of us. We as civilians must always remember that if we enjoy some moments of peace and freedom then the armed Forces are a major contributor. They defend the nation and provide it with the opportunity to live in peace and make progress, and do not hesitate to give even supreme sacrifices when required. Indeed the nation has gratitude to offer.

Quaid e Azam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah spoke to the 5th Heavy Ack Ack and 6th Light Ack Ack Regiments in Malir on 21st Feb. 1948. What the Quaid e Azam said is as valid now as it was before. Quote:

"In this machine age when the misdirected genius of man forges new engines of destruction every day, you have to keep abreast of the times and keep your knowledge and equipment up to date... not because we have any evil designs against any of our neighbors but because our own security demands that we should not be caught unaware. There is nothing that we desire more than to live in peace and let others live in peace and develop our country according to our rights without outside interference and improve the lot of common man. This is no doubt going to be an uphill task but if we are determined to work earnestly and sincerely and are willing and ready to make sacrifices for the collective good of our nation, we shall soon achieve the aims and the end we have in view."

The advice of the Quaid is valid for the Armed Forces as well as the large civilian population. We all need to work together, hand in hand, with 'nation' and the 'country' in mind above every other consideration to improve the lot of the common man.

Unpublished Articles

THE THEATRE IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan as a political unit is young, but the history of the land, its people and the culture is one of the **oldest so far known to the world**. The archeological discoveries and excavations at Moenjodaro and Harappa prove that the sub-continent can claim to be one of the 'mothers' of civilization. The life span of his "Indus Valley Civilization" has been estimated to run from 2500 to 1500 B.C, at the end of which followed a series of large scale invasions or immigrations by the Aryans. A thousand years later, in the first few centuries of the Christian era, there came in a variety of new racial stock into the country—the Sakes, the Parthians, and the Scythians. Again a thousand years later came another wave that brought the Afghans, Turks, the Mongols and the Mughals. The people of Pakistan have thus a very diverse ethnic origin. In East Pakistan, Mongolian Influence, and on the Makran coast, Negro Influences are also noticeable. It seems that an Ancient-times, the period for which the evidence is most abundant and common to both East and West Pakistan, is the Buddhist period which began some five centuries after Christ and much longer in East Pakistan. After this the most decisive event in the growth of Pakistani Culture was the arrival of the Arab Muslims. The Arabs were followed by the Turks, the Afghans and the Mughals. The cultural background of these conquerors, although Islamic, was not ethnically the same. They came from various regions which had come under the way of Islam. From this circumstance has also followed a variety of ideas that later fused and imparted greater richness to the country's cultural life. One of the most important elements in the synthesis was the deep influence of European ideas and thoughts transmitted to the subcontinent principally through the British role, and right now we are living in the theatre teams also participated. One may mention here that the unsophisticated theatre companies have also been very much on the move during this period, and these theatres generally named after their leading actors or financiers like AlamLohar's theatre, Nazir's theatre, Bhatti's theatre have come into contact with the theatre from the city.

The second important development has been the notice taken by the Government of the problems of the theatre. Not that the Government launched any major project for promotion of the theatre, but this much is certain that the theatre did not any more suffer the complete neglect of the past. One of the major hurdles in the way of development of the theatre was the levy of heavy entertainment tax. Government policy remained very uncertain previously and to quote an example, the west Pakistan Government granted temporary exemption to the Arts Councils of Lahore from the levy of entertainment tax in 1959, but five years later it decided to withdraw that exemption with retrospective effect. Later on, at least the West Pakistan taxation authorities exempted most of the plays without too much fuss.

The award of state honors in the field of the theatre by the President of Pakistan was also another symbolic act of recognition. Also, in this eventful period was appointed a national committee to recommend to the Government a policy and plan for the future development of the arts in the country.

The third important development was the rise of interest in the publication of plays. Most significant was the work of the Bangla Academy, Dacca, which published a series of contemporary Bengali plays. Majlis Tarraqi-e-Adab, Lahore, also published some plays Urdu Translations from Bengali into Urdu and Urdu into Bengali were also undertaken and it seemed that, on this whole, the interest of the publishers was on the increase.

Last, but equally significant was the formation of a small number of small semi-professional theatre groups and an increase in the number of educated young men and women who thought seriously of the theatre. TV combination as a possible profession, and started to live on their income from these sources, partly or wholly.

To summarize, although the theatrical scene in Pakistan shows some influence of the ancient theatre in the villages, there is in fact a greater movement towards reviving the later stage forms. With the coming of Independence and the emergence of a national identity, greatly enhanced by the war of September 1965, there is a great deal of interest among the writers to include in their subject matter the more contemporary events and heroes.

In the cities sophisticated plays, influenced by Contemporary Western staging methods, have dominated the scene. Most of the scripts have been translations but efforts to develop original drama have been so successful so one can predict with a fair degree of confidence that the local theatre will be very soon filled with original plays. Some of these plays may be considered to have treated life superficially but depth of vision comes only after the writers have studied and written for some time and should be expected in a few years-times.

As for the problems of the development of the theatre in the future, the government is beginning to take serious cognizance of these problems and, with the great upsurge of interest during recent years, one can entertain hope of much greater developments in the year to come.

THE SENIOR CITIZEN

A human heritage

(A note from Naeem Tahir)

As a nation, we often talk about the example of Madina, we also talk about 'Haqq ul Ibad', but little action as a state, or as a nation, is taken.

Now is the time that we take action. It is already too late and we are likely to lose this heritage soon. It is late because only a total of less than 80000 people born before 1947 are alive. Most of them may not be in a position to record their experiences. Few of them may have been achievers who must be looked up for guidance. Some of them may be in dire need of help in health and living expenses. A few may be enjoying the fruits of the service they have been in through pensions and other supports.

Before I proceed further let us identify this group as the **Most Senior Citizens. Group1**

The other group is of the seniors who have crossed the retirement age and not yet crossed 80. Let this group be recognized as the **'Senior Citizens'. Group2**

Both the groups are recognized in the civilized world as those who need special actions, laws, and respect.

It is also ensured that these people remain a useful part of the society and contribute without extreme conditions of living.

On the basis of the steps taken around the world, I summarize and urge the Government of Pakistan to show awareness and responsibility that it has socially, morally, and religiously.

Living costs:

The first existing useful facility in Pakistan is provided by **National Savings Organisation**. Now it needs a review and several improvements must be implemented. These are suggested to be the following:

a. The limit of investment in Bahhood Saving Certificates needs enhancement.

Presently it is 50 lacs. There should be no limit. This facility is beneficial for the Government because it brings money for its work from local resources. Several seniors may like to liquidate their real estate assets to avoid collection of rentals and invest in the Behhood scheme. However, in case it must have a limit then it should be at least 15 million each.

b. Reverse Mortgage

At an advanced age most seniors, who own a house, prefer to spend their last years of life in the house they own. However financial constraints may not allow that. To avoid this situation, most of the countries offer a 'Reverse Mortgage' of the house by the banks. In a reverse mortgage the banks make a fair evaluation of the house and buy it. However, the payments are made in monthly installments. This solves the cash flow problem of the senior.

At the completion of the term or earlier demise of the owner, the bank gives the option to the decedents to buy back the house on the mortgage price or let the bank take the house. The banks need instructions and appropriate authorization from Finance Division.

b. Medical Support. Some seniors have entitlement for medical services for them and their families from the organizations they worked for and retired from. Others have no medical support while, at their agespecially, they are in dire need of it.

Therefore, all seniors, particularly the most senior citizens, (Group 1) must be helped as is the law in most developed countries. It is suggested that all government hospitals should tend to the Seniors on priority basis. The fee should not be charged. Other expenses including medicine, hospitalization, and labs on government account. However if the senior wishes special attention from non-government hospitals then he/she should contribute 25% of the cost of such service.

d. Social relevance. This factor is most relevant for the individual's mental health, and for the society. This is beneficial for the society, individual, and the family in many ways. The individual with experience can contribute advise on the basis of his/her experience of service. Person can be engaged as an honorary magistrate or adviser in various departments and thus contribute to society and its managers. As an individual it will give the person a sense of being socially relevant and needed. The society will benefit from the long experience/exposure of the individual and may usefully apply to the current situations. The immediate family members must do maximum for the emotional and physical well-being of these elders. The attention from the immediate family is the most desirable and emotionally fulfilling. Therefore, in Islam the 'Haqqoq ul Ibad' are more important than 'Haqqoq Allah'!

In India if the children neglect the needs of their parents, then they are punishable by law.

E. The Senior Most (Group 1)

They are in need very special treatment. According to the census by the Government of Pakistan, there is a total of 80000 individual survivors in this category. Of these halves are likely to be male and half females. Both carry tremendous importance in the nation's heritage.

Presuming that some of these have reasonable health and memory, they are the ones who know the socio-political circumstances of all generations. Which include the time of the British Government, making of Pakistan, living in complete Pakistan, living in the halved Pakistan after 1970, and so on. All such persons, who may be very few, must be traced. Their personal experiences and observation are invaluable and extremely important parts of our heritage like Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, forts etc. Already several world organizations are seeking such people for recording their memories. Their narratives help understand history in the perspective of the realities of those times. The partition experience being one major subject.

If these people are not looked after, and recorded, then there will be no one left to tell the story.

F. Establishment of Old Age Homes: Those who are destitute, homeless or unable to maintain a household, such persons should be helped by providing Old Age Homes in every district, where they can appropriately look after. This responsibility can be carried out by the Social Welfare Department and Social Welfare Organizations.

There are other several courtesies that also need to be extended to the elderly. Like special counters in the banks, Airlines, etc. These should be ensured in any case.

As convener of the Senior Citizens Association, linked with the United Nations, I urge the Government of Pakistan to fulfill its social and moral duty and implement these recommendations.

March 7, 1982

THEATRE IN PAKISTAN.....

Naeem Tahir Interviewed by

Salim Bokhari In THE MUSLIM.

THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR-2

STAGE AND Television actor, director and producer Naeem Tahir was in Rawalpindi recently to stage his play "AapkiTareef" at the Liaquat memorial Hall. He took time to have a sitting with his correspondent. In a wide-ranging interview Naeem Tahir reviewed the state of theatre.

SALIM BOKHARI: How do you review the early years of drama in Pakistan?

NAEEM TAHIR: If you look back at the middle 1940's you will find that sub-continent was passing through a very critical period. Those were stormy years. The Muslim League and Congress struggle was coming to a head. The second World War had just ended the traumatic experience. Culture Tradition that had existed before the war was damaged beyond repair. How could the stage unaffected? The War killed theatre of AGHA HASHR's time. Partition created a new situation. In India nothing much was charged. It was still a unit. So obviously people connected with the theatre there were not confronted with the situation we faced here. Peoples from all parts of India were migrating to Pakistan. They had their own values and traditions. Problem Number ONE was that those who was migrating from should have first re-habituated before we could think culture development.

The Country was not politically and economically stable. Thus the theatre could not develop the way it should have had, people who had anything to do with the drama were scattered all over. They started working in small groups at different places. I would like to mention here that that these people in spite of great hardships continued their struggle to re-introduce drama and had contributed a lot towards this end.

SALIM BOKHARI: Would you name those people who were in the forefront of this struggle and also when was the first play staged after partition?

NAEEM TAHIR: Its really difficult to say what was the name of the first play staged in Pakistan. But I would think that the first play after 1947 was staged at the Government College, Lahore, in 1950-51. It was based on translation of Shakespear's "MID SUMMER NIGHT's DREAM". Master Azia Played the lead.

There is a possibility that a few English plays might have been staged at Government College, Lahore, but I am sure this was the first ever Urdu play in Pakistan. Then in 1953, another play, "Government Inspector" was staged at Government College. I and Khalid Saeed Butt played the leading roles. This again was an Adaption.

SALIM BOKHARI: You mean the Untill 1953, plays were only staged at Government College, Lahore.

NAEEM TAHIR: No, at around the same time Khawaja Mohiuddin started work in Karachi. If I am not wrong Baba-i-Urdi Molvi Abdul Haq encouraged him to stage his first play and "Zawali-i-Hyderabad" was perhaps the first Urdu play staged in Karachi.

I must say that all these efforts were made on individual level. Anyway in the 1950s the theatre received greater attention and several educational institutions got into the act. The University of Peshawar played the most significant role in these years. Again, German Lady "Sigrid Kahle", also joined the struggle during this period and formed the Clifton Players Club. Kahle played the major role in development of stage in Pakistan. Khawaja Mohiuddin later also joined this club. The Clifton players Staged several plays.

SALIM BOKHARI: When was the first cultural organization formed?

NAEEM TAHIR: The first ever cultural organization was the Pakistan Arts Council, Alhamra, Lahore. It was formed in late 1948. Its formal inauguration was performed by Governor General Khawaja Nazimuddin on Dec 10, 1949. The formation of this body was a landmark in our cultural history. Its office-bearers included Justice S.A Rehman, Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Abdul Rehman Chughtai, B.A Hashmi, S.S Jafri, Zarful Ahsan Lari, Agha Bashir and Dr. Tassaduq Hussain Khalid was on the council's executive. The Arts Council was inaugurated on the eve of painting exhibition by Chughtai.

SALIM BOKHARI: In 1955, who were the most prominent stage personalities?

NAEEM TAHIR: Well, we had Mohsin Sherazi, Farid Ahmad, Aslam Azhar, Fazal Kamal, Zia Mohiuddin among others.

SALIM BOKHARI: What did you do during this period?

NAEEM TAHIR: I am coming to that. In 1955, I wrote a script and also directed it. In 1956, I staged a play "BAKHEEL" at the Government College, I also directed it. It was successful. The same year, I did an experimental play "MUJRIM KAUN" it was a really difficult task. I was also the director. The theme was socio-political criticism. For me it was a challenge as an actor in the first. In the first place while it was my test as director in second.

In two-and-a-half hours there was no just a comic relief. I must also tell you that a day before the first show, the country was placed under Martial Law by Sikander Mirza. My friends suggested that I should not stage this play since it would be dangerous to do so under Martial Law. But it was too late. I mustered courage and went ahead. The play was successful in the sense that it was shown for 14 nights at a stretch. My work, particularly as a director, was highly appreciated. It was the first play to recover production cost by sales of tickets. Moreover, all the participants paid Rs. 100 each. I can also claim that it was first play which laid the foundation of professionalism in theatre. Nevertheless our priority was not to make money out of it but to promote theatre in the way or the other. I forgot to tell you that "MUJRIM KAUN" was translated by Izhar Kazmi for Art Council.

Now as I recall there were two prominent teams in the field one each in Lahore and Karachi. In Lahore the art council team as led by me and in Karachi by Khawaja Mohiuddin.

SALIM BOKHARI: So you mean there were two groups then?

NAEEM TAHIR: Not at all. There was no question of grouping at that time. People were not working for their personal gain. They just had one consideration that theatre should develop as national institution. We used to go anywhere a play was being staged and used to do our best to make it a success.

I left college in 1958 and as jobless. About the same time, Faiz Ahmad Faiz was elected as secretary general of the Pakistan Art Council. I had nothing else on my mind but the stage with the blessings from Faiz, I managed to stage three plays "ADAAB ARZ" in 1958. "SOE KAHAN" in 1959 and "AP KI TAREEF" in 1960.

SALIM BOKHARI: I may ask you a question out of a sequence? In what capacity were you working with Arts Council?

NAEEM TAHIR: I was the man in charge of the drama section in 1956. Therefore I had been trying to stage a play every three months. That is why plays were being staged in Lahore at regular intervals. This tempo could not be maintained anywhere else in the country. I must mention that Karachi was quite fertile for the purpose but nothing much could be done there.

SALIM BOKHARI: You left Pakistan for the United States in 1962 I believe and.....

NAEEM TAHIR: Yes, that's true I am the first Asian to whom a fellowship was offered in University of California by the Rockefeller Scholarship Association in advanced theatre art. I obtained my theatre degree from university with distinction. As a matter of fact, I completed two-year course in much less time.

SALIM BOKHARI: Would you like to tell me about that institution?

NAEEM TAHIR: I would love to. The institution had the most modern equipment. For Example, every two students were provided with the video cassette recorder. On other hand in our country there was only one VCR at a Television station until 1971. After the course was over, the university staged the inaugural show of the play "Girl of the Golden West". I was asked to take a part and

I played a role of Red Indian which was liked. Then I directed a play "You can't take it with you". It was a story of Russian ballet dancer. Later I played important role in "OTHELLO". I can say without hesitation that being in the University of California was a wonderful experience. Californians are loveable people. I tell you last year, I visited California again after 18 years. I went to my department. When the people there came to know that I was old student. They informed their Dean, Dr. Melnitz. He rang me up from his residence and invited me to Lunch. He was very excited to see me there and said: "you are among our founders". Dr. Melnitz was author of very famous book "Golden age of theatre".

In California during my stay, I had found complete freedom of expression. The intellectuals there discuss every problem in complete freedom. That is the reason why an artist is respected highly in the society while in our country it is the other way round. Here we treat our artists as second-rate citizens.

SALIM BOKHARI: What were your plans after completing course at California?

NAEEM TAHIR: I was confused. I had an offer from the ST. PAUL theatre. They wanted me to direct their plays for which they offered me 900 dollars a month. On the other hand I thought I should go back to my country. Meanwhile Faiz Ahmad Faiz was awarded Lenin Peace Award. He was not in good health at that time so he decided to quit as secretary general of Arts Council. Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj had already joined the Urdu Board as Director. So the old guard was leaving the council. It was then decided that the young trained person should be given charge of the council. It was only then that the Board decided to call me back. So, I returned to Pakistan in 1963. I took the charge from acting secretary Hamid Jalal. This was the beginning of the new era when the real foundations of theatre were laid.

SALIM BOKHARI: How?

NAEEM TAHIR: The first thing I did was to work out a clear cut policy for the development of theatre. For over three years until 1963. I had neither acted in nor directed any play. I kept myself busy finding and training fresh talent. A six months course was started. The results can be seen even today. People like Anwar Sajjad, Kamal Ahmad Rizvi, Hamid and Shaoib Hashmi were discovered. Moreover, we concentrated on discovering new creative writers and actors. The whole idea behind it was to enhance the creative standards, To achieve the goals. We opened a school at Arts Council where a large number of people were trained. The Council hall was very small and as such we could only stage experimental plays. From 1963 to 1970, these plays had an important impact on development of theatre.

SALIM BOKHARI: Were stage being staged on in Lahore and Karachi?

NAEEM TAHIR: No that's not true. The bureau of National Reconstruction staged few plays in the Open Air Theatre, Lahore. Two Urdu Plays "AUR SHABNAM ROTI RAHI" and "ASIA KHAN" and a Punjabi play "PAG" are worth mentioning. At about the same time, the Agha Babur Group in Rawalpindi staged their famous play "BABRA SAHIB". In Faisalabad Naseeruddin staged a few plays at the cotton mills. Theatre got some impetus when local administration in major cities started sponsoring plays. It helped us to form a repertoire in Lahore and I believe this was the real beginning of professionalism. We selected four plays and formed a

repertoire. It included Nazir Zaigham's "HANS KI CHAL" and my own "AP KI TAREEF" and "KANJOOS".

My policy as the Art Council's Chief was to provide a guarantee to all drama groups that their production would not suffer financial loss. Losses if any were made good. It encouraged artists and I am sure it helped the theatre a great deal. Mostly since artists were amateurs they were serving in walk of life or the other. Therefore, they were unavailable for rehearsals only in the evening. As I told you, administration of major cities had started sponsoring plays. Most active among them were Sialkot, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Faisalabad, Multan, Sahiwal, Rahim Yar Khan, Hyderabad and Jacobabad. Now artists were paid. Since most artists were not doing well paid jobs. They decided to resign and depend on their theatre fees. They included Qavi Masood Akhtar, Nazir Begum, Ali Ijaz, Atiya Sharf, Ather Shah Khan and Kemal Ahmad Rizvi.

SALIM BOKHARI: In which particular direction was work done during this phase?

NAEEM TAHIR: We had shortage of creative writers. As I told you earlier, except for Khawaja Mohiuddin who was doing original work, all other plays that staged were translations of, or adaptions from English plays. So, a hectic search was launched. To begin with I must say that on my request, BANO QUDSIA wrote her first script "IK TERE ANAY SAY". She was paid 2,000 for it. It was not bad payment for those days. BANO QUDSIA wrote five plays including "ADHI BAAT", "MANZIL MANZIL", "KHABOON KAY MUSAFIR", "SITAMGAR TERE LIYE". They intizar Hussain came in with "DARD KI DAWA KIYA HAY". After this a lot of people started writing. Prominent among them were Rashid Umer Thanvi, Attiqullah Sheikh, Anwar Sajjad, Asghar Butt, Soofi Nisar, Begum Imtiaz Ali Taj, Salim Chishti and Sajjad Haider.

AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE IDIOT BOX

- The Following is the remainder of the interview this correspondent had with **Naem Tahir**, noted playwrights, director and actor on theatre yesterday, today and tomorrow. We pick up the thread and **MR. NAEEM TAHIR** discusses the impact television had on stage.

SALIM BOKHARI: About the same time you came under fire from many quarters.

NAEEM TAHIR: Yes, That's true. The reason is very simple. I believed in a progressive approach towards theatre. All obscurantists' elements were against me. I did not bother about criticism and went ahead. Let me tell you a very interesting thing here because of my involvement with the theatre. It was always at night when I returned. My wife was also critical of me. Her views were carried by Daily Mashriq in an interview by Mussarat Jabeen. Anyway, I don't mind my critics.

TELEVISION

SALIM BOKHARI: To my mind, 1964 was the beginning of the new era in history of drama in Pakistan. What do you say? And would you like to say something about early days of Pakistan?

NAEEM TAHIR: About Television, Altaf Gauhar signed an agreement with the NEC for broadcasting programs on an experimental basis for three months. NEC contracted Aslam Azhar

who had some television experience. Finally, a four member TV team was formed including Aslam Azhar, Fazal Kamal, Late Zakia Durrani and Agha Nasir. This quarter visited Lahore where I hold an introductory in my residence. Later, an office was provided to the four at Arts Council.

SALIM BOKHARI: Do you think drama was benefited with the introduction of television?

NAEEM TAHIR: In my opinion stage should benefit after the induction of Television, But there it is the other way around. As you know, Television is an expensive medium. It had to bank on theatre for having trained talents. I expressed my views in a seminar in Arts Council some time ago. It does not mean that stage did not benefit from Television at all. As a matter of fact drama reached every home through television. It enhanced popular interest in drama. On the other hand more and more artists came to the force.

SALIM BOKHARI: By the way, what were you doing at that time?

NAEEM TAHIR: I was not performing but involved in the one way or the other. In 1965, we had this war with India. After it was over, I came across a new situation altogether. I can say it was a creative phase in my life. I started writing scripts for radio "MAULVI JI" and "KHEM KARAN" was to famous plays broadcast by Lahore station of Radio Pakistan. In January, 1966, I left for London for three months training. When I came back, I worked for improvising Pakistan's cultural relation with other countries. At long last, I was asked by the secretary education to form a national troupe which could be sent to other countries. I started looking for a talent all over the country in September 1964, including East Pakistan and formed a troupe of 50. Both the provinces were given equal representation. My idea was that troupe will represent folk and thematic dances.

SALIM BOKHARI: What do you mean thematic dances?

NAEEM TAHIR: It means that the dance will base on the major product of the particular area.

SALIM BOKHARI: Were the artists provided proper training?

NAEEM TAHIR: Yes, off course I asked all the artists to reach Lahore for training. When they arrived, a camp was organized. Why was I so keen to train them before they sent to abroad? On previous occasions private troupes had been visiting foreign countries but they earned a bad name of themselves and a country by putting up substandard shows. There were brawls among members of these troupes and they misbehaved with the organizers. I think mine was the first major effort to collect talented artists from different parts of the country and to train them before sending them to abroad.

SALIM BOKHARI: Who were the prominent members of the Troupes?

NAEEM TAHIR: The troupes included Saira Jahan, Rafi Anwar and many others.

SALIM BOKHARI: When did the troupe make its foreign debut?

NAEEM TAHIR: Immediately, after President Ayub Khan's China Visit in 1965, the troupe visited that country. I was the director. We performed successfully for over five weeks in China. After this I was asked to take the troupe to Indonesia on the eve of Bandung Conference. I was

appointed the leader and director of troupe. For certain reason I was not lead the troupe and troupe was led by Younis Saeed. The number of artists was reduced. Anyway I sent a proposal to the Government that these artists should be retained. Otherwise, the whole exercise would become futile. It was about the same time when Pakistan International Airline Academy was formed. I think it was in 1966. I must say that PIA played vital to promote Talents. But let me claim the credit that the PIA got the same people who were trained by me before the Visit of China.

ACADEMY

SALIM BOKHARI: What role did the academy played in promoting culture?

NAEEM TAHIR: As I said earlier, Academy played very vital role. The troupe flourished under the academy. But the difficulty was that it was not available at the National level. PIA is a commercial concern. It has its own requirements and they were more commercial than others.

In 1970, President Yahya Khan signed an agreement with Iran to send a troupe on the eve of 2500th anniversary of Monarchy in that country. I had been in television since 1968 and was posted at Rawalpindi. My Father-In-Law was murdered in Lahore. So, I requested TV authorities to post me to Lahore. The request was still pending when I was told that Foreign Office was facing a problem organizing a troupe which could be sent to Iran. When Foreign Office came to know that I am available. They Assigned the job through the Arts Council.

SALIM BOKHARI: Did you organize a new troupe?

NAEEM TAHIR: As I told you the previous one was with PIA. So, I had to raise new troupe with name of "DANCES OF THE PEOPLE OF PAKISTAN". The troupe could not go to Iran because of political developments in Pakistan. But it remained intact until 1973 as long as I was the Chief of Pakistan Arts Council.

Coming back to drama again. From 1966 to 1968 several plays were staged. It did help to develop the sort of interest between the people who was involved in theatre work. For Example, I went to Karachi to stage my play "AP KI TAREEF". I tried to contact Karachi Arts Council but despite repeated requests nobody turned up to guide me. The date of play was announced, a day before we were not able to complete our set.

Thanks to Khawaja Mohiuddin who, when he came to know that we were in Karachi, searched for us and reached the venue of the play with his team. He asked me if he could do anything for us. We told him he could indeed and it was due to Khawaja Sahib's hectic efforts we could stage the play. In 1962, when I was about to leave for America. I requested Khawaja Sahib to write a script for a play "JOHNSON HIGGS MEIN". He agreed. It was a play in the context of Hashir the camel driver's visit to America on Johnson's invitation. But the script could never be completed. From 1966 to 1968 all of Khawaja Sahib's plays were staged in Lahore.

ARTS COUNCIL

SALIM BOKHARI: You were in Television in 1968. How could you find time for Arts Council affairs?

NAEEM TAHIR: Yes, I was in Television in 1968. At that time I had nothing to do with the Arts council. It was only in 1960. It was only in 1970, that I returned to the Arts council. In 1968, Television was in its prime. Artists were getting enough assignments. The reason why artists started leaving Arts Council was they were not getting support from Arts Council. Television offered them double attraction; more money and star value. Although the theatre suffers a great deal on its accounts, the cause of drama benefited. The reason is simple; even if they had said Goodbye to the stage they were still performing artists.

SALIM BOKHARI: What was Arts Council doing all this while?

NAEEM TAHIR: It was in the midst of the deep crisis. No serious efforts were made by it to attract artists to the stage. This led to the takeover of the Arts Council by the Government in 1972. After the takeover I decided to quit the Council.

SALIM BOKHARI: Did the takeover do any good to the theatre?

NAEEM TAHIR: To my mind, Arts Council was concentrating on the construction of the new hall rather than other. But construction work was suspended in 1977 because government was not sincere in completing the project. Then from 1972 to 1979 council failed to do any good to the cause of drama. On the other hand few people were still putting in individual efforts. Prominent among them were Jamil Bismil and Nazir Zaigham. Some credit goes to the National Council of Arts which supported the theatre. Few people were sent abroad for training and the National theatre Group of Rawalpindi was formed.

SALIM BOKHARI: Khalid Saeed is an important figure in Drama art. What do you think his role during this period?

NAEEM TAHIR: Khalid Saeed Butt's role in the drama has always been positive. Under his leadership the National Arts Council of Pakistan and Punjab Arts Council Contributed a lot to promote the cause of Drama.

SHIFT

SALIM BOKHARI: I believe about the same time you left not only the Arts Council but also your acting career?

NAEEM TAHIR: Yes, you're right I left the industry after getting highly disappointed with the Council's affairs. I concentrated on my private business. I remained away from the theatre for over seven years. This again was the phase, when the theatre was facing an organizational crisis although the theatre at the time was the product of socio-political realities as they existed in 1979. Under the regime public participation in all cultural fields increased. Television played a very important role in this regard. The obvious result was that audiences began demanding from the

theatre themes that had immediate relevance to the life. Unfortunately the theatre could not face this challenge.

SALIM BOKHARI: Are you satisfied with the present role of theatre?

NAEEM TAHIR: No, not at all, as I have said, theatre now means entertainment. *I don't believe in it. To my mind theatre has its social commitment. I should analyze the realities of life; it should present facts but I am convinced it is not doing.*

SALIM BOKHARI: How do you review the governments patronage of the theatre?

NAEEM TAHIR: It's a very sensitive issue. But I will not mind telling you that the financial patronage is almost nil. If any producer thinks of staging a play, his problem is how he will recover his expenditures. He will have to think of the Box Office. He will never select any serious topic. He will instead provide cheap comedy. If the present trend continues, the theatre's late will not be different that of the film industry. For Example, even today its very difficult to find a sponsor for a stage play.

SALIM BOKHARI: What precisely you think are the problems that theatre is faced with today?

NAEEM TAHIR: This again is a very difficult question. Anyway, to my mind theatre is facing four major problems: Creative, Social, Economic and Organizational. On the creative level, the first thing is script. We need at least 52 scripts annually but having 52 scripts which are creative and commercially attractive that's need a lot of effort. Another problem is that we don't have skilled direction. Minimum investment has been made in this field. That is why not a single director has been awarded the pride of performance award. While several artists have got it. The reason is very simple. The director is given no importance. So, naturally he gets disappointed. It is time we recognized the director's importance because he is the man behind the show.

Theatre has very limited resources. It had suffered from scarcity of halls for quite a long time. More halls should be constructed. I am sure the present government will do something in this problem.

SOCIAL FRONT

On the social front also the theatre is facing secure crisis. We have a major problem of prejudice. The general public does not have a good opinion about people associated with the theatre. All citizens are equal. Why, then, should we be treated as a second-rate citizen merely because we belong to theatre. The theatre should be self-sufficient and it should not depend directly on sponsors or organizations. Private initiative should be encouraged. People who want to stage experimental plays should be ensured full support. Now I give you a concrete example: These days, it cost you from a hundred thousand to hundred and 20 thousand rupees to stage a play. Most of this amount is spent on three major heads; publicity, rent of the hall and payment of artists. Now if the drama is totally a commercial proposition, ticket sale goes up to Rs. 100,000 while normally it is never more than rupees 80,000. The producer is saved only if somebody sponsors the publicity complain. Otherwise it means a loss of twenty thousand. If a play falls at the box office, only the

producer, director and writer suffer the loss because you know the hall and artists have been paid in advance. Interesting, do you think?

SALIM BOKHARI: How many bodies are concerned with the performing act are operating?

NAEEM TAHIR: I think they are four. I count Television as a body. There are Pakistan National Council of the Arts, the Punjab Arts Council and the Lahore Arts Council. I think that some coordination's are required among these bodies for the development of live theatre. There are six major centers where theatre is functioning Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Multan and Hyderabad. Peshawar and Quetta can also be included in this list.

SALIM BOKHARI: Do you think our cultural organizations have some say in quarters that matter? You know I

NAEEM TAHIR: I get your point. To any knowledge these four organizations have very little say in deciding the priorities in the national scheme of things. They should be backed more strongly, financially and have funds at their disposal for maintenance and production.

SALIM BOKHARI: My last question what can the press do to promote theatre?

NAEEM TAHIR: Well, Newspaper has been quite co-operative throughout. I have a suggestion. Through Newspapers should adopt a uniform publicity policy for the theatre. Since we get our publicity sponsored. We should be allowed special low rates. In fact, drama publicity rates should be lower than those who charged from the film industry.

(CONCLUDED)

June 24, 1996

THEATRE ARTS – 50 YEARS

Naeem Tahir

A narration of personal experiences and observations of the last 50 years.

The Backdrop

The usual question 'where to begin?' has been answered.

So, we begin from the 'cut off', 50 Years ago, 1947, August 14, midnight!

Politically and geographically the division of India was possible. Let us say, **it was made possible** because it became inevitable. Lines of partition were drawn; the sub-continent was **divided** and Pakistan came into being.

How does one divided culture? Or it's manifestations-the Arts? This is a question which wise men have tried to answer. But have they found an answer? Culture is the sum total of the effect of centuries on the people living in land. They absorb civilizations, political turmoil, geographical and climatic conditions, myths, the fairy tales they heard from mothers and grandmothers, legends, day to day exigencies and millions of other small and big things. All of these melt and simmer in the crucible of time and then, a 'way of living' - and expression, emerges. Then it finds its way in Art Forms and Language. How does one divide this heritage? This is something that I must leave to the people who feel they are wiser than me.

I will remain within what I have seen, experienced or understood.

We, my parents and my brother and sister, moved from a small Lahore suburb to the main city where most of our relatives lived. This was done because there were several non-muslim villages around the area, we lived in. The 'fear' of being attacked was too much to cope with. We were not the only one whom fear was the dominant feeling. A great lot of people felt that way because of the wide spread brutalities after the announcement of 'partition of India'. Lord Mountbatten. The British soldier boarded the ship in Bombay. There was no need to look back at the bloody mess left behind.

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The settlement procedure was laid down. A settlement culture started. It was the top priority. It must have done some good but the manipulation of it did a lot of damage to the moral fibre of a people who wanted to become a nation.

Those were such unsettled times that 'theatre' could not have taken any priority. There was too much drama, tragedy, and suspense, happening in the daily life 'Subah kerna sham ka' (and vice versa). 'thaan joo-e-sheer ka' Those were the days of an intense struggle for survival by the individuals. The Government was trying to handle problems in many sectors; economy, politics, internal security, settlement, food, administration, defense etc. Everything needed to be done for a new country and a new nation. Resources were scarce. There were not even common pins available for files. Clerks had to do with the thorns of Keekar! Culture was something for a later date. The 'stage' was not yet set for the theatre.

IN THE WINGS.

The sounds in the background were somber, but from within the turmoil the spirit of a new people was to emerge.

During the migration, a lot of theatre people exchanged abode. The touring theatre companies that found Karachi port as a place of business were not to visit from Bombay or Calcutta any more. But they left behinds 'locals' who had learnt the craft and a public which enjoyed theatre. I am told that some of the small-time actors even continued to meet and remember the good old days in a run down, shanty tea joint. They dreamt of the future. "Such is the stuff that the actors are made of". But the 'management' to get their 'act' together was not there yet. It was in early 50s that the threads began to be picked up in Karachi. The wonderful German lady Miss Sigrid Kahle's contribution to organize drama presentations in Karachi must be remembered as significant in the early history. It was amateur drama in English, but it re-kindled the desire to see more among the people who mattered.

Also in the wings was the great playwright, Khawaja Mohiuddin, who had migrated from Hyderabad Deccan. He settled with some piece of agricultural land and looked for an opportunity to stage plays.

In Lahore distinguished persons like Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, Abdul Rehman Chughtai, Mian Mumtaz Muhammad Khan Daultana, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Justice S.A. Rehman and their contemporaries formally founded the Pakistan Arts Council, Lahore as early as 1948. The building it acquired was nostalgically named 'Alhamra'. The name is even carried by the newly built art centre in that area. The Pakistan Arts Council 'Alhamra' was formally inaugurated by then Governor General Khawaja Nizamuddin on December 10, 1949. The inaugural program was a collection of paintings by the living legend, Abdul Rehman Chughtai. The well-known theatre company of the dedicated Anglo-Indian Family of Kendals, named as "Shakespeareana", continued to visit and performed in the make shift hall of Alhamra. It may appear to be a little off the subject but I am very tempted to describe the 'Alhamra' of those days. So please allow me.

"Alhamra" was a building owned by a well to do Hindustaniocrat who decided to migrate to India. Even before partition he ran a school of dance in this era. It was located in 14 acres of land bound by Kashmir Road/Governor House on one side, The Mall on the front and the Nedous Hotel on

the third side. At the back there were other residences. The Governor's House was known as "Saahib ka Ghar". The Mall as "Thandi Sarak", Nedous is not there anymore and it has been replaced by Avari Renaissance Hotel plus a wide road. The building in itself had the look of the 'Raj' time's architecture of the affluent. Big porch, Veranda, columns, a corridor which ran from the porch to the interior and the stairs leading to the upper story. There were, supposedly, rooms on the left of the corridor and, the formal area -the dining and the drawing room or hall, on the right. The condition was dilapidated, almost crumbling. Rooms were dark and a favorite abode for the bats! Toilets were unspeakable. However, the exterior had a wonderful set of old tall pines trees that I can never forget. There were no boundary wall so roaming cattle could craze unhindered! Some artists and lot of cattle lived in peace. My description relates to some years after the 'Inauguration', while the organization was still in a struggling situation. To be fair, it was a good deed done that they had a center allotted for arts, but for quite some time they had almost no resources to maintain it. So let me leave the Alhamra picture of that time for now and return the overall situation of first few years after the independence.

In Lahore the pre-partition theatre Centres like the Bradley Hall and the camping grounds near Bhaati gate were no more functioning as the centres of the theatrical activity. The lovers of Agha Hashar's theatre was also inactive. Lahore was to develop other centres of activity in years to come.

Lyallpur, now Faisalabad, had also a theatrical tradition. There were theatres attached to couple of industrial concerns that were fairly regular and advanced in presentations in the pre-partition days, but the post-independence situation bought a temporary pause.

Other provinces, NWFP and Baluchistan must have had some links to the theatre of the past but I am not fully aware of those. I know there were quite a few intellectuals and a writer who were making efforts in Peshawar. It is more relevant to see what happened when things started to happen.

THE CURTAIN RISES

SCENE-1

The earliest drama performances I know of, were in Karachi and Lahore. In Karachi it was the "K.A.T.S" Karachi Arts Theatre Society, and in Lahore the Government College Dramatic Club. Most of the plays were in English, until Khwaja Moinuddin came up with his Urdu originals. Encouraged by Baba-e-Urdu Maulvi Abdul Haq, Khwaja Moinuddin dealt with the subjects which were socially relevant. He built up a team of most dedicated performers and technicians. His team performed in Karachi and other cities of Sindh. The movement had the support of civil administration. The Deputy Commissioners in various districts helped in making arrangements and in collecting funds to meet the expenditure. The actors and technicians participated more in the spirit of building a movement and communicating the message. Personal gains had almost no priority. The plays like Zaval-e-Hyderabad, Lal Qilay Say Laloo Khet, Wadee -a- Kashmir and Taleem - e Balighan had pertinent political and social comments, and were sincerely appreciated by the public. In Karachi, Katrak Hall, and later, Theosophical Hall were to be the main centres.

The period between 1950-60 established Khwaja Moinuddin as the major original playwright of the country. This period also saw a large number of educated and influential young performers to commit themselves to theatre and performing arts. Aslam Azhar, Zia Mohyuddin, Farid Ahmed, Mohsin Sheerazi, Sigrid Kahle, and many others came via the English plays. There was of course the 'Urdu' team of Khawaja Moinuddin with Mehmood Ali, Abdul Majid, Qazi Wajid, S.M. Salim, Subhani Bayounas Munawar Saeed, and others. There must have been many more particularly those who were participating in the Gujrati plays. A strong movement was developing. No doubt it was lead in importance and significance by Khawaja Moinuddin, and his colleagues, as far as the theatre in Urdu was concerned. In early 50's the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi also came into being and started to extend a helping hand to some theatre enthusiasts.

The Lahore scene was a bit different. There were several known names from pre-independence times living here. Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj and Rafi Peer were the two everyone looked up to. Although the "Pakistan Arts Council" had been founded but it was not to play a significant role until the mid 'fifties'. It was again the Government College which activated the movement and picked up the threads from the past. Lahore had always been known as the city of colleges and universities. If a movement developed in the educational institutions, it spread everywhere. I am convinced that the most important sector of the theatre movement which made Lahore the premier centre of theatre in country, dates back to early 50's and continued till 65. It is important that the reader is made aware of the Lahore scene of that period in some details.

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In the Lahore scene of that time, there were four "sets": the Government College Lahore, The Coffee House, The Tea House, Radio Pakistan and Alhamra. Major actions originated from these areas, but there were other areas also becoming activated like the Islamia College, King Edwards Medical College, Dyal Singh College, The Kinnaird College, Lahore College for Women, YMCA and the Open Air Theatre, Bagh-e-Jinnah.

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I narrate my personal impression of the ingredients of the theatre movement, its chemistry, conflicts and consensus.

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I joined the Government College in 1951 as a science student, but with a growing interest in theatre. A childhood of rural exposure and the science subjects were unhelpful in mixing up with Urban Crowd. The Dramatic Club that was the most attractive, remained a mystery until I became a B.Sc. student in 1953.

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The Dramatic club was the domain of the "ENGLISHWALAS." The Urduwalas were down cast. On the other hand, most of the ENGLISHWALAS were the "in" crowd, the favored ones and the made the best use of theatre as a fashion and means for social prominence.

The first success of the Urduwalas came under version of Shakespeare's *Mid-Summer Night's Dream* (*Sawan Ran ka Sapna*), by Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum. It was staged in the Government College Open Air Theatre in 1952. It was suspected that the opportunity came to the Urduwalas only because the Englishwalas found it a little uncomfortable to stage a play in open air in the hot summer of Lahore. The Englishwalas kept their claim on the main hall, at the prime time of the year, and were always provide the maximum budgetary and moral Support of the college administration.

Weren't we jealous! The enthusiastic response from the college crowds to *Sawan Ran ki Sapna*, made the Urduwalas feel better. The performance by Safdar Mir and Master Feroz were memorable.

No Urdu plays was staged the next year but the college authorities felt it difficult to ignore the Urdu drama for too long. Prof. Safdar Mir was designated to stage the next annual Urdu play in 1954. Nikolai Gogol's 'Government Inspector' was chosen for the 1954 summer at the Government College Lahore. This was staged in 1954, and brought together a group of young enthusiastic students who were to dedicate their lifetime in performing Arts. It was also my first Stage appearance.

The hard core of the 'Urduwalas', were, Fazal Kamal, Sikander Iqbal, Khalid Saeed butt, Soofi Waqar Ahmed, Zafar Samdani, Arshad Durrani and myself, to name a few.

There was support from some college professors, particularly Safdar Mir and Soofi Ghulam Tabassum. From the Englishwalas, we had partial support from Sakhi Sarwar Sultan who was Secretary G.C.D.C, Farid Ahmad, Zaheer Rashid Mian and Professor GM Asar. We reached this stage as a result of very intense movement within the college. Much heat was generated but Urduwalas were not prepared to let go the breakthrough achieve earlier with **SAWAN RAN KA SAPNA**.

The *Sawan Ran ka sapna* was probably the first full length stage play staged in Lahore in Urdu Language after the Independence. The tradition was strengthened by the Government Inspector. The tradition of Urdu Drama established in the Government College by S.A Bokhari (Patras), Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, Soofi Tabassum and their contemporaries as becoming alive.

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Safdar Mir chose to stage a long one act to play the next year. Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj's 'Isfahan kay tukband' was costume comedy and had delightful character to play. I was promoted from a bit role in Government Inspector to the lead in 'Isfahan.....'. The shows were well received. The Urdu plays in GCDC had come to play. There was no going back.

Later, in those summer holidays there were heavy assignments for me from Safdar Mir. I was to translate Chekov's 'Seagull,' and Strindberg's 'after the fire'. I was also to read Tolstoy. Obviously, the price was paid by my science subjects.

Vibrations of the G.C.D.C went around. A mini revival of Agha Hashar's plays were started by Mr Ishrat Rehmani. He Chose the Y.M.C.A. hall. Generally staged with minimum paraphernalia, but the response was good. Citizens of Lahore were going along with the theatre movement.

Raja Farooq Ali Khan of Radio Pakistan, Staged "Kiya karey Ga Qazi" with Muhammad Hussain, Beghum parveen and myself. This was my first exposures to an ensemble that could be called to have been drawn from professionals related with old theatre and radio.

King Edward Medical College revived the tradition of an annual play. Dr Anwar Sajjad was actively involved.

Even Islamia College joined the band wagon. Soofi Nisar Ahmad was the moving Force.

The Arts Council saw Ali Ahmad presenting several plays mostly related with the progressive movement and the 'Avant Garde' theatre. His team had a number of dedicated people with him. Mention must be made of Nazir Zaighum and Mohsin Rizvi.

The theatre activity in Lahore was gaining ground.

Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj re-organised the Arts Council into various sections, namely Arts, Drama, Music and Literature, and appointed an "In Charge" for each section. Mrs Hassan Habib was In Charge of Arts, Mr Hayat Ahmad Khan had the charge of Music, and I as In Charge of drama.

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All work everywhere was still honorary, at no charge. Only the costs of material as well as cloth, nails, and some makeup were met, rest was all contribution to the 'movement' by the participants. 'Total Professions' was a dream still far away.

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In 1956, I was asked to direct the G.C.D.C annual play. Molier's 'Miser' was chosen. Principal of the college, Prof. Sirajuddin laid down the condition that the translation must be checked by Mr Imtiaz Ali Taj. We could not lose this opportunity. Zafar Samdani translated and adapted the whole play within 7 days! (at the fabulous "bribe" of 10 packs of cigarettes! He was locked up in Bedroom and food was passed through a window!!).

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Next step was to get it approved by Taj Sahib. The script was delivered him and four of us, Khalid Saeed Butt, Sikender, Fazal and me, were to wait every day, in turns, at Taj Sahib's residence and rushed the script to Prof. Siraj as soon as he had corrected it. Taj sahib was a great support. He handed over to us a much improved script. Almost new in parts.

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Molier's Miser was staged in Urdu as 'Bakheel'. It met with unprecedented success. It was extended beyond its normal run and even Laat Sahib, Mr Gurmani graced one of the evenings in his own desire.

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Urduwalias were "baptized", and become acceptable henceforth. This was my last play as a student of the college. I completed my M.A and had to move on the real world.

One Day, soon after I had left the college, I went to see Mr. Safdar Mir. He lives in a hotel room in Bakhshi Market, Anarkali. We started talking about theatre. He asked me what I intended to do in future. I had ambitious plans, and a naïve enthusiasm about future.

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I said, "I will do a lot of work for theatre, and.. I will build a hall in this city, which should be dedicated to theatre only!"

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"Nau mun tail hoga to radha nachey gee, ha ha ha ha". He had a big hearty laugh.

I felt embarrassed.

SCENE 2

The real world outside, for me, was only world of theatre, radio, or journalism. There was no other priority.

Lahore, being in the centre of the movement, attracted a lot of people who loved theatre. Zia Mohiyuddin planned to stage Shakespear's Julius Caeser, in Urdu, at the Government College open air theatre. The translation was done by 'Lala' Javed. Mohsin Sherazi played Julius Caeser. Khurshid Shahid -Calpernia, Naeem Tahir (myself) -Brutus, Salman Peerzada -Antony, Zia Mohiyuddin -Cassius and Kamal Ahmed Rizvi played "kafka". Translation was done by 'Lala' Javed.

When the Arts Council re-organized into different sections namely arts, music, drama and literature. Two one act plays were to be staged to inaugurate the drama section. A farce 'Cox' was to be directed by Taj Sahib, and a tragedy, "MERA QATIL", to be directed by Mr. Safdar Mir. In Cox and Box, the cast was Khalid Saeed Butt, Mrs Sabira Azam and Myself. In Mera Qatil it was Khurshid Shahid, Izhar Kazmi, Yasmin Imtiaz Ali, Sikander, Tariq Hameed, Memona ayub, Kausar Hameed, Khalid Aziz, Dr Younus and others.

Another play Ibsen's Doll's house, as "Gurhia Ka Ghar" was directed by Meher Nigar during the same year.

This show was showed by Izhar Kazmi's "Mujrim Kaun". It was an adaption of J.B. Priestley's "An inspector call". It was a play with socialist ideas. Two nights before the opening Marshal Law of Ayub Khan was imposed. Some well-wishers suggested "Don't do this play you all will be arrested." Nothing of the sort happened, even the General Hashmi made his first appearance at Alhamra in this play. This play made history. It is a very serious, and a touching play. It made important social statement. Lot of people thought my reputation was at stake and this play will be the end of it. But 'Mujrim Kaun' ran to packed houses. People were taken aback. It moved the viewers. The play covered all its expenses. Historically it started professionalism, the detail of this happening I will give later.

I confess that my memory fails at times and I cannot remember the names of all the participants. Unfortunately, most of my records are lost. I mention the names of mostly those who have continued to work in theatre over the years. They deserve our grateful acknowledgement, but it is also a fact that a great movement developed only because it was nourished by the contributions of hundreds of 'unknown soldiers' who worked tirelessly, played small roles, painted sets, supplied tea, copied scripts, and do all things which go unnoticed, like the human backbone.

By this time, in the late 50's the focus of the theatre movement was beginning to shift to Alhamra, the Arts Council. It was developing into real, Full of Life 'Heart' of Arts. The dilapidated building notwithstanding, the spirit was there. Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, after the reorganisation of Alhamra, moved to the board of advancement of literature as its director and Mr Faiz Ahmad Faiz was appointed a full time secretary to the Pakistan Arts Council Lahore. It was obvious that the cultural movement in Lahore had attracted the notice of the decision makers and a capable, whole time, executive head was the need of the times. Faiz was an ideal choice.

With Mr Faiz Ahmed Faiz, entered a host of artists, actors, writers and intellectuals into the Council. Alhamra was now the focus. The crowds at Coffee House, Pak Tea House, Halqa Arts-e-Zoq, actors, writers, directors from the colleges and elsewhere, poets, journalists, members of various progressive movements all found Alhamra a place to get together. The tea at the "Canteen" was inexpensive and occasionally on credit! The natural beauty of the surroundings, presence of variety of artists, heated discussions, no urgency to go home and empty pockets, all of these created the ambience which was unique. Faiz helped as far as he could, rest you took care of yourself. It suited me fine. It suited a lot of others as well.

One of the major problems of the time was to find females to act in plays. The social prejudice against performing arts in general and female performers in particular was strong. In the society of the subcontinent woman exist only as mothers, sisters and daughters. It may be an affectionate attitude, but their right to be individuals, to grow, to discover themselves, to pick up challenges and to achieve professional excellence, had not been considered by men or even by most of the women. Acting and dancing were "bad" in the society, and a hindrance in mantrimony. So, the "respectables" avoided it. But the same respectables were keen to watch if somebody else's daughter performed! There were only few pioneers. Khurshid Shahid and Yasmin Imtiaz Ali became regular performers, and for a short time Mrs Sabira Azam, and Salima Faiz were active. All of these were from known respectable families. I think the theatre movement shall always be grateful to these ladies for providing the lead at a crucial time.

There was lot of activity in drama and other arts. I teamed up with Yasmin to adapt and stage three plays one after the other namely Aadab Arz, Soay Kahan, and Aap ki Tareef. Salima was also allowed to act in my plays by Faiz Sahib on my request. I was building up a team. The plays ran to such packed houses that they not only covered the expenses, but left a profit in the kitty. So, one day I walked up to Mr Faiz Ahmed Faiz and said that it is time that 'we be treated as professionals. I still remember his peculiar smile when he allowed the payment of RS.100 to each performer for the run of the play! We had made history.

Feeling confident about our productions and the support and appreciation being given to us by the people and the press in Lahore, Faiz Sahib accepted an invitation from Karachi! We staged "Aap ki tareef" at the Karachi Theosophical Hall to packed houses.

INTERMISSION?

In 1962 I decided to take a long leave from my employers, the Pakistan International Airlines, and to proceed a University of California at Los Angeles for a degree in Theatre Arts. We got married the same year (Yasmin and myself) the same year, and proceed to USA. Unfortunately Mr. Faiz Ahmed Faiz suffered a heart attack and left for treatment in England. The Arts Council passed through interim arrangements and there were temporary charges for short times with Mr Mohsin Sherazi, Mr Shoaib Hashmi and Mr Hamid Jalal. I completed my degree in late 1963 and immediately returned to Lahore. Mr Faiz Ahmed Faiz had resigned. A new head of organisation was to be appointed on full time bases.

SCENE 3.

In September 1963, I was appointed the secretary of 'Alhamra', Pakistan Arts Council Lahore. The Board of Governors had made its intention known. They wanted a younger person who could make it the carrier and devote energy to the development of the organisation and the arts in the country. I was 26. I could have continued with my carrier in PIA or tried my luck elsewhere. But I had no second thoughts. I had to take this opportunity to bring to reality my dreams or the visions. But a few people in the senior and contemporary circles, had reservations. Some for personal reasons of not getting the job, others for lack of confidence in youth. I was the youngest applicant. So, I entered in Alhamra in a somewhat cold environment. It didn't matter to me. I knew what I wanted to do, and nothing was going to stop me from treading that path. I wanted Alhamra to be a major centre of arts festivals in the world! I wanted to do this..... I wanted to do that... I wanted to do everything, this is how young people think. I was no different.

I have had three different tenures at Alhamra. First 1963 to 1968, then 1971 to 1974 and last in the 80's as the convenor of the Board of the Governors in an honorary capacity.

Some of the significant things that happened in these periods' theatre are worth mentioning. We adopted a completely open-door policy and launched a vigorous campaign to draw writers, actors, technicians and others to think in term of theatre. A drama committee was appointed to invite and review scripts. They were paid a 'reader fee' to make it worth their while. All plays selected were ensured a production. The writer as well as other participants were paid. Private productions were encouraged and provided with a subsidy to meet essential expenses. It may not have been a large sum of money but was sufficient to save a genuine group from the frustration of not being able to see the play staged. All administrative help was provided free. Electric was free, rehearsal space was free.

Critique sessions followed several productions. Experimental plays were specially encouraged and play reading were held to assist the writer.

To attract the senior writers to drama very substantial fee was offered. It was almost 20 times more than the nearest competitor, Radio and 10 times more than TV at that time. Most writers responded. Bano Qudsia, Intizar Hussain, Asghar Butt, Hijab Imtiaz Ali, Anwer Sajjad, Kamal Ahmad Rizvi, Yousaf, Razi Tirmazi, Akram Butt, and many others. They had the satisfaction of being paid as well as getting their work produced.

Within two years the little Alhamra hall was booked round the year, and mostly sold out. The theatre movement was gaining momentum.

Many young persons who were holding their jobs looked at theatre as a real option. I encouraged, in some cases gave personal assurance, that they can earn enough in theatre. Muhammad Qavi Khan, Masud Akhtar, and some other took the plunge.

A large number of groups built up. Basically, it happened because there was no financial risk and there was every chance of gaining profits or at least a name and experience. I feel I managed to offer a deal to the people in the theatre movement which was better than any other they ever got.

Very soon the little theatre could not stop with the demand and additional arrangements had to be made.

A make shift open air theatre was improvised. A fair big international size stage platform, 3-5 feet in height from the seating level was the main performance area. Bamboo structures acted as wings. Reasonable wing space was given. A back quarter for makeup and as dressing room was also made available. Rented 'Niwar' chairs on the level ground in front provided the seating area. The ground was very large so seating could extend to 6000. Two panels on either side of the stage to hang up lights were erected. This was all! The need was such that even the Bolshove Ballet performed on this stage and so did many other, finest performing groups of the world.

The open-air theatre was located in the area where now the Art Gallery and the administrative blocks have been built. Some of the main stars of today made their debut at this place. Samina Saeed, Attiya Sharaf, Jamil Bismil, Khalid Abbas Dar, Afzal Ahmad, M. Sharif, Munawar Saeed, Nahid Rana, Afzal Rana, Rehana Siddiqui, Sajjad Hyder and a real large number more all related to this era.

We are a large number of totals 'fanatics' involved 25 hours a day! Imagine the ambience the Alhamra provided! There was a continuous presence of the finest artists, sculptors, designers, musicians, writers, actors, directors, critics and a host of students. Occasional visitors from other cities as well as other countries added to the richness. Imagine the richness of the interaction.

PRESERVING THE HISTORY

One of my administrative actions will certainly assume significance with the passage of time. The pertained to creating a 'log book' of the developments. When I joined the council, I had great difficulty in finding any of the previous scripts or account of the programs and activities. There were very brief sketches meant to be included with the audit reports or in a 'minute book' of the Board meetings. I made it mandatory that every script submitted or performed should be made part of the "Financial" vouchers and preserved like financial records. I also ordered a "daily report" which covered every event within the premises of Alhamra, including programs, seminars, visitors and their comments, press reviews and any other significant matter. This daily report was compiled into an annual report at the end of the year. The council officers Mr. Masood Iqbal, Mr. Anwar Khalid, Mr. Farooq Zameer carried out this statement.

I also supported a research to collect data on classical music and musicians. The initiative was taken by Masood Ahmed Sheikh and a research cell was established. There were several other research projects undertaken. The music research cell was later transferred to Radio Pakistan when I left Arts Council.

In 1962 when I took a tonga for Alhamra, from my house on Abbot Road near Simla Hill, barely half a mile from Alhamra, I had to explain to the tonga wala, how I reach my destination, he knew nothing about this place. In 1967 you could take any transport from Rayi or Model Town and just say 'Alhamra' and you were taken there without having to say it twice.

The 'Genie' of theatre was move out of the bottle. It also had the tendency to get out of control. The arena, and the backstage.

This narration is dominated by my personal experiences and observations. That is what I can express with some authenticity.

Having once again reminded my reader of the scope of this narration, I continue:....

In and around the Lahore theatre arena, other relevant things were happening. These 'things' effected the life in the country. I need to take some of these into account and record their impact. No movement, particularly a theatre movement can go in isolation.

The major factors were: imposition of the Martial law of 1957, Development of relations with People's Republic of China and the Soviet Block, The TV Experiment, The planning of the Alhamra Art Center, The War of 1965, and Social-religious-political attitudes of those times.

The first years of the Ayub dictatorship saw some welcome developments. The Alhamra also started to receive a 'development' grant of Rs200000/- from the Federal Government annually for development activities. It also received RS. 50000/- annually from the province. In addition, it raised funds by public contributions, membership fees, sale of tickets and minor commissions on sale of paintings. The Arts Council was a private body, registered under the 'Societies Registration Act'.

Contrary to the earlier impressions, the Ayub regime was quite liberal towards arts. Although it was repressive on the political movements in the country.

The signing of cultural pacts with the Soviet block and China underscored the importance of culture in foreign relations. It also developed a better understanding among the people of friendly nations. The cultural exchange programs were being implemented by hurriedly picked up performers from the different areas. This concept of selection of cultural troupe was totally based on bureaucratic or political logic. It was pathetically nonprofessional. Usually, a leader of the troupe was appointed who would get a 'free' trip on the basis of contacts and so called 'love for culture.' These visiting troupes and the artists, some of them well known, may have left a good impression of their individual skills but fell far short of an ambassadorial conduct off stage. The result was more sour than sweet!

We held an introductory get-together at home and invited the prominent writers, directors, actors, designers etc. to introduce them to the "TV team."

Next the 'Alhamra' canteen room was made available to them to set up the TV cell office.

The planning started. In three months, the TV station was start functioning in a small, one room, studio in the back yard of the big new building of the Lahore Broadcasting House!

The TV studio was affectionately called the 'TV KHOKHA'.

So, the TV arrived. Contrary to the General belief it will 'damage' the theatre movement I believe TV will strengthen it. Some logic: more people will be involved in the performing arts; more people will watch—result will be greater interest and understanding.

Later I got very occupied with my assignment to build up a troupe for China. *Mainly Dancers and Musicians. I was getting a hard time trying to convince the Government that I intend several months of rehearsals to develop thematic dances, and to choreograph solo and group numbers in dance. Music had also to be composed by Feroze Nizami. I not only needed the most of the troupe members at one place for rehearsals, I also wanted to make them stay together, in a hotel for the duration of rehearsals, so that they get to know each other and learn table manners and basics of good conduct on tour.*

Finally, we built up very interesting programs and were ready to move. The working title was "The Dances of the people of Pakistan".

President Ayub made his historical visit to China in March 1965. Some serious political alliances were in the making. We left for China 50 in number, soon after Ayub Khan's visit. Just before leaving I discovered that Government had 'appointed' leaders, deputy leaders, etc., for visit to China. They hardly knew any participant, or the program or the dedication and unity that I had succeeded in building up. I remained the director of the troupe and the show.

Chinese are the greatest of hosts. Their banquets are the ultimate in sophistication and charm. Especially the state banquets. The dinner courses and the toasts could be 10 or more at an average! Could even be 20! At least this is what we experienced in those days of Mao Tse Tung and Chou En Lai.

I could feel from the resounding applause of my troupe members, when I spoke, that they gave a loving approval. I was not the government appointed leader but I 'felt' my comrades were fully with me! I must mention some of the distinguished members of the troupe who made the China visit an all-time success.

These were: Rafi Anwar, Ami Mianwala, Saira Shahjahan, Akbar, Jhunnoo, other members of the Bulbul Academy Dacca, Roshan Ara Bokhari, Shelly, Sarinda player Munir Hussain, Muhammad Ali composer, USTAD Nazim Hussain and Khadim Hussain and many others. Towards the end of the tour Shamsul Huda Choudhry and Younas Saeed mixed up with the troupe well.

September 1965 saw the war with India! The support of China to Pakistan was clear. Soviet also played a role. Although it was a somewhat controversial role: "The role of Performing Arts and culture in cementing foreign relations became established, and it acquired a certain priority in the National Scheme.

In 1963 I had found a small painting, a sketch, of an art centre done in Faiz Sahib's times. Mr Hamid Jalal, my immediate predecessor, was at that time the Director General, Public Relations of Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). The WAPDA had engaged the famous architect Edward Stone and teamed him up with Mr. Tajjudin Bhamani of Karachi to design the WAPDA House. Mr Jalal felt that Bhamani with the association of Stone should be able to design a good art centre as well. So, a decision was made by the Governing Council of the Arts Council

that Mr. Tajjudin Bhamani shall be architect of the future building. Luckily during my study at UCLA, the University was constructing its Theatre Complex. I not only studied planning of the theatres but also volunteered to work in the technical team in the final construction stage. I searched for my notes, visualized the requirements, and went ahead to prepare a document that was a comprehensive as could be done.

The genuine well-wishers of Arts were no longer antagonistic. Many members of the Punjab Cabinet frequented the Alhamra, but still the Finance Secretary, Mian Tajamul Hussain was unable to get a decent financial provision. The budget of 1966 was getting ready to be put up to the assembly, without a decent amount to be provided for Alhamra Arts Centre.

At this time, in spite of fanatic opposition of the Mullahs and their kind, Almighty God decided to help the Artists!

This is how it happened:

An important Soviet troupe was to perform at the Alhamra open air theatre one summer evening. We set up a stage and rehearsed one night before. Everything seemed all right. The show was ready to be inaugurated by the President, Ayub Khan. The troupe was led by a Soviet Minister. Overnight there was a huge storm! Everything was blown off and there was water in the seating area. Inauguration could not have taken place. I went to the Governor's house and reported the matter. The inauguration was postponed by a day.

I thought it was a golden opportunity to drive the point home that the Alhamra needed a proper hall. I consulted the Chairman of the Alhamra, Mr. Justice S.A. Rehman. Justice Rehman agreed but thought that the President could not be asked to spare time at a short notice.

The President arrived at Alhamra, I was second in line to receive him. He shook hands and I immediately apologized for the cancellation and said 'Sir, if you help us, we can avoid recurrence of such disasters!'

The building could now be started but unfortunately Bhamani, the architect, died of heart ailment. I proposed young Nayyer Ali Dada to be a new architect. Nayyer was fresh out of the college. His aesthetics were strong and I felt a bright, Lahore based architect, was the only answer.

Nayyer was appointed and went ahead enthusiastically to plan Art Centre.

Later the Punjab Chief Minister, Mr. Hanif Ramey, himself an artist associated with the Alhamra, made a financial allocation of 10 million rupees to ensure that the Art Center gets completed without hindrance.

The movement that started in humble circumstances was now meeting with success.

I have not made any comment on the standards or quality of the theatrical presentations of those times. Mostly the theatre work was carried on by people with good educational or literary background. The benchmark was still the standards of the Arts Council productions.

PREJUDICES

In spite of the theatrical presentations being in good taste and handled with fair sense of responsibility, we met with a lot of unnecessary criticisms from the orthodox and so called religious people. They called it 'Fahashi', immorality, and were ready to pick up faults in every effort. There are deep seated social and moral conflicts and double standards. Acting on stage confused with 'reality'! the main targets were the girls acting on stage. Their life was made difficult by relatives and acquaintances.

There was much more permissiveness elsewhere in the society which went unnoticed by the so called guardians of morals. The slightest suspicions about an actor or actress were turned into a scandal with relish. Some newspaper specialized in promoting orthodox fundamentalism of the most primitive kind.

The functionaries of the Arts councils were blackmailed and threatened. Some lecherous men of influence looked at them with searching eyes to discover if they were high-class pimps! Carrying on in these circumstances was trying and needed a lot of the courage of conviction.

Few realized that here was a class of dedicated people trying their best to provide a new nation with a cultural identity through arts. Prejudices and decadent attitudes had to be fought at every step.

ACTION, IMPROVISATION, ASIDES AND A SAD SCENE!

In 1968, I joined Pakistan Television Corporation as Principle Central Television Institute Rawalpindi. I was to train personal for all sections of television production. In 1970 a personal tragedy occurred. Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, who was my father-in-Law after my marriage with YASMIN, was murdered on the night of 19th April in Lahore. Beghum Hijab Imtiaz Ali was seriously injured, but survived. The Shock and its effects were to change many things in my life. I was confronted with a difficult situation.

Yasmin was Mr Taj's only child they lived alone. My parents had migrated to U.K. they lived in my brother and sister who are doctors. My mother was under constant treatment, she was suffering from cancer. Nobody was left in Lahore to take care of Taj Sahib's family interests.

The murder investigation needed a constant follow up.

To my disappointment the TV bureaucracy appeared insensitive to my need of a temporary transfer to Lahore. I was disillusioned.

I had retained my lein with the Arts Council, and fortunately, an opportunity arose out of a Foreign Office decision which suited the Arts Council environment. A lot of political changes were occurring very fast. Ayub Khan had resigned, elections had been held, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had gained a majority from 'west Pakistan' and Mujibur-Rehman from 'east Pakistan'. General Yahya had assumed power as the President and martial law administrator of anterim government! Gen. Yahya wanted to show solidarity with Iran and decided to participate in the celebrations for the 2500 years of Iranian monarchy in a big way. A committee was set up, with Mr. Mumtaz Hassan

as the Chairman and Myself as its secretary. I was allowed to resume my job at the Alhamra and operate from there.

I resigned from television. But I also have some fond memories of my days in television. It is a good feeling that a large number of people, who rose to distinction in TV later on, were at one time my students and I had opportunity to share my knowledge and experience with them.

In the meantime, the theatre scene at Lahore had substantially changed.

It appeared that the movement had lost the steer. It was wavering in all directions. The economic viability of theatre had been established by the hard work of its pioneers. They had done so while maintaining good standards of writing, directing, acting and presentations. There was no planning to the gallery.

In the 70s several mushroom groups arranged 'financier' and put-up plays where ever they could find a place. The 'financier' were mostly the types that go around the film studios. Their usual objective: short term investment, 'hide able' profit, possibly some 'company' and may be a name. Generally, the over-riding consideration being the box office.

Quality of scripts started to drop. Why spend on something which is not appreciated? Why not just invest in the actor! Quality of directing also dropped. Why spend on something which is not seen? Why not get a pretty face? Why not ask the actor to improvise if something is appreciated by spectators, and play him a little more? So, the door to adlibbing and 'Jugat' opened.

I shall refrain from any comment except that it was very different to what the previous generation was dreaming of.

Most of any time in the Arts Council was spent in trying to keep the Council affairs running as well as possible, and in raising a troupe to present thematic dances called 'Dances of the people of Pakistan', In Iran.

The effects of political upheaval were felt in every section of society. There were demands, allegations, speeches and protests everywhere. They came the War and the shock of the Loss of Pakistan. MR. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto took over the governance of the country.

The collective psyche of the country was rejecting everything that had gone on before. A new order was the demand. A broad of culture organization was under discussion. In Lahore a committee was formed for Punjab to make its recommendations.

Most members of this committee were in the provincial cabinet including Mr. Hanif Ramey. I was also included as a member. While we had completed our recommendations about the formation of Punjab Council of Arts and the bill was to be presented to the Punjab assembly, the Government of Punjab used the amendment to the Societies Registration act, and dismissed the Board of Governors of the Art Councils without showing cause and nominated a new board!

The sudden change was un-called for and the timing was bad.

The member of new board lacked cohesion and experience. They were led by Dr. Enwar Sajjad. I am not sure if he knew of the intentions and attitudes of his colleagues. Some of his colleagues enjoyed threatening the staff of the council, and used the 'Stick and carrot' technique to win their loyalty. They would even spy on me and my family, and were found peeping into my sitting room, at my residence. I felt ill at ease.

To top it all my mother's health worsened. Leave was requested but not granted! My mother died. I decided to leave for England and later tendered my resignation. Service left a bad taste.

It was a sad end. In future my association with performing arts was never going to be as an employed!

A writ was filed by some members against the decision of the Government's "Take Over" of the Alhamra. It is still pending. Speedy Dispensation of Justice!

Soon the Government itself decided to remove its nominee board and appoint a new Board! The New Board was headed by Soofi Ghulam Tabassum.

By this time Nayyer Ali Dada must have completed the Architectural and other drawings. So the Chief Minister, MR Hanif Ramey, laid the foundation stone of the new hall and sanctioned RS. 10 million from the Provincial exchequer. It was great boost to the Alhamra. The digging started.

The Physical changes the "Ambience". Something different was to emerge.

THE HORROR

I was now trying to establish a business for myself. I was also participating in the political activities as a member of the Peoples Party. I was not in contact with the Art World.

The new Martial Law came in 1977. A witch hunt started. The elections were announced in 90 days! It was a trap to identify the second line of political leadership. We fell into the trap. My papers were filled by party workers for a membership of National Assembly. Elections were postponed; life was not easy for us. Years of horror followed under Zia regime. The elected Prime Minister was hanged. Workers were flogged, beaten, killed! Everything was done in the name of religion. Party workers were the focus of all harassment and hardships.

While life was so oppressed, arts could not have flourished. The Alhamra building under construction was stopped. The premises bore a deserted look.

THE PIOT

One day I received a telephone call from the life member of Alhamra. Mr Sarwar Sheikh. I had not heard from anybody connected with Alhamra for long time. He said he had received some papers for signatures from a government department. The officer who had brought the papers wanted these to be signed immediately. These papers concerned Alhamra and he did not want to sign without consulting me. He also said that the officer did not want to leave the papers even overnight to allow him to think about the contents. Immediate signatures were required! Such was

the Audacity! Mr. Sarwar somehow managed to have a copy made, and then refused to sign unless some time to read and consider the contents are allowed. The officer whom must have been 'high' with the backing of Martial Law power, reluctantly agreed. Mr. Sarwar, by this act did a great favor to the city.

The papers contained a resolution to voluntarily dissolve the Arts Council! The signing member also accepted the inability to run the council affairs and requested the Government to take it over for such disposal as it may deem fit!! It was almost a death warrant for the Arts Centre and to my dreams and dreams of all those who had been in the vanguard of the movement for the cultural development in the country.

I could not have stayed away this time. I was stunned. What if the signatures of most of the members have already been obtained? Many members, particularly the musicians, do not even understand English! (Later Madam Nur Jehan told me that she signed those documents as she was rehearsing and asked the 'officers' to tell her what it was about. She was told they were looking for her consent to institute awards for the artist!)

The only option was a legal recourse and it had to be very quick.

In Marshal Law days everyone is under fear, even the bar and the bench! My neighbor, Sami-ud-din a young and bright lawyer obliged. A writ was prepared overnight. Nobody wanted to sign it along with me because of fear. Ultimately Nazeer zaighum Agreed.

The writ was against the Government. The court did not admit it.

As 'court proceedings' the newspaper could print the matter without being censored. The issue came to light. A controversy started. Mostly the reaction was in favor of our petition.

More important, the then Governor changed. General Jilani took over. The commissioner Lahore was transferred and Afridi was appointed. Perhaps most relevant, the Secretary Information and Culture changed and Javed Ahmed Qureshi took charge.

Javed and I shared the same desk at school in the 9th class at Central Model. Javed and I would have stood in the court opposing each other! Javed, himself a poet and an enlightened person sympathized with my cause. General Jilani was also a very enlightened individual. Javed chose to seek fresh instructions of the Governor. RESULT:

The Governor denied intentions to change the status of the Arts Council and case came to an end.

As fate would have it, I was appointed the Convener of the new Board of Governors of the Arts Council in an honorary capacity. My major task was to complete the building and revive the theatre activity! It was strange, I was there, again, to build the center I had dreamed of almost twenty years ago!

There was a lot - a lot of work that needed to be done. The design, particularly the technical details had been completely messed up. The hall roof had been changed to a tin roof. The

false ceiling was flattened, leaving no room for light placements. There was no grid or cat walks. The stage house was there, but no fly up arrangements! The control rooms were disregarded and a strange 'machan' was being constructed for sound effects close to the proscenium opening! The place for lighting controls was going to be similar! A whole lot of re-designing was required to achieve some sense, may be even then not all could be achieved. We started. Rashid Umar Thani shared some burden. It was work round the clock. Javed took care of the bureaucratic rigmarole and we tried to sort out the disputes between builders, architects and others, in addition to work on design with Nayyer. Starting in January, we were in a position to resume construction by the end of February. No mean achievements.

At the inaugural ceremony the program continued perfectly, without the least of problems.

At the inaugural ceremony the program continued perfectly, without the least of problems. The fly ups, orchestra pit, lighting, sound, scenery etc. all worked flawlessly. Javed and me looked at each other in amazement. It seemed too good to be true. Were we dreaming? Nur Jehan was singing on the stage. It was all real.

A dream had actually been realized!

I planned and supervised the production for six months. Recruited the personnel, including Samina Ahmad.

The theatre fare consisted of the best available from the country's history. Khawaja Moin's Taleem-i-Balighan the original production, Yasmin and Naeem's, Aap Ki Tareef directed by me with some changes in the cast and Saba, Intizar Hussain's "Khawabon key Musafir" directed by the Nazir Zeghum provided debut to Faran Tahir, Imtiaz Ali Taj's "Karma Number Panch" and Qavi khan, Bano Qudsia's "Adhi Baat" by Kamal Ahmad Rizvi, and Anwer Sajjad's "Ek tha Raja" directed by himself.

SCENE 4

The development during last one decade. Must be fresh in the memory of the initiated readers. The last play that I acted in and also directed, was Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj's 'Anarkali'. It was sponsored by PUCAR. It will remain a very important contribution of the PUCAR but most probably it was the only, complete and professional production of Anarkali.

Anarkali production was creatively satisfying and it was also a grand show. Anarkali has been attempted by several groups in colleges; by amateurs, and by ambitious or native adventurers. Results have been pathetic in most cases because of the great demands of the scripts.

I continue to direct plays even now. I directed Bano Qudsia's "Sitamgar..." in which Salman Shahid, Saba, and Ali Tahir gave impressive performances; Rehana Siddiqui made a comeback and Fareeha Parvez made her debut. Most of my time these days, is taken by arena presentations of Callisthenics and folk dances. Callisthenics is a new art form of mass presentation developed in this century only.

In and elsewhere in the country, now a lot of very valuable work is being done. Mostly younger people are involved. They are getting ready to wear the mantle of us 'oldies'! A serious and a parallel theatre is emerging. Samina Ahmad even runs an acting school and a very effective puppet theatre. Shahid Nadeem has emerged as a prolific writer on real issues. All these augers well.

As today a large community of performers has organized itself into various groups. Lahore has the distinction of five very regular theatre working round the year. These are Alhamra1, Alhamra2, Tamaseel, Mehfil and Lahore theatre. In Addition, there is Alhamra at the Qaddafi Complex, the open-air theatre at the Bagh e Jinnah. Theatre has come to stay in Lahore. The daily theatre goers' numbers about 3500 on average.

THE FINAL DIALOGUES

Looking at the history, the quality and style of our popular theatre today is more like that of the 'commedia dell'arte' of the 16th century in Italy.

Let us look at some descriptions from the history books:

Quote, (... about "commedia dell'arte")

A curious feature of the commedia dell'arte were the lazi-jokes of one sort or another interjected into the plot.

Most lazzi were physical... what we call stage business. Often, they had nothing to do with the action. While two lovers were engaged with their troubles, a comic servant might pretend to catch a fly, or eat imaginary cherries from his hat and flip the pits in the hero's face.

The actors engaged in studies and load their memories with a great mass of matter, such as stock sentiments, conceits, love speeches, complaints, ejaculation of despair and serious theatre going on as parallel activity in Pakistan.

The theatre of 'today' in Pakistan has a parallel in history. I feel it is closer to the 16th century 'commedia dell'arte' than any other. It is not the most highly respected parallel. The fact is that respectability comes to the arts only if a nation pays respect to the Arts. Art relate to the national Arts. Great drama comes out of support, financial and moral, from the public and its appointed institutions.

Similar to the 'commedia dell'arte' we have lost the basic 'Strengths' of the theatre namely: the 'writer' and the 'director'. I feel the public institutions, like the Arts councils, will need to once again build up the intellectual base and provide the leadership to develop a more respectable and mature theatre. The popular theatre in the private sector has made some valuable contributions which cannot, and should not, be ignored. It has helped the actor/actress and the technicians to live out of theatre earnings. It is not a mean achievement. Today the live theatre in Pakistan pays more to its actors than Film or the TV.

We have come a long way in the last 50 years. It may not be long enough! But it is substantial. We may have wanted to achieve everything, but can we do that in one life time? I may feel sad

that an 'ideal' situation has not been achieved in my life, but I hope it will be achieved in somebody else's lifetime! I should be satisfied with philosophical view about things that I cannot change, but nevertheless, must continue to make an effort. The change will come.

CURTAIN?

NO. THERE WILL BE NO CURTAIN. THE SHOW SHALL GO ON.

اردو اسٹر ویوز

ایک دن جیو کے ساتھ

میزبان: سہیل وڑاج

مہمان: نعیم طاہر

تاریخ: 26 جولائی 2020

سہیل وڑاج: ریڈیو، فلم، تھیٹر سب کے اداکار رہے۔ ریسرچر، اسکالر، میپر اور ایڈمنیٹر بھی رہے۔ اتنے زیادہ کرداروں سے انساف کرنا اور کسی ایک میں آگے بڑھ جانا مشکل نہیں ہو جاتا؟

نعمیم طاہر: دیکھیں اگر نیت ہو اور محنت کرنی آتی ہو اور جذب جنون کی حد تک ہو تو بہت سی چیزیں ممکن ہو جاتی ہیں۔

سہیل وڑاج: آپ کے والد ان پکٹر آف اسکولز جبکہ والدہ پہلی خاتون ڈاکٹر تھیں۔ آپ نے خود سائنس پڑھی لیکن آپ آرٹس میں آگئے۔ یہ کیسے ہوا؟

نعمیم طاہر: میرے والدین کو شوق تھا کہ میں ڈاکٹریا نجیب نہیں ہوں۔ میرے بڑے بھائی بھی ڈاکٹر تھے۔ مجھے لاؤ ہونے کے باعث آوارگی کی گنجائش مل گئی تھی۔ میرا جنون مجھے ایسا لے چلا کہ آہستہ آہستہ ڈرامے، سچ کا شوق مجھے گور نمنٹ کالج میں بہت زیادہ ہو گیا۔ پھر اس زمانے میں کامنی کوشل کا عشق بہت مشہور ہو گیا تو ہم فلمیں بھی دیکھنے لگے۔

سہیل وڑاج: آپ بھی تو کامنی کوشل کے عاشق ہو گئے تھے۔

نعمیم طاہر: جی بالکل۔ وہ میرا پہلا عشق تھا۔ جب کامنی یہاں آئی تھیں تو میں نے ان کو کہہ بھی دیا تھا۔ اب تو خیر ان کی طبیعت اتنی اچھی نہیں ہے لیکن وہ نہایت ہی نیس خاتون ہیں۔

سہیل وڑاج: ہاہاہا۔ اچھا۔

میں ریڈیو پر جا کر تقریباً دو زبان، (دو زبان سے مراد ہے ہر ٹھنڈے)، آؤٹشن دیتا تھا کیونکہ مجھے باہر پان والے نے بتایا تھا کہ ”میاں یہاں آؤٹشن ہوتے ہیں اور جو لڑکے پاس ہو جائیں، پھر ان کی آواز اور آجائی ہے۔ لیکن ہر جعرات کو آؤٹشن ہوتے تھے اور پھر کو مجھے چھپی آجائی تھی کہ آپ ناکام ہو گئے ہیں۔

نیم طاہر:

سہیل و راجح:

نیم طاہر:

سہیل و راجح: پاکستان میں فروغ فون کے سب سے بڑے ادارے بیشل کو نسل آف وی آرٹس کے چیف اینڈیکٹور ہے۔ آخر اس کی کیا وجہ ہے کہ پاکستان میں فون ترقی نہیں پا سکے؟

نیم طاہر: سہیل صاحب اس کا ذمہ دار اخشور ہے۔ ہم اپنی Heritage کی value نہیں کرتے۔ جو آپ کو تاریخی ورثہ ملائے اگر آپ اس کو نہیں سنبھالیں گے تو یہی ہی رہیں گے اور یہ یقینی ہی ہماری قوم کا ستیاناں کر رہی ہے۔

سہیل و راجح: ایک طرف Entertainer ہے، تفریج، اداکاری اور تحریر کرتے ہے اور دوسری طرف ریمریج اسکار کا سمجھ دہ کام Melluhas ہے۔ انہیں ولی کے لوگوں پر پوری کتاب لکھ دیا۔ یہ دونوں چیزیں کیسے کر لیں؟

نیم طاہر: یہ ایک اور جستجو تھی۔ جیسے بلکے شاہ کہتے ہیں کہ کی جاننا چاہتا تھا کہ میں کون ہوں؟ میں بھی جاننا چاہتا تھا کہ میں کون ہوں؟ چنانچہ میں پہنچ تاریخ کا مطالعہ کرتا تھا۔ سندھ سکھ پہنچا اور اس کی تاریخ پڑھی تو پہنچا کر میرے والدین سندھ کے تھے۔ میری والدہ کشیر سے تھیں۔ میں نے درج بدرجہ تاریخ کے پہنچے جانا شروع کر دیا۔ اس جستجو میں مجھے معلوم ہوا کہ اس خطے کا قدیم نام MELLUHA تھا۔ آپ اور ہم سب اس MELLUHA تاریخ کا حصہ ہیں۔

سہیل و راجح: آپ نے ڈرائے لکھے اور خود اداکاری بھی کی۔ آپ کے سر سید امیاز علی تاج اور آپ کے زمانے میں بڑے معیاری ڈرائے ہوتے تھے۔ یہ پھر ہم کیسے آگیا؟

نیم طاہر: آپ بھی بہت مشکل سوال پوچھتے ہیں۔ اب اس کے اندر پیسا آگیا ہے۔ پیسا بہت اچھی چیز ہے اگر اس کو صحیح طریقے سے استعمال کیا جائے۔

سہیل و راجح: لیکن تھیز میں اگر پیسا نہ ہو تو تھیز کر کے کاون؟

نیم طاہر: تھیز میں پیسا ہے۔ اگر یہ پھر بازی نہ آتی تو پھر بھی تھیز میں پیسا ہتا۔ میں نے محمد قوی خان اور علی اعجاز کو بیک کی تو کری چھروانی اور گارنی دی کہ ہم ڈرائے کریں گے اور میں کسی طرح تھیں اتنا پیسا مہیا کروں گا کہ جو تنخوا تم پہاں لیتے ہو وہ پورا ہو جائے گا۔ یہ دونوں بھی میری طرح جوئی تھے اور میرے ساتھ شامل ہو گے۔

سہیل و راجح: میں آپ کو ایک مثال دیتا ہوں کہ میرا ایک ڈرائے تھا ”آپ کی تعریف“ جو میں نے 1962ء میں شروع کیا۔ اس زمانے کا یہ سب سے بہت ڈرائے تھا اور الحمد للہ، ہم نے اس کے نکت پیچ کر اچھے خاکے پیے بنا لیے تھے۔

(نیم طاہر اور یہ سہیل طاہر کے ساتھ ناشتہ کرتے ہوئے گفتگو)

سہیل و راجح: یہ سہیل طاہر اور آپ کی کتنے سال کی رفتات ہو گئی ہے؟

نیم طاہر: 1960ء میں ہماری مٹنگی ہوئی تھی اور 1962ء میں ہماری شادی ہو گئی تھی۔

مجھے ٹوٹل توپہ نہیں کئتے میں بناکن مجھے جب بہاں پیے آگے تو آپ جانتے ہیں کہ پھر انہیں بالا کو احساس ہوتا ہے
کہ اب یہ ان کی ذمہ داری ہو گئی ہے۔ لہذا مجھے فارغ کر دیا گیا تھا۔

لیکن بعد میں وہ یہ بہاں بناتے ہوئے پھر پھنس گئے۔ یہ لیکن کیلیکہ بہت ہی شاد اور بہاں ہے اور ان کو بنا نہیں آرہا تھا۔ انہوں
نے سوارخان کو روپورٹ دے دی کہ یہ نہیں بن سکتا لہذا اسے اوقاف کے حوالے کر دیا گئے۔ سوارخان نے بھی آرڈر
کر دیے کہ اپنے اوقاف کے حوالے کر دیا جائے۔ میں اکیلا ٹھیک طور پر عدالت چلا گیا اور بہت کوششوں کے بعد میں نے
اپنے آرڈر لے لیا۔ جب میں نے اپنے آرڈر لے لیا تو اسے میں جزو جیلانی آگئی۔ جزو جیلانی آرٹس اینڈ پھر کے لیے
یہ سب اچھا دل رکھتا تھا۔ اس نے مجھے بلایا کہ نیم صاحب آپ کیوں نہ اپنی دینا ہوں۔ میں نے کہا آپ لوگوں کی جو حرکتیں ہیں
اوس پر میں خوش کیے ہو سکتا ہوں۔ کہنے لگے آپ کو میں گارنی دینا ہوں کہ میں آپ کے خلاف سارے کیسروں کی
دوں گا اور بیان دوں گا کہ نیم طاہر ٹھیک ہے ہم غلطی کر رہے تھے۔ میں آپ مجھے یہ مکمل کر کے دکھائیں۔ میں نے کہا
جسی بسم اللہ ضرور کروں گا۔ پھر 14 اگست 1981 کو اسے میں نے مکمل کر کے نور جہاں کی آواز سے اس کا افتتاح کر دیا۔

(نیمال روڈ پر واقع مشہور آر کیکٹ نیز علی دادا کے دفتر میں گفتگو)

پاکستان کی جو تاریخ ہے اسے اتنی بڑی شخصیات پیدا کی ہیں جیسے کہ ایتیاز علی تاج صاحب، فیض احمد فیض صاحب،
صوفی قبیل۔ ان کے بعد پھر آئے نیم طاہر صاحب۔ وہ ایک ایسا زمانہ تھا جس میں بڑے عمدہ اور ظرف والے لوگ آئے
اور ان میں سے ایک نیم طاہر ہیں۔

(نیم طاہر کے ذاتی دوست اور معروف اداکار قوی خان گھر پر تشریف لائے)

میں خوش قسم تھا کہ ابتداء میں ہی مجھے آرٹس کو نصل میں جگہ مل گئی۔ آرٹس کو نسل سے ہی پھر میں ٹیکی ویژن پر چلا
گیا اور مجھے سعادت حاصل ہوئی کہ میں پاکستان نیلی ویژن کا پہلا لیکنر ہن گیا۔ اور میری اس کامیابی کے پیچھے جو سر
قہرست نام ہے وہ نیم طاہر صاحب کا ہے۔ ہر چیز میں ہی یہ باکمال شخصیت کے مالک ہیں۔ میں ان کو چکے چکے فالو کر ساتھ
اور اپنی عمارت کو مضمون کرتا جاتا تھا۔

(بیٹھے علی طاہر، قوی خان اور باتی احباب کے ساتھ دوپھر کے کھاتے کی نیل پر)

مجھے ان کے ساتھ کام کرنے کی بھی سعادت حاصل ہوئی۔ میں نے ایکٹنگ کا آنماز ان کے ڈائریکشن سے ہی کیا۔ پھر
زندگی میں ایک وقت ایسا بھی آیا کہ میں ان کو ڈائریکٹ کر رہا تھا۔ میں نے ان سے ایک پھر تو یہ سمجھی کہ اب اجانب ہار مانتے
کو تو آپش ہی نہیں سمجھتے۔ دوسرے وقت کی اہمیت ان سے سمجھی ہے۔

نیم طاہر:

(ہالی ڈاؤنیکٹر میٹھے فاران طاہر کا نیم طاہر کے بارے میں ویڈیو پیغام)

فاران طاہر: اب اکی تو جتنی بھی تعریف کی جائے وہ کم ہے۔ اب اکی کچھ خصوصیات ایسی ہیں جو زندگی میں میرے لیے Inspiration ہیں۔

He is a wonderful actor. As a writer he is brilliant

میری زندگی میں جب میں نے امریکہ میں ایکٹنگ شروع کی تو مجھے اچھی طرح یاد ہے کہ میرا پہلا پلے (Play) کا بیل جو

تمہارا میں مشکل سے 50 لوگ بینچ سکتے تھے۔ لیکن مجھے سپورٹ کرنے کے لیے

He flew from Pakistan and

saw my show all the time.

اللہ کے کرم سے پھر جب لوگوں کا ہجوم مجھے دیکھنے آتا تھا تو اس وقت بھی ابا مجھے دیکھنے آئے۔

(ایکٹر عظیم گیلانی کا نیم طاہر کے لیے ویڈیو پیغام)

نیم طاہر دیے تو میرے دوست ہیں۔ لیکن میں نے بھی نیم صاحب کو اپنا منور رہا ہے۔ ان کی بیوی میری سیکل لیلی جو

کہ تھوڑی سی بے دفا بھی ہیں لیکن نیم صاحب آپ میرے نزدیک اور یاد رکھنے والے دوست ہیں۔ آپ مجھے بہت یاد

آتے ہیں۔ ماشاء اللہ آپ کو نظر نہ لے۔

(گھر کے لان میں بینچ کر نیم صاحب سے گفتگو)

سہیل و راجح: کبڈی کھیلی، خطاٹی کی، کینٹر کے survivor ہیں، زندگی کی 80 سے زیادہ بہاریں دیکھے ہیں اور 70 سال تو آپ کی فی

زندگی کا سفر ہے۔ آخر کیے اتنا Maintain کر لیا؟

نیم طاہر: سہیل صاحب ازندگی کے سفر سے آپ ہر روز سکھتے ہیں۔ ہر روز سکھتے ہیں اگر آپ ازندگی کو دیکھ رہے ہوں۔ میں نے جو

مونا سبق سیکھا ہے وہ یہ ہے کہ اگر آپ کی نیت شہیک ہو اور آپ سمجھتے ہوں کہ کوئی مقدمہ اس قابل ہے کہ اسے حاصل

کیا جائے تو اس کے لیے جی جان لگا کر پوری توجہ سے کوشش کرنی چاہیے۔ اللہ تعالیٰ آپ کو کامیاب کر دے گا۔

سہیل و راجح: ابیری یا سکن طاہر کے ساتھ آپ 60 سال سے زیادہ ٹرکچے۔ آن کے والد سید ایتیاز علی تاج، دادا میڈ میتاز علی اور دو خود

بھی سلیبری تھیں۔ زندگی میں ان کے ناز خزیرے تو اخنانے پڑے ہوں گے۔

نیم طاہر: ہماری شروع دن سے دوستی رہی ہے۔ نہ انہوں نے کوئی ناز کیا اور نہ میں نے کوئی نخرہ اٹھایا۔ شادی ایک پیار محبت کا ہام

ہے اور ہماری محبت کی شادی ہے۔ اس لیے ہم نے محبت کو بدنام نہیں ہونے دیا۔

ملی طاہر:

and therefore it was an important stage in our lives consciousness of this significance. As a disciplined and trained artist I have full realization of the importance of rehearsals and discipline

ملکہ تر نور جہاں، فیض احمد فیض اور سید اقیاز علی تاج جیسے بڑے لوگوں سے نشیش رہیں۔ ان لوگوں سے آپ نے کیا سیکھا؟

بیل و زاج:

اون سب کے ساتھ تو ہمارا تقریباً روز کام بنا جانا تھا۔ نور جہاں تو ادھر اکثر آیا جایا کرتی تھی۔ جب بھی وہ اداں پر بیان ہوتی تھیں ہمارے پاس آ جاتی تھیں۔ وہ ہم سے اسی اسی باتیں کرتی تھیں جو وہ کسی اور سے بھی نہیں کرتی تھیں۔ جیسے کہ اللہ فرماتا ہے: میں اپنے فرانٹ تو معاف کر دوں گا لیکن جو انسانوں کے فرانٹ ہیں وہ کبھی معاف نہیں کر دوں گا۔ ان لوگوں سے ملاقاتوں میں بھی میں نے بھی سیکھا۔

نیم طاہر:

ایک دفعہ جب وہ کلیو لینڈ امریکہ کے اپٹاٹ میں زندگی اور موت کی کلکش میں تھیں تو میں ان سے ملنے کیا تو وہ بہت خوش ہو گئی۔ کہنے لگی: بھیل۔ آپ میری زندگی کی کہانی لکھ دیجیے گا۔ کیونکہ جو باتیں میں نے آپ سے کی ہیں وہ میں نے کسی اور سے نہیں کیے۔

بیل و زاج:

آپ لکھ رہے ہیں؟

اب میں ایک کلکش میں ہوں کہ زندگی کی وہ باتیں جو وہ خود کسی اور کو نہیں کہہ سکیں، وہ کیسے لکھوں؟

نیم طاہر:

اگر انہوں نے آپ کو اجازت دی ہے تو آپ کو ضرور لکھنی چاہیے۔

بیل و زاج:

میں بھی اسی نتیجے پر پہنچا ہوں کہ شاید انہوں نے مجھے اسی لیے کہا کہ ان کے دل پر جو بوجھتے، جس طرح سے دنیا نے ان کے ساتھ سلوک کیا تھا، جو انھیں پوچھ لگی تھیں، وہ چاہتی تھیں کہ کوئی وہ ختم ڈینا کو دکھا دے۔

نیم طاہر:

آپ کو شاعری اور گائیگر میں کون پسند ہے؟

میری پسندیدہ تو نور جہاں تھی، نور جہاں ہے اور نور جہاں ہی رہے گی۔ اس کے بعد مہدی حسن تھے۔ ان دونوں کی

بیل و زاج:

خاص بات یہ تھی کہ ہر لفظ کو باخوبی ادا کرتے تھے۔ شاعروں میں جو سب کہنے والی باتیں تھیں وہ غالباً کہہ گئے تھے۔ اس کے بعد علامہ اقبال بھی تھے، فیض صاحب اور بہت سے اعلیٰ شاعر اء، خاص طور پر میں تذکرہ کروں گا بڑی ہی

نیم طاہر:

حس اشاعر دپر دین شاکر کا۔

نیم طاہر:

کیفے ڈی سی

میزبان: فیض رحن

مہماں: نیم طاہر

تاریخ: 11۔ اپریل۔ 2016

تعارف:

السلام علیکم! میں ہوں فیض رحن اور آپ دیکھ رہے ہیں کیونکہ ڈی سی۔ آج میرے ساتھ جو شخصیت موجود ہیں میراں کا ساتھ ایک طویل اور دیرینہ تعلق رہا ہے۔ فلم، ٹی وی، آرٹ، تھیٹر اور دیگر فیلڈز سے جس میں انہوں نے کارہائے خدمات انجام دی ہیں اور انک کا نام روش کیا ہے۔ منے ٹرینڈرز اور نئی چیزوں تعارف کی ہیں۔ میری مراد جناب نیم طاہر صاحب سے ہے۔ جو اس وقت واشنگٹن میں ہمارے ساتھ موجود ہیں۔

فیض رحن: نیم صاحب بہت شکریہ کہ آپ تشریف لائے۔

نیم طاہر: بہت بہت شکریہ۔

فیض رحن: آپ سے میرا ایک بہت طویل تعلق رہا ہے۔ لاس انجلس میں سب سے پہلے آپ سے ملاقات ہوئی تھی۔ میں یہ چاہتا ہوں کہ آج کی اپنی گفتگو کا آغاز اپنے لاس انجلس کے زمانے سے کریں۔ آپ لاس انجلس کیوں تشریف لائے اور کیا کیا آپ نے اس دوران؟

وہ اس لیے کیوں کہ ہم اس کو کوئی worth while چیز دے نہیں رہے ہے۔
مشائی، وہ کیا کسی چیزیں ہیں جو ہم نہیں کر رہے پا کستان میں؟

وہی ہم نے Indus Valley کی بات کی تھی۔ آپ نے ڈاکٹر دافی کو کہا تھا کیا ہے نہیں کیا۔ وہ دنیا کی تاریخ کا سب سے بڑا سار تھا۔ ہمارے تو ایک مالا یہ سفری کا ایجمنٹ میکل سے سامنے آ رہا ہے۔ باقی ہمارے اتنے سکالرز ہیں، ان کی تو کوئی پکر پر نہیں ہوتی۔

ہمارے یہاں امریکہ میں اور ہر جگہ جناح چیئر (Jinnah Chair) ہے۔ پاکستان نے وہ چیز بھی خالی چھوڑی ہوئی ہے۔ جناح چیئر ہوں گی تو آپ کے آرٹس اور لیبرپر کی کوئی بات کرے گا۔ ایک پیز جو میں سمجھتا ہوں کہ بہت ضروری ہے وہ یہ کہ آج بھی واٹکشن میں آپ کے پاس عمارت موجود ہے، جو بہت ہماری ہے۔

میں آپ کے اسی نقطے پر آؤں گا کہ ڈنیا کی ہر بڑی یونیورسٹی میں جناح چیئر ہے جسے خالی چھوڑا گیا ہے اور کوئی باقاعدہ سکار موجود نہیں ہے۔ اس کی بہت بڑی مثال ہے کہ کوہیا یونیورسٹی جہاں پر قائد اعظم چیئر کے نام سے چیئر موجود ہے لیکن وہ بالکل خالی پڑی ہوئی ہے۔

Berkley میں بھی خالی پڑی ہوئی۔ خیر بہت ہی جگہیں ہیں جہاں یہی صورت حال ہے۔ آپ مجھ تاک اگر ہمارا کاری ہیں تو ہمارا Intellectual Exposure کیسے ہو گا؟

میں اسی لیے یہ گزارش کر رہوں کہ پاکستان کے پاس واٹکشن میں ایک عمارت Jinnah Center کے نام سے موجود ہے، اسے کار آئندہ بنایا جائے۔ اس میں ریٹریٹ ایجاد کرے۔

اس کے علاوہ یہ کلچرل ڈپلو میسی بہت بڑا تھیار ہوتا ہے ملکوں کا۔ جیسے کہ چاکر اور بھارت ہیں، بے شک لاکھ رائی چاکر میں اس میں سارے پر گرامز ہونے چاہیے۔ اسی طرح سے اور بھی لوگ جاتے اور دیکھتے ہیں۔

ایہ ہوتا ہے تو اون۔ جیسے کہ قرآن پاک میں بھی واضح ہے کہ تو اون قائم کرنا ہی کائنات میں کامیابی کی بات ہے۔

جی بالکل۔

ہم اس چیز میں ابھی تک کامیاب نہیں ہو سکے۔ ہمیں چاہیے کہ فتویں لطیفہ، آرٹس، کلچر، لیبرپر وغیرہ، ان میں جو پاکستان کام کر رہا ہے، آگے بڑھایا جائے۔

فیض رحمن: ایسی سیسی سے ہٹ کر کیا ایسا کوئی ادارہ موجود ہے جو ڈنیا میں پاکستان کی ثقافت کو سامنے لے کر آئے؟ کیا اس پر کوئی کام ہو رہا ہے؟

فیض طاہر: فیض صاحب دیکھئے، اس Concept پر پہلے بہت سی روپورٹس تیار ہو چکی ہیں۔ جس سے اسے رحمن، حیدر امیر علی ہائی کورٹ کے بعد نیشنل کونسل آف آرٹس اور دوسری آرٹس کو نسلوں تھیں۔ یہ ڈنیا داری بنیادی طور پر ACT 1973 کے مطابق نیشنل کونسل آف آرٹس کو نسل آف آرٹس کو دی گئی تھی۔ لیکن یہی سی نیشنل کونسل آف آرٹس بن گئی تو اس پر حملہ ہو گیا، کئی سیاست انوں اور ہیروکریٹس کا۔ اور جو اس فیلڈ سے تعلق رکھنے والے تھے، حتیٰ کہ فیض احمد فیض کو بھی پیچھے کر دیا گیا۔ جن لوگوں کا Concept تھا وہ بہت سے اور دوسرے لوگوں نے اس کو ایک ہیروکریٹ طریقے سے مظہم کر دیا۔ ایسی صورت حال میں کہ 18 سال سے اس کی عدمت تھی اسی نہیں اور پھر مجھے بلا گائی تو میں نے وہ 18 میٹنے میں بنا کر دے دی۔

فیض رحمن: اس کے باڑے میں بھی مجھے تھوڑا سا بتائیے گا۔

فیض طاہر: دیکھیے وہ خلیج یہ تھا کہ فیض صاحب کی روپورٹ کے بعد ایک Concept تھا۔ بھر بنے نیٹر صاحب نے اس کے لیے

زین میں بھی دے دی۔ وہ بہت اچھی لوکیشن پر تھی، میں President House کے سامنے۔ اب وہاں پر ہیروکریٹ کا چھاپا پڑ گیا اور اُن کو تھیک دے دیا گیا۔ اتنا سست کام ہل رہا تھا کہ بس وہ بنیادی لوگ پہنچتے تھے۔ بہر حال یہ بہت بھی کھانا ہے۔ پھر صدر پاکستان، پریز مشرف کی تظریج پر پڑ گئی تو انہوں نے مجھ سے پوچھا کہ تم اس کے لیے کیا کر سکتے ہو؟ میں نے بھی اپنا بلان پیش کیا تو پھر انہوں نے طے کیا کہ یہ تنظیم نیم کے حوالے کر دو۔ پھر میں نے آرٹس میگری سیست پوری عمارت 18 میٹنے میں بنائی جو بچھلے 18 سال سے نہیں بن پا رہی تھی۔ اس کے بعد اس کا ایک مکمل پروگرام بنایا اور اب الحمد للہ اُس کو دنیا کی دس بہترین گیئریز میں شامل کیا جاتا ہے۔ ہمیں لکھنؤں جب آگئی تو انہوں نے خود طے کیا کہ اس میں سارے پر گرامز ہونے چاہیے۔ اسی طرح سے اور بھی لوگ جاتے اور دیکھتے ہیں۔

فیض رحمن: آج کل اس کی کیا صورت حال ہے، کیا آپ کے پاس کوئی معلومات ہیں؟

فیض طاہر: نہ پوچھیں۔ ہاہاہا۔

میرے وقت میں وہاں بہت سی ائٹر نیشنل کافنر نہیں ہو گیں، بہت بڑے بڑے پر گرامز ہو گئے، کلچرل ڈپلو میسی کو بہترین

طریقے سے آگے بڑھایا گیا لیکن یہ اب نظر نہیں آ رہا۔ یہ سب کچھ چلتا رہنا چاہیے تھا لیکن جو حکومتیں جاتی ہیں، ان کا اچھا

بر اس ب کام غائب ہو جاتا ہے اور نیا کام شروع ہو جاتا ہے۔

فیض رحمن: روانی نہیں رہتی؟

جی بالکل۔ اصولی روائی نہیں رہتی۔ اب سارا ذرور جو ہے وہ ٹیلی ویژن پر ہے۔ ٹیلی ویژن کی پروگرامیں Detoriate ہو گئی ہے۔ آپ دیکھتے ہیں کہ لڑائی جھلکے کی کیفیت کی رہتی ہے۔ جیسے Current Affair کا پروگرام ہے اس میں کوشش کی جاتی ہے کہ کون زیادہ تماثل پیدا کرے اور ایک دوسرے پر سبقت لے جائے۔

نیم طاہر:

نیف رحن: جی۔ جی۔ رینٹن (Rating) زیادہ آجائے۔

جی بالکل۔ اب رینٹن اور اشتہار دینے والا پر اگر اموں کو گائیڈ کر رہا ہے۔ جسے تنظیم پیرا (PEMRA) کو نظرول کرنا چاہیے، وہ بالکل بے نس ہو کے بیٹھا ہو گا۔

نیم طاہر:

نیف رحن: جی۔

سے ایسی چیزیں ہیں جو پاکستان میں تھیک کی جاسکتی ہیں۔

بشرطیکہ جو متعلقہ وزارت (Culture Ministry) ہے اسے گورنمنٹ سنجیدگی سے لے۔ صرف اپنی پروجیکشن پر نہ سکی رہے بلکہ پیشل پروجیکشن کی بھی بات کرے۔

اپنی پروجیکشن ہمی ضروری ہے۔ وہ ضرور کرے لیں اس کا کچھ حصہ ملک کے لیے بھی وقف کرے۔

جی بالکل۔

نیف رحن:

اب میں آخر میں آپ کی ذاتی زندگی کے بارے میں کچھ بات کرنا چاہتا ہوں۔

فاران طاہر۔ ہالی ووڈ (Hollywood) کا بہت بڑا نام ہے، بہت بڑا Reference ہے۔ ماشاء اللہ انہوں نے بہت ترقی کی ہے اور ایک پاکستانی نژاد امریکی ہوتے ہوئے مجھے بہت فخر محسوس ہوتا ہے۔

فاران کے بارے میں کچھ فرمائیے کہ آپ کے کیا جذبات ہیں اُن کے بارے میں؟

مجھے اُس پر بہت فخر ہے اور اس میں وہ ساری باتیں ہیں جو میں نے اپنے شروع میں شعر میں بھی کہی تھی کہ: مرد یہ کاروبار رومند، وہ کوئے یار رومند۔

اُس نے برکلے (Berkley) سے اکنامکس کی ڈگری حاصل کی۔ پھر اُس نے مجھے کہا کہ اب آپ جو چاہتے ہے تو میں نے کر لیا، اب میں وہ کرنا چاہتا ہوں جو میرا جی کہہ رہا ہے۔ میں نے پوچھا: تمہارا کیا جی چاہ رہا ہے؟

کہا: کہ جو آپ کرتے رہے ہیں۔

میں گھبر اگیا کہ اس نلک میں اس بیک گراہنڈ کے ساتھ تم کیا کر پاؤ گے۔ لیکن الحمد للہ اُس نے اتنی محنت کی کہ آپ کو جیت ہو گی کہ اُس نے لوڈرن کے اپنے آپ کو سرداش (Survive) کیا ہے۔ اس نے چھوٹے چھوٹے روپیے، بارز Bars میں کام کیا۔

اُس کا تھیز یکل کام اتنا اچھا تھا کہ پھر اُس کو Harvard سے اسکار شپ بھی ملی۔ پھر اُس نے Harvard میں ماہر رکلا اور وہیں پر پڑھایا گئی۔

اب تو وہ ماش اللہ بڑی بڑی فلمیں جیسے Ironman وغیرہ ہیں، وہاں نمایاں کرداروں میں نظر آتا ہے۔

افسوں کے ساتھ پروگرام کا نام ختم ہو رہا ہے۔ دیے تو آپ جیسی شخصیات کے ساتھ کی گھنٹوں بات چیز کی جا سکتی ہے لیکن پروگرام کا نام آدھ پون گھنٹہ ہی ہوتا ہے۔

اب میں آپ سے اور اپنے ناظرین سے اجازت چاہوں گا۔ بہت بہت شکر یہ۔

”مکنہ گار ہوں کہ اس وقت کی روشنی میں ڈاکٹر یا جنگیر بننے کی خواہش کو پورا نہ کر سکا۔ لیکن آرٹ اور کچھ سے وابستگی احتیاطی کی اور خواہش یہ تھی کہ اس شعبے سے وابستہ افراد ایک باعزت روزگار سے مسلک ہو سکیں کیونکہ اس وقت اس نیلگی سے وابستہ افراد سے بارے میں رویے نہیں ہیں۔“

نیم طاہر کہتے ہیں کہ انہوں نے کافی ہی میں اپنی سمت کا تعین کر لیا تھا۔ اس لیے انہوں نے کافی میں اور دوڑائے کو فرض دیے کی کو شش کی اور اپنے ایم اے کے فائل میں ڈارے کے سلسلے میں انھیں سید امیان علی تاج سے بلے کا موقع میر آیا اور وہ کہتے ہیں کہ اس سے انہوں نے بہت کچھ سیکھا۔

”ڈرامہ میراجون تھا اور تاج صاحب سے بہت رہنمائی ہوئی۔ یا سیمین طاہر سے شادی ہوئی تو وہ بھی ڈارے کی شو قیم حسیں اور پھر دو نوں کو راک فیلڈ سکارا شپ مل گیا اور یو ٹیوری اسی آف کیلے فور نیا سے تھیز اور آرٹ میں باصرہ کرنے کا موقع مار۔“

پاکستان جانے کے بعد انہوں نے آرٹ کو نسل میں فیض صاحب کے ساتھ کام شروع کیا جنہیں نے انھیں ڈارے کا اچھا رجحان دیا۔ اور یہاں سے ان کی کوششوں سے اردو زبان میں اور یمنی ڈرامہ لکھنے کی جانب توجہ دی گئی۔ نیم طاہر نے فیض صاحب کے بعد اس سر آرٹ کو نسل کی عمارت تعمیر کرائی جو ایک بڑی کامیابی تھی۔

پاکستان بیشل کو نسل آف آرٹ کے حوالے سے ان کا نام ہمیشہ سرخیوں میں رہا۔ پاکستان کو نسل فار بیشل انٹریشن لار ہسپر سینٹر کے ڈائریکٹر کے منصب سے شروع کرتے ہوئے انہوں نے متعدد اعلیٰ اور کلیدی منصب سنبھالے۔

نیم طاہر نے سات سال کی تحقیق کے بعد خطے کی تاریخ اور ثقافت کے بارے میں ”ملودہ (MELLUHAS)“ کے ہم سے ایک کتاب بھی لکھی، جسے وہ اپنا ہم کام قرار دھیتے ہیں۔

”بینے لمحوں کی اس گزران میں ہم نے اپنا ایک بڑا نقصان کر لیا اور وہ یہ کہ ہم نے اپنی تاریخ اور روایت کی اچھی چیزوں کو انکر انداز کر دیا اور ان میں سب سے بڑی قربانی ہوئی زبان کی کیونکہ زبان ہماری ثقافتی روایات کی نمائندہ ہوتی ہے۔“ انہوں نے کہا: ”نیم طاہر قوی زبان کے ساتھ ساتھ علا قاتی زبانوں کو بھی بہت اہم سمجھتے ہیں۔ لیکن ان کے بقول، ”ہم نے سب سے زیادہ نقصان اپنی روایت کا کیا ہے۔ ہماری روایت میں بے حد خلوص، بیمار، محیت اور اچھا اندراز لگنگو بھی شامل تھا۔ میں مانتا ہوں کہ وقت کے ساتھ اور مختلف سماجی اور سیاسی حالات کی وجہ سے ان میں تبدیلی آسکتی ہے۔ اور آئن بھی چاہیے کیونکہ زمانہ بدلتا ہے، اور انھیں قول کرنا بھی چاہیے لیکن انسانی رویے جیسے اخلاق اور تہذیب کو انتہائی درجہ برقرار رکھنے کی ضرورت ہے۔ تہذیب نظر انداز ہو تو پھر آرٹ اور کچھ بھی اس کا حصہ ہے۔“

کل اور آج

میر یحییٰ: بہجت جیلانی

مہماں: نیم طاہر

تاریخ: ستمبر 2022, 02

نیم طاہر کو گون نہیں جانتا؟

پاکستان کے قیام کے پہلے 75 برسوں میں مختلف شعبہ بائی زندگی سے تعلق رکھنے والی وہ شخصیات، جو مک کے سیاسی منظر سے تھیں، مختلف مظہر کئی دشوار اور نازک راستوں سے گزر چکی ہیں، ان میں نیم طاہر بھی شامل ہیں۔ فلم ہو، یا ذرا مامہ، پاکستان کا کچھر میں یا پھر ریسرچ اور تحقیقی کام۔ اتنے مختلف شعبوں میں اپنی جد اشناخت بناتے والے نیم طاہر سے پوڑا کا سٹ کے لیے بات ہوئی تو اپنے تعارف کے بارے میں بابا لیٹھ شاہ کا معروف صرعمدہ برائت ہوئے ہوئے یعنی جیاں میں کون؟“

”ہمیشہ وہ کیا جو میرے دل نے چاہا، کبھی کچھ مصلحت کے تحت نہیں کیا۔ جب سے ہوش سنجالا میری دلچسپی آرٹ اور کچھ میں رہی۔“

نیم طاہر کی والدہ بر صغری کی اولین خواتین ڈاکٹروں میں تھیں جبکہ والدہ عالم ہونے کے ساتھ ساتھ اپنے آف سکولز بھی تھے۔



YOUTUBE INTERVIEWS

I	Alk Din Geo Ke Sat 26th July 2020 Guest: Naeem Tahir	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6MeDydd4bU&t=9s
II	Naeem Tahir's Most Interesting Interview Speak Your Heart with Samina Peerzada	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFK8FRx9evM
III	Naeem Tahir Talks About How Faran Tahir Made It in Hollywood & Uni of Berkeley & Oxford Epk News	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7tMGijUX5o&t=77s
IV	G Sarkar with Nauman Ijaz Episode - 18 Naeem Tahir & Ali Tahir 20 June 2021	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fG3jUqrxokI&t=111s
V	Naeem Tahir's Most Interesting Interview with PJ Mir	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fj33NDm3Vdc&t=108s
VI	Cafe DC: Naeem Tahir	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ub7kBb0BRJo
VII	Naeem Tahir Exclusive Interview Actor Dramatist	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvglC1v0_FU&t=3s
VIII	Madam Noor Jehan Live interview video clips along with Naeem Tahir	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0b-10Lhbbwo&t=13s
IX	Naeem Tahir in Neo Pakistan Nabeeha Ejaz Part 1 23 Dec 2020 Neo News	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyGg2ooyGio&t=73s
X	Naeem Tahir on ICTV Irvine Iqbal Quidwai New Program cable TV discuss Gore V Bush 2000	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xF4MzZRoTLg&t=92s
XI	Naeem Tahir Exclusive Hum Log SAMAA TV 12 August 2018	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7hSIQy9M_s&t=59s
XII	Irfan Khoosat Ke Hamrah Naeem Tahir ki Mulaqat aur Sawalat	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvlOVBsGirg&t=76s
XIII	Brunch @ Home 01 03 2020 Guest Naeem Tahir	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98xtVhSQLw
XIV	Yasmeen Ke Sat Pheli Mulaqaat Kaise Hoi?? Naeem Tahir Episode 3	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvAPMM6EcBk
XV	Sehra Naeem Tahir Saheb by Sara Raza Khan	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvsnPKNvOH4

Naeem Tahir's

PICTORIAL

At a Glance

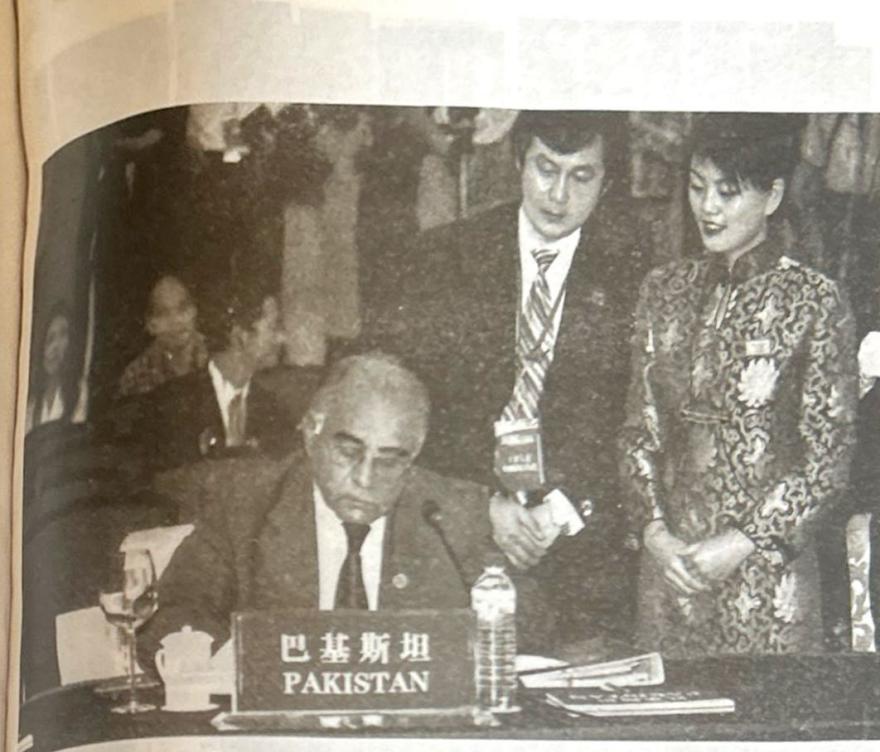
The process of building relations with China continued for decades.

Naeem Tahir represented Pakistan

As Minister of Culture,

at the Asian Culture Ministers Conference, 2005. 7

IN CHINA



The process of building relations with China continued for decades.

Naeem Tahir represented Pakistan
As Minister of Culture,
At "Asian Culture Ministers Conference, 2005."
IN CHINA



(English 1) *views & ideas* 11(Urdu 2) *views & ideas* 11(Urdu 3) *views & ideas* 11Introduction
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...and some inspiring person. The first time I met such a person was on 22nd June 1972. This was the first day of my existence.

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COLLECTORS

Introduction
By Ali Tahir

Some times in life you come across an inspiring person. The first time I met such a person was on 22nd June 1972. This was the first day of my existence.

I am lucky that this was not just a one-time encounter but a daily occurrence. As I got older, the time I spent with this inspiring person stretched on. Understanding the information presented to me by life. Taking decisions and giving the decisions you make not 100% but 200% of your effort, never accepting defeat, taking responsibility for things and completely carrying them through, helping people move forward in life, continuously

learning new things from the people around you and life in general, and working hard – all these traits lie within that inspiring person. I call him Abba and thousands of others know him by one name: Naeem Tahir.

Abba was born on 26th February 1937 in Amritsar, 34 miles from Lahore. At age 5 he moved with his parents to a village, Ali Raza Abad, 12 miles from Lahore. He was an “unschooled” little boy from a village who, in 1957, went on to do his MSC from Government College Lahore, in 1962 he got a Master’s Degree in Theatre Arts from UCLA, in 1963 he became the secretary general of Alhamra Arts Council and with that position he worked tirelessly and succeeded in making theatre commercially available, in 1964 he worked on initially setting up Pakistan Television Corporation and training the staff, in 1976 he became the chairman of Carpet Manufacturers Association and increased Pakistan’s carpet exports by ten folds from 1984 to 1995 he made the Horse and Cattle Show the most large scale festival in Pakistan, in 1997 he became the chairman of Pakistan Fruit Processors Association, in 1989 and then in 2004 he created the SAF Games opening shows; Pakistan’s largest ever event. In 2005 he became the Chief Executive of Pakistan National Council of the Arts; he completed the building of the Art Gallery and alongside he worked to create a softer image for Pakistan in the eyes of the world and implemented over 20 Cultural Pacts.

Behind all these accomplishments there is a long back-story, filled with difficult tasks as well as struggles that he had to overcome, and it is this very story that this book shall narrate.

For the ease of the readers, each section of this book has been divided according to decades of Abba's life. Some moments of this story that are included have been presented in the form of pictures.

So over 81 years ago from today, this picturesque story begins.

Ali Tahir

22 February 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The invaluable contribution and support of friends and family is gratefully acknowledged. Efforts have been on for a decade. Ms Ayesha Taslim, Mr. Gulzar Afzaqi, Agha Sahir Tanvir, Rab Nawaz, Prof. Farzana Mujib, Zafar Ahmad, Usman Rana and others, all contributed, and by the help of recorded interviews and conversations, this narrative was possible.

Naeem Tahir

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Naeem Tahir

Born Naeem Tahir
Amritsar, 26 Feb, 1937

Occupation Actor

Scholar
Public speaker
Columnist
Teacher
Dramatist

Years active 1951-present

Spouse(s) Yasmeen Tahir

Children Faran Tahir
Mehran Tahir
Ali Tahir

Naeem Tahir is Pakistani theatre, film and television actor, scholar, public speaker, columnist, teacher and dramatist. His works are extensively published.

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Career

His research work on the Pre-History of the People of Indus Valley was published by the National Council of the Arts Islamabad. His other publications include 'Views and Comments' a collection of 60 articles published in Daily Times. The volume 2 of this series is under publication and expected to be in the market in early 2014. This volume contains over 100 articles. Also in publication are his articles in English published in different magazines and Newspapers.

His publication of 'Jalsa Urdu Dramay Ka' is in Urdu. It was staged at the World Urdu Conference Islamabad and later at Alhamra, the Lahore Arts Council. Another rare form of an Epic Drama in Urdu has been written by Tahir under the title 'Sael e Rawan'. It is a researched narrative dramatized for stage. The subject is the rise and fall of the Muslim Empire and later freedom struggle in Indo Pakistan Sub-Continent. The narrative covers a period from 1609 to August 1947. The play has been repeatedly staged and is published along with other outstanding works as "Land Mark Theatre" by National Council of the Arts Islamabad.

Naeem Tahir has several other works telecast/ broadcast by Pakistan's networks. His research based work on terrorism was serialized recently as 'Samjhota Express'. Some of the subjects of his recent research include the roots, history and extent of terrorism in Pakistan and India. During his stay in USA in 2000 he was the COO of ICTV, a satellite channel in Urdu and English from Irvine California.

He has written two scripts for future film production namely 'Bombay by Boat' and 'God is Mine'. Mr. Naeem Tahir holds degrees of BSc and MA (Psychology) from Punjab University, and a bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts from the University of California at Los Angeles. As a scholar he continues to update his knowledge. He taught theatre subjects in 60's at the Arts Council Lahore. Later he was appointed Principle Central Television Institute Islamabad where he trained all entrants at the newly established TV networks in Pakistan including Bangladesh (now). He was responsible for developing the curriculum's in consultation with a German and Pakistani faculty. He taught 'Analysis and interpretation' of scripts. He is a visiting lecturer to the highest training centre for senior civil servants in Lahore named until recently as Civil Service Academy].

Tahir has held high positions in the Pakistan Government. His last appointment was as Chief Executive, Pakistan National Council of Arts, Ministry of Culture. He successfully completed and commissioned the National Art Gallery, popularly called, the 'Jewel of Islamabad' and taken note of by the international media. The National Art Gallery project was entirely developed during his tenure during his supervision. The National art Gallery complex is spread over 143000 Sq.Meters construction and houses 14 exhibition galleries, a modern theatre hall and studios. During his tenure he developed a program of Cultural Understanding through Performing Arts with The Kennedy Arts Centre at Washington. It was a three-year program which was partly implemented during his tenure.

Earlier, in his tenure at the Arts Council in Lahore he completed the construction and commissioning of the 'Alhamra Arts Centre' which includes two theatre halls and several art exhibition galleries, music centre and seminar halls. These are some of Mr. Tahir's tangible and durable contributions which shall be remembered for times to come.

In 2005 he was designated to represent Pakistan as the head of delegation in the Asia Culture Ministers Conference in Beijing. He has earlier been head of several cultural, goodwill and trade delegations to Europe, and South Asian Countries. Presently, he is Chairman 'Unesco Theatre Institute Pakistan'.¹⁰¹

Filmography [edit]

- [Khuda Kay Liye](#) (2007)

Television [edit]

Naeem Tahir has done 100s of TV programs as actor, compere, producer and writer. Very recent few drama serials are: [MannMayal](#) (2016) [Sangsaar](#) (2017) [Jannat](#) (2018) [Toujo Nahee](#) (2018)

Noticeable Achievement Highlights
Building the institutions

Institution Building Alhamra

- (a) Purchased 4-acre land for Alhamra complex and started a vigorous *movement for the development of visual and performing arts* from 1963.
- (b) Planned a modern "Arts Center at Alhamra" in consultations with *experts at Universities of California UCLA, World Architects Association and British Theaters Consultants.*
- (c) Requested field Marshall Ayyub Khan for funding the Alhamra arts complex. Funds were granted 1966.
- (d) Maintained "Daily Activity Report" for as long as Naeem Tahir was there. *This is the only archival record.*
- (e) Stopped Punjab governor Sawar Khan, through legal action, in 1983 *from transferring Alhamra to Auqaf Department, Punjab.*
- (f) Completed Hall 1 in 1984 as convener of the Board of Governor of Arts Council, appointed by the Punjab Government, in record time of 6 Months.

PTV

- 1) Trained the TV personal in all aspects in West and East Pakistan from 1968 to 1970, as Principal Central Television Institute Rawalpindi.

NATIONAL ART GALLERY AND PNCA CULTURAL CENTRE AT ISLAMABAD

1. Proposed, and got approval of government for making of National Art Gallery, and PNCA culture Centre Islamabad, in 2005. Completed in record time and inaugurated in 2007.
2. Represented Pakistan as Minister of Culture at Asian Culture Minister Conference in China 2005.
3. Completed the National Art Gallery project in 2007 and got the restructuring of the organization started.
4. Launched movement for Culture diplomacy and revived contacts with 18 countries.

Signed culture programmes with Kennedy Arts Centre Washington for the first time in Pakistan's history.

Proposed "Jinnah Centre for Cultured Understanding" at Washington, USA.

Developed and got approved the performing Arts Center Islamabad including National Theater and Museum of Performing Arts Acquired 7 acres land.

Proposed Arts Center at Gilgit, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta and specified the land required.

FIELD BALLET (Theatre Festival-Horse and Cattle show)

9. From 1984 as Chief Organizer of National Horse and Cattle show and then later on SAF games, created the national show of Field Ballets. Naeem Tahir is the only expert, outside of China or Korea who has created "Field Ballets" with several thousand performers.
10. Contract with Kennedy Art Centre, Washington, USA.
11. Proposal to setup 'Jinnah Centre' at Washington DC.

Trade, Industry and Exports:

12. From 1975 to 1985 Naeem Tahir had a leadership role in Exports of Hand Knotted Carpets. When he started to promote this industry the annual export from Pakistan was about 50 Crores Rupees from Pakistan, In the next ten years it reached 500 crores due to his leadership efforts and participation in international exhibitions.
13. In early 1990s Naeem Tahir decided to set up an Industry for export of value-added fruit products. He set a plant with a capacity of 10tons an hour and opened export market for fruit juice concentrate, particularly from mango.
14. In 1994 led a delegation to UK to enhance exports of fruit processing industries. Delegation including Chairmen of Nestle, Cargill, Golden and several other large industrial groups.

Letter to President of Pakistan

3 April 2004.

Dear Mr. President,

It was indeed wonderful to have met you on April 6th along with Begum Sahiba and your illustrious mother. We sincerely thank you for providing us the opportunity and for the meaningful conversation that ensued. It was refreshing to observe your relaxed and focused style and the deep interest in the progress of the country. After a long time we felt that the country is in the right hands and moving in the right direction.

Your appreciation of our effort in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the 9th SAF games was extremely encouraging. I, our son Ali, Yasmin and my trainers' team of Tahir Theatre Foundation worked hard to contribute the creative segments in the ceremonies. The SAF team headed by Lt. Gen. Arif Hasan has greatly contributed to build an impressive image of a progressive Pakistan. The International papers, BBC, and even Doordarshan have agreed that Pakistan has laid new standards. This is where we take pride - building an image of Pakistan.

I was very impressed by your interest in continued development of the arts in the country and your encouragement to me personally to continue to contribute. Your interest and encouragement set me thinking and I am now taking this opportunity to share some thoughts and to confirm my dedication if you would consider these pursuits worthwhile.

Before I draw your attention towards possibilities in image building of our country through Arts, I am giving a brief introduction of my past activities. I have been associated for almost 50 years in various development activities, in culture, Arts, TV, exports and trade. I was the first Pakistani Principal of the Central Television Institute, I ran training courses in 'Alhamra' Arts Council for 11 years and trained and directed the cultural troupes for the implementation of cultural pacts with China, Indonesia, Iran, Afghanistan Soviet Union and the Commonwealth. I also developed the Alhamra Halls. However, no amount of training will succeed in raising the general level of performing arts unless the market place is created for quality and the talent finds a respectable option of a career. God has been kind and my efforts have always brought good name.

At this time, I feel Pakistan needs an all out effort to promote its image as a progressive, enlightened and forward looking country. For years the image has been damaged and associated with terrorism, smuggling, money laundering and drugs. The great cultural and historical heritage has been forgotten and no one thinks of Pakistan as a pleasant place to be. You have brought a change and have made brave efforts to change the negative perceptions. I, with all my energy, experience and dedication wish to support you and make every possible contribution in building Pakistan's image.

Success in this direction only will bring investors, businessmen, tourists and good foreign relations.

Culture is the biggest attraction for this category of the flow of international investment. I feel we have no other options but to follow the course you have set. I and my family have been in the vanguard in our humble way and feel now is the right time to finally succeed.

I would like to outline and implement an annual program of the highest quality participation in all international festivals, exhibitions, conferences and sports events. These are the platforms where we need to establish our identity as a living, cultured and enlightened people. We have the world's richest heritage. Distinguished scholars like Dr. Dani and Mark Kenoyer will vouch for that. We have amazing talent which blossoms when given an encouraging environment. We need trainers in some fields but that can be arranged.

I also feel it is important that the domestic market place be improved. Improvement in the infrastructure is needed. For example there is not a single organization which has international standard of lighting, sound equipment and of stagecraft available in the country! Therefore within the country we need the upgrading, not by associating amateurs or only government functionaries, but the actual experienced professionals who have a standing and the experience. The TV and Film presentations are not much to talk about, however TV holds a better promise at this time.

We need to layout a program of training, upgrading and guidance to private and government organizations associated with culture in general, and in performing arts, so that they can come up with worth while participation in the international forums.

Finally we need to set up centre of excellence to support and produce the highest quality Programs in all art forms and equip it as a national window of achievement in visual and performing art forms.

These are briefly my thoughts, I believe all this is doable if I have your support and encouragement and the cooperation of the related department is forthcoming without reservations. Together we can change the national image to something we can all take pride in.

Mr. President Sir, if you feel these thoughts of some value then I can elaborate on an implementation plan. I am a field person. I have always proven that I do what I say or claim. Insha-allah we will succeed.

With the very best regards,
Yours Sincerely,

M. Naeem Tahir
Chairman, Tahir Theatre Foundation
Address: 122 – B, Model Town, Lahore
Ph: 5831927, 5884038, Fax: 5831916
Cell: 0300 – 8450416, Email: nttta@yahoo.com

Naeem Tahir works with dedication and sincerity of purpose.

NOT FOR REWARDS OR AWARDS.

1965

Building Bridges with China.



First ever Cultural Delegation of 48 members, on its way to China. Program based on Folk Heritage themes by Naeem Tahir. Music composed by Feroze Nizami. Troupe included Rafi Anwar, Ami Minwala, Akbar Samrat, Faqir Hussain Saga, Munir Sarhadi and Roshan Ara Bokhari.



From East Pakistan, Bulbul Academy contributed its performers led by Ms. Jhunnoo.

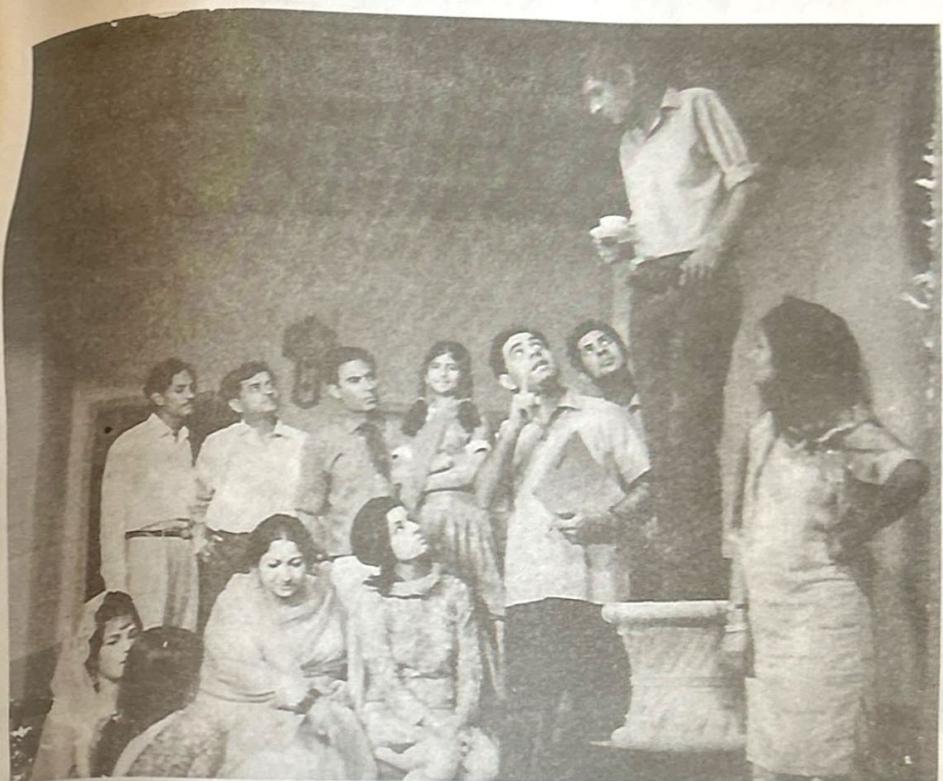
First ever Cultural Delegation to China 1965.



Members Call on Chairman Mao TseDhung
At the 'Great Wall'

280

Directing a drama for Radio Pakistan Lahore



Kennedy Award for 'No Traceur' 1988

Important meetings to promote international Cultural Relations

At President's House Islamabad with President Bush, President Musharaf, first ladies, and other participants



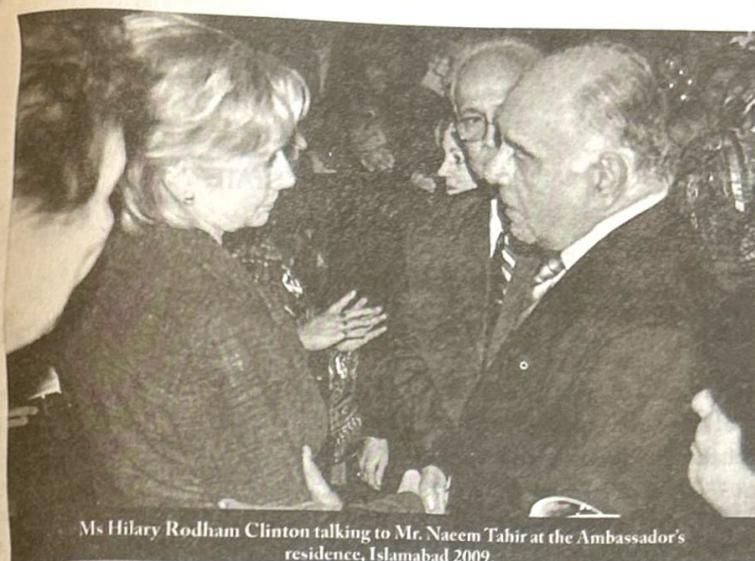
Kennedy Award given to Naeem Tahir

At Kennedy Art Centre Washington, with First ladies, Laura Bush and Sehba Musharaf and Micheal Kaiser, Chiarman and Executives of Kennedy Center



To Naeem Tahir
With best wishes

Laura Bush



Ms Hilary Rodham Clinton talking to Mr. Naeem Tahir at the Ambassador's residence, Islamabad 2009.



Asim Yar, Naeem Tahir, PM Jordan Adnan Badran, PM Pakistan Shaukat Aziz, HSY
At World Economic Conference 2007



THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON
November 24, 2009

Mr. Naeem Tahir
Chief Executive and Director General
Pakistan National Council of the Arts
Plot #5, Jinnah Avenue, F5/1
Islamabad, Pakistan

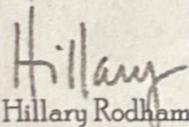
Dear Mr. Tahir:

Thank you very much for graciously hosting the town hall meeting at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts during my recent visit to Islamabad. It was a pleasure to have this important discussion in such a beautiful setting.

I would also like to thank you for the book, *Melluhas of the Indus Valley*. Your thoughtful gift will serve as a fond reminder of my trip.

With appreciation and best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,


Hillary Rodham Clinton

Yahya Jaffar
Chairman
World Economic Conference 2001

Ms Hillary Rodham Clinton,
Secretary of State

Dear Ms Hillary Clinton,

Lahore, March 6, 2010

It was indeed a very pleasant surprise to receive your letter of Nov.24, 2009. The letter was redirected to my Lahore address.

I am grateful for your expressed interest in my book 'Melluhas- the people of the Indus Valley.' I am also very happy that you found the National Art Gallery Islamabad, built during my tenure as the Chief Executive of Pakistan National Council of Arts, worth attention and appreciation. It was certainly an appropriate venue for your town hall meeting.

I have now shifted to Lahore and as I mentioned during the brief conversation with you at the ambassador's residence, I am busy writing a script for the film based on the research on the roots of terrorism in Pakistan. I have been encouraged by the Inter Services Public Relations of Pakistan Army to develop the script for a film, and hopefully they will find funding to make it. As a Pakistani American it is close to my heart that the great effort made by the Pakistan Army with the American support be truly understood and appreciated. The gap of understanding among the people here needs to be filled to ensure the goodwill for the American people. I hope to complete this manuscript before my return to USA later in the summer.

My sincere thanks once again, and best wishes to you for the future.

Naeem Tahir
Tahir Haveli,
122 B, Model Town, Lahore.
Email: nttusa@gmail.com. Phone 9242 35831927 Cell 03334638010.

Note: Enclosed, a photograph.

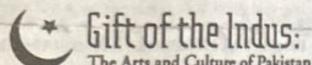
The Kennedy Center

THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 21, 2006

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts
announce launch of cultural collaboration with Pakistan
on the World Wide Web



www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/pakistan

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts today announced the launch of a new web site—Gift of the Indus: The Arts & Culture of Pakistan (www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/pakistan)—at a special ceremony with First Lady of the United States Laura Bush; First Lady of Pakistan Begum Sehba Musharraf; Kennedy Center President Michael M. Kaiser and Kennedy Center Vice President for Education Darrell M. Ayers, as well as Washington-area high school students. The event also included a brief performance by world-renowned Pakistani tabla player, Sattar Khan “Tari” accompanied by Ghulam Farid Nizami on the sitar.

“Today we are celebrating a milestone in a relationship between the Kennedy Center and the people of Pakistan,” said Mr. Kaiser, who made his first trip to Pakistan earlier this year at the suggestion of Mrs. Bush. He began discussions with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts and its leader, Mr. Naeem Tahir, about ways they could work together to strengthen the arts infrastructure of that nation. Since that first trip six months ago, a great deal has been accomplished, including: developing a plan for cooperative efforts, conducting the first arts management seminar in Islamabad, planning a collaborative children’s theater project and creating the web site being launched today.

“We believed this web site was central to our joint mission of building awareness of the beauty and richness of Pakistani culture because it gives people around the world, especially young people, a look at this remarkable cultural heritage,” Mr. Kaiser said.

“Learning about other cultures and countries is at the heart of diplomacy,” said Mrs. Bush. “By learning about Pakistani music, literature and theater, we also learn about the people of Pakistan and their rich heritage.”

“Diversity has been the essence of our people and traditions,” said Mrs. Musharraf. “The people of Pakistan are making a real contribution in preserving the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the country. These can be seen in our art, architecture and literature.”

“We are making a great beginning in the right direction. Thanks to the vision of President Musharraf and President Bush. I am determined to take this vision of friendship and peace forward through better understanding,” said Mr. Tahir.

-more-

The site, designed for young people (especially ages 13-18) in the United States, Pakistan and around the world to learn more about the arts and culture of this South Asian nation, is the result of a unique partnership between the Kennedy Center and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

The site is divided into three main areas:

- The Arts of Pakistan; where visitors can learn about music, theater, dance and visual arts.
- The Nation, which focuses on the land and people of this diverse country.
- Culture and Daily Life, which is about life at home and public life – family, friends, school and cultural traditions.

Each section is filled with information as well as audio and video clips, text and images that bring the arts and culture of Pakistan to life. In addition, there are areas throughout the site to help visitors learn more about the Pakistani language and culture.

Finally, a special blog called *Mehlif*—the Urdu word for a gathering place—has been set up for students to blog about the arts and culture of Pakistan and the United States. With guest moderators in the U.S. and Pakistan, this online space will promote and provide opportunities for cultural exchange and awareness between students—specifically teenagers living in those countries, or with a deep interest in the arts of South Asia. The goals include giving space to the exchange of ideas and information about each culture and its arts, as well as to encourage bicultural students living abroad to share their perspectives.

ARTSEDGE

ARTSEDGE (<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>), a program of the Kennedy Center’s Education Department, is one of the nation’s leading creators of free arts education materials for teachers, students and families, producing educational media resources delivered across multiple platforms—video, audio, interactive and print—that work together to create an immersive arts experience. From media-rich interactives, innovative performance guides and Podcasts for young audiences to free, standards-based lesson plans and guidelines for arts-based instruction for educators, ARTSEDGE serves teachers, students, and families by supporting teaching and learning in, through and about the arts.

THE KENNEDY CENTER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Kennedy Center has established one of the most extensive arts education programs in the world—reaching more than 11 million people across the nation each year. Since its establishment in 1972, the Kennedy Center’s Education Department has dramatically expanded its education programs. Young people, teachers, artists, and families participate in and use the Kennedy Center’s many innovative and effective education standards-based resources and programs in person, in print, via satellite and on the internet through performances, classes, lecture/demonstrations, open rehearsals, residencies, seminars, master classes, professional development, and advanced training for young actors, dancers, musicians, and arts administrators. The Kennedy Center’s Education Department is committed to promoting higher standards for national performing arts education programs and policy.

PAKISTAN NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE ARTS

The Pakistan National Council of the Arts is entrusted with the role of promoting the visual and performing arts throughout Pakistan. It safeguards the interest of the community, promotes and projects the national heritage and plays a crucial role in building a positive image for Pakistan on the domestic and international arena. Aims, objectives and functions determined by its founders are incorporated in the PNCA Act of 1973 that categorically give the council the posture of a policy-making and coordinating agency in the field of culture and the arts.

Stove Boat Productions, a media services and web development company in Washington, D.C., was a creative partner in the development of Gift of the Indus: The Arts and Culture of Pakistan.

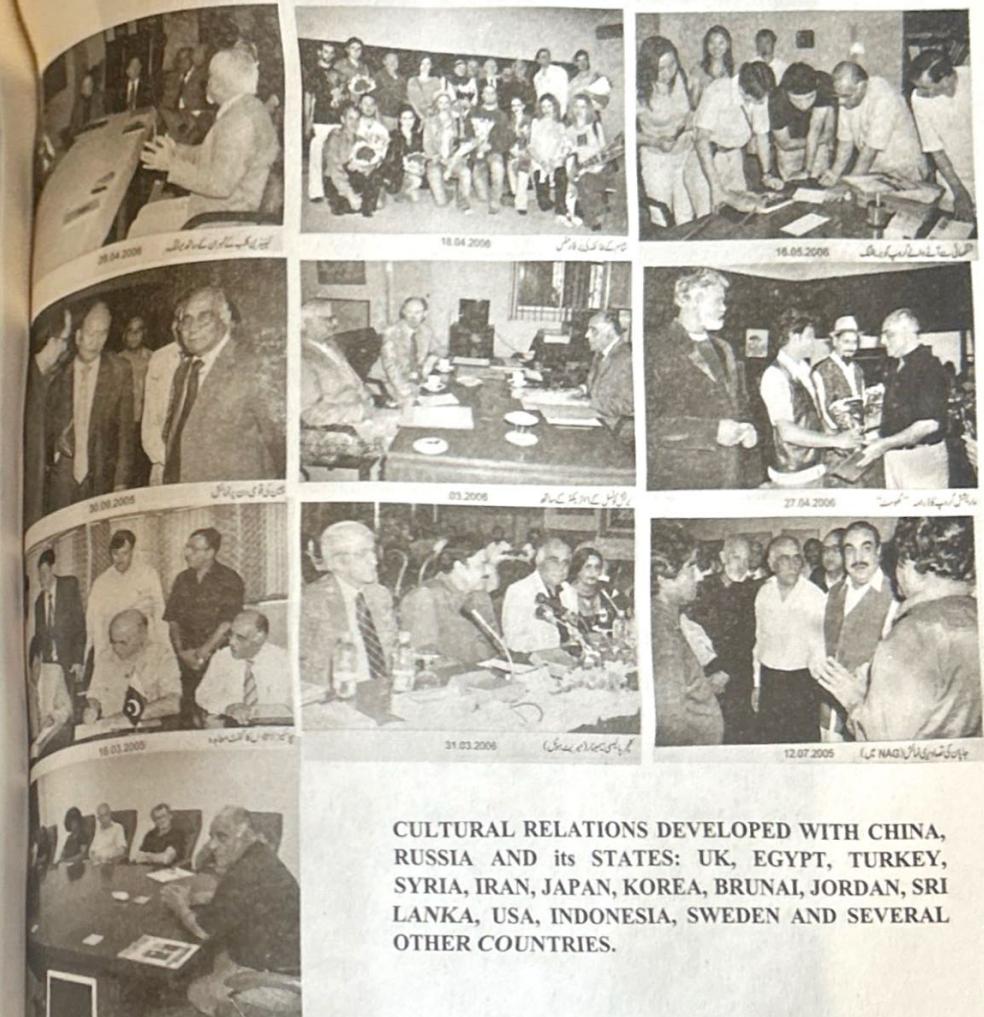
For more information about The Gift of the Indus: The Arts and Culture of Pakistan, please visit www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/pakistan.

###

PRESS CONTACT: Rae Bazzarre, 202/416-8441, rbazzarre@kennedy-center.org

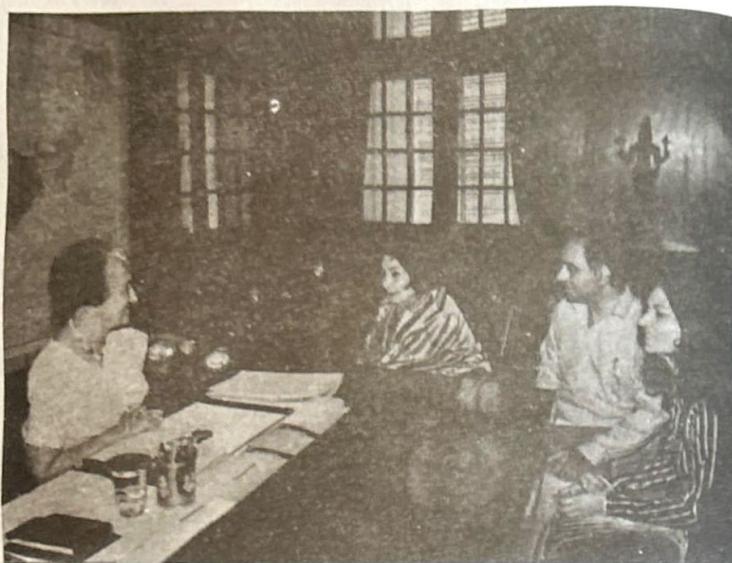


With Ms. Sheila Jackson Lee Chairperson,
Pakistan Caucus, US, Senate (At Islamabad)



CULTURAL RELATIONS DEVELOPED WITH CHINA,
RUSSIA AND its STATES: UK, EGYPT, TURKEY,
SYRIA, IRAN, JAPAN, KOREA, BRUNAI, JORDAN, SRI
LANKA, USA, INDONESIA, SWEDEN AND SEVERAL
OTHER COUNTRIES.

WITH INDIRA GANDHI IN DELHI



In Manila, with Clair Pamment, and Saba Hameed for UNESCO congress

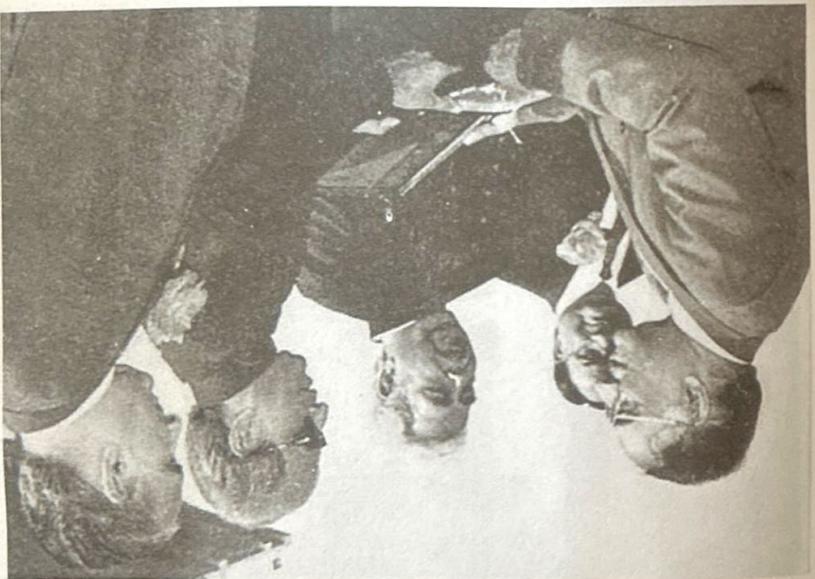


With Marlon Brando (Godfather fame) From Hollywood



Indonesian dignitary and Mian Yasin Wattoo.





With President Farooq Laghari



With Prime Minister Meraj Khalid

VIEWS, INTERVIEWS AND PICTORIAL

CONSULATE GENERAL OF PAKISTAN
P.O. BOX NO. 340
DUBAI (U.A.E.)

NO. P01-9/95/95
APRIL 30, 1997

APRIL 25, 1997 was extraordinary and splendid.

The Indus Valley Heritage Show conceived and presented by you at Dubai World Trade Centre on April 25, 1997 was extraordinary and splendid.

Presentations of this nature are not easy to come by. I realize that behind these minutes of top quality presentation, countless hours of hard work have been put in. Your experience and your professionalism was evident throughout.

As Pakistan's representative in Dubai I felt proud when the diplomatic corps and other members of the community were equally profound in their praise. It is a tribute to your commitment to excellence. I recommend that you should explore the possibilities of presenting this year in other countries also. Golden jubilee Year in other countries also.

Please accept my heartfelt congratulations for making us feel proud. Also convey our appreciation to each member of your troupe whether they worked on or off the stage.

With best wishes.

Consul General
(Sajjad Ashraf)

Yours sincerely,

Fax No. (92 42) 583-1927
Lahore - Pakistan
Tahir Theatre Foundation
Chairman,
Mr. Naeem Tahir



With Begum Nusrat Bhutto



With Governor Punjab Gen. Jillani



With President Musharraf and Begum Sehba Musharraf



With President Asif Zardari

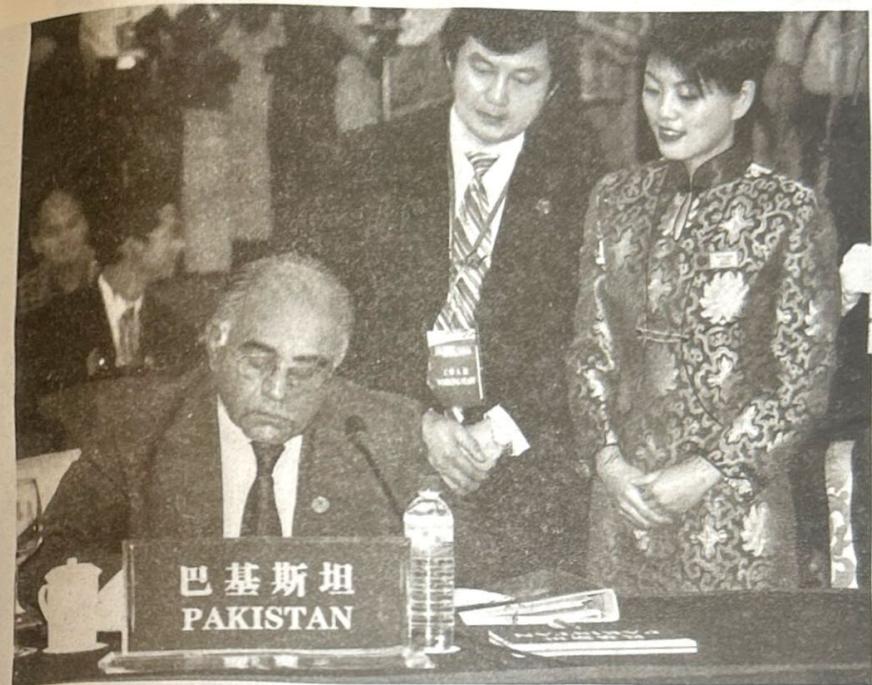


With Chief of Army Staff Gen. Raheel Sharif



The process of building relations with China continued for decades.

Naeem Tahir represented Pakistan
As Minister of Culture,
At Asian Culture Ministers Conference, 2005.





Received by Governor, Fushong Province



Nurturing the tree of friendship, with Iftikhar Raja from Pak Embassy.



JINNAH CENTER
For
Cultural understanding

A desire for the promotion of better cultural understanding between the people of Pakistan and the people of United States of America is the basis of this concept.

Looking at the current patterns of building relationships between nations several areas are explored, public diplomacy is a very effective tool i.e. reaching out to the public of host country through art and culture. All efforts can prove be short lived, unless the people learn to understand and respect and give 'space' to each other, by developing a 'cultural' understanding of each other. Relations based on business deals, defense needs, and global emergencies are likely to be short lived but relations based on cultural understanding are more durable. All countries go through waves of some short lived phenomena of love, hate, or preferences like white, yellow or black. But relations on the basis of deeper human understanding survive.

Peace and tolerance are the real essence of the Pakistani society. In this atmosphere Visual Arts, Sculpture, Music, Dance, Drama, and all related forms flourished. This is the image that Pakistan needs to continue to project in the world and remove the impressions created by recent wave of extremism.

For this objective we need to establish a "Jinnah Center for Cultural Understanding". It's an ideal time to undertake this project and we have ideal place for that i.e. the old chancery building, the building is not only of historical importance but also ideally located. It is maintained in good condition but not put to a significant use. It can be used as an annex of the embassy and dedicated to promoting Pakistan's art and culture.

My preliminary assessment is that a move to establish a cultural center will be enthusiastically supported by the Diaspora as well the local friends of Pakistan. Such a center will be the heart of intellectual discourse, place of presentation for

visual and performing arts, lectures, research, social get together at special occasions, media interaction and social media penetration. It can also be a link between the Jinnah Chairs at different universities and much more.

beyond the minimum financial sustenance by the Pakistan Government, further financial requirements can be met by the Diaspora and friends of Pakistan.

A detailed working program and organizational system of the 'steering committee' and 'sponsors group' can be worked out later.

I shall be glad to cooperate and contribute my time for the success of this nationally important project. I am quite hopeful that we can start functioning with an appropriate program by August 14, 2016.

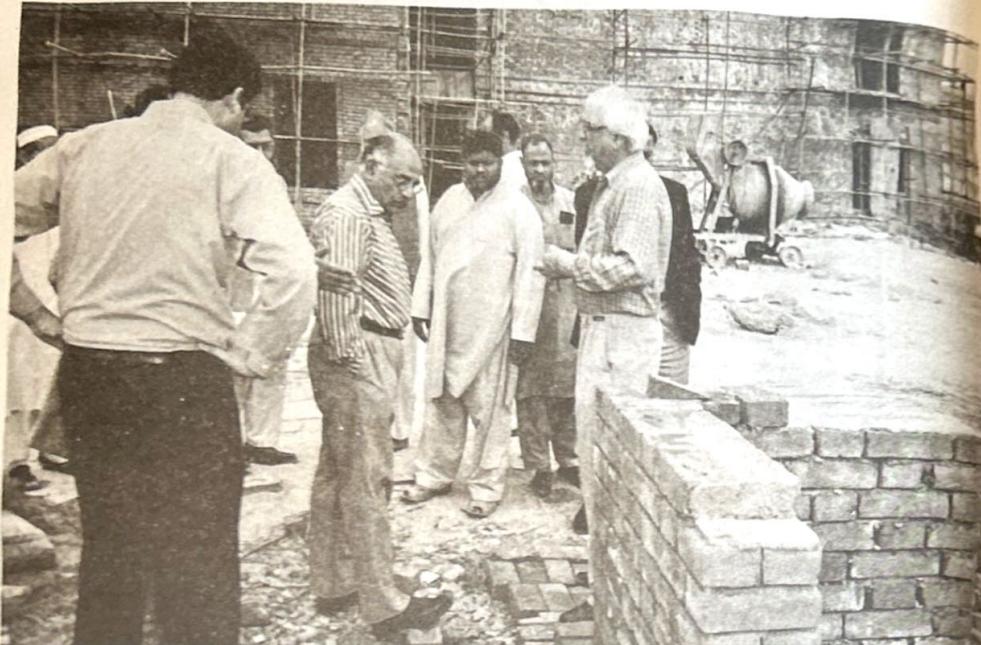
Naeem Tahir.

Cell Pakistan: 03334638010
 Address: 122 B, B block Model Town Lahore, Pakistan

April 5th, 2016

Note: from 1969 – 72: Naeem Tahir was asked to join Ministry of Information as Joint Secretary and was loaned to Pakistan Television as

Principal Central Television Institute at Chaklala, for training the officers/producers and technicians of the Television Network.

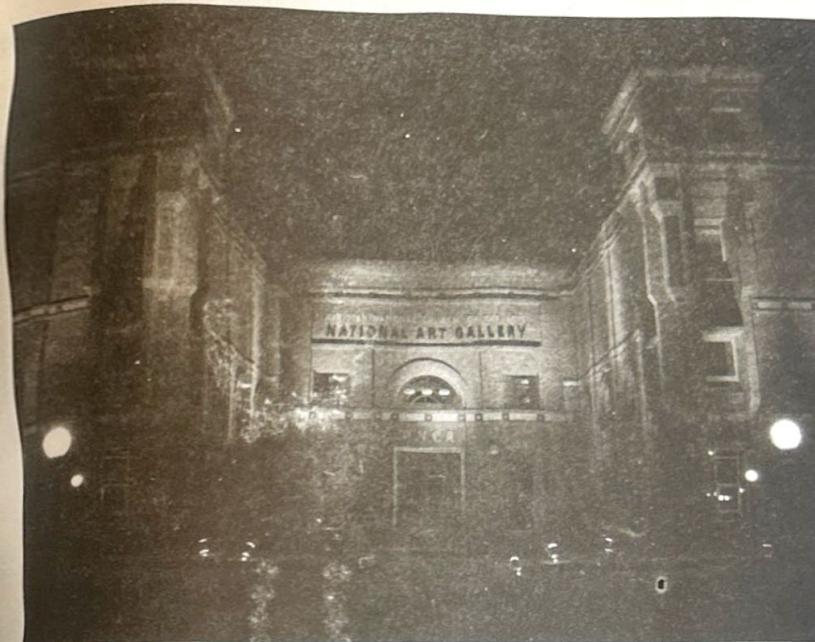


05.04.2005

اے جی کی سائیٹ پر بیٹھنگ

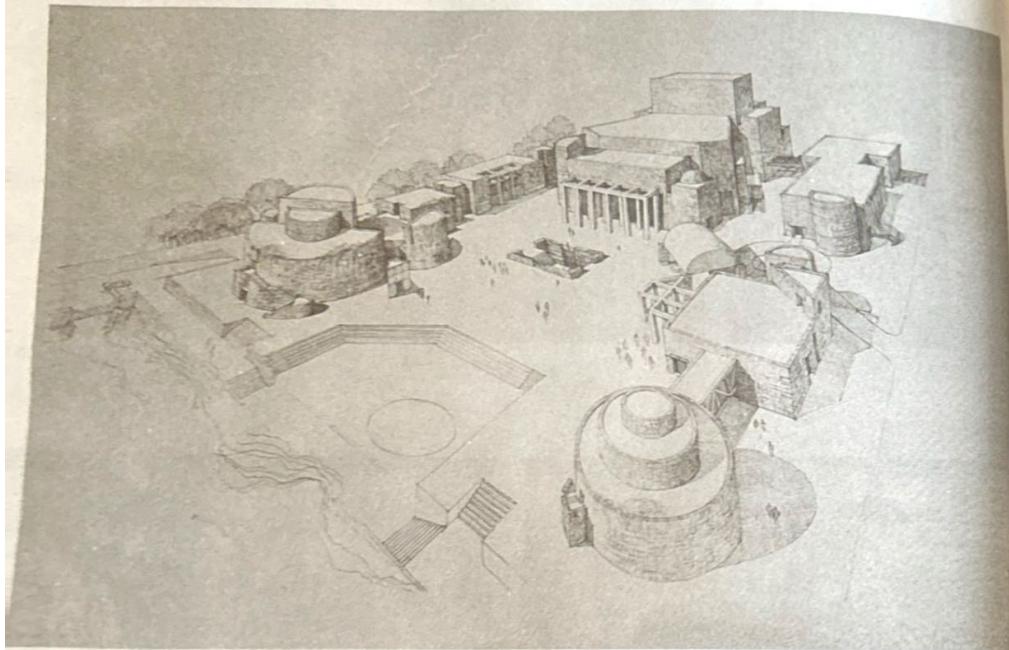
The NATIONAL ART GALLERY and building of Pakistan National Council of the ARTS (2005 – 2007)

National Art Gallery and PNCA Art Centre inaugurated August 17, 2007, built by dedicated efforts of Naeem Tahir.



NAEEM'S VISION FOR FUTURE:
National Theatre Complex in Islamabad.

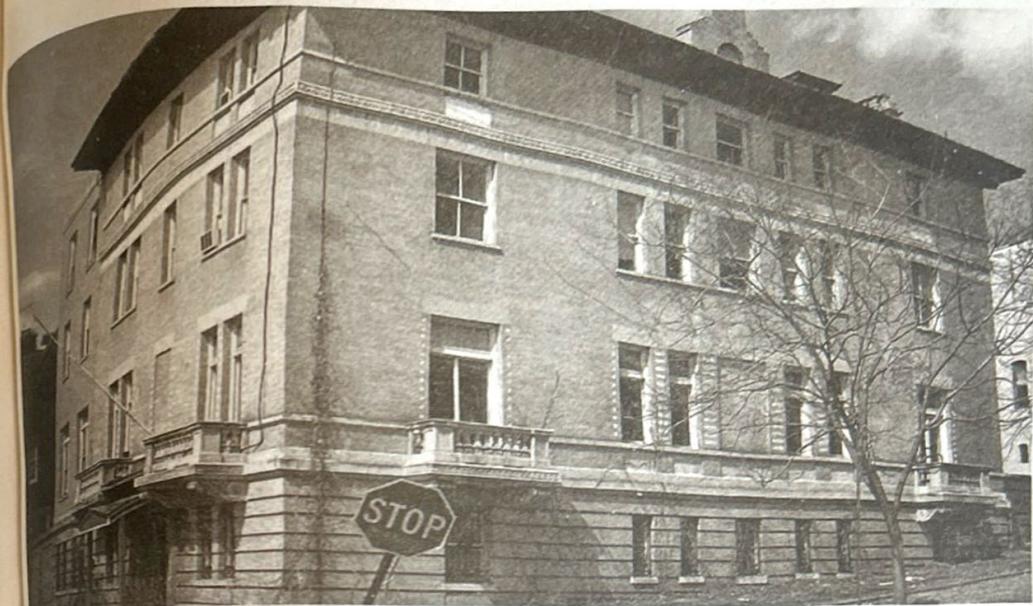
In 2007, Naeem Tahir succeeded in getting the approval of the Government to build a "National Theatre Complex". The project would include a National Theatre with allied facilities and a museum of Performing Arts. 7 Acres of land was allotted at Shaker Parian area. The design competition was won by Nayyar Ali Dada Architect. It is awaiting the start of construction.



Plan of National Theatre designed by Nayyar Ali Dada

Naeem Tahir has proposed that the old historical building at Washington USA owned by Pak Embassy be converted into an active organization

"JINNAH CENTRE FOR CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING"
Even offered to raise \$5 million for it.

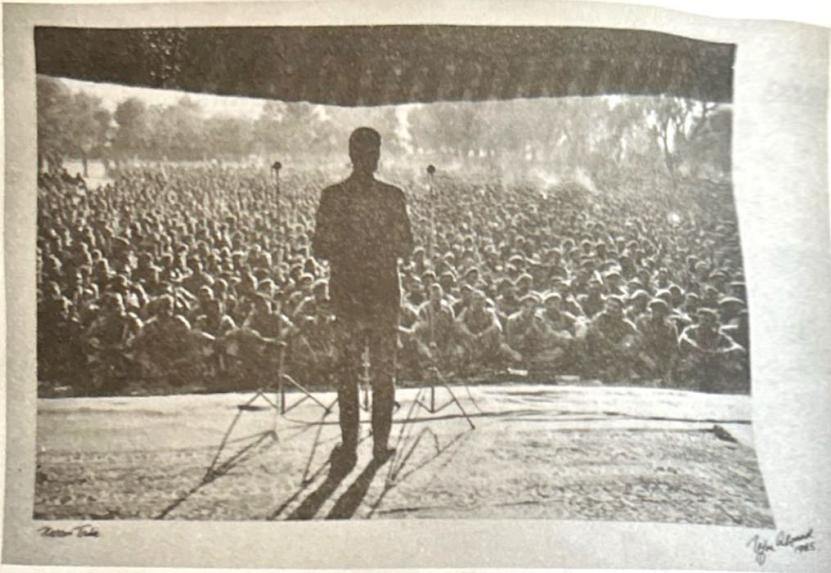


Proposed: JINNAH CENTRE FOR CULTURE

Abandoned building of Pakistan Consulate in Washington. If not turned into Jinnah Centre, it may be confiscated by USA for negligence.

1965

On a WAR Front



Naeem Tahir dedicated himself completely to defend. He visited frontlines and supported the Jawans. He took groups of artists to show full commitment and solidarity. He wrote for radio the famous plays "Molvijee" and "Khem Karan"

1965



310

Complete history

Glimpses of TV, Stage, Radio, Film work, and family.

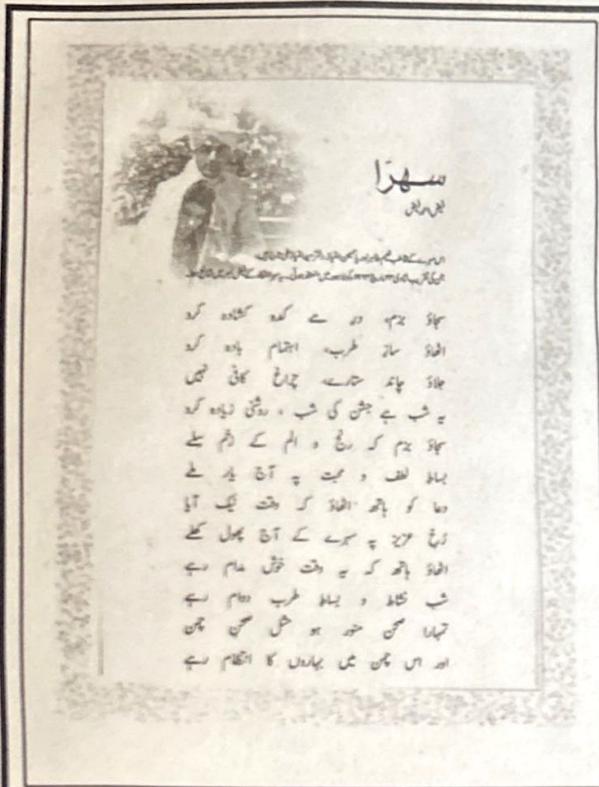
1954 Radio

جشن تسلیم۔ ریڈیو پاکستان لاہور کی پیشکش
(۲۳ جنوری ۱۹۵۴)



وہ فلم کا جس کی اولیٰ حشیش تسلیم کے مختسب کیلئے میں سنی جائیں کی
ڈائیکٹر: مسٹر ڈیکٹر، میکر: مسٹر ڈیکٹر، نیم طاہر، مددگار: مسٹر ڈیکٹر
کامیکس: مسٹر ڈیکٹر، سینے: مسٹر ڈیکٹر

SEHRA: Written by Faiz Ahmad Faiz,
Sung by Nur Jehan on March 24, 1962



Faiz Ahmad Faiz



Madam Nur Jehan

Complete Family



Naeem Tahir with his immediate family





Faran Tahir, Halim Tahir, Margret Kelly Tahir, Yasmin & Naeem Tahir



Naeem & Yasmin and the Cat in "Begum Sahiba ki Billi" a Taj Classic

Sitting: Ms Sahir Rahim, Yasmin Tahir, Madam Shabnam, Naeem Tahir
 Standing: Aamir Qurashi, Faisal Rehman, Ali Tahir, Wajeha Tahir



Met together with Ms Shabnam on her return to Lahore

With the Great Indian Star Kamani Kaushal at Yasmin and Naeem's residence at Model Town. Zeba and Mohammad Ali also seen.



Stage Drama "Mujrim Kon?" at Alhamrah (1958)



Standing: Izhar Kazmi, Sakander Iqbal, Shoaib Hashmi, Yasmin Tahir, Kamidar, Sikander's Brother
 Sitting: Tariq Hameed, Sikander's Brother, Khalid Aziz, Naeem Tahir, Stage Manager, Chokidar

Stage Drama "App Ki Tarif" at Alhamrah and many Cities from 1961...



Naeem Tahir as "Akbar" in stage play "ANARKALI" at Alhamra HALL-1 in 1981
 Firdos Jamal, Naeem Tahir, Sabiha Khanum



With Dilip Kumar at the residence of Mr. Javed Qureshi, CS PUNJAB





Nur Jehan & Naeem Tahir in PTV
Interview Program On Khurshid Anwer



V.O.A, Cafe DC Program



As CEO of ICTV USA



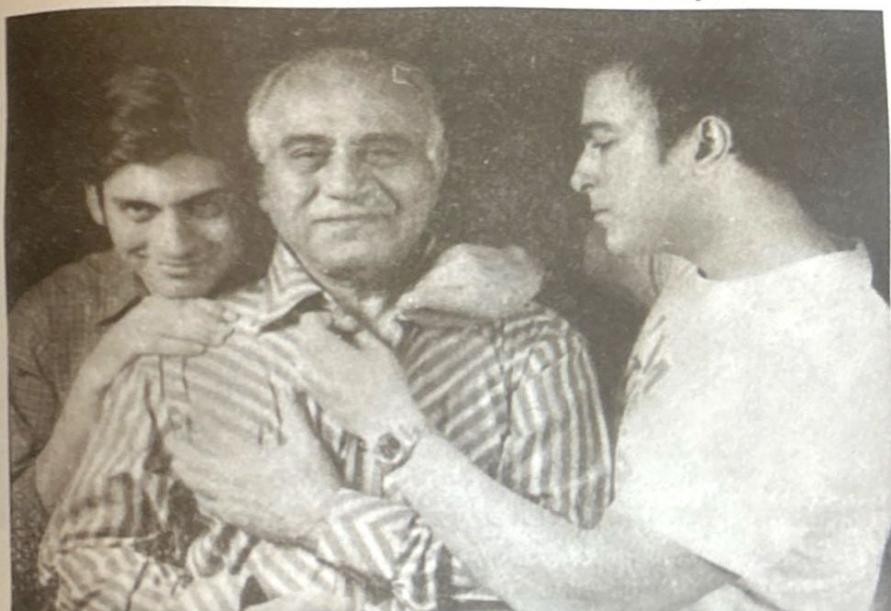
Ahmad Rushdi Live
with Naeem Tahir on PTV



Raat Gaye Naeem Tahir
on PTV 23/01/2018



With Fawad K and Shan in Film "Khuda ke Liyae"



Cast of Khuda kae Liyae

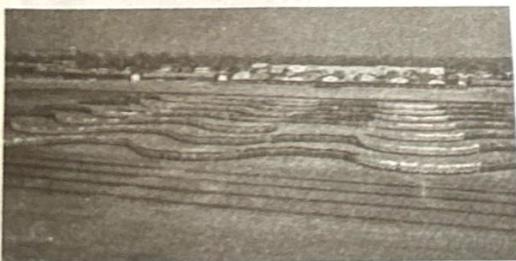
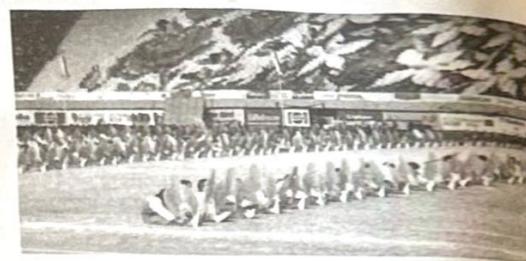
With Actor Shan and Seemi Rahal in Film "Khuda ke Liyae"

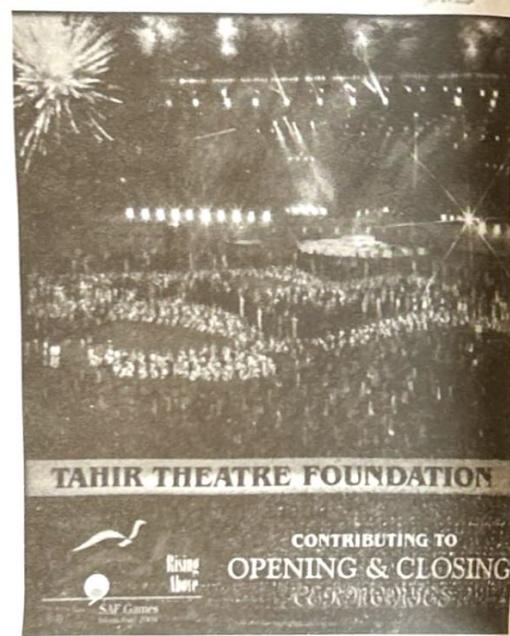
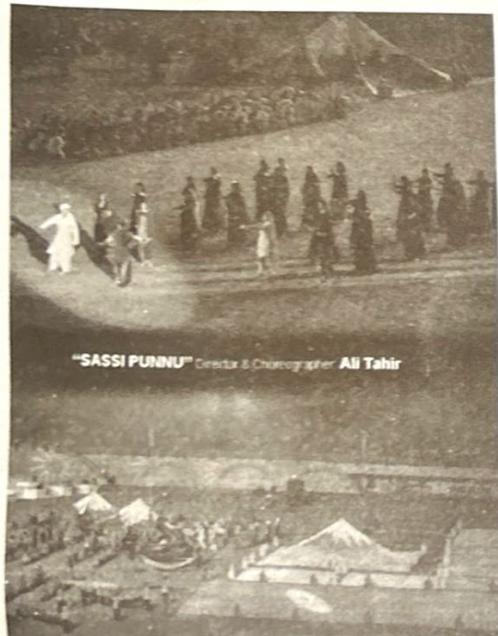
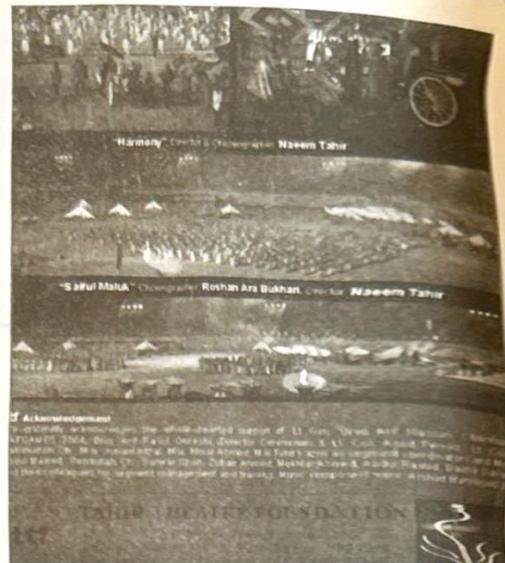
'FIELD BALLET'

Callesthenic Creations

An inventive Art form of Naeem Tahir, and learnt by his students. Only Chinese and Koreans tried successfully. Naeem Tahir crated several shows at National Horse and Cattle Show and at opening of South Asia Games in 1984 and 2004. He is internationally respected and admired for it.

Naeem Tahir's youngest son Ali Tahir has learnt and created "Sassi Punnoo" Field Ballet in Saff Games 2004.





**PRESIDENT'S MEDAL FOR "OUTSTANDING SERVICES"
SPECIALLY CONSTITUTED AND AWARDED TO NAEEM TAHIR**





Letter From President of Pakistan

Page No. 3



THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

General M. Zia-ul-Haq

ISLAMABAD
2012/2/4 PRESIDENT
GS Rajab 1407 A H
06 March 1987

Mr Naeem Tahir
212-D Block
Model Town
Lahore

Dear Mr. Naeem Tahir,

The school children's display on the opening day of the National Horse and Cattle Show, on 01 March 1987, was most heartwarming. In fact, this event was so impressive that it actually stole the show. While I was conveying my feelings of delight and admiration, in this respect, to the Chief Minister Punjab, he informed me that the formidable task of collecting and training the large number of school children in such a short time was accomplished entirely due to your untiring effort, dedication and professional skill as an artiste. Please accept my compliments.

Although I have written to the Chief Minister Punjab separately in this connection, I shall appreciate it if you will also convey my personal appreciations to all the Headmasters/Principals of the schools whose children participated in the display.

I am enclosing a small gift of a watch for you as a token of my personal appreciations of the magnificent job done by you in arranging the display, which was a superb demonstration of physical culture, discipline, harmony and team work.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

General
(M. Zia-ul-Haq)

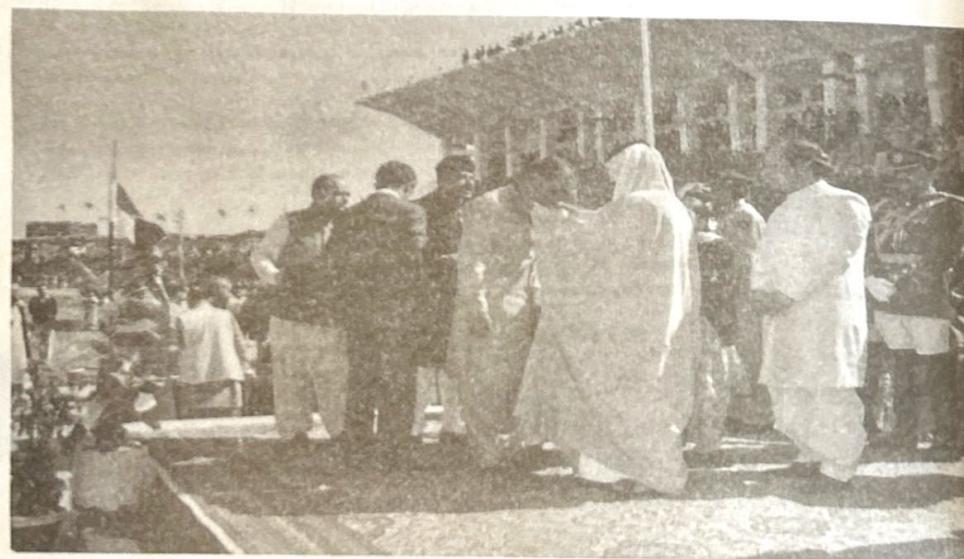
Receiving Awards from Dignitaries



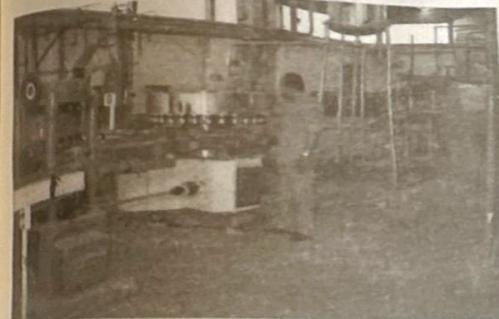
Industry and Trade



As Chairman Fruit Processing Industries with members including
Nestle, Cargill and Shezan.



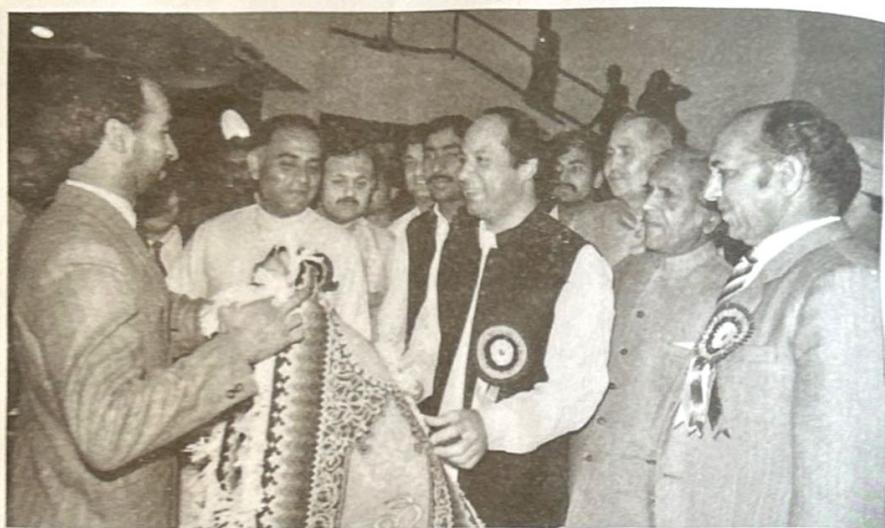
Inspecting his fruit processing plant
"Indus Fruit Products Ltd".



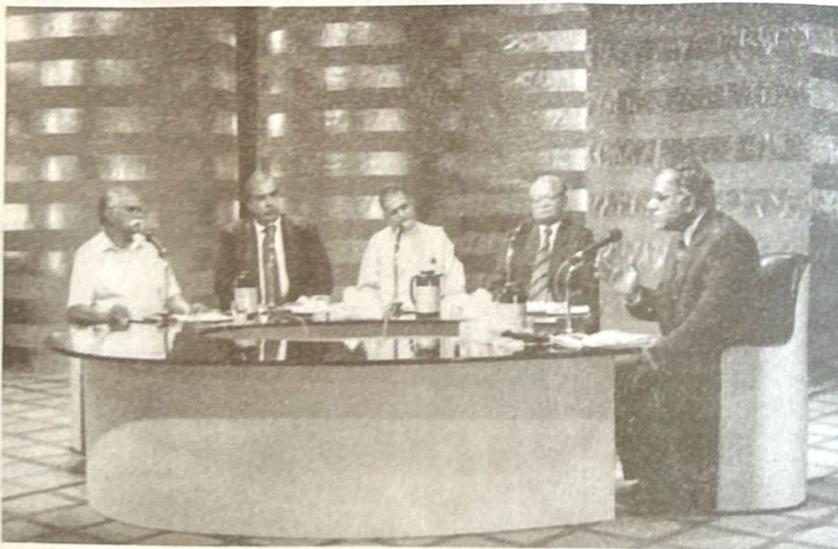
Leading a delegation to UK as
Chairman Fruit Processing Industries.



Naeem Tahir, Chairman International Hand knotted Carpet Exhibition, receives Mian Nawaz Sharif, Punjab Finance Minister



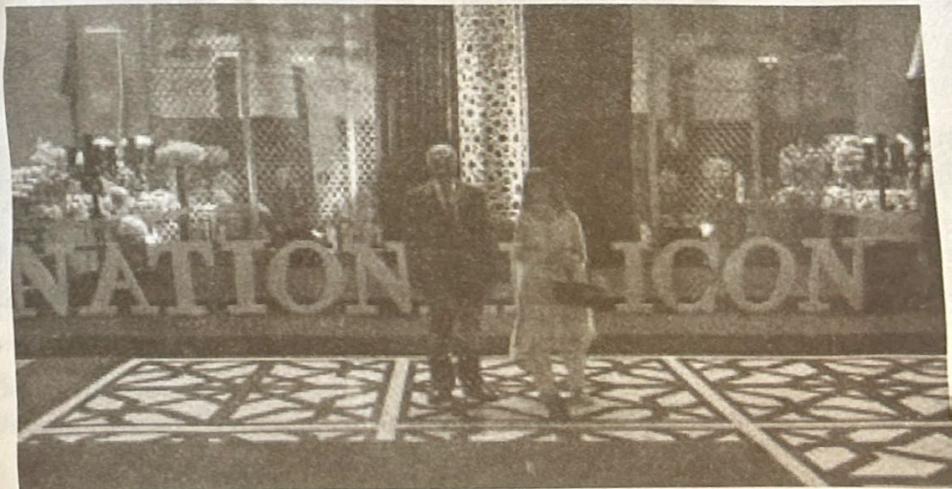
"Made in Pakistan" a PTV series of discussions to promote exports,
Conducted by Naeem Tahir



Some Public Awards



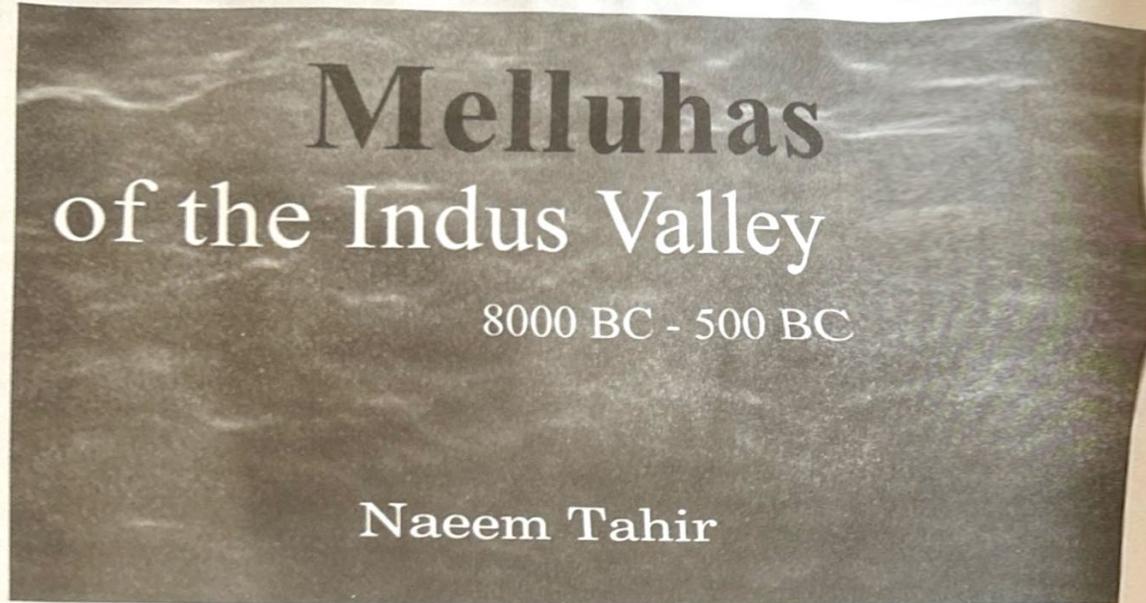
Awarded "NATIONAL ICON" by Ministry of Information in May 2018



PUBLICATIONS:

Naeem Tahir is extensively published. Some of his books are:

1. "Aap ki Tareef" a three act play written together with Yasmin Tahir
2. Views and Comments vol.1 vol 2.
3. Sael e Ravan an historical stage play
4. Samjhota Express TV Serial
5. Mohammadi Begum research work.
6. Well known research work: "Melluhas" the people of Indus valley 8000BC to 500 BC



COMMENTS OF:

(1) Dr Ahmed Hasan Dani FRAS SI, HJ. Distinguish Archeologists, Historian and linguist.
 (2) Fazal Dad Kakar -DG- Archaeology
 (3) Jonathan Mark Kenoyer: Prof. Anthropology, University of WESCONSON, Madison USA.

'Melluhas of the Indus Valley' is based on ten years of research, dedication and hard work by Mr. Naeem Tahir. In the words of the author, "it is the story of the rise and fall of the People of the Indus Valley and their disappearance". It starts off 8000 years before now and covers up to 500 BC. Books hitherto written on this subject mostly uncover the city plans and highlight the architectural grandeur of our ancestors. This study for the first time speaks about the people who were instrumental in building our great past. Full of engrossing illustrations, maps, photographs and little-known facts about the ancient Indus people, this book is both valuable reference material and a readable book of general interest for all those who take pride in the international heritage. The author has based his narrative on solid researches in Archaeology, Anthropology, Prehistory and Mythologies. Mr. Tahir has been frequently in touch with me. I am happy to say that I was able to make some contribution to his study by providing materials from my personal library and answer some of his questions.

I am sure the readers will find this book a significant contribution to the subject and a good investment to understand Ancient Pakistan.

Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani
Professor Emeritus, Quaid-i-Azam University

Mr. Naeem Tahir has an exceptional interest and a deep study of our national heritage. He has made a thorough study of archaeological data and has also looked at many other sources to reconstruct the contribution of the people of Indus Valley Civilization. The great value of this book lies in creating a comprehensive profile of the people who developed one of the greatest civilizations of humanity. It could not have been easy to look with such depth to the prehistory of 2 million years and also to co-relate with other disciplines like anthropology, mythologies, literature, to name a few. Most interestingly, he has tried to lift the veil from a period

sometimes believed to be 'dark'. The 'dark' period covered the times when little was known of what had happened to the great people after building a great civilization and one wondered, where they disappeared to! There are valuable clues and hypotheses given by Mr. Tahir which will certainly invite further research.

It was long and hard work and no doubt his 10 years of study has produced a remarkable document. It is written in his inimitable literary style that will hold the attention of a wide readership.

Dr. Fazal Dad Kakar
Director General, Archaeology & Museums, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad

Several years ago, in late 1990s, Mr. Tahir was present in one of the talks I gave in Sacramento. He was at that time engaged in this study. Later he sought confirmation of the dates of the Masks reproduced in my latest book "Ancient Cities of Indus Valley". I am very happy to know that he has finally completed his study and it is now available to the general public. There are not many books on the subject of the real inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilization. There are many indications that they were recognized as "Melluhas" by the contemporary civilizations, particularly the Mesopotamians. Mr. Tahir's study and narrative of the disappearance of the Melluhas is of particular interest.

There is indeed great need of such books based on reliable data of archeological and other scientific disciplines written in a manner that makes the lay reader enjoy the contents. This book "Melluhas of the Indus Valley" fulfills this need.

Dr. Jonathan Mark Kenoyer
Professor of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Early Days.

Making of a 'Legend'

1947



1954

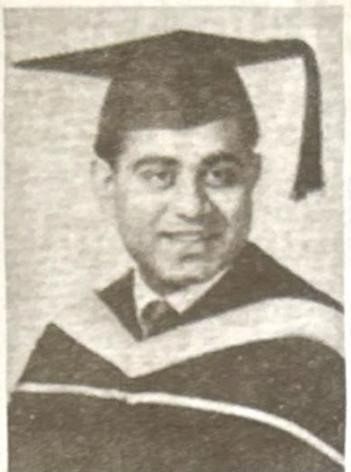


1955

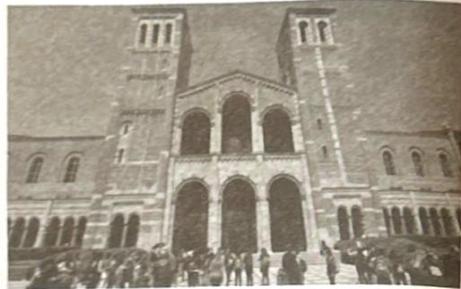
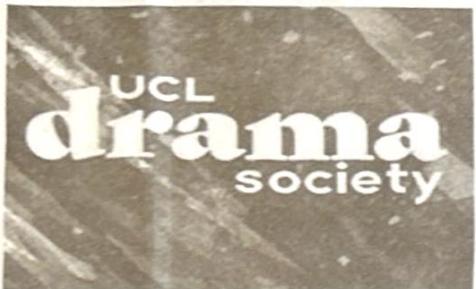


1963

MUHAMMAD NAZEM TAHIR



The after Lahore, West Pakistan; Campus Theater, Grid of the Golden West, Directed O the People and Wind in the Ardea, SA



At British Drama League

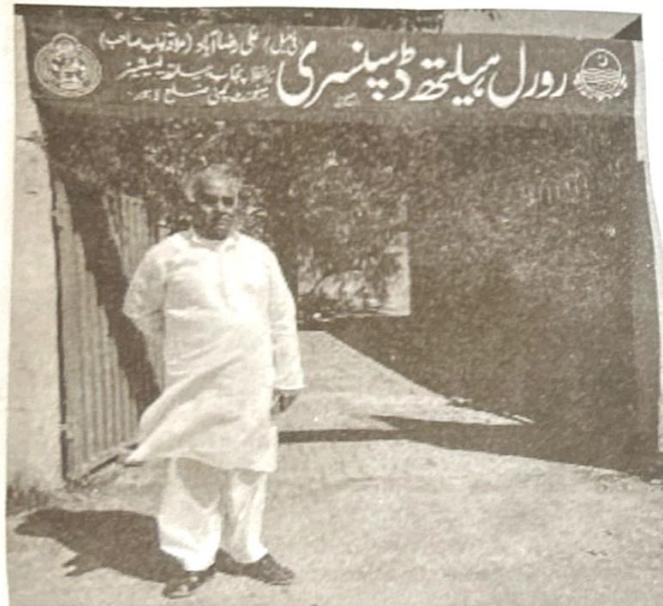


Camera man Shafqat Mahmood, Ya'qoob Nasik, Naeem Tahir Principal, CTI, Chaklala, Anwar Khawaja, Marghoobur Rehman, Mahboob, Shaheen, Safia and rest of the students of 6th batch.

Nostalgic visits to Ali Raza Abad
With Syed Anzar Hussain, an old friend, in front of "Darogha Haveli"

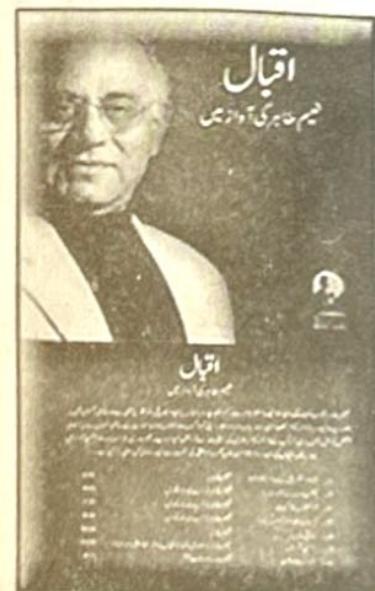
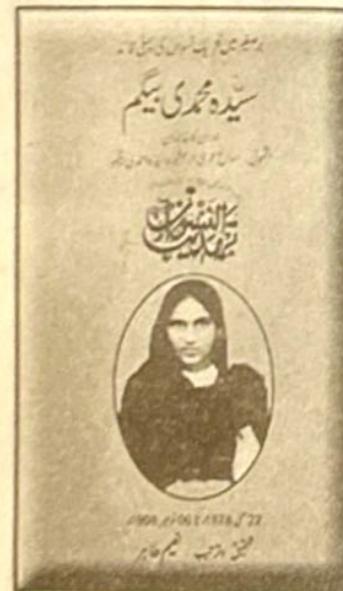
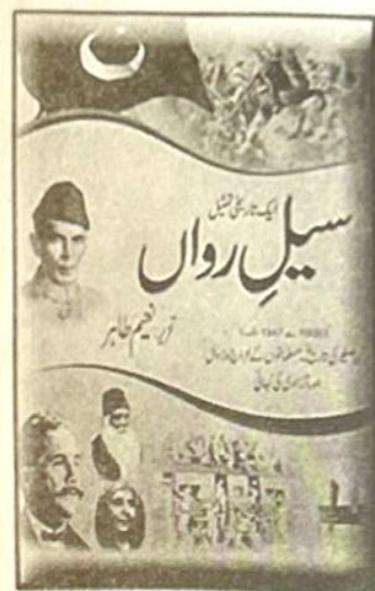
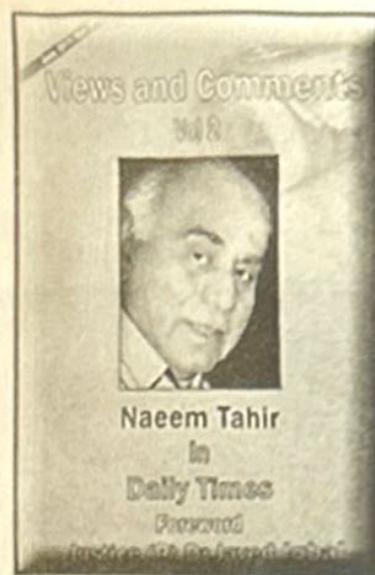
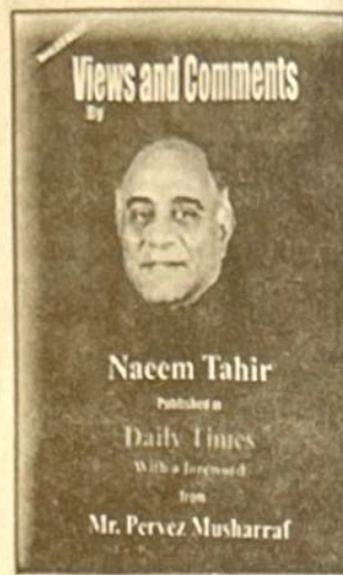
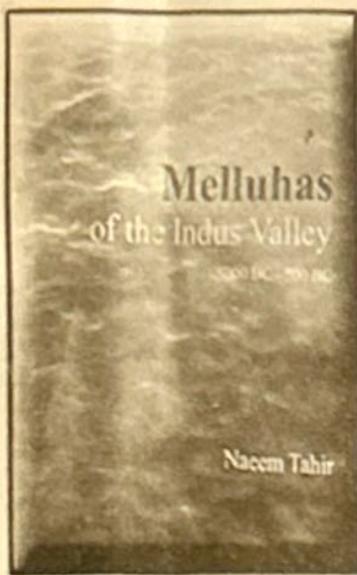


In front of the 'Hospital' set up and run by Naeem's mother Dr Mrs Sardar Azim in 1942. Dr. Mrs Azim was in the first batch of lady doctors in India in 1934.



On a visit talking to an old timer Mohammad Bashir 'Numberdar'





Other Works

- Melluhas, The People of the Indus valley from 8000 B.C to 500 B.C.
Published by National Council of the Arts, Islamabad.
- Views and Comments Vol. I & II. Published by Sang-e-Meel Publication.
- Bombay by Boat (Film script). English (Under publication)
- Earlier articles on Theater and other arts, English Version
- Scripts of stage show. (Various) English
- Aap Ki Tarif Urdu stage play. Naeem Tahir and Yasmin Tahir, published by Sang-e-Meel Publication.
- Soey Kahan'Urdu stage play. Naeem Tahir and Yasmin Tahir published by Sang-e-Meel Publication.
- 'Sael-e-Rawan' and 'Jalsā Urdu Dramēy Ka' Epic Plays published by Sang-e-Meel Publication.
- Plays for Radio and Television Urdu
- Samjhota Express (Television Serial) Urdu, 22 Episodes
- Dagh e Dil (Screen play) Urdu
- Order Order' (Television Serial) Urdu
- God is mine (TV Serial) Urdu
- Mulla Nasir ud Din (Episodes of TV Serial) for children. Urdu
- A bio-graphical interview of Naeem Tahir. Urdu
- Terwan Darwaza auto biography under compilation. Urdu.

RECORDINGS

- Molevi Jee' a play, By Naeem Tahir, Recorded during 1965 War.
- Kalam-e-Iqbal in the voice of Naeem Tahir.
- Interviews with History.
- "Rozan-e-Zindan". Naeem Tahir reading Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Yasmin Tahir reading Elyse in Ajoka Theatre Production.



Ground Floor Mian Chamber 3-Temple Road, Lahore.
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E-mail: publications.aks@gmail.com
www.akspublications.com.pk

