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AN INDIAN'S  
SOJOURN IN PAKISTAN

# ACROSS THE WAGAH

MANEESHA TIKEKAR



## SHASTRI INDO-CANADIAN INSTITUTE

5, BHAI VIR SINGH MARG, NEW DELHI - 110 001, INDIA

TEL: (11) 2374-2677, 2374-3114, 2374-6417 FAX: 2374-6416

E-MAIL: [sici@vsnl.com](mailto:sici@vsnl.com) WEBSITE: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~sici>

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The first of the two parts of the book is devoted to a study of the history of the Indian people with a special reference to the political and social conditions of the country during the last few decades.

For  
My Teacher

*Professor R. Srinivasan*  
in appreciation  
of his Lectures  
on  
*Political Philosophy*

Checklist of Publications

The only isolation now left in question ...

... they had ...

... their different ...

... people ...

... at least he ...

... the land he ...

... the ...

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*Borders are scratched across the hearts of men  
By strangers with a calm, judicial pen,  
And when the borders bleed we watch with dread  
The lines of ink across the map turn red.*

— Marya Mannes (1904-1990), 'Gaza Strip' (1959),  
from *Uncommon Sense* by Gregory Sams.

*Unbiased at least he was when he arrived on his mission,  
Having never set eyes on the land he was called to partition  
Between two peoples fanatically at odds,  
With their different diets and incompatible gods.  
'Time,' they had briefed him in London, 'is short. It's too late  
For mutual reconciliation or rational debate:  
The only solution now lies in separation ...'*

— W.H. Auden (1907-1973), 'Partition' (1966)  
from *Auden's Collected Poems*, 1976.

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## Preface

As I entered the Royal International Guesthouse on the Seventh Avenue in Islamabad Karim Meghji, its proprietor-manager welcomed me with a *namaste*. I was about to greet him with *waleikum asalam* expecting him to welcome me with *asalam aleikum*. I had practised the Islamic greeting *asalam aleikum-waleikum asalam* mentally for several days before reaching Islamabad. The Lahore-Islamabad flight of Pakistan Airways was delayed by half an hour. By the time it reached Islamabad it was nearly midnight. Col.(Retd) Aziz-ul-Haque, Secretary of the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS or the Institute) to which I was affiliated for my research project, received me at the airport with a handshake. Hence my practice of Islamic greeting proved futile at least on my first day in Pakistan.

I had entertained the idea of going to Pakistan for several years, but I never could imagine that my desire would ever be fulfilled and even if it did, that I would spend as many as five months in Pakistan. Few people travel to Pakistan from Mumbai, though Mumbai-Karachi connection is old. Kutchhi-Gujarati Muslims and Sindhis do travel to Karachi even today for trade and commerce or to meet separated relations. I do not belong to either group. My curiosity about Pakistan was purely academic and getting an opportunity to go to Pakistan from Mumbai was rather difficult. I have observed that university and college teachers, journalists and researchers from Delhi cross the boundary fairly often and with greater ease. Historical bonds between Delhi and Lahore are still

strong and Pakistanis visiting India too travel mostly in the precincts of Delhi as if the India south of Jamuna just does not exist. In 1988 when Benazir Bhutto took over as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, my friend Sudha Mohan and I had thought of writing to her expressing our desire to visit Pakistan, but never really got down to actually doing so.

And then after several years, in 1999 an opportunity did come my way. Or rather possibility of such an opportunity was within my sight. The Ford Foundation announced a new Programme — ASIA Fellows Program — providing opportunity for Asian researchers to conduct researches within Asian countries. The day I read the announcement, I decided to initiate a research project on Pakistan. I had been reading about *Hindutva* politics for some years and had done occasional writing too. I had more often than not toyed with the idea of studying Islamic politics in Pakistan. A bare minimum theoretical framework for such research was ready with me, therefore though time for sending application for the fellowship was rather short, I could quickly send a research proposal titled *Religious Resurgence, Democracy and Interstate Relations Between India and Pakistan*. In 1998 I had met two Pakistani representatives at Amman, Jordan in a month long programme of the International Leadership Academy of United Nations University. Discussions with them had proved useful in understanding several things about Pakistan and my hurriedly put up proposal read, I felt, fairly well.

The proposal was accepted and I got a call for interview at the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo. I thought I had crossed the first hurdle. I had no inkling at that time, of the number of hurdles I would have to cross to reach Pakistan. I naively believed that things would be easy as Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Lahore Bus *Yatra* was just over. My interview at Colombo was scheduled for 10 June 1999 but the guns at Kargil started booming from 26 May. I was even asked in the interview whether in the prevailing situation there was any hope of getting permission from Pakistan.

As the Kargil got over and I became somewhat hopeful about the permission from Pakistan, India shot down Pakistan's naval aircraft, 'Atlanique' that had violated the Indian airspace. By the time the dust over it got settled, in October 1999 there was a dramatic change of guards in Pakistan with the army taking over in a coup orchestrated by the Pakistani army chief, General Pervez Musharraf. There was absolutely no trace of reply to my letter seeking permission from Pakistan. By the time I hoped that the situation would improve once the military regime settled down, Indo-Pak relations suffered yet another blow. Pakistani terrorists hijacked Indian Airline's flight from Kathmandu and the relations between the two countries reached the nadir. I persisted with my efforts of seeking permission from Pakistan. I had already written to the University Grants Commission of Pakistan, as well as Pakistan High Commission in Delhi more than once. Possibility of getting the permission seemed remote, but I decided to continue my efforts till I got a formal reply from Pakistani authorities.

And then, out of the blue on 18 April 2000 I received an e-mail message from Pakistan High Commission asking me to send the completed visa form along with a copy of the passport. I rejoiced at my success in getting the permission; but nothing happened for the next six months. So I decided to take a trip to Delhi and met the concerned officer in the Pakistani High Commission. The meeting proved abortive but I had the satisfaction that I had left no stone unturned. Then suddenly on 18 November 2000 after a gap of another several months I received a letter from the High Commission informing me that I had been granted affiliation to the Institute of Regional Studies in Islamabad. I had requested for affiliation to the Centre for South Asian Studies, University of the Punjab in Lahore but the Pakistan Government had transferred me to Islamabad. Perhaps it was easy to keep an Indian under watch in Islamabad. Despite the transfer, I shouted *eureka* but my

happiness again proved short-lived. Before I could reach Delhi for visa, on 28 November I received a telephonic message from the High Commission saying that my permission was withdrawn by the authorities in Islamabad. There was no point in making further enquiries about the cancellation of the permission so I had decided to inform the ASIA Fellows Program accordingly after I received a formal letter of rejection of permission from the Pakistan High Commission. But the letter however would not come. I kept insisting for the letter from the High Commission and they kept saying that once such letter was issued to me it would not be possible for them to open my case again.

Thereafter I spent two months in Delhi. Mumbai is not a place to study Pakistan. Nehru Library at Teen Murti and Sapru House Library in Delhi proved immensely useful for my study. While in Delhi I met and spoke to some high level Pakistani delegates at various seminars. They included the former army chief of Pakistan General (Retd) Jehangir Karamat, Lieut. Gen. (Retd) Talat Masud, Major Gen. (Retd) Muhammad Ali Durrani, Dr. Shirin Tahir-Kheli, a prominent high profile Pakistani-American scholar and peace activist, Dr. Samina Yasmin who teaches International Politics at an Australian University and Nusrat Jaweed of *The News International*. I had met Dr. Tahir-Kheli in 1998 in Mumbai. She got the details of my case and promised to help me in reviving the permission. At the fag end of my stay in Delhi I met Dr. Satish Kumar, former Professor of Foreign Policy and Diplomacy at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Satish Kumar being active in Track Two Diplomacy is a regular visitor to Pakistan. He was to go to Islamabad on one such visit in the first week of February 2001 and was to meet the then Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar. He appreciated my research topic and on hearing the never-ending story of my efforts to go to Pakistan made me write a letter addressed to Abdul Sattar and promised to speak to him in Islamabad. Thereafter things moved fast.



In the second week of February 2001 I received a message from Rashid Salim Khan, the then Director General of South Asia Desk in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Pakistan asking me who had withdrawn my permission to visit Pakistan. I was amused as I was told earlier that the permission was withdrawn by the authorities in Islamabad. In the second mail he assured me of restoring the permission and in the first week of March Pakistan High Commission called me to Delhi for the visa. I rushed to Delhi without giving them any more time to withdraw their permission and on 3 May 2001 finally could leave Mumbai for Pakistan.



This book based on my five months stay in Pakistan is neither a review of Indo-Pak relations nor is it an examination of the Kashmir issue. Both are outside the purview of this book. It is essentially about the people of Pakistan, their society and their cultural moorings, their life and concerns, their politics, as well as their problems and also struggles. It is about Pakistani cities, their histories and monuments. By and large, we Indians know Pakistan only through its negative images. Its hostility towards India, its obsession with Kashmir and its 'sponsorship' of *jihad* in Kashmir and terrorist activities elsewhere in India cause nothing but fury among Indians. For the majority of Indians, Pakistan is a terrorist state and of late the 'fountainhead' of global terrorism; a country ruled by the army and controlled by the mullahs. And even if most of the above description is not totally untrue, Pakistan is obviously much more than this. One cannot understand other societies through mere stereotypes. India and Pakistan have looked at each other through deliberately constructed mutual stereotypes over the years. They view each other either as caricatures or

bogeymen, images often manufactured by respective regimes in both the countries and also by certain sections of the media for the media is often interested in 'stories' of the stereotypes bordering on sensationalism. Indian perceptions of Pakistan are largely unidimensional and almost always un-informed and un-nuanced and Indian attitude remains self-righteous and short sighted. We rarely get to know about the complexities of Pakistani society, normal day to day life of Pakistanis, their struggles to protect their freedoms against the *khakis* and mullahs, and also about their efforts to retain the sub continental roots of their culture.

This book is an offshoot of my fairly long stay in Pakistan. It is an outcome of my observations of Pakistani society, people and culture, my discussions and deliberations with people and small talks here and there, my travel in the country, my understanding of Pakistan through its newspapers, magazines, TV and of course the load of books I read for my project. All this unfolded before me the contours of Pakistani life — personal, familial as well as social. Experiences are subjective but that should not impede objectivity in their narration and analysis. For a comprehensive and sound analysis of one's own experiences and observations I believe it is necessary to look into the ideas and writings of others in the field. Therefore I have made use of the writings of several Pakistani, western and Indian scholars. During my stay in Pakistan I regularly went through the important English newspapers and magazines. I met several Pakistanis from various fields of activities in connection with my study, conducted 60 formal interviews and spoke to many more informally. All these discussions helped me in understanding the Pakistani psyche and subtleties of its social life. Of course I take the full responsibility of the opinions expressed and conclusions reached in this book.

On my return from Pakistan though I had planned a book on Pakistan in English, I wrote it first in Marathi with the intention

of reaching the common man in Maharashtra. But I was not sure of the response. I did not know if people were really interested in knowing Pakistan. But to my great surprise the book got tremendous response from readers. I received phone calls and letters from the readers speaking approvingly about the book for it gave them a different perception of Pakistan. The book got the critical acclaim too. It won two prestigious literary awards. All this was because I realised that there was a growing awareness and interest about Pakistan among Indians. My friends who do not read Marathi urged me write the book in English all over again. My friends from Pakistan were persistent with such a demand. When I went again to Pakistan for a Seminar in Islamabad in May 2003, my friend Amera Saeed from the Institute of Regional Studies threatened me that if I did not write the book in English, she would learn Marathi and translate it into English. The present book is both bigger and comprehensive than the Marathi book.

*Across the Wagah* is not intended to be a travelogue in a conventional sense. In the first part of the book I have not only described the cities, the interesting places but also the people I met and their views on many issues. It brings out the variety of cultures of these cities and of opinions held by people. Pakistan is not a monolithic country as most Indians would like to believe. The second part briefly reviews the tumultuous political history of the country and the factors that have influenced the course of politics. Though Pakistani politics is well documented it was necessary to make it a part of this book as Pakistan is a highly politicised society. It is difficult to comment on Pakistani society and culture without referring to its politics. The third part unfolds complexities of Pakistani society with its myriad shades and hues that are normally not known to us in India, and also the cultural dilemmas faced by the country. Readers will also find a small section on 'Pakistani Perceptions of India' at the end of the book.

I made two sociological discoveries during my sojourn in Pakistan. Firstly, one must learn to differentiate between the people, the nation and the state. People, as people are one thing, while people as nation become quite a different thing. When people become nation it is like a sort of chemical reaction in which the basic ingredient, the people, is transformed altogether. Nationalism and patriotism are important, but up to a point and with discretion. In many cases there is no enmity between peoples as peoples but enmity between nations can acquire horrendous proportion. It creates diametrically opposite entities like 'we' and 'they'. Everything about 'us' — religion, language, and culture — is good and therefore adorable. Everything about 'them' — religion, language, and culture — is bad and therefore to be abhorred. As a state, nation starts playing different games. Nation-state is a different entity altogether. The moment national emotion is supplemented by political power; it becomes a unique entity in the sense that it invariably develops politico-economic-cultural interests of its own. It has its own equations about power. It does not necessarily reflect desires or opinions of people who constitute an essential element of the state. It charts its own independent course. But then people, nation and state are realities. They cannot be wished away. Therefore, I think if the tensions between the nations are to be reduced then it is necessary to increase camaraderie among the peoples, especially, of unfriendly nations. It is necessary to understand the other side of the estranged neighbour. In my 20 months efforts to obtain permission from Pakistan I interacted with the Pakistani establishment. That experience was no doubt frustrating. But once I reached Pakistan I interacted with the people of Pakistan. There was a sea-change between these two experiences. I found common Pakistani hospitable, respectful, co-operative, friendly, talkative and motivated more by the heart generally than by the head. My second discovery is that 'boundary' and 'frontier'



are two different concepts. Territorial boundaries and cultural frontiers are not one and the same. Territories may be divided and new nations created, but the fault lines of culture do not necessarily follow the national boundaries.

My stay in Pakistan was not only smooth but very fine. I had no problem whatsoever in those five months. In all those days never was there a moment when I felt I was in Pakistan, in a 'hostile' cultural milieu. Indo-Pak tensions did not affect my stay, not even after the failure of the Agra Summit or after the 9/11 tragedy. I thought this was really a unique experience. And now I realise there is nothing new about my discoveries. We live with these truths, but they are often clouded by jingoism on both sides.

Under the broad cover of Islam, Pakistani society is widely diverse. History of Pakistan is recent but the history of its land is ancient. Strewed in this region are several symbols of centuries old human civilisation. It is also endowed with geographical and natural diversity. I could see and experience all this. Therefore I wish to reach it to my fellow Indians through this book. It is necessary to understand the little known side of the estranged neighbour. If now the two countries are talking about peace they will have to shed tons of historical baggage that they have been carrying with them so far. Peace will have to take roots in the minds of the two peoples. Generations of Indians and Pakistanis have been raised on unfriendly perceptions of each other. If we want peace efforts to succeed then we need to change our perceptions. The preamble to UNESCO's constitution states 'Since wars begin in the minds of men it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.' And to construct peace in the minds of people it is necessary to understand people, their aspirations and fears, their strengths and weaknesses, and their past and the present that shapes their identity.



Crossing the Wagah would not be possible without the ASIA Fellows award and the help of a great many people and well wishers. I was fortunate to be awarded ASIA Fellowship which provided me not just the grants but more importantly credentials to go to Pakistan as a 'scholar'. I am grateful to ASIA Fellows Program for the fellowship. Normally a fellowship has to be utilised within a year after it is awarded. But I was granted over two year's period to utilise my six month fellowship. ASIA Fellows Program shared my optimism of getting permission from Pakistan and supported me in my struggle to obtain the same. I am grateful to Pakistan High Commission in Delhi for taking interest in my case and helping me in the process of obtaining permission from Islamabad. I particularly thank Shuja Alam and Dr. Shah Jamal of the High Commission.

It would not have been possible for me to spend five months in Pakistan if the authorities of the SIES College and the then Principal V. Padmanaban had not readily granted me leave of absence from college duties. I am thankful to them for the same. Similarly my colleagues in the Department, Gayathri Narayan, Dr. Rashmi Bhure and Vanita Banjan willingly shared the burden of additional workload during my absence. I greatly appreciate their unstinting cooperation. Mohan Panjabi of Indo-Pak Council wrote to a number of friends for my permission, contacted people in Pakistan and kept my morale high throughout. Dr. E Sridharan, who looks after the ASIA Fellows Program in South Asia, was constantly in touch with the Pakistan High Commission, the former Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan, S.K. Singh spoke to officials of the Pakistan High Commission on several occasions on my behalf. When the possibility of getting permission looked bleak, I met Dr. Satish Kumar and with his efforts I finally got the permission. I am obliged to each of them. Abhinandan Thorat of Pune and Somnath Shetty of Delhi made relentless efforts to secure permission for me from Pakistan for which I am thankful to them.

I am extremely grateful to Rashid Salim Khan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan for without his intervention I would never have gone to Pakistan, and to Nusrat Jaweed who had also worked for my permission. During my stay in Pakistan the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad had virtually become my second home. Despite the vagaries of Indo-Pak relations the immense cooperation and warmth I received in the Institute is simply unforgettable. Brig. Bashir Ahmad, Col. Aziz-ul-Haque, Professor and Mrs. Khalid Mahmud, Amera Saeed, Shaheen Akhtar, Nasreen Naqvi, Nasir Zaidi, Dr. Abul Barakat, Riffat Fatima, Nusrat, Farhat Perveen, Abdul Ghani, Khalid Mahmood Malik all helped me in my academic work and also made my life and work in Islamabad easy and enjoyable. I am happy to say that these friendships have endured till date. My greatest support in Pakistan was Professor Zafar Ali Khan from Lahore, right from my entry into Pakistan till the day I left Lahore for India. He made me understand many subtleties of Pakistani life that first time visitor to a country is bound to miss and made many suggestions for my project. I enjoyed his generous hospitality at Lahore. I think I can never thank him enough. I immensely enjoyed the friendship and hospitality of Ismat and Shah Jahan in Islamabad. Families of Muralidhar Reddy, Islamabad representative of the Indian daily *The Hindu* and K.J.M. Verma of the Press Trust of India provided me company from time to time. I shall ever remain thankful to all of them for making my stay in Islamabad memorable in every sense.

I owe my thanks to Dr. Aslam Syed of Quaid-i-Azam University who was instrumental in getting me visa extension for two months and also visas for Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi, a task, I presume, was otherwise very difficult. But for his help I would have remained confined to Islamabad. One of the prominent lawyers and a former Minister in Benazir Bhutto's government Aitzaz Ahsan used his good offices for my visa extension.

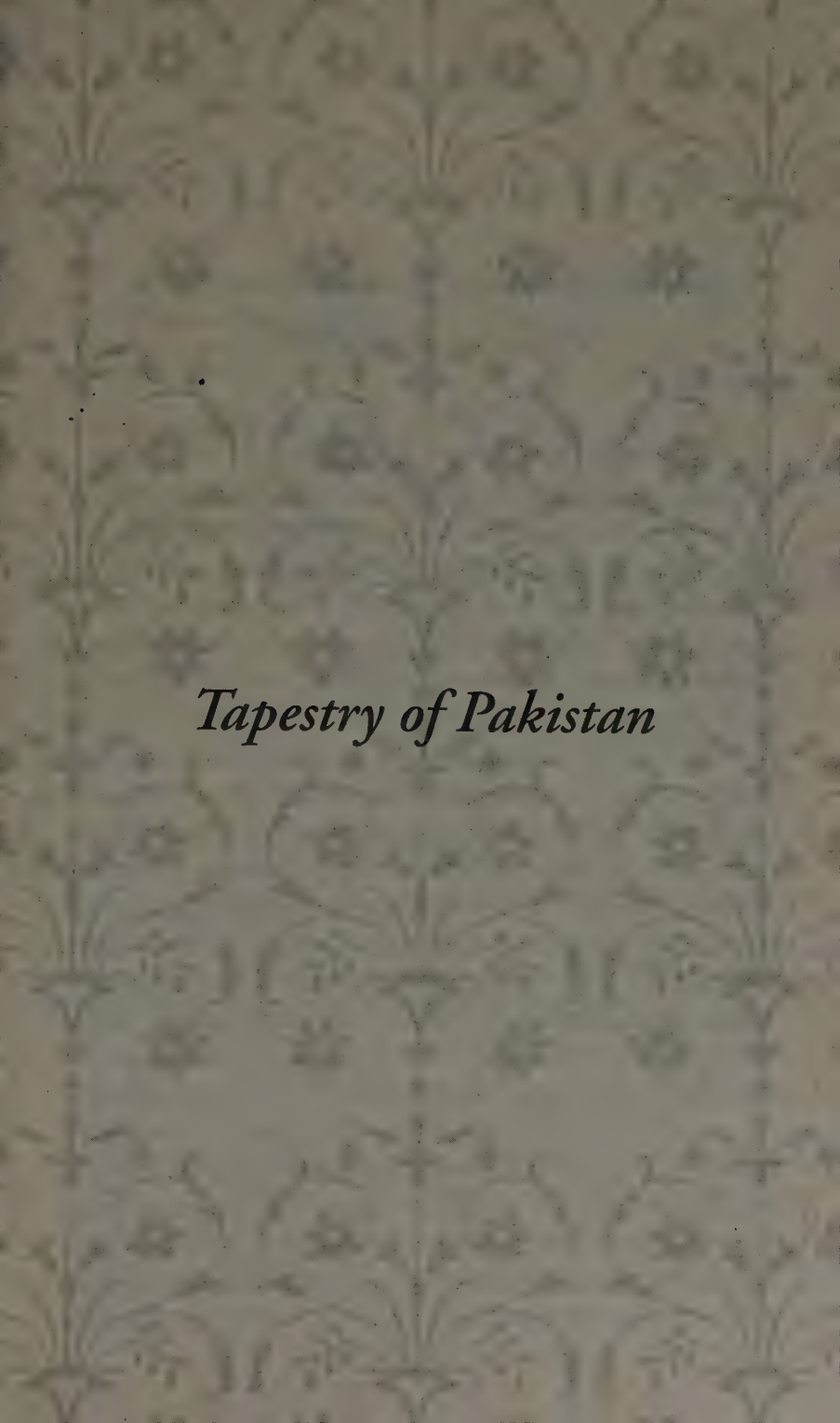
I must say, contrary to my belief, that it was very easy to approach prominent Pakistanis. Most of them granted me interviews without hesitation. I enjoyed their kind hospitality and shall remain grateful to them all.

My brother Abhijit Raut has been a great help in the preparation of this book. For him it was indeed love's labour. I owe my thanks to Sanjiv Bhalla for permitting to use his photographs of Lahore and Karachi and to Rakesh Tambe for processing them for the book. I wish to thank Aroon and Ashutosh, my husband and son, who made no issue of my going to Pakistan over an extended period of time and who willingly took over domestic responsibilities back in Mumbai. They showed immense confidence in my ability to live in Pakistan, so much so that after 9/11 when friends and well wishers wanted me back in Mumbai immediately, Ashutosh told them not to nag me to the point of annoyance, lest I prepared myself to go to Afghanistan to meet Osama! He was perhaps assuring my anxious friends and relatives, the level of my comfortable stay in Pakistan which I had communicated to them from time to time.

**Maneesha Tikekar**

Mumbai, 1 March 2004





*Tapestry of Pakistan*

*Pakistan Political*



Based on Survey of India Map

## *Islamabad — A Beautiful City Without Soul*

The last flight of Pakistan Airways from Lahore to Islamabad was delayed by some thirty minutes. The distance between the two cities is small but the flight takes an hour due to the small aircraft flying the sector. The journey from Mumbai to Islamabad was via Delhi and Lahore. ASIA Fellows Program had sent me a ticket from Bangkok and I had taken an early morning Air India flight to Delhi. Delhi–Lahore flight was in the evening at 6 and finally I reached Islamabad at 11 in the night. It took almost 17 hours for me to reach the neighbouring country. It is rather strange that even when Indian mind is preoccupied with Pakistan, and more so in recent days, it is still a distant country for an average Indian not only in terms of time but also in imagination. Pakistan really became a distant country when direct flights between the two countries were suspended following the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001. My second trip to Pakistan to participate in a seminar organised by the Institute of Regional Studies in collaboration with Haans Seidel Foundation in Islamabad in May 2003 was via Dubai.

Arriving at the immigration counter at Lahore Airport I braced myself for intensive interrogation, but I was in for a pleasant surprise as the officer at the counter welcomed me to Pakistan with a grin and completed the immigration formalities quickly. Before that, when I boarded the Pakistan Airways aircraft at Delhi, one of the

airhostesses had appreciated my *sari* profusely. For her it was perhaps a formality necessitated by her job but I thought it was a good beginning. Lahore Airport is small. I simply came out of one gate and turned into another to go from the international section to the domestic one. A big new terminus at Lahore Airport was then under construction. Now I learn that a new plush International Airport at Lahore has replaced the old one.

I was travelling with a lot of baggage — excess of 30 kg than the normal allowance of 20. I had a problem when I had to pay 500 Pakistani rupees for the excess baggage as I had only Indian rupees and American dollars. I looked around but could not locate an exchange counter. As I looked puzzled, to my surprise the clerk at the counter suggested that I could pay in Indian currency! There was no other way out, hence I pushed a 500 rupee note and got a receipt for 500 Pakistani rupees and moved ahead. One Indian rupee was then almost one and a half times more than a Pakistani rupee. Though Indian currency is not officially available in Pakistan, Pakistani newspapers report the exchange rate between Indian and Pakistani rupee daily.

There were still two hours for the flight to Islamabad. I looked around in the departure lounge. I had practised Urdu script for a couple of months before leaving for Pakistan, hence I could read the board indicating 'departure' at one end of the lounge. I went and sat in that direction. I bought a telephone card and made two calls to Mumbai to inform the family that I had crossed the fence. An elderly lady came and sat next to me and asked if I was an Indian. 'You look new to the place but composed. Generally Indian women display more confidence compared to Pakistani women', she remarked.

Airport at Islamabad also is small. Professor Zafar Ali Khan, a former professor of English literature from Dayal Singh College, Lahore, had come all the way to receive me. I had met him at



Bangalore in April 2000 at the joint convention of Pakistan–India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFPD) and once again at Delhi in December in the same year when he had come to participate in a Punjabi Conference at Chandigarh. At the time of the partition his family migrated from Jalandhar to Lahore. Professor Khan, originally a Pathan, had thus got transformed into a ‘Punjabi’. Shah Jahan also came with him to receive me at the airport. He teaches English at the Government College, Islamabad. We too had met in Bangalore. Both Zafar Ali Khan and Shah Jahan are from the leftist movement and have immense goodwill for India.

And suddenly Col. Aziz-ul-Haque stepped forward. Before I left Mumbai he had informed me that someone from the Institute would receive me at Islamabad but I never imagined that he would come and receive me personally. He greeted me with a stern smile. Even in the dark of the night I could sense a cultivated praetorian discipline behind that smile. Of course I was already acquainted with his *khaki* discipline through the e-mail correspondence I had with him before reaching Islamabad. He always sent monosyllabic single line messages, at the most two lines. There never was a third line in his message. He wrote briefly and strictly to the point, and used to call it his *fauji* English. Later when I was more familiar with him I told him about my reading of his expression at the airport — why is this Indian woman here? And he explained that he was rather worried about his responsibility as Secretary of the Institute, of looking after an Indian woman, the task he was not very confident of handling.

Airport for Islamabad is actually situated in Rawalpindi. Likewise it has no railway station of its own. Perhaps it is the only capital city in the world without its own railway station. The Royal International Guesthouse is some 15 km away from the airport. It was midnight and there was little traffic on the road. Later I realised that there was hardly any traffic in Islamabad even during the day.

If ten vehicles stopped on the road one behind the other I used to call it a traffic jam. And such traffic jams could be seen on Friday afternoons when the offices and establishments closed for *zohar* prayers. Sunday mornings were so quiet that it was difficult to sight a vehicle right up to the horizon if one was travelling on a straight road.

The road from the airport to the city is beautiful, flanked by green slopes on both sides with dense trees lacing the upper edges of slopes and with a road divider with colourful flowers. Even during the high noon of summer Islamabad had lots of flowers. I could not, of course, see all this on that night but later every time I travelled that way I thought it was a pleasant journey. Col. Aziz and I had talked a great deal by the time we reached the guesthouse. Despite his tendency to be miserly with written words he is a good talker. Well travelled and well read. That makes him an interesting conversationalist. Professor Khan and Shah Jahan were travelling in another car.



Long before one enters Islamabad one can see the lights on the minarets of the strikingly modern and elegant Faisal Mosque. It is the most well known landmark of the city. In a way it lends identity to Islamabad. Turkish architect Vedat Dalukai designed the mosque which displays a combination of modernism and aesthetics in architecture. It is situated at the foot of the Margalla Hills that form a beautiful backdrop for the city on its west. The mosque occupies a ground area of 1,89,705 sq metre and its 88 metre high minarets are visible from a distance of ten miles. The main prayer hall, with its ceiling 40 metre above the ground, can accommodate 10,000 *namazis* at a time. The entrance verandah



*Faisal Mosque*

and the surrounding areas take 24,000 people and the open space on the eastern side takes 40,000 people. The administrative offices, printing press and a small bookshop, and a museum and cafeteria are all located under one roof in the premises. Besides the Mosque is situated the International Islamic University. This huge, uniquely designed and well chiselled mosque was gifted to Pakistan by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and was constructed during the regime of Pakistan's former military ruler Zia-ul-Haq.

It was almost midnight by the time we reached the guesthouse. Its room number 29 on the first floor virtually became my home in Islamabad for the next five months. Aziz Saab had already booked a room for me in this centrally located guesthouse in a good neighbourhood that was barely ten minutes walk from the Institute. Therefore in the next five months I never thought of looking for another place. The owner-proprietor of the guesthouse is Gujarati speaking Karim Meghji, educated at Rajkumar College in Rajkot. He had returned to Pakistan after spending ten years in the US and personally supervised the guesthouse. Since Gujaratis from

Karachi who came to Islamabad for some work or the other — mostly for securing American and occasionally Indian visas — usually lodged themselves in Karim Bhai's guesthouse, one could often hear Gujarati being spoken at the guesthouse. This guesthouse was used to Indians, as the Indians who came to work at the Indian High Commission in Islamabad made this their home, sometimes with families, till they found suitable accommodation. During my stay two Indian families had stayed in the guesthouse for ten days each. Around the Agra Summit in July 2001 several Indian journalists came to Islamabad and at one point of time we were ten Indians there. I used to tell Karim Bhai jokingly that he could as well rename the guesthouse as Royal Indian Guesthouse! Sometimes other foreign journalists also made this place their temporary abode in Islamabad. After 9/11 they invaded Islamabad in large numbers. Representatives of the influential newspapers preferred to stay at the five-star Marriott but those of the smaller newspapers moved into a number of guesthouses dotting the city. In fact many of them hardly had any knowledge of Pakistan. I recall a lady journalist from a West European country moving around in total bewilderment at the Royal Guesthouse.

The presence of foreign journalists in the guesthouse caught the attention of Pakistani intelligence. The red coloured motorbikes parked outside the guesthouse indicated their presence. Karim Bhai was not bothered by their presence and tended to overlook them. Only a senior officer received his hospitality. An Indian journalist from a reputed weekly from Delhi would constantly peep out of the gate to see if intelligence *wallas* were around. I knew instinctively that I was being observed. But it was always discrete and never obvious. I am sure the cabbies around the guesthouse must have been informers of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). Some friends in Islamabad warned me about them. But I used to travel with them often and I found it was

quite safe. Though, I must confess that initially I was quite wary taking those cabs and would try to hide my identity. On hearing *my* Urdu (I spoke Hindi and Pakistanis thought it was Urdu. In fact I used to get compliments for my Urdu.) some of them used to ask me inquisitively from which part of Pakistan I came and I would confidently claim to be from either Karachi or Hyderabad (Sindh). Later I became friends with one of them and he would ask me many things about India.

I went to the Institute the next day after arrival. The most important job lined up for the day was the mandatory police reporting in Foreigners' Registration Office. This had to be done within 24 hours after entering Pakistan. Though Indians could be granted visas 'exempted from police reporting', I was not granted such visa probably due to the proposed length of my stay in Pakistan. I was given one such visa when I briefly visited Islamabad in May 2003. Later every time I wanted to leave Islamabad and travel to some other place in Pakistan it was mandatory that I kept this office informed of my travel plans and my address in a new place. Soon I became a known face in the office and I used to get my residence permit stamped immediately. As I travelled outside Islamabad I realised that every city had a different culture of reporting. In Islamabad it was formal though courteous, Lahore was curt, in Peshawar it was friendly and hospitable and the Karachi office was, in my opinion, unduly interrogative.

On the first day in the Institute Col. Aziz completed the formalities. I was taken to my cabin. It was a fine place, facing the Jinnah Avenue with lots of natural light and with my nameplate already displayed on the door. Then I was introduced to everybody in the Institute and shown the library. Aslam was instructed to serve me tea.





Summer in Pakistan is long and hot. At the beginning of May temperature was already touching 40 degree Celsius. Later in June it shot up still further making it as hot as Delhi or Amritsar. Then in August when I went to Lahore I thought summer in Islamabad was bearable mainly because of the greenery in the city. Islamabad is a very green city with islands of trees strewed all over. Along with the familiar Pipal, Neem, and Banyan trees it also has Chinar, Pine, and Tahali trees. Descriptions of Tahali tree with small round leaves are often found in Punjabi folk literature. A little away from human habitation but still within the city limits one got the feeling of moving in thick fragrant woods. But I hardly saw the yellow flowered Laburnum or the red flowered Gulmohur that bloom in summer and are commonly found in Mumbai. Lots of Nilgiri (Eucalyptus) trees have been recently planted in Pakistan especially along the highways. Pakistani environmentalists are not too happy with this tree as it tends to suck groundwater quickly depriving other trees of water. Islamabad blooms with flowers even in hot summer. Apart from the flowers commonly seen in India, a variety of Chinese roses and cut flowers decorate the road dividers. In some sectors in the city, footpaths were beautified by manicured patches of grass and colourful flower beds maintained by residents.

People of Islamabad by and large do not live in apartment blocs. They have been newly introduced in the city though government servants are accommodated in flats. In sector F-10 a few luxury apartment buildings have come up recently. Otherwise the city is full of independent, mostly one-storeyed houses with attractive exteriors and small gardens in front. In most of the houses I found doors and windows kept closed protecting themselves from the hot summer air. Houses in sector E were tastefully constructed but in Sector F-10 and 11 they looked garish and overly decorated to me. Many of them have a façade decorated with 'Roman columns'. Houses in sector G were more middle class in appearance

but still spacious. People used to be surprised when I told them that for a middle class Mumbaite owning a flat measuring 750 sq feet was a luxury.

Forty-year-old Islamabad is situated at the north end of Potohar plateau in north Punjab. In 1958–59 Pakistan Government started hunting for a suitable site for the construction of its new capital with the intention of moving it from Karachi. In 1960, after locating the place, the capital was named Islamabad. Pakistanis keep joking — Islamabad has neither Islam nor is it *abad*. The well known Greek firm of Architects M/s Constantinos Doxiades Associates of Athens was entrusted with town planning. The team consisted of many reputed architects including Robert Mathew, Gio Ponti, Edward Stone and Denis Brigden assigned for constructing public building complexes. It is said that two parallel processes could be seen in the building of the new capital — Islamisation of modern architecture and modernisation of Islamic architecture. From October 1963 people started shifting to the new city and by 1966 the government started functioning fully from the new capital.

Islamabad is a modern and well planned city with wide tree-lined streets, large houses and well organised bazaars. It is divided into a number of sectors that are planned alike. Islamabad Region covers a large area measuring 906.50 sq km. The city proper is a small area covering 200.15 sq km. Islamabad Park and Islamabad rural areas make up for the rest of the region. Margalla Hills to the west enhance the natural beauty of the city by lending it a picturesque look. Margalla is Mar-i-Quila in Persian — a hill fort of serpents. In ancient times this region was said to be ruled by snake worshipping Takkas of Turanian race who are believed to be the founders of Takshshila.

Islamabad Region is full of topographical variety. In this region are compressed hills, valleys, plateaus, fragrant woods, fertile fields, eight rivers, waterfalls, and swift rivulets. Soan is the most important

river of this region. Rawal, Simly, Khanpur, Tanaza, and Missriot are the lakes within and around the city.

Islamabad was planned on the horizontal sectoral development scheme. The Central Secretariat, Presidential Palace, Houses of Legislature and the Supreme Court are located in the Administrative Sector. To the west of this sector are the offices of Autonomous and Semi autonomous organisations. Diplomatic Enclave is situated to its south. Indian High Commission is located in this Enclave. Khaiban-e-Quaid-i-Azam (Jinnah Avenue) is the central artery of the city. This wide avenue is flanked on both sides by several offices and business establishments. This is also known as Blue Area. The south side of this avenue is full of eating places of all kinds. Islamabadites frequent these restaurants for dinner and ritually visit Jamil Sweets for after dinner *kulfi*.

Residential sectors are situated on both sides of this Avenue. Every sector measures 3.1 sq km in area and is further divided into four sub-sectors with a small shopping area for each of them. A centrally situated *markaz* is the main market of the sector that connects all sub-sectors. The guesthouse and the Institute are both located in sector F-6/1. Faruqi market is close to the guesthouse and adequate for satisfying daily needs. Every Sunday morning I would go to this market mainly to make a call to Mumbai. Central market of F-6 sector was called Supermarket. This was also within walking distance of the guesthouse. Pakistani markets are full of imported goods as its own manufacturing base is limited. Imported cosmetics are sold in plenty. Indian products like Dabur's Hajmola, Amala Tel, and Godrej Kesh Kala Tel could be seen in many shops. The big and fashionable Jinnah Supermarket in Sector 7 had several jewellery shops. These supermarkets are loosely modelled on American malls and contain all kinds of shops including bookshops and modern restaurants. The market at Aabpara is the oldest in Islamabad and a typically middle class one. Routine things like

utensils, glassware, suitcases, and tin trunks are available at affordable prices. In fact the construction of Islamabad began from Aabpara. Bazaar at Karachi Company is even cheaper. Covered market near Hotel Holiday Inn is small and expensive but often frequented by diplomatic personnel. Blue Area on Jinnah Avenue is a large linear market. Most of the shops here are, so I was told, a development of the past eight to ten years. I liked the market in Sector 10, but the one I liked most was a small Kohsar Market in Sector F-6 situated at the foot of Margalla Hills. It resembles a market at a hill station.

Islamabad has a number of bookshops, big and small. I wondered how these shops made business in a city of less than a million population. By and large I did find buyers in every bookshop. Vanguard and Mr. Books are the reputed bookshops in Islamabad. Vanguard is both a publishing house, and a chain of bookshops found all over Pakistan. It is owned by Najam Sethi, the proprietor-editor of the Lahore based weekly, *The Friday Times*. Sethi is known in India. He had delivered a talk in Delhi in 1999 that was highly critical of Pakistan. It had created a big commotion in Pakistan and on his return to Lahore he was promptly frisked away from his home to an unknown destination at midnight on orders from Nawaz Sharif, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan. The journalistic fraternity from all over the world protested staunchly against Sethi's arrest as infringement on freedom of the press.

The city has a fairly large community of foreigners both from the diplomatic and NGO sectors. Apparently NGOs, supported through foreign funding, do a brisk activity in Pakistan. Foreigners frequent bookshops and more importantly, also buy books. I saw a number of books in social sciences authored by Indians as well as Indian fiction in English and Urdu. I located an English translation of a short story collection of a well known Marathi writer Gangadhar

Gadgil in Mr. Books. Urdu translations of Kautilya's *Arthshastra*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagvad Gita*, and *Puranas* are also available. Due to the geographical location of Pakistan and the Islamic connection, Pakistani bookshops display a large number of books on Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia. Such books are rare in Mumbai bookshops. Even flipping through these books casually was a learning experience about these countries.



I did not take much time to settle down in Islamabad. The guesthouse was good with a big and comfortable room and with good facilities. The Institute functioned from 8.30 in the morning till 2 in the afternoon. On Fridays it closed at noon and had an extended weekend. It was not obligatory for me to be present in the Institute daily or sit there till its closing time. But I went to the Institute everyday at 8.30 in the morning. It was necessary for me to have a routine. Col. Aziz is a disciplinarian and I too am fastidious about punctuality, therefore I think he had formed a good impression of me. I was particular about reaching the Institute before his car was seen in the premises. I also used to complete all formalities in time. Therefore, Colonel often remarked that I should have been in the army. Sometimes he remarked that I was too 'proper'. And on that I would say that an Indian woman staying alone in Pakistan for six months had to behave properly.

Lieut. General (Retd) Agha Ibrahim Akram founded the Institute of Regional Studies in 1982. Although it was established under the Ministry of Information it is an autonomous Institute. Retired army men are often appointed in its administrative positions while research fellows are civilians with academic background. While I was affiliated to the Institute it was headed by a member of the Pakistan Foreign Service and the country's former ambassador



to China, Khalid Mahmood with whom my interaction was limited. The present President of the Institute is Major General (Retd) Jamshed Ayaz Khan. Brigadier (Retd) Bashir Ahmad, a senior research fellow coordinated the research efforts. No major decisions are taken without his consent. Col. Aziz-ul-Haque was the secretary responsible for the administration of the Institute. Hence I interacted with him regularly. The Institute functions as a non-profit research centre devoted to the study of the region around Pakistan: South Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, China, Central Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. Of course its focus is on Indian studies. Twice a week — every Monday and Thursday — it received 13 Indian newspapers in its library. Newspapers also came from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Gulf countries and also from Hong Kong. Its library has an impressive collection of books and periodicals with regional bias and the Institute has developed a comprehensive collation and documentation service for area studies. The Institute's most impressive achievement in my opinion is its long list of publications that include five periodic publications, ranging from a fortnightly to quarterly, brought out with painstaking punctuality, and books and monographs published occasionally. I was amazed that the Institute brought out a book comprising of papers presented in the seminar held in May 2003 within three months. Its library and documentation facilities are open to outside scholars of other institutions or universities and to foreign scholars too. Yet the atmosphere in the Institute was simple and informal and within a couple of days I felt completely at home.

The second Khalid Mahmud in the Institute was a senior research scholar, normally addressed as Professor. He is a well known India hand and therefore much sought after in Pakistan. During the Agra Summit he was one of the invitees for the seminar organised by the Indian Council for Social Sciences Research. Around the same time Rajdeep Sardesai, then of the Star News

had come to interview him in the Institute. Khalid Mahmud is one of the prominent Pakistanis invited for consultation by President Pervez Musharraf from time to time. I was told that he was 'India baiter'. But at the outset we had established a good rapport with each other. He and his wife Rukhsana not only showed me Islamabad but also introduced me to the city's food culture from Hotel Marriott to ordinary *dhabas*. Since both of them are fond of hosting people I too was treated to good food at their home on a number of occasions. Both of them have visited India a few times. Rukhsana has shopped, she told me, extensively in India for silk *saris*, silver ware, spices and gold jewellery. I found to my pleasant surprise, a miniature Jagannath Chariot from Orissa displayed at their home.

Once I asked Professor Khalid Mahmud frankly about his 'anti-India' stand. He too was candid in his reply without mincing words. His main grudge against India is that India is hegemonic in Kashmir. Professor Mahmud is a Kashmiri settled in Punjab. He was educated at Lahore and taught Political Science in the Punjab University in Lahore before he was asked to resign for his propagation of leftist views. Then for sometime he worked as the editor of *The Nation*. Professor Saab professes radical views on many issues including Islam. He does not practise religion, does not keep *rozās* during *Ramazan*. In his opinion his 'anti-India' position is not a result of religious differences between India and Pakistan nor does it have any Islamic undercurrent. His grudge against India is limited to India's obduracy in Kashmir. Personally he is not against independent Kashmir but he is sceptical about the survival of independent Kashmir. If it survives because of American intervention then it is not in the interest of either India or Pakistan. He also spoke about the possibility of division of Kashmir. Predominantly Hindu region could stay with India, Kashmir Valley could be separated and he believes that the Valley

would prefer to join Pakistan. He thinks *jihadis* have by now clearly understood that Pakistan could not have the whole of Jammu and Kashmir. My question to him was if there was any possibility of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), northern areas that are under the control of Pakistan, and the Kashmir Valley coming together and forming an independent state. This, he said was a remote possibility as Azad Kashmir (POK) was geographically and racially not a part of the Kashmir Valley. Ethnic Kashmiris are in minority there. This region was assimilated into the state of Kashmir during Maharaja Hari Singh's regime. Similarly the people of Gilgit region — northern areas — do not consider themselves Kashmiris. The Muslims of this region are Ismailis and Shias while Kashmiri Muslims are Sunnis. Whether one agreed with him or not, it was always a pleasure to talk to Professor Khalid Mahmud. When I met him again in May 2003 he made it a point to tell me that his views on Kashmir had changed since 2001. He would now want Pakistani diplomacy to adopt a more pragmatic policy towards Kashmir. He thought if the Indian position on Kashmir was inflexible and Pakistan repeatedly emphasised the centrality of Kashmir in Indo-Pak relations, then there was no point in having a dialogue between the two that was sure to end in a deadlock. He said that Pakistan ought to realise that it was not in a position to find a solution to Kashmir that would either secure national interest of Pakistan or fulfil the aspirations of Kashmiris. If Pakistan sought US intervention then it would suggest converting LoC into international border and granting autonomy to Kashmir. Therefore his advice to Pakistan Government was that it should not insist on immediate solution to Kashmir but postpone it to some future date and de-link Kashmir from the process of normalisation of relations with India. He said even Qazi Hussain Ahmad, the Chief of Jamaat-e-Islami had advised President Musharraf that *Amarika ki ghulami se behatar hai ki Indiase sulah karon* (rapprochement with India is better than servility to America).

Professor Mahmud is a connoisseur of food and music and is also fond of Hindi films. He said he liked Urmila Matondkar, the perky Bollywood actress. He wrote an editorial on Smita Patil, a Bollywood actress known for her histrionics, after her untimely death in 1987, in the daily *Muslim* and incurred the wrath of its proprietor. Dialogues between him and Rukhsana were interesting and racy. Rukhsana is great at repartee and often left him dumbstruck. Initially I used to address her as Mrs. Mahmud and Professor Saab used to be irked at it. He would ask me if we in the subcontinent had not our own terms for addressing people. Why should we take western forms of address? Then he suggested that I could call her *didi* or *baji* — elder sister — adding that he felt very embarrassed whenever I addressed Rukhsana as Mrs. Mahmud. On that, Rukhsana asked him quietly, 'Am I not your wife'? He used to tell me jokingly that on my return to India I should write an article on them in some Indian periodical titled 'An odd couple of Islamabad'. During my stay in Pakistan Professor Mahmud went to China for a month. A delegation from the Institute visits China annually and the Institute receives a Chinese scholar every year. Pakistan–China relations are proverbially good. China is said to be Pakistan's 'all weather friend'. Within a few days of my reaching Islamabad the Chinese President visited Pakistan. Pakistani Government was euphoric about his visit, an event comparable only to President Clinton's visit to India, a year earlier.

There is yet another Khalid Mahmood (Malik) in the Institute. He is in the clippings section. My interaction with him was limited. Amera Saeed, Shaheen Akhtar and Nasreen Naqvi were my friends in the Institute. While Shaheen and Amera are research scholars, Nasreen works at the Collation Section. Thrice a week she hosted a programme on Current Affairs in Urdu on Radio Pakistan. Nasreen has a flare for literature and has excellent command over Urdu that made many people think she was a migrant from Uttar

Pradesh in India. Her forefathers came from Iraq and settled in a small town — Fatehganj near Islamabad.



Nasreen and I used to roam around in Islamabad though there is little to see in the city save a few picnic spots. We visited Shakarpariyan National Park and Rose and Jasmine Garden on a hot sunny Sunday. I had visited both the places earlier with the 'odd couple' but we had reached Rose and Jasmine Garden well after sunset and things were barely visible then. I was told that it was customary, almost mandatory, to take foreign dignitaries on official visit to Pakistan to Shakarpariyan and plant trees at their hands. Shakarpariya is located between Islamabad and Rawalpindi. It is, as if, a national pastime of Pakistanis to go and eat huge *masala papads* at Shakarpariyan.

Rose and Jasmine Garden sprawls over 200,000 sq metres. There was hardly anybody in the garden when we reached as it was a sunny and humid day. This garden is situated in the heart of the city near Aabpara Market. But once you enter the garden you forget its location. It has some 250 varieties of roses and 10 to 12 varieties of Jasmine, the national flower of Pakistan and also of chrysanthemum. Flower shows are held in the Garden twice a year, in March-April, and November. There are several trails in the Garden disappearing into thick trees. But we did not follow any of them. There was no sign of another human being in the Garden except for the workers. We faced the same problem on our way to the Lotus Pond. To reach the pond one has to walk a furlong or two through the woods. The path was deserted and there was nobody except Nasreen and me. We decided against taking any risk and simply returned to the waiting taxi.

Another favourite place of Islamabadites is Rawal Lake and the garden on the Rawal Dam. On weekends and holidays these



places come alive with a number of families picnicking. It is a small lake enclosed by a dam holding waters flowing from Muree and Margalla Hills and is a major source of water supply for Islamabad and Rawalpindi. There is a small boating club frequented by people for boating and fishing. At the entrance of the garden, on the left hand, is a small restaurant run by Pakistan Tourism. On the right I saw a crest of an old temple — a typically Hindu temple — hidden behind trees. We went around the temple. Nasreen tried to collect some information. But nobody around knew anything about it. With the construction of the dam, villages in the vicinity got submerged under water but the temple standing on a mound survived. Nasreen also took me to the secluded side of the lake that is almost forest like and a beautiful picnic spot. This area is mostly deserted but the foreigners in Islamabad prefer it for outing to the crowded garden on the other side with stalls selling snacks, cold drinks and cheap artefacts.

One place that I liked immensely in Islamabad was Lok Virsa — the folk art — Museum near Lotus Pond. This museum was founded in 1974 for the preservation of the folk culture of Pakistan. For an Indian familiar with a rich heritage of myriad folk culture tradition at home this museum may not be very special but it is still an attractive place to visit. Folk culture of Balochistan, North Western Frontier Province and the northernmost regions of Pakistan are still unfamiliar to an Indian. Especially the culture of Kalash, Spiti and Chitral regions is unique and in a way quite different from the Islamic culture. The big human statues made of black wood from Kalash immediately attract attention. The museum is situated in a *haveli* like building and the ambience of the entire complex is well created. The premises also boast of a good library with an impressive collection of books on religion and culture. There is an open auditorium that holds plays and music programmes in the evenings, and a publication centre that



*Lok Virsa Museum*

disseminates information on culture, folk music and literature, Sufi poetry, and brings out cultural gazettes. The publication centre also undertakes reprinting of old and rare books. Lok Virsa Museum is the biggest centre for production of audio and video cassettes of folk music in Pakistan. In 1983 the National Crafts Council was established under the aegis of the museum to encourage traditional crafts. But the museum is really out of the way. Without a vehicle of one's own it is difficult to return to the city. Lok Virsa has a shop in the Supermarket in Sector 6 selling specimens of Pakistani crafts. A couple of days prior to returning to India I bought a stone tile with the famous emblem of the Mohenjo Daro bull etched on it.

If Faisal Mosque is the identity of Islamabad, Margalla Hills lend it grandeur. Several trails for hiking run through the thick woods in these hills. There are a couple of interesting picnic spots here. One is Daman-e-koh which means 'in the lap of a hill'. A winding road leading to Daman-e-koh reminded me of Khandala *ghat* near Mumbai. A small zoo is located at the foot of the hill. One can get a panoramic view of the city from this point. After

dusk one can also see the twinkling lights of Rawalpindi at a distance. Weekends are crowded here. But after eight in the evening this place starts wearing a deserted look. With little human activity the hills offer an awesome sight in the dark. From Daman-e-koh one has to climb up the long winding stretch of road to reach Pir Suhawa. On reaching there one can feel an instant change in climate. It is cool Alpine climate at the top. Hill slopes are covered with Pine trees and the woods around are inhabited by a variety of animals. On my second visit to Islamabad in May 2003 that hardly lasted for 72 hours I did steal some time to visit Daman-e-koh but could not go to Pir Suhawa.

On one hot Sunday evening in the month of May, Rukhsana took me for the *Urs* of Shah Barri Imam, a major festival of Islamabad. It is held every year in summer at the tomb of Syed Abdul Latif Shah, popular as Barri Imam in Nurpur, a non-descript village situated just behind the Diplomatic Enclave in Islamabad. The *Urs* is held to commemorate the death of the saint who, as the legend goes, had predicted 300 years ago that this place, where Islamabad is situated now, would become a great capital of a new nation. For days flocks of devotees go to Nurpur, singing and dancing through the otherwise sedate streets of Islamabad. The *Urs* was typically a village fair in the Indian subcontinent complete with makeshift stalls selling all sorts of things including *prashad* of coconut, groundnuts and granulated sugar as in Hindu *yatras* in India. For a moment I wondered whether I was in Pakistan or India. I thought it would do us good to remember that the popular culture of the subcontinent is essentially syncretic.

So is this city of Islamabad, of well laid roads, nice houses and blessed by natural beauty. But it is a city without a distinct face. Islamabad has no identity of its own. It is a laid-back city, almost a non-happening city, and an indifferent city. This is an abode of bureaucrats, army officers and of foreign missions. Everybody here

is an outsider. People have come here from different regions, towns and villages of Pakistan for earning livelihood. Though many people have now made this city their home, nobody really belongs to this place. It has neither a history nor a culture of its own. It is a beautiful city but without a soul. Pakistanis often remark that Islamabad is in Pakistan but Pakistan is not in Islamabad. One has to travel 14 km from Islamabad to find Pakistan in Rawalpindi.

Islamabad is dead quiet on Sunday mornings. An American visitor once commented that the city is slightly bigger than the famous Arlington Cemetery near Washington DC but is more dead than the cemetery. I rarely found children playing or making noise outside homes. Every Sunday around 8.30 in the morning I used to walk to Faruqui Market through street number 32. I was quite fond of that pretty road. But I hardly found a soul on that street. More often than not I was the only soul walking around. Once in a while I would see a newspaper boy riding a bicycle or a milkman on a motorbike. Strangely, I could sense no sign of human life in the houses along the road. Life in those houses was behind the doors and windows that remained shut most of the time. It is said that during *Ramazán Eid* break Islamabad is almost deserted.

Cultural activities are few and historical monuments obviously don't exist in this young city. All construction is at the most forty years old. I liked the Supreme Court building designed by architect Kenzo Tange at the beginning of the nineties. It is modern and awesome. We in India are familiar with it as it appears often on TV with news about Pakistan. It is said that the original design of Tange was Islamised during its construction. A little ahead of it is the Revenue Board office combining the old and new styles of architecture. Further down the road stands one of the most controversial constructions in Pakistan, the palatial and ostentatious Prime Minister's Secretariat built during the regime of Nawaz Sharif. It has not been put to use ever since it was completed.

Some time ago there were reports suggesting that Saudi Arabia was prepared to buy it. But presently it is maintained by the establishment like a white elephant. The other white elephant in the city is the well-designed Convention Centre. This is also not in use and its maintenance cost is said to be very high. Saudi-Pak Tower built in a post-modern style combining stark lines with Islamic motifs on Jinnah Avenue is magnificent. Most offices of the United Nations are situated here. Islamabad Club at one end of the city is also nice. I used to admire its colonial style construction with tiled roof. This club is habitually a favourite meeting place for the city elite. I had the opportunity to go to the club for some of my social and official rendezvous.

Coming from a fast paced, vibrant, populous and noisy city like Mumbai, I found Islamabad too slow, quiet and lack-lustre. But over a period of time I understood the positive side of its slow life. I realised that I was completely free of the stress that is a part of life in Mumbai due to its hectic life and acute pollution. Islamabad is virtually free of air and noise pollution. My room was located in the inner side of the guesthouse and therefore insulated from the noise of traffic. Once I had to shift to a room facing the road for a week and I found the new room terribly noisy. In fact there is hardly any traffic on the Seventh Avenue where the guesthouse is located, yet I could feel the difference. No wonder that people from Islamabad do not like Lahore-Karachi and Lahoris and Karachians find Islamabad dull.



There is nothing much one can do in this city. But I had enough to do at least on the week days. Since I met and interviewed several people in Islamabad, tracing the right people, tracking them, fixing appointments, getting directions to reach the meeting places and finally meeting them kept me busy. But evenings were free. After



a few days I started going for evening walks though the weather was not really conducive for it. On Sundays there would be complete lull in activities. Then I would write my diary and practise Urdu writing. But I learnt to spend time without doing anything in Islamabad. The TV in the room provided Zee, Sony and Sahara channels apart from Pakistan TV and BBC. I became a TV buff in Islamabad. I regularly watched what has now become Ekta Kapoor's never ending soap — *Kkusum* on Sony — and *Draupadi* on Sahara. I watched PTV news read by heavily made up women newscasters and of course BBC programmes, especially Asia Today.

Occasionally I used to visit a couple of my new friends in Islamabad. Apart from visiting Professor and Rukhsana, I would meet Shah Jahan's family at their residence in Sector F/10. His wife Ismat is a smart, intelligent young woman working as a high level executive at the Asian Development Bank in Islamabad. Her work demands lot of travelling, so my meetings with her were infrequent. But whenever I could I enjoyed talking to her. I interacted more with Shah Jahan. He was a great help to me in Islamabad and accompanied me on a few occasions. He would bring his car to the Institute and sent for me. He never entered the Institute. I found this rather awkward. On asking him he said that people in the Institute must have been wondering how I could find such a handsome driver in Islamabad in such a short time! As Ismat was usually busy with her office work Shah Jahan had to babysit most of the time for their three year old son Roman, meaning romance. Their elder son Sparlay (spring, in Pashto) was twelve, hence independent. I went out with them for dinners. Twice we went to a Persian restaurant Omar Khayyam opposite the Institute. Apart from the succulent Persian kebabs I liked the exquisite and expensive Persian carpets on sale in the upper sections of the restaurant.

Like Shah Jahan, Ismat too has been active in the left movement. A feminist and a fighter by temperament, Ismat is a very sensitive woman. Her mother is originally a Hindu from the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP). Her maternal uncles reside in Faridabad near Delhi. Both Shah Jahan and Ismat have interest in India and are fond of Mumbai. Shah Jahan would say jokingly that if he ever changed his religion he would embrace Buddhism and if he ever left his country he would like to live in Mumbai. But that he said was not possible. Their house was always full of guests. Activists visiting Islamabad from Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar normally enjoyed their hospitality.

Muralidhar Reddy, representative of the well known Indian daily, *The Hindu*, in Pakistan, lived on street number 39, a walking distance away from my guesthouse. So also the representative of the Press Trust of India, K.J.M. Verma lived on Nazimuddin Road barely five minutes away from the Institute. Both Reddys and Vermas were of great help to me in Islamabad. The Reddys were in Islamabad since the summer of 2000, while the Vermas had arrived in Islamabad in January 2001. Both had spent a few days in the Royal International Guesthouse before they found suitable homes and therefore were friends of Karim Meghji. Verma had worked for PTI in Sri Lanka for four years before going to Islamabad. Both of them kept me updated on Pakistani situation. I used to talk to Muralidhar a lot on telephone. Sometimes I used to spend Sunday mornings at his place. His wife Aparna is from Uttar Pradesh while Verma's wife Ajita is from Kerala. Reddys have a son and the Vermas, two daughters, all school going. I admired both Aparna and Ajita. Their life was confined strictly to home and hearth. They had no occupation outside home and their social life was considerably restricted. They had good neighbours but were scared of interacting with Indians. Moreover their houses were under constant watch. Their visas were restricted to Islamabad preventing

them from any outing in Pakistan. Later when I got visas for Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar they were really happy for me. Both Muralidhar and Verma worked from home. Their computers, fax machines, telephones and Verma's teleprinter were constantly on. I enjoyed Aparna's and Ajita's hospitality and once in a while went to the Supermarket with them.

Pakistanis are familiar with *The Hindu*. According to Reddy *Hindu* is more known in Pakistan than in North India, for the *Hindu* covers Pakistani news and is critical of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Sangh Parivar. *Hindu's* sister publication *Frontline*, a fortnightly, is also fairly well known in Pakistan. In the opinion of Pakistanis it is the only fair and secular Indian newsmagazine. Next to *Frontline* comes the *Outlook* in popularity. *India Today* is branded as *hindutvavadi*. But *Femina* and *Stardust* from India are the most sought after Indian periodicals, which is indicated by the fact that Pakistani readers easily pay upto Rs. 300 for a single issue.

I had got introduced to Nusrat Jaweed, Special Correspondent of *The News International*, a widely circulated English daily of Pakistan, in Delhi. I had also met him in Mumbai. He was instrumental in the publication of my review article of Aitzaz Ahsan's *The Indus Saga* in *The News* before I reached Pakistan. This review, which was seen as rather overt criticism of the book that was highly rated in Pakistan had earned me some name and more notoriety in Pakistan prior to my arrival in Islamabad. But I was touched by Ahsan's magnanimity who despite my review took personal interest in the extension of my visa and put in a word with the concerned authorities.

In Islamabad I visited Nusrat a couple of times. His wife Sarah is well educated and belongs to a well known family of Pakistan. I found their house simple but tastefully decorated. Sarah works for an NGO in social development sector like many other highly

educated and upper class Pakistani women. This sector receives substantial aid from the foreign funding agencies and attracts many well educated, well placed women like Sarah and Naghma Imdad, Managing Director of Dataline Services whom I had met in Islamabad.

Often on Friday afternoons I went for seminars to Hotel Holiday Inn in Islamabad. The Institute closed at noon on Fridays so seminars were a good way of spending evenings. I met several people in these seminars and then I kept meeting them on a number of similar occasions. Seminars begin with a recitation of *Tilawat-ayats* from the *Quran* — something similar to *Saraswati vandana* in India. Most women cover their heads during *Tilawat*. In the first seminar I was totally ignorant of this practice. After a couple of minutes I realised that I had not covered my head and that girls across the table were staring at me. But I decided against covering my head. Later when I narrated this incident to Dr. Maqsudul Hasan Nuri, my colleague from the Institute who also participated in the seminar he remarked that I looked like a Pakistani. I thought that was the real problem. If I looked *frangi* then nobody would expect me to cover the head. But in no seminar did I cover my head for *Tilawat* and nobody objected to it.

I mostly wore *salwar kameez* in Pakistan. *Sari* was reserved for occasions. Pakistani women have almost given up wearing *saris*. The two exceptions in Islamabad to my knowledge are Dr. Zarina Salamat, a historian and a peace activist whom I had met at Bangalore, and Indu Mitha, a veteran classical danseuse in Islamabad. On my way to Pakistan I had removed my *bindi* at Delhi airport and put it back after five months at Delhi airport on my return. Aparana and Ajita never wore *bindi* and advised me to refrain from putting it.

Some seminars used to be held at Best Western Hotel near Islamabad Club. I also attended a few talks and discussions at the

Centre for Voluntary Organisations. In some such seminars I met Dr. Parvez Hoodbhoy, Dr. A.H. Nayyar both renowned physicists, prolific writers and peace activists, Dr. Tariq Rahman, Professor of Linguistics and South Asian Studies, Dr. Mohammed Waseem, and Dr. Ijaz Hussain from the Department of International Relations, Dr. Rifaat Hussain, Chairman, Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, Rasul Bakhsh Rais, Director, Area Study Centre for Africa, North & South America — all from Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) in Islamabad. Later I had long discussions with each of them in the context of my research theme. Dr. Hoodbhoy was awarded the prestigious Kalinga Award of the UNESCO for his undeterred efforts at peace in 2003.

QAU was established as a centre of excellence. It has a large campus situated a little away from the city. The campus looked arid and devoid of any greenery in contrast to the green city of Islamabad. Professor Khalid Mahmud thought that the QAU resembled Takshashila University in its design and layout, while Dr. Masud Zahid, Professor of History at the National Institute of Pakistan Studies at QAU felt it was more like Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi. I had the opportunity to visit QAU a number of times. The day I went to see Dr. Waseem, 23 July 2001, happened to be the day of historic cloud burst for Islamabad and north Punjab. The city was lashed by unprecedented rains almost after a century. It rained 625 mm. in a single day. When I left for QAU in the morning there was no indication of the impending deluge though it was raining fairly heavily. Born and brought up in Mumbai, and therefore used to heavy rains, I had thought it would be a normal rainy day. But by the time I reached the campus it was flooded. Despite the adversity I had a meeting with Dr. Waseem for a couple of hours. The rains took a heavy toll of a hundred people in Islamabad and north Punjab region of Pakistan. Two of my colleagues from the Institute — Dr. Abul



Barakat Ahmad, the editor and Shaheen Akhtar — were not spared by nature's fury. Their houses were flooded and most of their belongings like hundreds of others were washed away by floods.



Islamabad is the city of institutions. In my long stay in Islamabad I met several prominent people and visited many institutions. I interviewed Niaz A. Naik, former Foreign Secretary and the former High Commissioner of Pakistan to India, Aga Shahi, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Najamuddin A. Shaikh, and Maqbul Bhatti, both former Foreign Secretaries, Ziauddin, resident editor of *The Dawn* in Islamabad, Naseem Zehra, a fiery journalist, Mariana Baabar, who writes regularly for the Indian newsmagazine *Outlook*, (I was indeed flattered by her generous coverage in *The News International* of my paper presented in the seminar organised by IRS in May 2003.) Dr. Shirin Mazari, the high profile Director of the Institute of Strategic Studies known for her hawkish views on India, General (Retd) Aslam Beg, the former Chief of the Army Staff, Lieut. General (Retd) Hamid Gul, the former chief of the ISI, Lieut. General (Retd) Talat Masud, Brig. (Retd) Shaukat Qadir, Dr. Khaled Rehman, Executive Director of the Institute of Policy Studies of Jamaat-e-Islami, Dr. Zafar Ansari, Research Director of Islamic University, Dr. Ghulam Mustafa Azad, Research Director of Council of Islamic Ideology, Dr. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Director of Islamabad Policy Research Institute, Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani, a renowned archaeologist, and a polyglot who knows as many as eight languages including Hindi, Marathi and Sanskrit, and Director, Taxila Institute of Asian Civilization, QAU, Dr. Inayatullah, Coordinator, Council of Social Sciences, Professor Khwaja Masud, a Marxist scholar and a leading light of the now extinct communist movement in Pakistan, Senator Akram Zaki and a few others. It must be stated here that all these

interviews were held in very amicable atmosphere and even if there were differences of opinion between me and the interviewee, no interview ever ended on a discordant note.

Octogenarian Dr. Dani is a Kashmiri born in Raipur, Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh in India) in British India. He got a bachelor's degree in Hindi from Nagpur University followed by Masters in Sanskrit from the Benaras Hindu University. At Benaras he came in contact with some reputed Maharashtrian scholars like Dr. V. V. Mirashi, Dr. A.S. Altekar and Professor S.V. Puntambekar. Dr. Dani is fair complexioned, and his surname does not reveal his religious identity. Therefore these Maharashtrian scholars took him to be a Konknastha brahmin (for they could not have possibly imagined a Muslim studying for Masters in Sanskrit at Benaras) and one of them even advised him to join Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). I could not miss the twinkle in his eyes when Dani narrated this anecdote to me. Dr. Dani has trained three or four Sanskrit scholars in Pakistan. But increasingly, he thinks, it has become an impossible task. According to him Urdu grammar has basically taken from Sanskrit grammar and therefore there should be no difficulty for a Pakistani to learn Sanskrit. And he believes, in fact is convinced, that anybody who knows Sanskrit has no difficulty in learning any other language. After his Masters, Dani earned a doctorate on South East Asia from London and later a DLitt from Tajikistan. He has done research on Central Asia but his fundamental research is on Takshashila (Taxila in Pakistan). Interestingly both his English and Urdu works on Takshashila are published from India. Dani's participation in the Indian History Congress in Kolkata in December 2000 was widely reported in the Indian media. When I spoke to him on 25 May 2001 at his home in Islamabad he informed me of his forthcoming visit to India in June to deliver the Indira Gandhi Memorial Lecture at the Royal Asiatic Society, Kolkata.

I met Professor Khwaja Masud in the evening on the same day. True to his left ideology he analysed religious fundamentalism in economic terms. In his opinion religious fundamentalism is the result of the failure of capitalism. It is more of an urban phenomenon and hence it is necessary to seek cooperation of the rural masses to confront this evil. The urban masses, by nature, tend to be bourgeoisie and the student mind is already poisoned by fundamentalist ideology. I was told that his wife Salma Masud who was active in the progressive movement especially in the movement for women's education had expired recently.

Senator Akram Zaki too began with economic analysis of fundamentalism. He contended that when people feel economically deprived and exploited they tend to become religious extremists. When such extremists are marginalised in power structure they tend to be fanatic about religion, but once they come to power their fanaticism gets gradually blunted. He pointed to the Iranian experience in support of his argument and expressed a hope that similar positive changes would come about in the case of Taliban in Afghanistan. I had met him on 4 June. There was no opportunity to test Senator Zaki's theory as the Taliban regime collapsed soon after in October 2001 as a result of America's war on Afghanistan following the events of 9/11. Even before I had met Zaki personally I had heard him propagating the same argument in a seminar in Islamabad. As I was about to conclude our meeting, a lady came forward and greeted me with a *namaste* with folded hands. For a moment I wondered if she was an Indian journalist who had come to meet the Senator. But she was the Senator's wife. His first wife, I gathered later, who had passed away a few years ago was connected with the royal family of Nepal.

I went to meet Lieut. General Hamid Gul, the former director of the ISI, at his residence in Rawalpindi. I was a little wary of meeting him as his very name was dreaded in India. I reached his

house a little before noon, my appointed time with him. He was winding up his previous meeting. As I announced my name he welcomed me with a smile and led me to his study. I had expected him to be a stern looking person with anti-India sentiments writ large on his face but he appeared mild at least externally. He was absolutely candid and blunt during the interview whether he was talking about India or Pakistan and yet the manner and tone of his speech was temperate. In his opinion though India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is much bigger than Pakistan's ISI the latter is more effective. ISI is drawn from the army while RAW from the police service. Therefore their cultures and mental orientations are different. On my asking about the allegations of ISI operations in India he coolly said that RAW was also playing a lot of mischief in Pakistan. Earlier, he said, RAW was close to Russian agency KGB but presently it works in close collaboration with Israel's secret agency Mossad because there has always been a good understanding between India and Israel. Moreover ever since Pakistan had acquired nuclear capability Israel has been worried about Pakistani intervention in the Middle East. I do not know what Gul thinks now about Pakistan making right noises about establishing diplomatic ties with Israel ever since President Musharraf returned from his US visit in June 2003.

On Kashmir he was confident that Kashmiris just detested being a part of India and if ever a plebiscite was held in Kashmir in accordance with the UN resolution, they would vote for Pakistan. He said it would be in the interest of India if Kashmir joined Pakistan instead of becoming an independent territory. For, independent Kashmir would inevitably invite massive American intervention and that will be prejudicial to Indian interests too. According to him, Indian democracy won't attain maturity until India recognised the right of self-determination of the Kashmiris. In his opinion the communal division of Kashmir would be harmful

to India and if Kashmiris acquired the right of self-determination, its fate would be determined on cultural basis and not the communal one. He was confident that Hindus and Buddhists in Kashmir would vote for *Kashmiriyat* and not religion. But he emphasised that once Kashmir was in Pakistan it ought to enjoy autonomy.

I asked him about the ISI role in the Mumbai bomb blasts of 1993. He said that when he headed the ISI it was not a part of the ISI strategy to cause bomb blasts in India. But he refused to comment as he was no more connected with the ISI. He categorically rejected any suggestion to the effect that the ISI had fathered Taliban, for Afghans are fiercely independent. An Afghan could be hired but not bought. I had heard the same argument a number of times from several retired army officers in seminars.

Why did Pakistan not stop terrorist menace in Kashmir? And Hamid Gul shot back, 'Why should we stop it? *Mujahideens* have made our army's job easier in Kashmir. They don't demand pension or land (Pakistani army men are gifted land plots by the government). They help us in cutting down our military expenditure and they have made Indian army's life in Kashmir miserable.' I was amused but did not react. My job was to make people talk. He also announced that he was a *jihadi* but believed that *jihad* is to be employed strictly for a noble cause. *Jihad* in Kashmir was justifiable but should not be employed generally against India. We spoke for two hours. It was perhaps the most interesting interview I have had in Pakistan. He was blunt and did not mince words. During our conversation Mrs. Gul peeped in to enquire about me. His small grandson also hopped in a couple of times to share a secret or two with the grandfather. As I concluded the interview I told him how his name was dreaded in India. He smiled and asked whether he really looked like that. It was two in the afternoon. He invited me to have lunch with his family but I declined the invitation politely and left his house.



Unlike Gul, General (Retd) Aslam Beg believed that ISI was involved in the creation of Taliban though he absolved the army and the bureaucracy of any role in it. Like Senator Zaki he was optimistic that sooner or later Taliban would choose a path of moderation. While commenting on India he thought there was some positive change in Pakistani opinion of India due to India's achievements in maintaining political stability and democracy and due to her economic progress. Also in recent time India had opted for aggressive diplomacy that paid good dividends, to her, for, even Pakistan's traditional friends like China and Iran supported India on the issue of terrorism. According to General Beg, the roots of militarism in Pakistan go deep down the history of the region; historical records indicate more than 40 invasions in the Frontier Province and Punjab. Therefore the culture that developed in this region was grounded in militarism. In his opinion the people of Pakistan had accepted the importance of the army that has remained consistent in its professional standards for over five decades while the fortunes of other institutions of the state had varied dramatically from time to time. Army's control over the country's politics is indeed formidable.



At the Institute, apart from Professor Khalid Mahmud I used to talk to Amera and Shaheen a great deal. Often Shaheen and I used to work beyond the closing hours of the Institute. We used to discuss several issues over a cup of *qahwa* made in Shaheen's room. Amera guided me in meeting people, suggested relevant reading materials and also lent books. Once I went to her house in Rawalpindi and had an opportunity to meet her family members. Also, Dr. Nuri, who later left for Germany sometime in August, and I often discussed a number of issues related to my work. Dr. Nuri, a former army officer had spent nearly three years in India as

a prisoner of war (POW) after the 1971 war. He narrated to me several stories from his camp life in Sagar in Madhya Pradesh, where he spent most of his time in India. While in the camp, he got interested in international politics and started reading it systematically. He said there was no difficulty in obtaining books through camp officers. Serious reading was an effective means of warding off any depression resulting from a deeply bruised self-image as POW. Of course not every POW succeeded in overcoming the depression. Later after his release and return to Pakistan, he left the army job and obtained a Master's degree in International Relations from QAU and a PhD from an American University later. Interestingly despite being a prisoner of war in India he displayed no animus against India.

Senior Collating Officer Nasir Zaidi in the Institute was a great help to me. Zaidi and Nasreen together have developed a comprehensive collation and documentation service by maintaining hundreds of files of newspaper cuttings and organising them subject-wise. Zaidi's family had migrated to Pakistan from Uttar Pradesh in 1951. After living in Karachi for a few years, he is now settled in Islamabad. He worked for the reference service of the News International in Rawalpindi after the Institute was closed for the day. His help was invaluable for me in the Institute. To me he was like a ready reference for locating material, prospective people to meet, their telephone numbers and addresses. Zaidi is one of the three journalists who were brutally beaten up by the police during the Zia-ul-Haq regime.

Dr. Barakat, the editor of the *Regional Studies*, a quarterly research journal published by the Institute, is a man of few words. He often enquired about my well-being and my work and suggested articles and references relevant for my research. He is related to Maulana Maudoodi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami but I learnt that Dr. Barakat's political moorings have been with the left

movement. The torrential rains of 23 July had hit his family badly, forcing them to change the house. But he never complained or spoke about the damage. He continued to work quietly in his own stoic way as usual.

I had to see Col. Aziz in his office often for completion of formalities concerning my fellowship or affiliation to the Institute or for fixing some high level appointment. I used to ask him many questions about Pakistan. It was fun talking to him for he holds his own distinct views about everything including research. In his opinion researchers are far removed from reality and tend to be theoretical and abstract in their thinking, and bombastic with words. Many of them neither spoke nor wrote clearly, but often got caught up with the jargon. He would say that he was not a scholar like others in the Institute but was an ordinary soldier who had spent most of his working life living in camps. It was hard for me to take his views on research lying down. So I used to argue with him in an effort to convince him that his views were incorrect and that theories in social sciences were not constructed in ivory towers, as he thought, but were in the form of an abstraction of the reality. He narrated to me his childhood memories especially of Hindus of Model Town in Lahore. He said he was always intrigued by the Hindu observation of purity and pollution. He wondered why the mothers of his Hindu friends who normally treated him with affection prevented him from entering their kitchen and prohibited their children from eating at Muslim homes. Similarly he wondered why a Hindu *seth*, who took keen interest in his educational progress, carefully avoided any physical contact with him in any transaction. Col. Aziz's father worked in Kashmir. His mother died in Kashmir and was buried in Srinagar. He was unhappy that he could never visit her grave after the partition.

Col. Aziz had spent nearly three years of his working life in East Pakistan and narrated a few incidents to me. He spoke highly of Bengalis and their culture and narrated how a Bengali soldier would read Tagore in his leisure time but his Punjabi counterpart would not even touch a book. He said that now Pakistanis acknowledge that their government's erroneous policies in East Pakistan were responsible for its secession from Pakistan rather than heaping the blame at India's doorstep entirely. But I think even now, some Pakistanis conveniently castigate India for the creation of Bangladesh. Yet Col. Aziz's observation is valid. I remember reading an article by a Pakistani commentator on the emergence of Bangladesh some years ago where the writer had said that it was only after 1971 that the Pakistanis have understood the pangs caused by the partition of the country, which Indians suffered in 1947. Colonel's son Bilal remarked that Pakistanis have stopped brooding over the separation of East Pakistan long ago. This is true. It confirmed my observation on the issue. But there are also people who think that separation of East Pakistan was good riddance. There was a big cultural divide between the Eastern and Western wings of Pakistan. Bengali language is closer to Sanskrit and the Bengali Muslims were seen as 'Hinduised' hence though the West Pakistanis did suffer from the shock and humiliation of the partition, it was blunted by the fact that there wasn't much attachment for the region separated. Col. Aziz had visited Bangladesh a couple of times after its creation. He wondered why despite India's help in the creation of Bangladesh, Bangladeshis were anti-India? Indian goods are available in plenty in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi manufacturers are not too happy about it. They think India has systematically proliferated the Bangladeshi markets with Indian goods causing a grave threat to the manufacturing industry in Bangladesh. (Did we in India not say the same thing when Chinese goods filled Indian markets a couple of years ago?) This

according to Bangladeshis is a kind of Indian imperialism. His experience in Nepal, he said, was similar.

Col. Aziz narrated an interesting anecdote while highlighting the problem of Pakistani identity. He was in Morocco when Indira Gandhi was killed in October 1984. On hearing the news a Moroccan asked him if he were an Indian. On knowing that Colonel Saab was a Pakistani he expressed his condolences on the killing of the Prime Minister of his country! The Moroccan could not distinguish between India and Pakistan.

Every Friday we had a *samosa* party in the Institute. I think it was Amera who pioneered these parties. According to Professor Saab these parties became regular after I joined the Institute. Though it was called *samosa* party, soon it became luncheon party. Once I made a typical Maharashtrian dish *batate pohe* — made from flattened rice cooked with onions and potatoes — for my friends. It is difficult to get *pohe* in Islamabad. But Professor Khan got them from a shop near Lahori gate from the walled city of Lahore. The quality of flattened rice was poor and it looked blackened but after thorough cleansing with water, I thought it looked all right. My friends at the Institute relished it or were polite. Once Nasreen and Shaheen brought *chhole*, and well decorated *dahi bhalle* for the party. Every member of the Institute took turns to bring something and celebrate the weekly party. Once I cooked a full-fledged lunch using the facilities at Verma's house — courtesy Ajita. My friends at the Institute wanted fresh coconut chutney. I got a coconut at 45 rupees but a coconut scraper was not available. So I chopped it into small pieces and made chutney. I cooked a vegetarian lunch and supplemented with *pakorras* from the Faruqui Market. But it was Rukhsana who surpassed us all. She is a wonderful cook and would bring a variety of things, often made of chicken with *rotis*, *parathas* and *puris*, and mangoes too. Later, our party day was



changed from Friday to Thursday and all of us looked forward to Thursday noon.

Guesthouse food was rather monotonous and consisted mostly of chicken preparations. I was immensely bored eating chicken day in and day out. After getting a nod from Karim Bhai I started cooking for myself in the guesthouse kitchen. Whether you cook for one person or a family you need the same paraphernalia. I bought and borrowed utensils, and fully armed myself with a pressure cooker and a frying pan from Aabpara Market, plates, mugs, spoons and plastic containers and spices from the Supermarket. I started buying vegetables twice a week. Vegetables in Islamabad are expensive, even the humble bananas were sold at 48 rupees a dozen. I prepared vegetables for cooking in the room and then went down to the kitchen. To my surprise Pakistani pressure cooker had two pressure vents and two weights but I soon got used to it. Later I was tired of cooking every day in that longish and hot kitchen. So I switched over to cooking in bulk for 2–3 days. I never made *chapattis* for myself but took them from the guesthouse. Pakistani *chapatti* is huge compared to Indian *chapatti*. One *chapatti* would be more than enough for me at a meal. Pakistanis in turn are amused by the size of Indian *chapattis*. Gradually my room started looking like a pantry. I missed *hing* powder — asafoetida — and fresh curry leaves, two indispensable ingredients for Indian cooking. Guesthouse had a Kashmiri cook. Some Afghani boys were also staying at the guesthouse at the same time. They had come for a medical treatment for one of them. Instead of taking the guesthouse food they cooked for the patient and themselves. Often we used to cook at the same time. The Kashmiri cook used to wonder why the two countries could not resolve the Kashmir problem and live in peace.



I spent three continuous months — May, June and July — in Islamabad. I visited the Indian High Commission in the first week and met the then High Commissioner Vijay Nambiar and the Deputy High Commissioner Sudhir Vyas. Vijay Nambiar has a Master's in Politics from the Department of Civics and Politics of the Bombay University. I have studied at the same department. Also for some time Nambiar had lived in Bandra East, a suburb of Mumbai, which is my home too. On reading my home address he mentioned some landmarks like Hanuman Mandir in the locality. It was really nice meeting someone so unexpectedly from Bandra East in Islamabad.

I had to open a bank account in the first week. My grant money was to be deposited directly in my account by ASIA Fellows Program from Bangkok. I was directed to the Habib Bank as the Institute banked with them. But the lady branch manager expressed her inability in opening my account as my visa was only for four months. I consulted with Bangkok but they said categorically that there was no way of reaching me my grant money without having a bank account in Islamabad. Verma advised me to approach Standard Chartered Grindleys Bank. Its manager A. Jabbar Junejo readily agreed to open the account on the opening deposit of 10,000 US dollars. I said if I had 10,000 dollars in cash I would not bother to open an account. He found a way out. I could open an account if I obtained a Letter of Introduction from the Indian High Commission. I immediately called up the High Commission and fixed an appointment with one Mr. Sharma. I narrated my story to him and he issued me a letter the very next day. As I stepped out of the High Commission with the letter a Pakistani intelligence agent accosted me. He thought I was a Pakistani and wanted to know why I had visited the Indian High Commission. Pakistanis who go for visas use the other gate of the High Commission. So my departing from the front gate of the High

Commission was enough to arouse his suspicion. When I explained to him everything and showed my passport he was convinced of my 'innocence'. He apologised and explained to me that he was only performing his duty, and as a friendly gesture directed me to the Bank. Finally I could open the account after more than three weeks in Islamabad. My grants arrived a week later. I had already spent a month in Islamabad. Royal Guesthouse had sent me a huge bill but Karim Bhai waited patiently for my money to arrive. I had a dollar account so I needed to change money into Pakistani currency. The commercial exchange rate is more than the bank rate, and in Pakistan, changing money is as easy as making a telephone call from a public booth in India. I changed dollars from the money changer next to the Institute, paid Karim Bhai's bill and heaved a sigh of relief.

I had already taken a mobile connection. Though the incoming calls were free the connection itself was expensive. After the arrival of the grant money I bought a laptop. It was provided for in the research grant. I went with Shah Jahan for selecting a laptop and decided on an IBM model. Col. Aziz spoke to the dealer, called for the delivery of the laptop in the Institute, made the payment and took the receipt for it under personal supervision. Shaheen said she would apply for ASIA Fellowship at least for a laptop.

On 1 August I got visa extension for another two months and also visas for Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar but my request for a visa for Quetta and Khyber Pass was rejected. Dr. Syed Aslam of QAU was instrumental in this whole operation. In consultation with Professor Khan I immediately planned my itinerary for travel in Pakistan. On 2 August the Institute President Khalid Mahmood, Professor Khalid Mahmud, Col. Aziz and Shaheen Akhtar left for a 10-day visit to China and on 6 August I left Islamabad for Lahore.

## *Lahore — A Punjabi El Dorado*

‘One who hasn’t seen Lahore hasn’t been born’, is a popular Punjabi adage. Punjabis claim proudly that Lahore is Lahore, as I keep claiming ‘Mumbai is Mumbai’. Interestingly I watched a Hindi (Urdu) play *Jis Lahore nahin dekhiya* (One who has not seen Lahore) in Mumbai recently, written by Ashgar Wajahat. The play is banned in Pakistan. Once Lahore was recognised as the Paris of the East. This city, known for its achievements in art, architecture, and literature has been a cultural crucible throughout the 20th century. Lahore has long been a sophisticated place in terms of poetry, literature, intellectual thought, crafts, even in making *kulfi*, *siri pai* or *bakarkhani*, says Reza Kazim, a Pakistani lawyer. And yet, Lockwood Kipling, the father of Rudyard Kipling, who is known for his oft-quoted refrain, ‘The East is east and the West is west’, is said to have found Lahore ‘so profoundly dull!’ Today Lahore is one of Pakistan’s most cultured and cosmopolitan cities and more importantly home to Pakistan’s moderate mainstream culture and long known more for food and festivals than religious zeal.

I feared that I might return from Pakistan without visiting Lahore. In fact I had intended to locate myself in Lahore for my project but the Pakistan government had stalled my intention summarily by locating me in Islamabad instead and limiting my visa to Islamabad alone. Hence as soon as I got visa extension I decided to go to Lahore. It is easy to travel from Islamabad to Lahore. Karachi–Peshawar railway link connects Islamabad

and Lahore but the best way to travel to Lahore, I was told, is by road — the famous motorway constructed with the help of the Korean company Daewoo. A number of travel companies including Daewoo run their coaches that literally glide on this smooth road, covering the distance of 280 km in roughly four-and-half to five hours. It is like travelling on the newly built expressway between Mumbai and Pune.

I set for Lahore at noon on 6 August after the mandatory police reporting at Islamabad. As you move out of the city, this broad motorway winds through a hilly terrain. Later it crosses a small *ghat* in the Salt Range and suddenly descends on the vast plains of Central Punjab. From there till you reach Lahore you see nothing but fields on both sides of the road. In this journey of 280 km, no road cuts across the motorway. Hence there is no stopping on the way except at the Peacock Restaurant near Kalal Kahar for snacks. But I found this road lifeless. It completely avoids places of human habitation. If one wants to observe popular life in Pakistan one must avoid this route and take the famous old Grand Trunk Road as I did on my return journey to Islamabad.

The day I set out for Lahore happened to be a rainy day, so the journey was pleasant. Hindi film songs were played in the coach throughout the journey and the passengers were also treated with Amitabh Bachchan's movie, '*Ek Rishta*'. I found most commuters including children, completely engrossed in watching the movie. Though Hindi films are officially banned in Pakistan the long distance coaches regularly screen Hindi movies. I remember reading a letter in the readers' column in a newspaper complaining about a certain coach that screened the Indian movie *Mission Kashmir*. Obviously this reader was bugged as the movie strongly indicts Pakistan for encouraging and promoting violence in the Kashmir valley. Promptly, on the third day, another reader in the same column wrote seeking to know the impropriety in screening the



movie. He thought it was a well-made film. I appreciated his stoicism, for initially I used to get bugged with the exaggerated and one sided reports about the happenings in Kashmir on Pakistan TV news programmes. Interestingly, a young woman relative of a friend in Islamabad had just visited Srinagar in Kashmir then and had found nothing 'terribly' wrong in Kashmir and said that life there was 'quite normal'.

The motorway crosses Jhelum, Chenab and Ravi, three major rivers of Punjab, between Islamabad and Lahore. Lahore is situated on the eastern bank of Ravi. The torrential rains in the third week of July that lashed the northern regions of Punjab had caused heavy flooding of these rivers. I really liked the sight of Jhelum overflowing and the vast expanse of its waterbed.

As the coach entered Lahore I felt I was suddenly transported from no man's territory to a densely populous land. It was evening and the roads were chock-a-block with traffic. City buses of Daewoo and Khan Brothers provide for most of the public transport in Lahore. Along with them run a variety of auto-rickshaws — there is a real variety of shape, size, and capacity. For the next ten days of my stay in Lahore I literally cursed whoever had designed the auto, for their height from the ground made climbing into them very difficult. Lahore is full of two-wheelers that are conspicuously absent in Islamabad. Lahore is real Pakistan. Islamabad is different. Lahore, its people, their culture, their food, everything has its own distinct flavour.



Lahore is made of history. The known history of Lahore spans over 1500 years though its mythology takes it back to the times of the *Ramayana*. According to a legend, the city of Lahore and a small town of Kasur near the Indo-Pak border were founded by

the two sons of Lord Ram, Lav and Kush. According to another belief Lahore was founded by Rajputs. The first documented mention of Lahore is found in the works of the Chinese traveller Hsuan Tsang who had visited Lahore in 630 AD. Lahore was mentioned as a city for the first time in an Arab tome, *Hudood-e-Aalam* written at the end of the 9th century AD. At the end of the 10th century Lahore was ruled by a Hindu ruler Raja Jaipal. Lahore came under Muslim rule at the beginning of the 11th century after its conquest by Mahmud of Ghazni. Alberuni, the well known Arab traveller and the celebrated author of *Tarikh ul Hind*, who accompanied the invading armies of Mahmud of Ghazni in 1018–19, has mentioned Lahore as a province, with Mandhukur — present Sialkot — as its capital. Later until the Mughals established their suzerainty over the city in 1524, Lahore was invaded a number of times. Qutubuddin Aibak, the Turkish slave officer of Muhammad Ghori who set himself as an independent ruler of Lahore, Iltutmish, a slave officer of Aibak, Aladdin Khilji and Muhammad bin Tughluq ruled over Lahore from time to time. Lahore found some peace under Pathan rule that lasted for nearly one hundred years. During the reign of Ibrahim Lodi, Daulat Khan, his Governor at Lahore, staged a palace revolt against Lodi and invited Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur to invade India. Babur captured Lahore in 1524 and soon India came under the Mughal rule in 1526.

In 1585 Akbar transferred his capital from Agra to Lahore and stayed on in this city for the next thirteen years. He invaded Kashmir several times from Lahore and also fought with tribes from the frontier region in the West. Lahore flourished under Akbar who made it a great city and a premier centre for art and culture in India. *Mahabharat* and Kalhan's *Rajtarangini* were rendered into Persian in Lahore. The famous Raja Todarmal, the Revenue Minister of Akbar died in Lahore. Later the two descendents of Akbar,

Jehangir and Shah Jehan further added to the glory of the city. Shah Jehan was especially attached to Lahore, as it was his place of birth. He beautified the city with lovely gardens topped by the exquisite Shalimar Garden. Shah Jehan's successor Aurangzeb rarely visited Lahore as he mostly confined himself to the Deccan. His brother Dara Shikoh controlled Lahore for some time. In 1659 Aurangzeb regained control over Lahore. Later, Badshahi Masjid, the greatest landmark of the city was built at his behest. But Lahore rapidly started decaying as it lacked the imperial presence.

Though the Mughals continued to hold Lahore and most of Punjab until the mid-eighteenth century, after Aurangzeb's death Lahore was neglected. It was invaded by Afghan rulers Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali a number of times. In 1770 when Abdali returned to Kabul he sold the city to Sardar Lahana Singh. At the end of the 18th century Ranjit Singh established his control over Lahore and laid the foundation of the Sikh Empire. Ranjit Singh ruled over Lahore for 40 years and extended his empire from Peshawar to Kashmir. Seven years after the death of Ranjit Singh, in 1846 the Union Jack was hoisted on Lahore. During the *Rajera* Lahore was a vortex of political activity. It remained a frontline city along with other Indian cities during the war of Independence in 1857. Later in the course of the Indian freedom struggle, the *Purna Swaraj* (complete independence) resolution was passed at the banks of Ravi in the Indian National Congress Convention of 1929. Lahore is the land of Lala Lajpat Rai and Bhagat Singh and their martyrdom in the cause of India's freedom. And most importantly, the place where the All India Muslim League passed a resolution that demanded a separate state for Indian Muslims on 23 March 1940, popularly known as the Pakistan Resolution. The League's Convention was held at Minto Park now renamed as Gulshan-e-Iqbal. At the centre of the park stands the 196 feet high Minar-e-Pakistan erected in 1968 to commemorate the



*Minar-e-Pakistan*

passing of Pakistan Resolution. In 1999 when the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee made the historic bus journey to Lahore, he created yet another history by visiting the Minar, symbolically conveying India's acceptance of the creation of Pakistan. This visit was greatly appreciated in Pakistan.

During the partition of India Lahore witnessed the most fierce communal riots. The early Muslim migrants from India went to Lahore and their Hindu counterparts came to India from Lahore. The trauma of Lahore has been well documented in numerous historical and literary works on the partition, both serious and creative. I vaguely recall an old Hindi movie starring Nutan, one of the finest actresses of the bygone era that depicted the trials of a young woman who lived in Lahore and got separated from her parents and husband in their journey to India during the partition. The best cinematic work depicting Lahore during the partition I

have seen till date is *Earth-1947* made by Deepa Mehta based on *Cracking India* also known as *Ice Candy Man*, the work by Bapsi Sidhwa, a distinguished Pakistani novelist.

In 1954 Pakistan Government formally created two units of Pakistan, 'East Pakistan' and 'West Pakistan' and Lahore became the capital of the western unit. Later in 1971 after the cessation of East Pakistan, Pakistan became a federation and Lahore was granted the status of the capital of Punjab Province. During the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1972 Indian army had reached very close to Lahore threatening to capture this historical city.

Lahore's place in the history of Pakistan is unique. No other Pakistani city could be compared to Lahore. In the long history of this great city it was invaded, plundered, destroyed, and reconstructed a number of times. Perhaps Lahore city is the best example of how history is determined by geography. It is situated strategically on the ancient trade routes to Kabul, Multan and Kashmir and had been always threatened by invaders from the north. The city is surrounded by vast plains of the Punjab depriving it of any natural defence. Even after the creation of Pakistan its geography has placed the city in a tight corner. It is merely inches away from the Indian border.

Lahore has been the subject of praise of many western poets, writers and travellers. European visitors describe Lahore as one of the great cities of the East. The great English poet Milton wrote about two Mughal cities, Agra and Lahore in his renowned work *The Paradise Lost*. The two European chroniclers of life in Mughal India, the Spanish traveller Fray Sebastian Manrique, who visited Lahore in 1641, and the French traveller Francois Bernier who travelled through the Mughal Empire were impressed with the city adorned with magnificent buildings and beautiful gardens. The impressive buildings of Lahore have always been the object of admiration of the British officers and travellers. Rudyard Kipling



was born in Mumbai but raised in Lahore and is said to have loved Lahore immensely. It is said that Kipling found the character of Kim, the protagonist of the novel by the same name written in 1901, while working in Lahore as assistant editor of the *Civil and Military Gazette*, a sister publication of *The Pioneer* of Allahabad.



I reached this historic city of Lahore in the evening of 6 August. Before I could sense its historicity and appreciate the architectural beauty of its splendid buildings, I experienced its muggy weather. It was very hot and humid. In the next ten days of my stay Lahore was infested by terrible weather, something I had never experienced ever before that made me simply restless.

My stay in Lahore was at Dharampura with Professor Khan's family. It was predominantly a Hindu-Sikh locality before the partition. Its ethos even today is that of any North Indian city. I was told that Sushma Swaraj, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and cabinet minister in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government in India is originally from Dharampura. Professor Khan's one-storeyed house originally belonged to a Sikh family. It was allotted to the Khan family when they migrated from Jalandhar to Lahore after the partition. Since then the Professor and his elder brother who practises law in Lahore have been living in this house. Houses here stand cheek by jowl. Narrow alleys run through Dharampura making any movement of air almost impossible. Air cooler provided no respite from the heat.

Professor Khan's two nieces are well educated. Hina is a medical doctor working as a Registrar (Surgery) at Ganga Ram Hospital, and Ayesha has a Master's in Business Administration and works as an executive in a private firm. His third niece Maliha was then studying at school. Women characters in the Hindi serials aired

on Indian TV channels had conditioned their image of an Indian Hindu woman. They had imagined me in the same cast — with a big *bindi*, *sindur* in the parting, handful of bangles and a chunky *mangalsutra* around the neck. Maliha even said so. I thought I was a curious specimen for them for they had not seen a Hindu woman in life and blood. I was reminded of a similar experience a few years ago. I was in Amman, Jordan for an International Leadership Workshop of the United Nations University. Our group consisted of a Russian lady Elena from a Siberian town. On our first meeting she had said that she had seen a *sari*-clad woman in life and blood for the first time in her life. Professor Khan had named his daughter Geeta but her school changed it to Gaitee Araa meaning ‘decoration of earth’ in Persian. Gaitee Araa was studying for her Master’s degree at some other town in Punjab.



The day after the police reporting I set out for sightseeing in Lahore with Professor Khan. At high noon we visited the tomb of Jehangir. It was under Jehangir that Lahore gained prominence in the Mughal Empire. Jehangir died in Rajauri en route from Lahore to Kashmir. His body was brought to Lahore and buried in Char Bagh on the outskirts of the city now called Shahdara. Once upon a time this place was called Bag-e-Dilkush, a favourite place of his queen Nur Jehan. The mausoleum was designed and constructed in accordance with the wishes of Nur Jehan by Jehangir’s son Shah Jehan. There are two large entrance gates, one each at the north and the south of the premises. The southern gate that serves as an entrance today is surfaced with red sikri sandstone and inlaid with white marble. The mausoleum is a square platform and like the entrance gate is constructed in red sandstone decorated with white inlay depicting flower vases. Each side of the square measures

approximately 267 feet. On the four sides stand four minarets embellished with chevron patterns in white and pink stone. There is beautiful delicate inlay work of marble and other coloured stones on the walls and the ceiling. Mosaic tiles and fresco paintings are used as additional decoration. The cenotaph is situated in the crypt within this platform and has long corridors running on its four sides. It is made of marble, inlaid with black letters giving the year of Jehangir's death (1627) and 99 names of God. It is decorated with a creeper like design of pomegranate buds — *anarkali*. In the same premises lay the tomb of Asaf Khan, Nur Jehan's brother who was also the closest advisor of the Emperor. This octagonal tomb stands in a pathetic condition today. The entire premise is covered with big shady trees that provided considerable relief on that hot summer day.

Across the railway line on the same side of Jehangir's tomb lays the simple tomb of the Mughal Queen Nur Jehan in a dilapidated condition. Jehangir married Meher-un-Nisa, the widow of Sher Afghan, a Mughal noble, in 1611 and gave her the epithet of Nur Jehan — the light of the world. She died in 1645 but had got her tomb made while she was still alive. The building has seven arched openings on each side. Its façade is made of red sandstone and marble while the inner walls are made of limestone decorated with floral motifs. Though most of it has now faded or crumbled down, a rare glimpse of the beauty of the motifs can still be seen. The four lines carved on the tomb bear testimony to her poetic genius. She wrote,

*Let no lamp burn on my grave upon my death,  
Nor a flower of Jasmine.  
And no candle with a flickering flame to remind my fame,  
And no bulbul singing in the sky  
To tell the world that I am dead.*

There are a number of historical tombs in Lahore. One of the most prominent ones is the tomb of the legendary beauty Anarkali. Her tomb is situated centrally in the city in the premises of the Punjab Secretariat. It is difficult to say how real or imaginary the story of Anarkali and Salim (Jehangir) is. Anarkali, according to the legend, died in 1599 and her tomb was constructed in 1615 at the command of Jehangir. During the Sikh rule Ranjit Singh's son Khadak Singh is said to have converted the mausoleum into his residence. Later the French General Ventura, a supporter of the Sikhs used this structure as his *zanana*. In 1851 it was converted into St. James Church and since 1891 it is used as the record room by the Punjab Administration. Anarkali's tomb, like her life, has always been a woeful tale.

On the same day I visited the two most notable of Mughal monuments, Badshahi Masjid and the Lahore Fort. If Faisal Masjid adorns Islamabad, Badshahi Masjid is the glory of Lahore, in fact of Pakistan. Adjoining the Lahore Fort it is the largest mosque in the subcontinent. This huge and massive structure is not only impressive but also beautiful. It was constructed in 1673–74 under the supervision of Aurangzeb's foster brother Fidai Khan Koka. This mosque is one of the best specimens of the combination of beauty, strength and grace. It is also one of the largest mosques in the world. Though traditional in design its uniqueness lies in its eight minarets made of red stone and three huge bulbous marble domes. Its 196 feet tall minarets have an outer circumference of 67 feet while the inner one measures only eight-and-a-half feet. During the Sikh regime these minarets were used as storehouses for men and weapons. The mosque is constructed on a platform and is approached by a flight of 22 steep steps leading to its entrance gate. The enormous courtyard measuring 276,000 square feet can hold 60,000 people. The floral designs in both inlay work and stucco on the inner walls of the mosque are conspicuously



*Rear view of the gate of Badshahi Mosque*

ornate. In 1818 Ranjit Singh constructed a square shaped pavilion, Baradari, a delicate marble edifice in the garden facing Badshahi Mosque.

This massive mosque stands face to face with the equally massive and famous Lahore Fort. It is one of the three huge Mughal forts in the Indian subcontinent, the other two being the Red Fort in Delhi and the Agra Fort. Professor Khan thought that the Red Fort is bigger than the Lahore Fort but most Pakistanis believe that the Lahore Fort is the biggest of all three. The exact date of the construction of this fort is not available. Nor is it the handiwork of any one Mughal emperor. According to one historical speculation this mud fort was perhaps constructed by Mahamud Ghazni in the 11th century. *Ain-e-Akbari* mentions the mud fort at Lahore that was demolished and replaced with a baked brick fort by Akbar in 1575. Jehangir made several new additions to the fort. In his memoirs *Tazuk-i-Jehangiri*, Jehangir has praised the charming



residences erected in great beauty and embellished with paintings by rare artists. Most of them were designed by the architect Khwaja Jahan Muhammad Dost. The most important of the surviving structures of Jehangir is the Kala Burj. Shah Jehan's main contribution was towards the beautification of the fort that began with his coronation in 1628 and continued right through 1645. He constructed the forty-pillared Public Audience Hall and the courtyard containing a tower named Shah Burj. Among the most impressive structures are the Sheesh Mahal that has small mirror pieces inlaid on the walls and ceiling creating a shimmering effect, and Naulakha, an exquisitely carved marble building inlaid with 9,00,000 precious stones still stand testimony to his yearning for beauty.

Many of the Mughal monuments have been ravaged by time and badly need extensive restoration. The red sandstone that has been used in abundance in the construction of these beautiful structures is simply not available in Pakistan. *The Indian Express* on 22 July 2003 reported how the cultural heritage of the sub-continent was at ransom due to the hostile relations between India and Pakistan. The report narrated the desperate measures taken by the Archaeology Department of the Punjab in restoring Jehangir's and Asif Khan's tombs, like removing original stone blocs, etching the carvings on its reverse and putting them back in place. The Archaeology Department officials pointed out that the last time they had procured the requisite sandstone from India was in 1981. But since the 1990s the worsening relations between the two neighbours have taken a toll on the monuments in Lahore. Even for good quality marble Pakistan has to depend on quarries in Rajasthan. On 11 August 2003 the *Express* published another report of a goodwill gesture from the Delhi chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), a private organisation willing to gift a truckload of the red sandstone needed

for restoration work in Pakistan. But the official trade norms between the two countries could still be a hurdle, feared the Director of Archaeology of the Punjab. It appears that the tombs may have to wait for long hoping for salvation.

By the time we reached home at night I was thoroughly exhausted, and suffered from physical and mental fatigue in an effort to understand and visualise the history of these monuments and their creators spanning over centuries. I had visited three great monuments in a day and I knew it was not the right thing to do. In one single day I was trying to comprehend the history of the entire Mughal Empire. But I felt happy; my long standing desire to see Lahore was fulfilled.



The next day I thought I must get down to work. I met a leading Pakistani scholar and activist Dr. Mubarak Ali who taught history for a while in the University of Sindh and is presently the editor of the Urdu quarterly *Tarikh*. Dr. Ali migrated to Pakistan from Tonk in Rajasthan. His candid and frank writing of history and blunt criticism of Pakistani historiography has ruffled many a feather in his country. He felt that the progressive and leftist ideology in Pakistan had acquired a kind of defeatist mentality. He looked visibly upset when he said that history was dead in Pakistan (or was it killed?) as an academic subject in 1962. There was a lot of commotion at his house as both his daughters, Atiya, a historian in the making and Sehla, a lawyer were to leave for the US for higher studies in the next few days. Our discussion was punctuated with telephone calls and visitors wishing good luck to the girls. His elder daughter Atiya had done her Master's in History at JNU in Delhi. She spoke endearingly of her two years experience at JNU. She experienced no discrimination as a Pakistani. Dr. Mubarak regretted that now JNU could no more boast of eminent historians

on its staff as in the yesteryears. He observed that history writing in India was increasingly becoming 'nationalistic' and that Indian historians had acquired intellectual arrogance. He also felt that most of their writing is now aimed at the western readership.

Dr. Mubarak invited me to a farewell dinner for his daughters at the Defence Club the next day. I met and spoke to several people during the dinner. The most interesting chat I had was with Pervez Vandal. Vandal is a renowned architect of Lahore. His comments about people and events are sharp, laced with his minute observation and a fine sense of humour. On knowing my surname he asked if I were a Maharashtrian. While in Australia he had known two Maharashtrians. One Deshpande and the other Khapardekar. Vandal had an interesting query: why do Maharashtrians shake their head so much while speaking? Then onwards I moved around with a stiff neck, lest I shook my head. His wife Sajida Haider Vandal is the Principal of the prestigious National College of Arts and the Director of its Research and Publication Centre in Lahore. The National College of Arts was established in 1875 as the Mayo School of Industrial Arts and John Lockwood Kipling was its first principal. Pervez is talkative and humorous while Sajida is serious. I met another talkative guest at the dinner, Advocate Anwar Kamal, with a fine sense of humour. I also met Dr. Rubina Saigol, a feminist, and activist of progressive movement in Pakistan. I had read and appreciated a couple of her articles especially her article criticising the Pakistani school textbooks. Sajida and Rubina were having animated discussion on Aamir Khan's latest Hindi movie *Lagaan* during the dinner.

The next day the Vandals hosted a dinner in honour of Dr. Mubarak's daughters. I liked their artistically decorated house. I met two senior journalists of *The Friday Times*, Khaled Ahmad and Ejaz Haider. I have always enjoyed Khaled Ahmad's writings. Very clear and level headed. I met him at the IRS Seminar in May 2003

where he presented a paper, but had no opportunity to talk to him except exchanging formal pleasantries. Present during the dinner were also Dr. Hassan Shah, Professor of Solid State Physics from the University of the Punjab and his wife Rukhsana, the Director of Export Promotion Bureau of the Government of Pakistan. Rukhsana is Sindhi. She said that Sindhis did not take an extreme position on Kashmir. Sindh was geographically away from Kashmir therefore unlike Punjab, Sindh had no emotional involvement in Kashmir. The next dinner was hosted by Rukhsana and Hassan. I thought it was a favourite pastime of Lahoris to hop from dinner to dinner. But I was amply warned about this by friends in Islamabad. At the Shahs, I found all women invitees smoking. Later my eyes started burning when most of the men joined the women in smoking in that closed-door air-conditioned hall.

One of the important interviews I held in Lahore was with Dr. Mubashir Hasan. Dr. Hasan is a prominent name in the progressive movement in Pakistan. He was the Finance Minister to the former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and is the founder member of PIPFPD. He is ever working for the improvement of relations between India and Pakistan. I had met him in Bangalore and had spoken to him telephonically a couple of times during his Delhi visits. I met him in the Delhi–Lahore flight on my way to Pakistan and we were together again in the Lahore–Delhi flight on my return journey from Pakistan. He is a frequent visitor to India.

I found Dr. Hasan's house in the high-brow locality of Gulburg, simple — that of a true socialist. I had a long discussion with him centring on Islamism in Pakistan. In his opinion in the political history of Islam, religion has never been a unifying force; rather it had always played a divisive role. This is because unlike Christianity there was no provision for centralised authority in Islam. Islamic political authority invited mullahs and interpreted religion according to their convenience but no political power could prevent

different interpretations of *Quran* and *Sunnah*. Therefore there is no ideological agreement among the Islamic extremists. The root cause of Islamic extremism could be found in the collapse of the capitalist economic and political system. He sounded optimistic when he predicted that religious extremism in the Indian subcontinent would be a short-lived affair. For, he believed the masses in the subcontinent understood the difference between the permanent and the transitory. They had the wisdom borne out of their experience of life of thousands of years that made any kind of radicalism only a passing fancy. The grave situation in the subcontinent according to him was the result of the utter lack of trust between the rulers and the ruled. He said he had no faith in the efficacy of the system of parliamentary democracy operating in the subcontinent that was borrowed from the British, as in his opinion, it has never been a true democracy. At best it was the imperialist version of democracy that originated in the early 20th century and hence incapable of solving problems in South Asia.

On the morning of 13 August I met Ameer-ul-Azim, Information Secretary of *Jamaat-e-Islami*. With a little effort I found his office on Multan Road. He has an MA in Political Science with another Master's in Business Administration. Punjab is the biggest centre of *Jamaat's* activity followed by Karachi. Ameer informed me that most of *Jamaat's* work is in the urban areas as the nature of its basic work is primarily intellectual. It has 20,000 full-time members and more than five million associate members mostly the former members of its students' body *Islami Jamiat Talibat (IJT) Pakistan*. In the last 10 years it has started paying attention to social issues like justice, peace, and employment. *Jamaat* runs a number of educational institutions imparting instructions to tens of thousands of students. Apart from educational activity, the *Jamaat* is also active in health services. Commenting on politics in Pakistan he said that the masses in Pakistan had no faith in political



leadership. Pakistani society was still feudal and there was collusion between political parties and the landowning class. Political system was corrupt to the core. But he was confident that if elections were fair and impartial then Jamaat would easily capture power. His main regret was that Jamaat could unmake governments but could not make one. In fact Jamaat-e-Islami is the only political party in Pakistan that maintains democracy within the party by regularly holding intra party elections every two years for all posts including that of the 'Aamir'! Ameer regretted declining moral values in Pakistan. But he was happy that the people had become sensitive to this decline and therefore were increasingly turning to Islam and *Quran*. In his opinion TV and particularly the programmes on Indian channels were primarily responsible for polluting the moral ethos of Pakistan. Equally responsible were the celebrations of the New Year and Basant that are observed with increasing gaiety and fanfare every year.

Over the years Basant has emerged as the greatest and the most colourful festival of Lahore. Basant, originating in a Hindu custom is observed on the second or third Sunday of the month of February. Though celebrated with colour and gaiety in pre-partitioned Lahore, it died a natural death with the creation of Pakistan. When it made a cautious restart after several years it was frowned upon by many Pakistanis and threatened by mullahs, but the Lahoris remained undeterred. The most important feature of Basant is the kite flying. Kites of various shapes, sizes and colours dot the Lahore sky. Music, singing and dancing in the streets — everything that is anathema to Islam is done in the name of Basant. For the past couple of years Basant has got official recognition and is converted into a tourist event attracting foreign tourists in large numbers. Now Basant is not confined to Lahore alone but has spread to other parts of Pakistan too. For the supporters of Jamaat the saffron coloured festoons of the Basant smacks of Hinduism,

and the growing commercialisation of the festival with sponsorships from Coca-Cola and Pepsi, invasion of western materialism. In an interesting piece written by Roy McCarthy in *The Guardian* (17 May 2003), a young woman supporter of the Jamaat is reported as vehemently arguing against Basant. It is not part of Pakistani culture. Pakistanis don't need new festivals. The most obnoxious part of Basant is that it encourages men and women to dance together and drink alcohol. 'This is not Islam. This is not Pakistan. This is not part of our civilisation' — she protested along with her husband. Of course my acquaintance with Basant is only through newspaper reports and pictures on TV. Col. Aziz told me that if I ever visited Pakistan during Basant he would arrange for me to see the festivities in Lahore. Then as an afterthought he added that he would of course not arrange for my singing and dancing in the streets! Professor Khan has aptly caught the spirit of Basant. In a recent message he wrote, 'it is spontaneous merry making, music, dance, kite flying, a phantasmagoria of sorts that expresses the oft-ignored or sublimated paganism in us'. Jamaat wants to banish this Basant from Lahore. With the impressive victory of the six-party combine of religious groups, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) in the October 2002 elections, Jamaat looks forward to realising its dream but Lahoris may simply put their foot down.

There is no alternative to *jihad* in Kashmir, said Ameer emphatically. India had helped in the liberation of Bangladesh so it should also liberate Kashmir, he argued. Once liberated, it will decide its own fate in consultation with Pakistan. He was not very hopeful about the outcome of the Track Two Diplomacy between India and Pakistan, for the right kind of people are not included in this process. Deobandis from Aligarh should be made a part of it. Finally he said that as long as the Kashmir issue was not resolved, trade or cultural exchange between the two countries would not yield any effect.

By the time I left his office it was past noon. He had replied to all my queries candidly for nearly 90 minutes. All our conversation was in Hindi and Urdu. At times I got stuck for the right word in Urdu as I could think only of *shuddh* (Sanskritised) Hindi word. But often Ameer could sense my difficulty and used the exact word I had in mind to complete my sentences. He said that Indian TV programmes had made Pakistanis quite familiar with Sanskritised Hindi.



*Zam Zama Gun*

*I*t is difficult to visit all historical monuments in Lahore in a 10-day stay in the city. But I made the best of my stay and visited the inner city that is the old walled city of Lahore, Shalimar Garden and the flag lowering ceremony at Wagah in the remaining days. I covered historical buildings and many parts of the city while travelling from one place to another.

Mall Road constructed in 1851 by Lieut. Col. Charles Napier runs through the city like a spinal cord and is flanked by impressive colonial buildings of the *Raj* era. It has two sections, the upper

and the lower. The first impressive structure as one moves from Gol Bagh or the old Band Stand, the starting point of the Mall is the Town Hall. A little ahead of it, on one side is the National College of Arts and the famous Lahore Museum, and on the other stand the buildings of the old campus of the University of the Punjab. All these structures are made of red sikri stone and their arches, columns and decorations display a fine combination of the Mughal and Gothic styles. In front of the museum, on a raised platform rests the historical Zam Zama Gun, 'terrible as a dragon and huge as a mountain'. Legends and stories about the gun abound in writings on Lahore. This huge gun is said to have been cast in 1757 on the order of Ahmad Shah Abdali and used in the Battle of Panipat in 1761, but people believed that the British had hauled it in from London to impose law and order on the 'anarchistic' Indians. It was said that whoever owned the gun ruled Punjab. Ranjit Singh is believed to have taken this gun to Amritsar for his Multan campaign and later brought it back to Lahore. One section of the Mall turns towards Anarkali Chowk from the Gol Bagh.

Anarkali (bazaar) is known all over Pakistan. It is a big bazaar with endless shops selling textiles, garments, jewellery, handicrafts and possibly everything under the sun. Lahoris take their guests to Anarkali as if it is mandatory. Pakistanis from all over the country shop at Anarkali especially for weddings. But somehow I was not impressed. To me it resembled Bhuleshwar area in Mumbai. Both the shops and the display of goods are rather commonplace. I sensed that Professor Khan was rather upset at my reaction. But there is something interesting in this crowded locality. In one of the obscure bylanes of the bazaar, in the thick of the humdrum of the day-to-day life, lies the tomb of Qutubuddin Aibak in the most oblivious manner. Constructed in 1210 it was repaired by the Pakistan Government in 1970. For a moment I wondered how that place must have looked in 1210.

Beyond the Anarkali Chowk, Mall Road turns into the prestigious commercial area of the city. Banks, insurance offices, commercial establishments, shopping arcades and hotels stand next to each other on this road. A little ahead beyond the Charing Cross is the majestic Punjab Assembly Hall constructed in 1938. Right in its front stands the tall minaret, a memorabilia of the Islamic Summit Conference of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) held in 1974 at the behest of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. On the same road are situated Governor's residence, Punjab Arts Council — Al Ahmara, that had won Aga Khan Award for architecture a few years ago, and the impressive looking Atchison College.

Mia Mir Nahar flows almost through the entire length of Lahore and the surrounding areas and lends immense charm to the city. Saint Mia Mir's Monastery is located near the Cantonment. As the legend goes the Saint had helped in laying the foundation of the Golden Temple at Amritsar. This *nahar* starts somewhere near the Wagah border and cuts across the city finally emptying into Ravi. The new premises of the Punjab University are spread on either banks of the canal. Both the banks are covered with huge trees and the belts of greenery dotted with colourful flowers. A number of small bridges span the canal at regular intervals. Well designed houses sitting prettily on both the banks make the entire area picturesque. The stretch of the canal near Mall Road is further beautified by colourful fountains and the banks are decorated with artificial silhouettes of animals lit from within.

A temple like structure near the office where I went for police reporting attracted my attention instantly. To my utter surprise the name board displayed on the building was in Devanagari script. It read 'Arya Samaj Anglo Vedantic College'. It once belonged to the founder of Arya Samaj, Swami Dayanand Saraswati. Now it is occupied by an organisation for Islamic studies. Sir Ganga Ram



Trust building is situated on the Mall Road. Sir Ganga Ram was the Executive Engineer and Town Planner of Lahore under the British Administration. He designed the famous Model Town of Lahore and erected the National College of Arts under personal supervision. There is a hospital named after him in Lahore. There are two other hospitals in the city named after two women relatives of Ganga Ram, Janaki Devi Hospital and Gulab Devi Hospital. From 1977 to 1981, when I lived in Delhi, I taught Political Science at Janaki Devi College on Ganga Ram Hospital Road in Rajinder Nagar. When I came across these names in Lahore I felt as if I had a very close connection with all of them. In recognition of Sir Ganga Ram's service to the city his statue was erected in Lahore, which after the partition, became a target of hatred of Hindus. Some zealots wanted to knock off the statue. Saadat Hasan Manto, one of the greatest Urdu writers of the Subcontinent in his *Siah Hashiyay*, the 'Sketches', has presented powerful insights on the events around the partition, has written a small piece 'The Garland' referring to the episode. It reads as follows,

'The mob suddenly veered to the left, its wrath now directed at the marble statue of Sir Ganga Ram, the great Hindu philanthropist of Lahore. One man smeared the statue's face with coal tar. Another strung together a garland of shoes and was about to place it around the great man's neck when the police moved in, guns blazing.

The man with the garland of shoes was shot, and then taken to the nearby Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.'

Ganga Ram had sunk into oblivion but more than half a century later some people are now demanding that Lahoris must recognise the outstanding services of Sir Ganga Ram. *Dawn* wrote an editorial on Sir Ganga Ram some time ago eulogising his services to the city and the poorer sections of the society and drawing attention to the pathetic condition of his *samadhi* and urging people to protect the monument 'as our heritage'. It also suggested that a Chair in Sir

Ganga Ram's name could be created at the King Edward Medical College in Lahore. His biography has been recently reprinted by the National College of Arts. I noticed that Sir Ganga Ram Trust Building in Lahore was maintained well.

Lakshmi Chowk is a busy area of the city. Lakshmi Building is one of the prominent landmarks of Lahore. Outer walls of the building are decorated with motifs of elephants and lotuses. Offices of several cinema companies are concentrated in this area. Hence the whole area was full of cinema posters. I found Pakistani cinema posters in-artistic and loud. Lakshmi and other buildings around were defiled by many such garish posters.

Lahore is a tourist centre with a large number of foreign visitors coming to the city. Therefore the city boasts of many big and small hotels. I liked the look of Hotel Holiday Inn. Close to that is a small historical hotel — The Falettes. Delhi-Lahore bus terminates at this hotel. An old English movie, *Bhowani Junction* made in 1956, based on John Master's novel of the same name, was partly shot in Lahore and the hotel staff is not yet tired of telling everybody how the leading lady of the movie, the famous Ava Gardner had stayed at this hotel during the film's shooting.

Guburg, Liberty, and Defence are the high class and modern residential areas of Lahore intersected by broad roads and dotted with modern shopping complexes. Several shops mostly of readymade garments are open till 11 at night and the well-to-do women and girls are seen busy shopping till the late hours.

Model Town is the old elite residential area dating back to the times before the partition. Then it was mostly inhabited by Hindus and Sikhs. They were the influential communities of Lahore controlling most of the trade, professions and education in the city. Only after visiting Lahore can one understand why the Indian Punjabis still lament the loss of Lahore even after more than half a century after the partition. To them, Lahore still evokes nostalgia.

The pathos of the loss of Lahore is aptly captured in Prem Kirpal's couplet.

*My beloved city of Lahore still standing not far from Delhi,  
within quicker reach by air or train, suddenly became a forbidden land  
guarded by a sovereign state of new ideologies, loves and hates.  
Homes were lost and hearts were bruised in both unhappy parts of Punjab*

(From Pran Nevile's *Lahore: A Sentimental Journey*)

As I was writing this account of Lahore I came across an interesting piece in *Time Asia* (August 18–25, 2003 / Vol. 162, No. 6) by Ved Mehta, a celebrated Indian scholar who has lived most of his life in New York, 'A House Divided', wherein he writes about his family house at 11 Temple Road in Lahore that he visited 32 years after the partition. Mehta writes with controlled emotion about his visit to the house and ends on a philosophical note saying, 'After all, it was more than 30 years ago that we lived in the house. And anyway, its loss, like the partition, is a part of history, which we all accepted long ago.' I suppose not everyone can take the loss of one's birthplace or home so stoically. I came across a moving account of the 'loss' of home '91, Garden Town, Lahore' by N.N.Vohra, former Defence and Home Secretary, Government of India. Vohra narrated poignantly his search for his house in Lahore on an official visit to Pakistan in 1987. He writes about his frustration of not being able to locate 'the home of his youthful dreams' despite going round and round the colony and then the thrill of a chance discovery of the house that 'stood in all its grandeur, just as it was forty years ago'.

I wondered if the contribution of Hindus and Sikhs in the making of Lahore has been adequately chronicled in the contemporary history of Pakistan. M. Hanif Raza's book on Lahore, *Lahore Through Centuries* is a fine pictorial introduction to the city. But nowhere does it mention Sir Ganga Ram or contributions

of any other non-Muslim citizen of Lahore. Even Sikhs are mentioned only as the destroyers of Mughal architectural heritage apart from the brief mention of the *samadh*s of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Guru Arjundev, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. Yet it must be mentioned that Lahore has retained many of the non-Muslim names of roads and localities like Sundar Dass Road, Mohini Road, Dayal Singh College, Dayal Singh Library, Raja Ram Mohan Roy Hostel, Mela Ram Road and Kishen Nagar. Hindus are an extinct community in Lahore now. Few years ago an Indian English daily had reported that the few remaining Hindus in Lahore have either embraced Christianity or have adopted Christian names.

The walled city of Lahore is a great treasure of Pakistan's cultural heritage. It is a densely populated area of narrow lanes and numerous bazaars, of various business activities and 'industries', measuring just two square miles. The old Sarafa bazaar has a distinction of its own. Most importantly this tiny area boasts of the remains of nearly 20 historical monuments and a thousand structures of cultural significance. This city became desolate when some Hindu ruler abandoned it centuries ago. The city was rehabilitated by Mahmud Ghazni and in 1698 Akbar constructed the wall around it with 13 gates. The one that faces Delhi is called Delhi Gate. (A gate in old Delhi facing the direction of Lahore is known as Lahori Gate.) The bazaar at Lahori or Lohari Gate is well known. Anarkali is spread opposite this gate. Mochi Gate has a peculiar distinction. Important political meetings in the city are held just outside this Gate. I think once you enter the ancient walled cities anywhere in the world you get a distinct feeling. These places undergo changes with the passage of time yet there is a feeling of frozen history, as if one has gone back into history sitting in H.G. Well's time machine. I had a similar feeling in the walled city of Jerusalem in 1998.

I was keen on visiting the Wagah border. Professor Khan made all the arrangements. I have not yet visited the Wagah from the



*India Gate at Wagah*

Indian side, but have seen it on TV a number of times in the past few years. We also read about the candle light peace vigil at the Wagah organised by Kuldip Nayyar, renowned Indian journalist and a former member of the Rajya Sabha at midnight of 14–15 August every year. These days Indian travel companies taking tourists to Amritsar also arrange for a trip to the Wagah. The flag lowering ceremony at the check post at the sunset has turned out to be a major tourist attraction in recent times. On the Pakistan side to reach the Wagah one has to travel 29 km from Lahore on the Grand Trunk Road along with Mia Mir Nahar. On either side of the check post Governments of India and Pakistan have raised galleries to facilitate the tourists to watch the flag lowering ceremony.

Gates of both the countries stand face to face. As I reached the Pakistan Gate I saw India's Gate proclaiming 'Mera Bharat Mahan'. I took my place in the women's section of the Pakistani gallery and sat looking at the swelling crowds on the two sides. There was still



*Pakistan Gate at Wagah*

some time for the programme to begin. As I looked around, the nature on either side looked similar. It was neither Indian nor Pakistani. It was evening and the sky was full of birds on the way back to their nests. I wondered whether their nests were in the Indian or Pakistani territory. Human life on the immediate sides of the border must also be similar.

Professor B. Arunachalam, the former head of the Department of Geography in Mumbai University had once in a public lecture succinctly explained the difference between the border and the frontier. The border between the two countries is indicative of the territorial limits of countries but the cultural frontier goes much beyond the border. Border is a legal concept while the frontier is a socio-cultural concept. Facets of human life and culture do not stop at the border. Sitting at the Wagah check post on the Grand Trunk Road I thought of those who had travelled on this road from times immemorial. For my BA I read Kipling's *Kim*. Travelling on this Grand Trunk Road Kim had described it as the 'river of life'. I thought Sher Shah Suri, the builder of this great highway (Sarak-i-azam from Sonargam in Bengal, now Bangladesh to Attock in the North West, a little before Peshawar) in the 16th century must have been a real visionary.

For many years after the partition, Indians and Pakistanis were permitted to cross the Wagah. Indians from Chandigarh and Amritsar would cross the border at Wagah to enjoy India-Pakistan cricket match in Lahore and Lahoris came to India to watch Hindi movies like *Mughal-e-Azam*. All this came to an end after the 1965 war. The gates got firmly shut for Indians and Pakistanis except for the diplomatic personnel, and foreigners. But the Delhi-Lahore bus service has now made it possible for the layman from both countries to cross the border at Wagah.

And suddenly there was a burst of patriotic Hindi film songs from the Indian side. They were songs from popular films like

*Sikandar, Jagruti, Shaheed and Upakar*. Not to be outdone, Pakistani band also started playing catchy and foot tapping tunes. By this time galleries on both the sides were packed to the capacity. The foreign tourists on the Pakistani side were waiting below the gallery. For them it was a great entertainment show. As the crowds increased on both sides the whole surrounding was vibrant with sounds of *Bharatmata ki jai* and *Jiye Jiye Pakistan*. I could see some activity among the Indian soldiers on the other side. Pakistani army men dressed in black and standing six and half feet tall were moving around with grave countenance. They appeared to be specially selected for the performance. Some foreign women clicked photographs with them, children tried to befriend them but they remained wooden faced.

As the moment for lowering the flag neared, one soldier from each side at a time marched up to the Gate, kicking high in the air with the face full of hatred for the other and making high pitched sounds. Encouraged by a thunderous applause, the next fellow went charging with more gusto. After repeating this dramatic exercise a few times it was time to lower the flags. Each side lowered and folded the flag with great care and respect and I could see Pakistani flag being brought back ceremoniously to its place of storage. Every morning flags are hoisted and in the evening lowered, after great drama. Wagah has emerged as altar of nationalism, a new centre for pilgrimage for Indians and Pakistanis. This overt display of aggressive sentiments on both the sides including the tourists set me thinking. I wondered if it is at all necessary to exhibit one's patriotism and enmity for the neighbour in such ludicrous manner. I thought it was indeed a mad and dangerous game. The interesting part of it is, I was told, that these men on both the sides marching towards each other emanating hatred from their eyes, chat with each other all through the day and also share meals, but once they get prepared for the evening show they act

like diehard enemies. For them it may be a drama but for the audience on either side the expression of the twin sentiment of patriotism and enmity is truly real. Aren't we stroking excessive patriotism and jingoistic nationalism of Indians and Pakistanis on daily basis through such enactments? Flag lowering must be taking place at several border posts all over the world, but I am sure nowhere will they be making it so theatrical. After it was over I turned my back on India and went into Pakistan!



I had yet to see many things in Lahore. But as I was exhausted by the heat and humidity I looked forward to returning to Islamabad. I decided that before leaving for India in October I would spend a week or so again in Lahore. I wanted to meet Asma Jahangir, the gutsy human rights activist and some others for my work. But most of them were travelling abroad and could not be met then. But before leaving Lahore I visited the famous Shalimar Garden of Shah Jehan. Nobody knows the exact meaning of Shalimar. It could be moonlight, an abode of love or a place of ecstasy. This garden, modelled on Shah Jehan's Shalimar in Kashmir, was completed in 1642 by two Mughal engineers, Ali Mardan Khan and Mulla Alam Alahi Tuni. It is spread over 40 acres with a protection wall on all sides and six watch-towers. The original garden had seven terraces but presently it is left with only three terraces divided laterally by a wide canal. They are named meaningfully — *Farahbaksh*, a giver of happiness, *Hayatbaksh*, a giver of life, and *Faizbaksh*, a conferrer of plenty. The middle terrace is the most impressive one. Imperial residences and audience halls made in marble are located on this terrace. Once its 200 feet long water tank had 152 fountains. Now they are about a hundred. There is a marble platform at the centre connected by narrow red

stone bridges. The garden has a variety of trees, many of which Shah Jehan had acquired from Kabul and Kandahar. But the condition of the great Shalimar Garden was really pathetic when I visited it. The waterways in the garden had layers of moss and waste mostly in the form of plastic bags. Its lawns were strewn with empty ice cream cups and cartons of eatables. The garden is swept clean whenever a foreign dignitary visiting Lahore is brought to Shalimar.

The patron saint of Lahore is Data Ganj Bakhsh. Data Ganj, originally Syed Ali Abdul Hussein bin Usman came to Lahore as religious advisor of Mahmud Ghazni. But this Sufi saint never returned to Ghazni. He adopted Lahore as his place of work and devoted himself to the propagation of Islam. The premises of his tomb and the adjoining mosque are known as Data Durbar. *Urs* of Data Durbar is held annually in the Islamic month of *Safar* attracting devotees from all over Pakistan.

One of the attractions of Lahore is the food street at Gwalamandi. A street that appears ordinary and drowsy during the daytime undergoes a metamorphosis at dusk. Suddenly the floodlights that come from nowhere and the coloured lights from the residential buildings along the two sides enliven the street. There is constant commotion in the food stalls and carts selling non-vegetarian food mostly and also fruit *chat* and salads. The road is closed for traffic, as tables are unfolded and laid on the street. Lahoris, I think, remain unmatched when it comes to eating. The road was full of young and old, and families with children enjoying the savouries. I found the eatables a little too oily. Normally Pakistani food is oily. I was not particularly hungry, so after munching something light I turned towards a milk shop. I had heard the fame of *pedewali lassi* of Lahore. *Pedas* are churned with milk and served in huge steel container. I think only a Punjabi can consume such a huge glass of *lassi*. But as a challenge I gulped down all the *lassi*, which is more than a meal. It can put a person



to sleep instantly. Lahoris are never tired of narrating stories about this *lassi*. Once, a story goes, Lenin visited Lahore with a view to bringing about a communist revolution. Before the plan came up for discussion some Lahoris suggested that they would discuss revolution over a glass of *lassi*. But after emptying the huge glass of *lassi* Lenin suggested that revolution could wait, he would first have a nap! Lahoris are voracious eaters. You visit any garden in Lahore including the Shalimar and you will be accosted by several boys asking your preference in snacks and drinks, and serve you right there.

Talking about food, I must say I found Pakistanis overwhelmingly carnivorous. But Pakistanis told me that it was essentially an urban trait. Till very recently Pakistanis in the countryside were primarily vegetarians as vegetarianism was more affordable. Rural Punjabis mostly consumed *dal-roti*, *dal-chawal* and got nicknamed as *dal khor*. Growing urbanisation has made non-vegetarianism popular. In my five months stay in Pakistan I was bombarded with chicken. Since vegetarian culture is virtually non-existent, anywhere I was invited for meals, I often found vegetables missing. By chance if they were made, it would be in combination with meat. Once, a host asked my preference in vegetable. I promptly said spinach. When I went for the dinner I found spinach cooked with mutton or rather the other way round. I wondered why the Punjabis living in the most fertile part of Pakistan do not consume vegetables. For Pakistanis an Indian Hindu has to be invariably vegetarian. Therefore whenever I said I eat chicken, meat or fish, I could literally hear the hostess heaving a sigh of relief. But if I were a vegetarian I would have returned to India in three or four weeks.

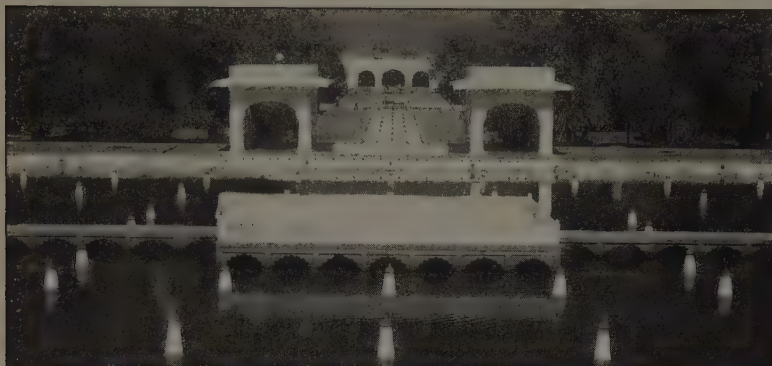
I was under the impression that Pakistani food would be hot and spicy. My opinion was conditioned by the experience of the spicy Indian Punjabi food. But I found it to the contrary. Pakistani meat or chicken curries are watery, the idea is to cook them in

their own juices without adding too many spices. Pakistanis rarely use *paneer*, cottage cheese. In their opinion Indians use *paneer* largely as a substitute for meat. *Nihari* and *halim* are mutton delicacies. *Nihari*, as the word suggests is meant for breakfast. It is a watery mutton curry cooked on low fire overnight. *Dal* and mutton are cooked and stirred together to form a thick consistency in *halim*. Both *nihari* and *halim* were taken to Pakistan by *mohajirs*. As in northern India the use of *arhar dal* in Pakistan is limited. Gram and *urad (mash) dals* are common. *Dal* is neither cooked nor mashed fully and is seasoned without adding water to it. Initially I found it difficult to gulp down such dry *dal* but soon got used to it.



Lahore is a city of flowers and gardens. In the vicinity of the Shalimar, there is Gulabi Bagh. Ranjit Singh's Hazuri Bagh is close to Badshahi Mosque. There is Iqbal Park with broad stretches of manicured lawns and full of seasonal flowers. Jinnah Garden on the Mall Road looks beautiful with big trees, myriad flowers and an artificially landscaped hillock. Its Quaid-i-Azam Library building is really handsome. I liked this garden and wanted to visit it again but never found time for it. Racecourse Park is a modern park with colourful 'dancing' fountains frequented by lots of people. Model Town too has a lovely park. Outside the city, on the way to the Wagah is the huge Jallo Park which is more of a picnic spot for Lahore. It combines a garden, a park, a forest, and a zoo and also has an entertainment centre, something similar to Essel World in Mumbai.

Lahore is also a city of domes and minarets. Its skyline is crowded by their various sizes and shapes, occasionally intercepted by the crest of a forlorn temple. However I wished, I could not visit one of the most magnificent mosques in Lahore, Masjid Wazir Khan. It was constructed in 1634–35 by Wazir Hakim Ilam-ud-

*Shalimar Garden*

Din. Wazir Khan was a governor of Punjab and a noted physician at the Mughal Court during Shah Jehan's time. The arches, walls and the inner sides of the dome of this mosque are decorated with Persian floral motifs. Another beautiful mosque in Lahore is the mosque of Dai Anga (wet nurse at the imperial court) or the mosque of Maqbul built in 1650. Like Islamabad, Lahore too has several new architecturally innovative mosques, many of which have just one minaret. After the 1965 Indo-Pak war many mosques came up with single minaret in the shape of a gun pointing towards the sky with a helmet covering the top bayonet.

It will be unfair to describe Lahore only as a city of historical monuments and gardens. It is also a city of educational institutions. The University of the Punjab founded in Lahore in 1882 is the oldest University in Pakistan and the fourth university then in India after the universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. In fact when Pakistan was created in 1947 it had only two universities, the other was at Dhaka. The main building of Government College opened in 1864 and shifted to its present premises in 1887, resembles a Church. The Foreman Christian College, the Islamia College, the Atchison College often described as 'the Pakistani Eton', and the Kinnaird College for women are well known even outside

Pakistan. King Edward, Fatima Jinnah and Allama Iqbal are medical colleges of repute. Tibbia College for Yunani medicine, Hailey College of Commerce and National College of Arts are among the top institutions of higher learning. Presently the Engineering University and Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) are the most sought after institutions in Lahore. In my flight from Delhi to Lahore I met a young Mauritian travelling to Lahore to study at the Engineering University.

Lahore is known for one more thing — Heera Mandi, Pakistan's famous red light area. Like most of the things in Lahore, Heera Mandi too has a history dating back to a few centuries. Situated in the old city and near the Fort it was the source of supply of the *nautch* (dancing) girls to entertain Mughal emperors. It is said that Heera Mandi, active for centuries, produced some of Pakistan's greatest singers and dancers. With Islamisation drive arduously pursued during the Zia regime, the place lost all its glitter and the dancers their fortune. It is closed down during *Ramazān* every year. Prostitution is officially banned in Pakistan. Though dancing is legal, it is confined for just two hours at night from 11 to 1. Old timers complain that the dance is no more classical but only a poor imitation of dances in Indian movies. I did not see Heera Mandi but I cannot resist narrating a hilarious episode in connection with it. Once at the Institute both Professor and Colonel happened to be in my office. Professor Saab told me that he and his wife would take me to Rawalpindi on the following Sunday and said they would also show me Raja Mandi, Pindi's red light area. Colonel was visibly upset. He simply disapproved the whole idea. Professor Mahmud was of the opinion that as a researcher I should get to see all aspects of Pakistani life. He suggested that when I went to Lahore I must visit Heera Mandi. Col. Aziz was aghast at the suggestion. How could the Professor indulge in such impropriety? Both men argued over it animatedly for some time and I enjoyed the situation thoroughly.

Lahore is situated between Ravi in the North and Sutlaj, a little further in the South. Its population is around 70 million. Along with the historical Lahore and the beautiful Lahore, like any other big city there are shanty colonies also in Lahore. It is sad to see the majestic historical monuments once situated in vast open spaces that added to their grandeur, now being a part of the crowded city and, more often than not, with run down surroundings. I got a feeling of *déjà vu*. This is exactly how I had felt in Cairo watching the Pyramids. Standing on the sandy plateau the Pyramids have lost their mystery and romance as the urban development in Cairo has spilled over almost touching the Pyramids. This is what has happened to monuments in Delhi and perhaps in all urban conglomerations especially in developing countries where the concern for preservation of architectural heritage is still embryonic.

Lahore suffers from regular power cuts. Islamabad as a capital city is blessed with continuous supply of electricity. But to celebrate the Independence Day on 14 August Lahore was decorated with colourful lights two days in advance. I was told that celebrations of *Jashn-e-Azadi* were far grander in Lahore than in Islamabad. But I did not stay back in Lahore to see *Azadi* celebrations. As scheduled, I left Lahore on the morning of 14 August. I chose my return journey via Grand Trunk Road. Just outside Lahore is the historical town of Sheikhpura. Further away is Muridke. Normally hardly anyone would have bothered about this non-descript town in Punjab. But now it is known throughout the world as the birthplace of the much-feared extremist organisation Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) recently renamed Jamaat-ul-Dawa. On the way to Islamabad from Lahore you travel through the four major towns of Punjab. The first is the industrial town of Gujranwala. Then on the other bank of the Chenab is Gujarat. After Gujarat and before crossing the Jhelum you are in the town called Kharian and on the



other bank of the river is the town Jhelum. Ahead of Jhelum town, a little away in the hills towards the right in POK one gets a glimpse of the famous Mangla Dam on the river Jhelum.

As the coach approached Rawalpindi it started raining heavily. Visibility was reduced to barely 25 feet. It is said that rains never spare Islamabad on Independence Day. In the bus I listened to General Musharraf's Independence Day address aired on the radio. By the time the coach reached Faizabad terminus the rain had almost stopped. I was happy to see the familiar roads of Islamabad. When the taxi reached the Royal Guesthouse I felt I had finally reached 'home'.

## *Peshawar — A City from the Arabian Nights*

Once back in Islamabad, I started planning for Peshawar and Karachi. I also had a few appointments lined up in Islamabad. On 16 August I met Brig. (Retd) Nazeer Ahmad, originally from Bharuch in the Indian state of Gujarat but brought up in Ludhiana-Hoshiarpur in Punjab. At the time of the partition he was stationed at Ahmednagar for about seven to eight months. He came to Mumbai when he decided to migrate to Pakistan, but was stranded for a few weeks in the city as a berth on a Karachi bound ship was not available. He became quite nostalgic remembering his days in Mumbai. Those days, he said, he used to lunch at the Purohit's near Churchgate station in South Mumbai.

The next day I went to the American Library not very far from the Institute. I found a lot of material useful for my work. By the time I finished photocopying the relevant things it was evening. I thought I would go again some other day. Little did I know then that some other day to visit the American Library would never dawn, for soon I left for Peshawar and Karachi and by the time I returned to Islamabad the 9/11 disaster had already divided the world into 'us' and 'them' and I learnt that the American Library had downed its shutters indefinitely for readers.

Pakistanis unlike Indians use the term 'photocopy'. We Indians tend to use the company's name Xerox as the generic term. For many of us 'xerox' means 'photocopy'. Pakistanis are quite amused

by the Indian usage 'xerox'. Likewise I was amused by a Pakistani expression 'Believe you me'. This is widely used by all and sundry from the highly educated to one with a smattering knowledge of English.

One day, I went to Mr. Books in the Supermarket to browse through books. I often reserved Saturday mornings for visiting bookshops. A funny incident happened then. Before going to Lahore I had met an active member of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in a seminar in Islamabad. He was also in the Supermarket that day and seeing me in the bookshop he marched upto me and said, 'We just don't like your country according recognition to the General' and walked out of the bookshop. His remark was directed at the Indian invitation to General Pervez Musharraf for the Agra Summit held the previous month. Many in Pakistan had expressed similar opinion — that by inviting a military ruler who called himself the Chief Executive then, for want of a suitable legitimate designation, India had accorded him recognition and legitimised his position and thus done disservice to the cause of democracy in Pakistan. Many in the bookshop heard his remark made in high pitched voice and appeared rather puzzled because nobody there understood the context of his remark and nobody had ever thought that I was not a Pakistani!

On 24 August I was busy the whole day. Dr. Shirin Mazari, Dr. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, and Dr. Ijaz Hussain had given me appointments on the same day. Despite Dr. Mazari's hawkish image vis-a-vis India, I found her moderate in my interview with her. This was my experience with a couple of other prominent Pakistanis too. I met Colonel Saab's friend, Brig. (Retd) Shaukat Qadir, in the Institute. He heads an NGO called Patang (kite). I wondered if mullahs who are otherwise allergic to kites had ever objected to this name. Qadir has visited India and unlike most Pakistanis did not limit his visit to the confines of Delhi and North India but

travelled up to Pune and even down south to Chennai. He had spoken to the university students in Delhi and Pune. He made a pertinent remark about the difference in attitudes of the students from the two cities towards Pakistan. He said that Delhi students expressed animus towards Pakistan while in Pune they were curious. Well, I was not too sure about this attitudinal difference between younger generations of the two cities, but I did not react.

Professor Khalid Mahmud had not returned from China. He had gone for a month's stay. The first floor of the Institute appeared dull and listless in the absence of his friendly personality and his booming voice that resonated on the entire floor. I too missed him as I had become habituated to his presence and also talking to him, however briefly, every day. During his absence I spoke to Rukhsana on a few occasions and also met her a couple of times. Professor Saab was thoroughly bored in China, she informed. I knew how much he was dependent on Rukhsana for every small thing. China poses severe communication problems to most outsiders as English is hardly used in China, and for someone like him, who is fond of talking, China must have been like solitary confinement.



I left for Peshawar by coach on 2 September travelling on the Grand Trunk Road from Islamabad. Dr. Sarfaraz Khan of the Central Asia Department of Peshawar University whom I had met in Bangalore had made arrangements for my stay on the campus. The journey from Islamabad to Peshawar took a little over three hours. The two major landmarks on the way are Hasan Abdal and Attock, though the road circumvents both the places. Hasan Abdal is a historical place. Raja Man Singh, one of the most capable

Rajput nobles in Akbar's Court and the confidante of Jehangir built a four part terraced garden with a pleasure pavilion over a waterfall in Hasan Abdal. Jehangir is said to have used this place for relaxing and one of the activities he indulged was putting pearls in the noses of fish! Not far from Hasan Abdal is the tomb of Khwaja Shams al-Din Khwafi, governor of the province during Akbar's time. As you travel further west you arrive at Attock. The town proper is away from the highway but the massive and austere fort at Attock built by Akbar and strategically situated on the river Indus (Sindhu) is easily visible. Above Attock the Indus was called Abasin or the father of rivers by the Afghans. This fort suddenly came into limelight when General Musharraf confined the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif here after introducing Army rule in 1999 and before packing him off to Saudi Arabia a year later.

A little ahead the river Kabul meets the Indus and then onwards the Indus runs parallel to the road. Seeing the Sindhu for the first time I felt something different. It is an indescribable experience. I think Sindhu is a part of our cultural, historical and collective consciousness. To see the river one has to go either to Ladakh in India, or to Pakistan. My fascination for Sindhu is a part of the larger fascination I have for historical monuments and geographical places. I was also thrilled when I crossed the Suez Canal, and stood on the shores of the Dead Sea in 1998. To me, these were the places in the atlas, and not real. Though Sindhu has now become 'accessible' to Indians with the annual Sindhu Pujan Festival held in June and popularised by India's Home Minister L.K. Advani, I wondered why in olden days Hindus (and also Sikhs?) believed that they were banned from crossing the river. That is the reason why it was also known as 'Attak' (prohibition) in some parts of India. When both Ranjit Singh and the Marathas defied the injunction and carried their flags beyond Attak, it was considered



an act of exceptional valour. 'To hoist a flag beyond Attak' is a popular idiom in Marathi even today.

On crossing the Indus one arrives in North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Before reaching Peshawar one crosses a fairly big town called Naushera. It is a cantonment town and therefore some part of it looks quite nice. As the coach negotiated a curved road in the main market, an old colonial building that housed a movie theatre caught my attention. I felt somewhere it resembled the Royal Opera House in Mumbai, which now stands demolished making way perhaps for a commercial complex or a currently fashionable multiplex.

Peshawar looked dry and arid. The road to Peshawar was green and cool but the city was dusty, dry and hot. Like Lahore, Peshawar is an old city, perhaps older. It is ancient and mysterious. There is some kind of enigma about the city. This at least was my first impression of the city that got strengthened during my week long stay, and could be very personal and subjective. The city, no doubt, is situated very strategically at the crossroads of South Asia and Central Asia and therefore has always remained important. The history of Peshawar is spread over several centuries. Many a great emperor like the legendary Porus, Sikandar (Alexander), Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka, and also Babur had ruled this region in its long and chequered history. Peshawar was a part of the Gandhara Empire. Accounts of the Chinese travellers Fah-Sien and Hsuan Tsang mention this city as Pop-leu-sha and Pul-lu-Shpa-lo respectively. It was also known as Parashpur, Purushpur and Parashavar. During Akbar's regime, however, it was Persianised to Peshawar. Peshawar is defined in the north by Budani river, a tributary of the Kabul and by a river named Bara to the south. Its western limits are drawn by the historical Khyber Pass and the northern by Shingara Pass. In ancient times caravans from Bokhara, Samarkand, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Ghazni and Kashgar passed

through Peshawar connecting this region to distant lands. It was a well known trading centre and now also a smuggling centre. In its chequered history Peshawar was ruled by Persians, Greeks, Kushans, Cythians, Huns, Hindus, Ghaznavis, Mughals, Sikhs and the British.

Walled city with 16 gates (the old city), Cantonment, and University Town constitute three distinct parts of Peshawar. On entering the city through the Grand Trunk Road one is greeted by the rugged fort of Bala Hissar built on high ground overlooking the city, and the terrain that is equally rugged. This is presumably Babur's fort built between 1526 and 1530. It was destroyed by Afghan invaders but immediately rebuilt by Humayun. During the Sikh Empire it was built again with ramparts under the supervision of a French Engineer. The British converted this mud fort into the brick fort. A number of Kushan relics have been found in the fort and the surrounding areas. Presently most of it is occupied by the army depot and hence, I was informed, closed for foreigners.



*D*r. Sarfaraz was in China when I reached Peshawar. I enjoyed his wife's hospitality who is a medical practitioner, at their residence just behind the university campus. After lunch I left for the university guesthouse. Though the city is dry and arid the university campus is very green, full of various fruit trees, and flowers. The premises of the guesthouse had a number of 'experimental' shrubs and I particularly liked the one bearing purple coloured chillies. Peshawar University has a large campus full of buildings, open grounds, intercepted by wide roads and broad footpaths. Medical College, College of Dentistry, College of Business Management are all situated on the campus. The campus bustles with activity

from early morning till late evening. I had imagined Peshawar to be an old fashioned, traditional frontier town. And it is indeed so. But the university campus developed in the past 50 years is quite modern. University of Peshawar was founded in 1950 with 129 students including a girl. In fact it grew out of the prestigious and grand looking Islamia College. Today it has a residential campus spread over about a 1000 acres with a total student strength of over 18,500. The University of Peshawar is a unique institution where educational facilities exist from nursery to PhD.

University's medical college is close to the main entrance. I saw several apron clad girls, many of them with *hijab* tied securely, moving around in haste. Most of the boys wear the national dress of Pakistan though once in a while one does catch a glimpse of a student wearing jeans. I also saw a couple of Sikh boys on the campus. Campus is a self-sufficient township with a cyber café, post office, bank, mosque, school for the children of the university staff, and internal transport facility. I liked the well designed and modern look of the Teachers Community Club. In fact Dr. Sarfaraz had initially thought of putting me up there but on second thoughts decided on the guesthouse.

Just as I was settling down in my room in the guesthouse, University's Security Officer M. Saqlain Bangash came to meet me. I saw a string of degrees printed on his visiting card. Apart from three Masters in Political Science, Pashto and Urdu he has a degree in law and also a diploma in journalism. I wondered why he chose to become a Security Officer instead of going in for teaching or research. After making enquiries about my well being, he suddenly said that he was a nationalist. I was rather puzzled at his remark. Later I understood that nationalist meant a supporter of Awami National Party (ANP), a prominent political party of the Frontier, and therefore, friendly towards India.

I was keen on visiting the Khyber Pass, though I was not granted permission for the Khyber during my visa extension. I had decided to work for it in Peshawar. I asked Bangash about the possibility of such a permission. He said it was difficult but advised me to meet Professor Mumtaz Bangash of Business Management faculty. After giving instructions to the *khansama* for my evening meals, he left. In the next three days I realised that cooked vegetables in Peshawar meant gravy of tomato-potato and Peshawari rice was made of thick, slightly yellowish grain cooked with a generous sprinkling of salt.

I promptly met Mumtaz Bangash the next day. As I told him my story, he told me bluntly that permission for the Khyber Pass was not possible and discouraged me from spending time over it. He has had a nightmarish experience helping some Indians in their visit to the Khyber. An Indian-American academic, his wife, his sister and sister's husband who too is a renowned Indian scholar were in Peshawar and were keen on visiting the Pass. They were denied permission but Professor Bangash decided to take them to the Khyber. There are always Pakistanis ever willing to assure you that you could go to the Khyber without permission. But as this group reached the Khyber, Pakistani Intelligence caught up with them. Four Indians were kept in a house under surveillance. An enquiry was instituted against Professor Bangash. Everybody was shaken at the turn of events. The Indian scholar's wife wanted to reach Lahore the next day and then to Delhi as she was to leave for the US immediately. Frantic messages were sent to Lahore and only top-level intervention from Pakistani authorities could secure the release of everybody. Ever since then Bangash discourages Indians from going to the Khyber.

It appears that foreign travellers are bent on visiting the Khyber at any cost. Several interesting stories of their unusual efforts to reach the Khyber circulate in Islamabad. I was told of a German lady who befriended Taliban, crossed the Pass and spent some time

in Afghanistan at the peak of turmoil in Afghanistan. Another story is really funny. It runs as follows. A group of eight American women reached Peshawar with a Pakistani Professor from Islamabad. They were mad about visiting the Pass but had no permission. They thought of a neat arrangement. They went and bought *burquas* and requested the Professor to take four of them at a time, shrouded in *burquas*, to the Khyber. Their argument was that the Professor was permitted to have four wives by his religion and they could go as his wives. Would anybody dare to question their identity? No way. I don't know if this story is a pure figment of imagination. But the moral of the story is that westerners are willing to risk anything for the Khyber. I was not prepared to take any risk for visiting the Khyber. Before I left for Peshawar Col. Aziz had warned me of unsavoury consequences of indulging in any kind of undue adventurism. I had given him my word and I kept it.



In the afternoon I met Afrasiab Khattak, Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in its Peshawar Chapter's office. Based at Lahore, HRCP is one of the most influential NGOs in Pakistan that has successfully kept every Pakistani regime on its toes since its inception. It has done a commendable job in taking up the cases of human rights violation in Pakistan and spreading awareness about the same. Annual reports of HRCP are a valuable resource for researchers working on human rights or social issues in Pakistan.

Khattak's approach to the question of politicisation of religion in the Indian subcontinent was historical. In his opinion it was Aurangzeb, who introduced politics of religion in this region. Later the British exploited the communal animosity between Hindus and Muslims playing one against the other and by recruiting paid



mullahs for the purpose. He analysed the nature of the Pakistani society dispassionately and with remarkable lucidity. In 1947 Pakistan was predominantly an agrarian society characterised by feudalism, backward economy, and tribal culture. Obviously its worldview was grounded in Islam. Pakistan did have a small class of modernised elite but its modernity was confined to itself. It lacked a vision to play a purposive role in the society and did not use its modernity to cultivate liberal and progressive ideas in Pakistan. New economy based on trade and industry appeared in Pakistan, without the requisite rearrangement of social relations complementary to the economy. In Khattak's opinion there were lacunae in evolution of modern society in Pakistan. It was characterised by the absence of a meaningful intellectual debate on modernity and tradition that resulted in a neat polarisation between the modern and the traditional. Intervention of military regimes in the country's politics, time and again, had blunted intellectual activity and has reduced it to superficiality like a mannequin in the show case. According to him Pakistanis had failed in generating new ideas and concepts and therefore its civil society had not gained strength. Yet he was confident that basically Pakistanis were not fanatic by nature. Even in backward regions like the Frontier Province, people had voted for secular principle in 1946. Then major changes took place, people changed their views rapidly. He narrated an interesting anecdote. The first Chief Minister of NWFP Qayyum Khan had authored a book titled *Gold and Gun in the North Western Frontier Province* before he occupied the office. But as he became the Chief Minister of the Province under the Muslim League he had to make himself attuned to the party ideology. In the process, as the Chief Minister of the Province, he had to ban his own book! And now after the 2002 elections the religious parties alliance, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which rules the NWFP seem to be bent on turning the Province into an Islamic haven.

Analysing the Indo-Pak relations, Khattak remarked that the fundamentalists in both the countries are alike and mutually reinforce each other. Pakistani army was instrumental in Kargil in 1999, Kargil brought BJP to power in India, and BJP in turn brought army to power in Pakistan, and the same BJP government accorded legitimacy to the General by inviting him to the Agra Summit. Despite my disagreement with him on a couple of issues I really enjoyed the discussion that lasted for an hour and a half in his office. I also met his other colleagues, particularly Jamila, whom I had got to know at the Bangalore convention.



In the evening I went to Qissa Khawani — story tellers' — Bazaar in the old city. If Lahore is full of historical monuments, Peshawar is known for its bustling, colourful and exotic bazaars. One can write a full length book on the bazaars of Peshawar. There are numerous bazaars like Sarafa Bazaar for jewellery, Misgaran Bazaar for bronze ware, Bazazan for textiles, Chitrali Bazaar, Dabgari Bazaar known for its folk musicians, Mochi Bazaar, and Bater Bazaar for birds, Banjara Bazaar, Pipalmandi, and Sabzi Mandi. There are modern markets in Cantonment, Kabuli Market in Hayatabad, a posh locality of Peshawar, Karkhana of Afghan refugees, and a number of modern shops on the University Road. The most spectacular of all these bazaars is the historical Qissa Khawani Bazaar. Sir Herbert Benjamin Edwards, the Commissioner of Peshawar from 1853 to 1862, had described the bazaar as the 'Piccadilly of Central Asia'. One can find all kinds of things in the bazaars of Peshawar. Exotic carpets, metal crafts, and semi-precious stones are available in plenty. One can find beautiful silver jewellery both chunky and delicate, in lovely designs, studded with stones, especially the deep blue Lapis Lazuli that was immensely valued

in ancient cultures. The Romans and the Cretans have used this rock containing blue mineral azurite in the construction of their buildings, mainly for columns; and in the Middle Ages it was used as a precious pigment too. It is found in the Peshawar region, mainly in Afghanistan. Also the Peshawar bazaars offer to the buyers a wide range of articles — skins of rare Himalayan animals, green tea from China, Kashmiri saffron, fruits from Afghan highlands, Russian glassware, American, Korean and Japanese goods, English tweed, Czech guns, textiles from different parts of the world and dry fruits. Traders of various lineages — Persians and Afghans, Chinese, Turkomans, Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and Tajiks — mostly refugees rendered homeless due to Afghan war, and the indigenous tribes — Afridis, Khattaks, Qazilbash and Mohammadzais — are found in these bazaars. In the streets, vendors roam around in their ethnic costumes selling infinite variety of goods. The narrow streets of these bazaars are interspersed with small tea stalls with samovars offering a variety of tea but mostly *qahwa*, a light green Chinese tea with a dash of cardamom. Somebody has said that the alleys and lanes of Qissa Khawani Bazaar appear to be straight from the Arabian Nights. How true! In fact I thought the whole of the walled city looks as if it is from the Arabian Nights. I was reminded of the bazaars of Marrakech in Morocco pictured in Hitchcock's old classic 'The Man Who Knew Too Much', and the Khankhalili Bazaar in Cairo that I happened to visit in 1998.

One of the major attractions of the old city is the beautiful Mosque Mahabat Khan situated in the Yadgar Chowk of Sarafa Bazaar. The builder of this handsome mosque was Mahabat Khan, who served the two Mughal emperors Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb, as the Governor of Peshawar. The most eye catching feature of this mosque apart from an impressive façade is the fine, delicate ornamental artistry in red and green that decorate its walls, columns and arches. This mosque, badly damaged during the Sikh rule has



*Beautiful interiors of Mosque Mahabat Khan*

been restored to its original glory. To the east stands a hillock overlooking the city called Gor-Kathari (Gol Khatri). It was known to be a place of pilgrimage visited by Chinese Buddhists and for caravanserais since ancient times. Later the hillock was home to places of Hindu worship. It is said that Taimur-e-lang, and Babur had both taken short breaks on this hillock during their expeditions in this region. Jehan Ara Begum, the daughter of Shah Jehan took interest in Gor Kathari and built a *serai*, a mosque and a well for the travellers. Many other constructions came up during the Sikh rule. Almost every construction on the hill now stands in dilapidated condition.



Rahimullah Yusufzai is the first Pakistani journalist to have met Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar. His main interests of study have been Afghanistan and Taliban. I was familiar with his writings before going to Pakistan. When I met him at his residence in Peshawar on 5 September he was recuperating from a major illness. At the outset he told me that if the world expected Pakistan



to control Taliban, then it was expecting the impossible because Afghans are fiercely independent. Commenting on the relations between the Pakistan army and Taliban, he said that the Pakistani army was mostly modern, secular and anti-Taliban. But, according to Yusufzai, it had no alternative but to adjust with Taliban, for the latter had the potential to create immense problems for Pakistan by encouraging import of guns and drugs. They might also support anti-Pakistani activity by exploiting the close emotional bonds they shared with the Pakistani Pakhtuns that resulted out of identity of race, language and culture between the two. Pakistan had to protect its political interests in Afghanistan as the Northern Alliance (then) controlling the northern region of Afghanistan received support from India and Iran. Since the former ruler of Afghanistan, King Zaheer Shah was still around, residing in Italy, Pakistani establishment feared the possibility of his returning to Afghanistan with outside help. His return to Afghanistan would certainly not be in the interest of Pakistan.

Yusufzai felt it was necessary to understand the situation that brought Taliban to power in Afghanistan. Before Taliban became *de facto* rulers of Afghanistan in 1996 Afghanistan had been reduced to a state of complete anarchy by inter-tribal conflict in the country. There was no government worth the name and the life of a common Afghani was insecure. When Taliban intervened and brought some order in the chaotic life of the country they were instantly welcome by the people. Later as the Taliban started to show their true colours people began detesting them. But that is altogether a different story, he said.

On questioning the extent of Taliban's impact on Pakistan, Yusufzai pondered for a moment and said it was little. Pakistan was a large country and a complex society. Moreover, unlike Iran, Taliban neither intended nor were in a position to export Islamic revolution. But he admitted that some sections of Pakistanis were



inspired by them. I was interested in asking him many more questions about Afghanistan and Taliban but I restrained myself as it would have been unfair to tax him any further while he was convalescing. As we were winding up our conversation Yusufzai pointed out that any attempt to impose a puppet government in Afghanistan would boomerang and that Taliban would never betray Osama even at the cost of friendship with Pakistan. I met him on 5 September and within a week, from 11 September the fate of Afghanistan started changing drastically. In less than two months Taliban was defeated by the American forces and the western countries congregated at Bonn in Germany in an attempt to put up an interim government in Afghanistan. As I was talking to Yusufzai I simply could not imagine a possibility of Afghanistan and the Muslim world undergoing a major turmoil in the near future.



Much before the Muslim invaders came to the north western part of the Indian subcontinent from Central and West Asia, Peshawar and the surrounding region had emerged as a major centre of Buddhist culture in Gandhara under Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Dynasty and the Kushan kings. In fact Gandhara was considered as the second home of Buddhism after Bihar, the birth place of Buddha. This region still retains indelible marks of the Buddhist civilisation with numerous Buddhist sites and relics strewn in and around Peshawar, many of which are preserved in the Peshawar Museum. This Museum on the Grand Trunk Road has an impressive building with a small stupa in the premises. Though small in size it is a virtual treasure house of art, stucco sculptures, coins, Buddha images, manuscripts and most importantly relics of Buddha stored in the famous casket of Emperor Kanishka. Professor Khan had told me that Pakistanis revered

Buddha. I was surprised, for the memories of the destruction of Bamiyan Buddha statues in Afghanistan just a few months ago were still fresh. But then, the destroyers at Bamiyan were Taliban who rejected all cultural heritages other than Islamic. What attracted Pakistanis to Buddha? His teachings? Not really, Professor Khan had said. It was the personal life of Buddha, who despite being a prince renounced every worldly comfort and went in search of the eternal truth. Apart from the Buddhist artefacts the Museum displays relics from the Mughal period and also showcases culture of the northern parts of the Frontier Province.

On the same day after visiting the Museum I visited another fascinating place — Karkhana. It is virtually an endless rows of shops owned mostly by Afghan refugees selling foreign goods. It is a straight drive of 30 minutes in auto rickshaw towards the right from the University Gate. Now it has become part of the city. On the way one passes through colonies of Afghan refugees made of mud houses. I had seen such Afghan villages on TV. Recently when I saw the controversial Hindi movie, 'Escape from Taliban' I was reminded of these colonies. They looked despondent and run down. Karkhana begins where these colonies end. Each row of street has its own speciality. Shops selling domestic appliances, white goods, watches and clocks, readymade garments, cosmetics, glassware and many more things occupy a street each providing ample choice to customers. Interestingly cosmetic shops are spread over two or three streets. In a cosmetic shop I found two women, apparently from a humble background, shopping for a shampoo bottle worth a thousand rupees. I thought most of the goods in Karkhana were either smuggled or spurious because everywhere customers indulged in heavy bargaining. Outside the shops, on footpaths, children were selling all kinds of goods actually for the asking. I saw a few streets in Karkhana and wound up my tour as I was not interested in shopping.

The road turning to the left from the University gate goes to the old city. This road is full of modern shops and restaurants. I was surprised to see a large number of shops selling wedding gowns in various colours and designs, displayed on full size mannequins with forearms covered with matching gloves, and holding baskets of paper flowers. And then I saw an interesting sight. On a fairly long stretch of the road gown shops and butcher shops alternate each other, with pretty mannequins draped in lovely diaphanous gowns complete with other bridal fineries in the former, and torsos of butchered animals hung upside down in the latter. I wondered who could be using gowns in such large numbers in a conservative city like Peshawar where sartorial traditions are observed more fastidiously than in any other Pakistani city I visited. I was told that Afghan women from the upper class, well to do and modern families who took refuge in Peshawar, but were not refugees in the conventional sense of the term wear these gowns during weddings and social gatherings. One doesn't get to see these highbrow Afghan women ever walking on the streets as most of these events take place behind closed doors. And if at all they do walk on the street, one would still not get to see them as they hide themselves in a typical Afghan 'shuttle cock' *burqua*. Afghan women in western dress in Kabul, and girls in skirts or jeans riding bicycles on Kabul University campus were not unheard of during the time of King Zaheer.



On my second visit to HRCP office in Peshawar I met two Persian speaking Afghan girls of Tajiki origin, Marina Matin and Khatera. Khatera looked typically Iranian but Marina could easily pass off as an Indian. Because of a big black-blue mole on her forehead between the eyebrows that looked like *bindi*, Afghans teased her as

'Hindu'. Marina's parents are well educated. Her mother has a Master's degree in Mathematics from France and the father is an engineer from a German University. Both opposed the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and therefore incurred the wrath of Russian supported government of Babrak Karmal. Marina's father fled to Peshawar in 1981 and her mother got arrested when Marina was barely a month old baby. Both of them spent the next three years behind bars. Out of prison in 1984, they started looking for Marina's father and after four years of intensive search, they learnt his whereabouts, and the mother and the daughter reached Peshawar in 1988. Their initial years were spent in Quetta in Balochistan but later they migrated to Peshawar. Marina's mother was the founder member of the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) founded at Kabul in 1971. Both Marina and her mother are active in RAWA in Peshawar, which is primarily engaged in economic empowerment of Afghan women. Her mother also teaches Mathematics and Physics to Afghan refugee children in camps.

Marina said both Taliban and Northern Alliance were puppets of foreign powers and anti-democratic and anti-women in orientation. She wanted truly peoples' government in Afghanistan. She said she felt quite at ease in Pakistan due to cultural similarities between the two countries and also because her life in Pakistan was qualitatively better than in Afghanistan. But despite that she longed to return to Afghanistan. It was her country she said, and therefore she wanted to return to Kabul. She had travelled in tempos paying 1000 rupees as fare and visited Kabul a few times. Khatera too travelled to Kabul to visit her maternal uncles. On one such visit she was walking on the street carrying her small cousin in arms. It was getting dark, the path was barely visible so she removed the veil from her face and was instantly questioned by a Taliban who ordered her to cover the face. A little later again low visibility

forced her to uncover her face and as her luck would have it the same Taliban accosted her again. He gave her one lash and said that her offence was worthy of three lashes but he was letting her go with just one!

Thereafter things changed in Afghanistan rapidly. Taliban was defeated, and Northern Alliance too vanished from the face of Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai's government was installed in 2002. Whenever I read about the developments in Afghanistan I think of Marina and Khatera. I wondered how they might have reacted to the post 9/11 events in their country. Would they be happy with the defeat of Taliban or desolate because of America's violent intervention in Afghanistan? Did Marina accept the Karzai government as truly people's government? Has she returned to Kabul?

Many years ago as a primary school student, I had read about Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in a history text book. Since then I had remembered him as Sarhad Gandhi as he was known in India. Later while reading an account of the Indian freedom struggle I got familiar with his *Khudai Khidmadgars* or Red Shirts organisation. I had also read about his struggle for independent Pakhtunistan after the partition of India. Indian Government had conferred on him the highest civilian award, *Bharat Ratna*. I recall reading the extensive coverage on his life and work in the Indian print media on his death. But I had never thought that some day I would meet his grandson Asfandyar Wali Khan. While I was in Peshawar someone suggested that I could seek a meeting with Wali Khan. But Wali Khan resides 35–40 km away from Peshawar in Wali Bagh, and my visa was restricted to Peshawar. Possibility of meeting him appeared bleak, but I decided to talk to him on telephone. As I dialled his number he picked up the call at other end. I introduced myself and realised that someone had already spoken to him about me. Luckily he was going to be in Peshawar the next day and



agreed to meet me next morning at the residence of Haji Ghulam Bilour, a well known businessman of Peshawar.

Asfandyar Wali Khan claimed that his Awami National Party was the only secular party in Pakistan. Then how would he describe Benazir Bhutto's PPP? He said, it was liberal and progressive. ANP had always opposed *jihad* in Kashmir and therefore, he said, they were branded as anti-national and anti-Islam. He fully concurred with the Pakistani position that there was no possibility of any improvement in Indo-Pak relations unless the contentious Kashmir issue was resolved. But he emphatically ruled out *jihad* as a solution. He accepted that Simla Agreement of 1972 could be the basis of negotiations and said that Pakistan would have to stop harping on UN Resolution about the plebiscite in Kashmir. In his opinion the very idea of plebiscite in Kashmir was now a *passé* but India and Pakistan could accept the Chenab Formula that envisages the division of Kashmir on communal lines and draw the international borders accordingly. He admitted that Pakistan army and religious groups had common interests between them. The army rule under Musharraf, he observed, had created a political void in Pakistan by completely marginalising political parties. This void had been filled by religious groups. Yet he admitted instantly that ANP also sought alliance with religious parties out of political expediency. He believed that if the army had the will it could easily control Islamist parties. He quoted a Pashto saying in support of his argument — strength of the peg to which a calf is tied decides how much the calf will jump around. (How interesting! Laloo Prasad Yadav, on his visit to Pakistan as a member of the Indian MPs delegation in August 2003 also used similar imagery of ox and the peg but in a different context altogether.) Wali Khan was critical of General Musharraf for making life hard for political parties by introducing a ban on political meetings. But, complained Wali Khan, that Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman (who created quite a

stir in India during his visit in July 2003 by dramatically crossing over the Wagah border), had organised a huge convention of Deobandis on the government land in NWFP that was concluded a little ahead of our meeting. ANP had given up the demand for independent Pakhtunistan but continued its fight for provincial autonomy. Wali Khan had other appointments lined up for the day so we had to conclude the meeting. He emphasised again that Kashmir should be resolved amicably and that it was possible, for the very Punjab that blew this issue out of proportion, now wanted peace with India. Wali Khan and his ANP suffered a severe set back in the 2002 elections with ANP winning only eight seats in the Provincial Assembly of NWFP and none in the National Assembly.

Haji Ghulam Bilour, at whose residence I met Wali Khan, also participated in the discussion. He said he knew it for certain that Pakistan would never get the entire Kashmir. The best way to end the constant bickering between two neighbours was to give away Kashmir to Kashmiris. He admitted that this was easier said than done. But one way to contain religious extremism in both the countries was to resolve the Kashmir issue at the earliest.

I was looking forward to meeting Mosarat Qadeem, Lecturer in Political Science at Peshawar University. I was introduced to her at the Institute in Islamabad and had spoken to her a couple of times there. I met Mosarat in her department office where she introduced me to the Department Chair Dr. Taj Moharram Khan. She is a firm believer in Indo-Pak friendship, so every time I spoke to her she used to refer to cultural similarities between the two countries. She has visited India a couple of times and during one of her visits had also met Shiv Sena Chief Bal Thackeray. She is impressed by the quality of education in India, especially that of research. She thought research in Pakistan was rather superficial. Pakistanis do not normally go for fundamental concepts, she

lamented. She said that when Indians and Pakistanis met in a third country they expressed genuine warmth towards each other. Her experience was that Indians and Pakistanis strike an instant chord between them but not necessarily with other South Asians like Sri Lankans, Bangladeshis or Nepalese. But in their own countries they freeze and keep away from each other because of the fear of being watched.



*M*y account of Peshawar visit would not be complete without a mention of Jalojai Camp for Afghan refugees on the outskirts of Peshawar. Pakistan has been accommodating nearly three million Afghan refugees since the early eighties. Jalojai Camp was set up in the middle of the year 2000 and at one point consisted of 60,000 refugees living in deplorable conditions. It was overcrowded, filled with make-shift tents, and without water or sanitation facilities. Conditions in the Camp were so severe that a Pakistani newspaper called it 'a living cemetery'. Perhaps that is why it attracted so much international attention. Apart from the people who mattered at the international level, even the people in glamour circuit including the Hollywood film stars visited the Camp. Thousands of Afghans arrived in Jalojai fleeing the ongoing drought in their country and the fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. Though a majority of them were Pakhtuns, there were Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras too. Moving on the dusty pathway in the Camp I suddenly saw a tin plate hanging outside a tent announcing the names of the two campers — Hakim Narendra Singh and Krishan Singh from Jalalabad (bordering Pakistan in East Afghanistan). Right from the beginning Medicines Sans Frontieres was the most active NGO in the Camp joined by United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) and other

international NGOs later. Despite this huge effort Jalozai became a symbol of the suffering of the Afghan population and also of the lack of support of the international community. After the initial show of support the international donors left Pakistan alone to deal with the enormous influx of Afghan refugees. Donor countries did not live up to their promise causing a constant shortage of funds. In February 2002 Jalozai Camp was vacated in accordance with the decision of the UNCHR, as the conditions in the Camp deteriorated further following the post 9/11 influx of refugees from Afghanistan. All the refugees from Jalozai were settled elsewhere in Pakistan.

I left Peshawar for Lahore on 8 September by coach. I was already booked for the onward train journey to Karachi from Lahore. As the coach reached the city limits of Peshawar it was subjected to police search for any non-permissible carriage of goods. A little ahead the coach halted at the famous madrassa of Maulana Sami-ul-Haq at Akora Khattak situated along the road. I could see hundreds of Taliban (students) engaged in studies early in the morning. Akora Khattak is regarded as the birth place of Taliban and the Maulana as their ideological father. At the stop a man looking like a mullah boarded the coach with huge bundles. As the coach moved forward he removed several reams of cloth and pushed them below the seats, in the TV compartment of the coach and in every possible place of hiding. By the time he finished his job neatly we were at the border of NWFP. There was another police search. The police pretended to look around in the coach, and gave an okay signal to the driver. As the coach entered Lahore a police jeep pulled near the coach, the cleaner of the coach quickly slipped a few currency notes into the hands of a policeman and the jeep moved away speedily.

## *Karachi — The Mega City of Pakistan*

*K*arachi Express was to leave Lahore at 6.30 in the evening. I had reached Lahore from Peshawar at noon. I had returned to Lahore after more than three weeks but found no change in the weather. It was muggy as ever. The façade of Lahore station looked unusual. It appeared more like a medieval English castle than a railway station in the subcontinent. After my return from Pakistan I saw a book on the *Railways of the Raj*, by chance, that explained Lahore station's peculiar looks. Opened in 1864, designed like a fortress by William Brunton, the then Chief Engineer of Amritsar and Multan Railways, it is the best example of a fortified station erected shortly after the Indian War of Independence of 1857. It has a long massive wall in front with holes for muskets and towers crowned by turrets. A fear of sudden attack by Indians and the consequent concern for security weighing heavily on the Government of India after 1857 had influenced the railway policy in every respect including the design of a station.

The train left Lahore at seven in the evening. Karachi Express was a newly introduced air-conditioned train running between Lahore and Karachi. It was air-conditioned only nominally. Pakistani railway service is poor. Even the compartment in which I was travelling was designed in a manner that appeared decades old. It hardly had any facilities. I bought dinner that contained thick Afghan *roti* and a big piece of *tandoori* chicken spending



sixty rupees. The food was so dry that I just did not know how to eat. I recalled the way Indian railways feed commuters in the Mumbai–Delhi journey in Rajdhani Express. When the Pakistani delegates travelled from Delhi to Bangalore for PIPFPD Convention they were impressed by the arrangements in Delhi–Bangalore Rajdhani Express.

In the morning the train was running through Sindh desert mostly cultivated with cotton, sugarcane and corn. I wanted to see the well known Sukkur Barrage on Sindhu but it had passed sometime before dawn. For a long time the train rattled through uninhabited lands and then, all of a sudden, I saw human habitation on both sides of the railway track that kept growing until it became a big city. It was Hyderabad, the second biggest city after Karachi in Sindh with a population of over one million according to the 1998 census. Hyderabad was founded in 1768 and remained the capital of the Emirate of Sindh until the British General Sir Charles Napier conquered Sindh in 1843. From 1947 to 1955 Hyderabad was the capital of the Sindh Province. Hyderabad, situated on the Indus, is an important commercial and industrial centre including film studios. It is also a major centre for education with the University of Sindh founded in 1947 in Jamshoro in the vicinity. By the time the train pulled into Hyderabad station shanty colonies on either side of the station became visible. Between Hyderabad and Kotari stations lie the vast spread of Darya-e-Sindh or the Sindhu.



*K*arachi was the first capital of Pakistan until it was replaced by Rawalpindi in 1959. An ancient settlement, Karachi was a small fishing and trading centre when captured by the British in 1839 and annexed three years later. Today Karachi is the hub of a

sprawling metropolitan area, and Pakistan's largest city and its financial, commercial, and manufacturing centre. Most of the international trade of Pakistan and also of landlocked Afghanistan pass through the city's busy modern port, centred on the island of Kiamari. Karachi remains the only international port of Pakistan. It has an undisputed place in the economy of the country. Major railways and roads from all over the country lead to the city, and its modern airport is considered to be the best in South Asia. Karachi is the industrial centre that produces steel, textiles, chemicals, refined petroleum, footwear, machinery, and processed food. It is also the banking centre of Pakistan with its own stock exchange.

Though references to Karachi are found in ancient texts, unlike Lahore and Peshawar, it has no history worth the name. It is said that in the ground below Kothari Parade in Clifton there existed a holy place of Hindus mentioned in *Mahabharata*. Yet like Mumbai, Karachi is the creation of the British. Presently Pakistan is engaged in building a major port at Gwadar on the Makran Coast in Balochistan. A coastal highway starting at Karachi and running through Makran right up to Jiwani a small port at the Pakistan-Iran border, with massive aid from China is also under construction. It will facilitate China to keep an eye on the Persian Gulf and the Gulf countries.

Karachi is mentioned in old Arabic texts. An Arab navigator Ibn Majid refers to Karachi as 'Karazi' in his work *Al Fawa'id Umdah* written by another navigator Sulayman al Mahri mentions it as 'Ras Al Karazi', and 'Ras Karashi'. Accounts of the Turkish navigator Captain Sidi Ali Reis found in *Muhit* mention 'Karaushi' harbour. Sindhi folk literature mentions it as 'Kalachi' or 'Kun Kalachi'. Abdullah Shah Ghazi who came along with Muhammad bin Qasim was said to have been killed in Karachi and his tomb was raised in the sea in front of the Clifton beach. It is the oldest place of Muslim worship in Karachi.



*Pre-Islamic Chaukhandi tombs near Karachi*

Karachi developed as a city in the 19th century. British officers and travellers have described 19th century Karachi as a small town engaged in trade. Its fortunes changed dramatically when it was made the capital of Sindh (Sind Province) in 1843. Yet Sindh was a part of the Bombay Presidency and Karachi had to play second fiddle to Bombay. The second time Karachi got a real boost was in 1936 after Sindh was separated from the Bombay Presidency. But this had another major implication. Sindh's separation from the Bombay Presidency proved to be a catalytic event in the future formation of Pakistan. Muslims constituted nearly 75 per cent of Sindh's population, while their population in Punjab and Bengal was a little over 50 per cent. Balochistan and the Frontier Province were on the periphery of politics. Therefore for a decade, from 1937 to 1947 Sindh remained a frontline province that lent support to the demand for a separate state of Pakistan. Lahore Resolution was passed in 1940 and the first government of the Muslim League took power in Sindh in 1942. In March 1943 the Sindh Assembly

passed a resolution tabled by Ghulam Murtaza Syed, president of the Muslim League in Sindh, in favour of the creation of Pakistan and took the first step towards the realisation of the idea of Pakistan. This was for the first time that the idea of Pakistan received formal support from any elected legislature. Later in 1971, the same G.M. Syed founded the Jiye-Sindh Movement. His disillusionment with politics in Pakistan since independence led him to campaign for *Sindhu Desh*, demanding autonomy to the region. Interestingly in the late 1920s he had campaigned for the separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency. Syed went full circle — from Sindhi nationalism to Muslim nationalism to Sindhi nationalism again!

On the creation of Pakistan, though Karachi was named the capital of the country there was a move to separate it from Sindh. Sindhis were enraged and the Sindh Assembly passed a resolution condemning such a move in February 1948. Despite vehement opposition of Sindhis, Pakistan Government remained firm on its decision and on 22 May 1948 through a resolution of the Constituent Assembly, Karachi became a Federally Administered Territory and continued to remain so even after it lost its status of capital to Rawalpindi and also after the capital was moved to Islamabad permanently. It was returned to Sindh only in 1968.



*K*arachi has always been a cosmopolitan and multilingual city. At the time of partition Hindus constituted 51 per cent of the city's population, Muslims 42 per cent, Christians three and a half per cent and Parsis, though prominent, were barely one per cent. It was familiar with a number of tongues — Sindhi, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Kutchhi, Punjabi, Balochi and Bravhi, and also Marathi. Today Maharashtrians have hardly any connection with

Karachi but they have been residents of Karachi almost for a century. Maharashtrians from Pune District and Konkan migrated to Sindh and Karachi in mid 18th century in an attempt to dodge natural calamities like a famine in Pune in 1842. Also as Sindh was a part of the Bombay Presidency several people including a number of Marathas from Bombay region were often recruited in administrative jobs in Sindh. The Chief Engineer of the Sukkur Barrage was a Maharashtrian named Bhide. The Marathi speaking community was found in sectors like health, construction and especially education. Their contribution to education was notable. The first government school in Karachi started in 1855 was Narayan Jugannath High School named after one Narayan Jugannath, a school teacher from Bombay region who rose to become an Education Officer. He was specially brought to Sindh to introduce a new system of education in the province. Sindh administration was well disposed towards appointing Maratha school teachers as they were known for their commitment to education and sincerity of purpose. Maharashtrians in Karachi, in contrast to their general trait, were also into business from salt and biscuit making to printing press and ship repairs.

A few years ago while looking for the Bombay University curriculum before 1947 in the university library I suddenly came across an old booklet, which I recall, gave detailed results of the matriculation examination of the university that included, among others, names of several Maharashtrian students taking examination at the Karachi centre. As many as 25,000 Maharashtrians lived in Karachi before the partition and the city had two Marathi-medium high schools. Many of them visited their native places in summer in Konkan journeying from Kemari Dock to Princess Dock in Mumbai cruising through the Arabian Sea for three days. The ferry from Karachi to Mumbai also brought students who came to study at the Wilson College in Mumbai. This bit of information





*Shivling at Ratneswar Mahadev Mandir, Karachi*



*Ganesh idol at Mahadev Mandir*

was of particular interest to me as Wilson College is my alma mater. India's proposal to Pakistan to start a ferry service between Mumbai and Karachi, made in October 2003, has greatly excited Mumbai Sindhis whose links with Karachi are still alive, and evoked nostalgia among a few Maharashtrians who still cherish faint memories of their life in Karachi.

While moving in Karachi I found no indication of the long stay of Marathas in the city. Nor did I meet anybody who could give me any information about the now extinct community of the city. As the possibility of the partition of India became more and more distinct in the mid-1940s, Karachi Maharashtrians returned to Maharashtra for good bringing an end to Maharashtra's connection with Karachi. But the aftermath of the partition brought thousands of Sindhi Hindus to Maharashtra most of whom settled down in and around Mumbai, concentrating in a new township called Ulhasnagar. Dayaram Gidumal Shahani, known to be one of the prominent architects of modern Karachi had made Bombay his home a long time before his death in 1927. He was a close collaborator of the noted Parsi reformer Behramjee Merwanjee Malbari in his efforts to bring about reforms in the condition of Hindu women. I do not know if Karachi has memories of Dayaram Gidumal but Mumbai remembers him even today through Seva Sadan, an institution founded by Gidumal. Today it runs a school for girls and functions as an NGO for the welfare of women.



Much before the train reached Karachi Cantonment station, the increasing number of pockets of habitation indicated that we were approaching a big city. Slums situated dangerously close to the railway lines reminded me of Mumbai. When I reached the station it was past 11.30 in the morning. Lahore–Karachi journey

had taken almost 17 hours. In Karachi I stayed at the guesthouse of the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), situated at one end of the city in the newly developing locality of Gulshan-e-Maymar. As the taxi left the station I saw the Goan Union Hall and the beautiful St. Patrick's Church. Once Karachi had a fairly big Goan community. But after the partition most of them migrated to Australia and the US. After travelling in a taxi for a long time I finally reached Gulshan-e-Maymar. What I liked most about Karachi on the very first day was its temperate weather unlike Islamabad, Lahore and Peshawar. It was Sunday and there was hardly any traffic on the road.

PILER has a small but well designed campus combining traditional and modern styles of architecture. It had moved to these new premises just recently from its previous campus in the city. On reaching the Institute I was informed that even before I had reached the city, *Intelligencewallahs* had already made inquiries about me with the PILER. Its Joint Director, B.M. Kutty, a veteran in the left movement in Pakistan is originally from Kerala. His other family members and relatives live in Kerala and Mumbai. After the partition he migrated to Pakistan alone and lived in Lahore for a few years before settling down in Karachi. He is a frequent visitor to India. One of his brothers lived in Santa Cruz, a suburb of Mumbai for a long time. I had met Kutty at Bangalore and then in Islamabad at Ismat's house where he spoke at length about Pakistani society and politics. I was very happy when he said during the course of our conversation, that there was no place like Mumbai. For, I am a staunch *Mumbaikar*.

When I reached PILER, it was busy preparing to hold the valedictory function to mark the conclusion of a week-long workshop on Women's Health and Security for women activists. They were looking for a guest for the function and were happy to have found an Indian guest. I distributed certificates to participants after

making a small speech. When I greeted the audience with *Asalam Aleikum* at the beginning, I was taken to be a Muslim. Many of the participants had relatives in Mumbai whom they visited occasionally and hence were familiar with different parts of Mumbai.

I met Rifat Hussain at night. Hussain is active in the left movement and works and lives in PILER. He is a Pathan by birth and had spent his childhood in Pune and Mumbai. He is thoroughly familiar with the alleys and bylanes of Pune even now and knows about Mumbai perhaps more than I do. It was interesting to know that while his mother and brothers migrated to Pakistan in 1951, Rifat Bhai stayed back in India for eight more years. But when loneliness set upon him, he decided to migrate to Pakistan in 1959. In July 2001 he had been to India to participate in a seminar at Panchgani in Maharashtra. Rifat Bhai and I used to have interesting post-dinner sessions daily during my stay in Karachi. He knows good Marathi but refused to talk to me in Marathi.

Gulshan-e-Maymar is far away from the city, therefore I hired a taxi everyday for the rest of the week. The next day I met Kutty and the PILER Director Karamat Ali whom I had met at Bangalore Convention and in Islamabad in a meeting of PIPFPD. My first job in Karachi was police registration. Unlike other cities I felt it was a little complicated. The same evening I visited the famous Clifton Beach. Frankly speaking, I found it rather disappointing. It is ordinary and unclean in comparison with Chowpatty and Juhu beaches in Mumbai. There was a layer of white plastic bags spread over a vast stretch of the beach. It is a straight long beach unlike the 'C' shaped beaches in Mumbai. Later, when I returned to the guesthouse I started preparing for my next day's work.



The next day, 11 September 2001, turned out to be a momentous day. When I set out in the morning I had no inkling about the earth shattering event that was to take place that day some thousands of miles away in the US. In the afternoon I met M.H. Askari, the Managing Editor of Oxford University Press, Karachi in the historical Sind Club started in 1883. He had migrated to Pakistan from Delhi. Askari writes in the most prestigious Pakistani English daily *Dawn* fairly regularly. I have always appreciated his comments on issues concerning Indo-Pak relations and the internal situation in Pakistan.

In the evening, on the same day I met the renowned Pakistani journalist M.B. Naqvi who writes for *Dawn* regularly. He also used to send dispatches to the *Times of India*, for many years. Naqvi was in Mumbai in April 2000 and I had accompanied him to a couple of places in the city. Therefore when I called him on the telephone for an appointment he instantly recognised me and cordially invited me for dinner to his place. It took some effort to locate his house in the North Nizamabad area of Karachi. He began our conversation by saying that he was a unilateralist. He wanted Pakistan to go ahead with dismantling its nuclear capability without waiting for India. According to him India would soon follow suit. He spoke at length on the internal situation in Pakistan. His approach was historical and he often quoted from history in support of his arguments. He ruled out any connection between Islam and militarism in Pakistan. It was politics at the root of militarism and that politics itself was shaped by the geography of Pakistan, he explained. The geographical distance between West and East Pakistan had distanced the two mentally as well as emotionally creating a chasm that proved unbridgeable. The first eleven years of Pakistan saw a tug of war between the Bengalis and the Punjabis. Bengalis were more in number but Punjabis staunchly refused to acknowledge it. Therefore Pakistani politics always remained



unstable and democracy could never strike roots in Pakistan. In Naqvi's opinion military intervention in the country's politics began in its nascent years. The assassination of the country's first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951, which still remains obscure, was in a way a revolt of the Pakistani Army. The army's hold over politics increased when the Kashmir issue came to be handled through militaristic mindset alone. Naqvi said the twin forces of ethnicity and sectarianism in Pakistan had proved to be more lethal than the abuse of Islam. They formed the underpinnings of contemporary Pakistani politics.

In Naqvi's view nationalism in both India and Pakistan has increasingly become militant. Notwithstanding the fact that India is a democracy, the guiding spirit behind Indian nationalism has always remained aggressive, bordering on militancy. In case of the BJP its militant nationalism is overt, but with the Congress it has remained furtive. Coming back to Pakistan, Naqvi squarely put the blame on the US for Islamisation of Pakistan. He said that the collapse of democracy in Pakistan coincided with Pakistan becoming a part of the American juggernaut. He lamented the demise of leftist ideology in Pakistan and stressed the need for a leftist party to set the balance between society and polity. While concluding our conversation he reiterated the importance of unilateralism. He said unless one was prepared to implement one's principles unilaterally one was not being serious about them.

In the midst of our conversation Mrs. Naqvi informed us of 'some terrible' event in the US. She looked a little bewildered but Naqvi dismissed it quickly as an accident. But by the time I left after dinner more news had poured in and we understood the immense gravity of the situation. When I reached PILER, I got the frame to frame account of the attacks on the twin towers in New York from Riffat Bhai. He had been glued to the TV ever since the first report came in.

The day after 9/11 I had an interesting meeting with Professor Ghafoor Ahmed, Vice-President of Jamaat-e-Islami. He spoke with a sense of finality about almost everything. Two of his statements struck me during our conversation. Firstly, he said, for Jamaat religion and government are one and the same. Islam is government and government is Islam. Secondly, he was confident that the Quaid (Jinnah) was very clear in his mind that Pakistan would be an Islamic state and that it must follow Quranic Law. Ahmed lamented the failure of every government in founding the Islamic state in Pakistan. Pakistan was an Islamic democracy and hence had to be different from other secular states. He said that Jamaat did not support the cause of Taliban for, according to Jamaat, Taliban did not propagate real Islam. In fact they had earned a bad name for Islam. Professor Ahmed said that Jamaat had nothing in common with Taliban and the culture of the two differed vastly. Yet he said 'we love them, we respect them and we have regard for them!' But he supported the notion of *jihad* wholeheartedly and proudly proclaimed that Jamaat was a *jihadi* party. Since Muslims are sufferers everywhere in the world they must wage *jihad*. At the same time he insisted that Jamaat had faith in democracy and is therefore committed to peace. Talking about Indo-Pak relations he agreed that mutual perceptions of Hindus and Muslims come in the way of improving relations between the two countries. But he assured me at the same time that as is the case with other minorities, Hindus are safe in Pakistan. Hindus in Sindh, mostly in medical and teaching professions are 'quite happy' according to him. Like Ameer-ul-Aziz in Lahore, Professor Ahmed emphasised that Jamaat was essentially an urban organisation predominantly middle class, mostly of professionals and mid-sized landowners and has little place for *Ulemas* (Islamic scholars).



Karachi is a huge city both in terms of its area and population. It takes quite some time to travel from one point to another, making the journey long and tedious. But that had an advantage as every time I travelled it virtually offered a tour of the city. Karachi constantly reminded me of Mumbai. Several localities and buildings in Karachi gave me a feeling of *deja vu*. The Empress Market built in 1889 bears a close resemblance to Crawford Market (now Jyotiba Phule Market) in Mumbai. Some of the 19th century chawls in Karachi reminded me of the traditional mill areas in Lalbaug and Parel in Mumbai. Old buildings on Bundar Road and Wall Street have some relationship with the public buildings in Mumbai's Fort area. The Frere Hall (named after Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere, the Chief Commissioner of Sind and later Governor of the Bombay Presidency) of 1865 looks like the Convocation Hall of Mumbai University, and the Merewether Tower built in 1892 complements Mumbai's famous Rajabai Tower. A number of buildings on Bundar Road, constructed in Art Deco style, look similar to Mumbai's Eros and Regal movie houses and the residential buildings on the Marine Drive. While moving through Karachi I thought I was in Null Bazaar, Byculla, Hindu Colony, Parsi Colony and many other familiar places in Mumbai. But unlike Mumbai one can still see many independent houses and beautiful bungalows in Karachi though a growing number of Karachians now live in apartment blocs as in Mumbai.

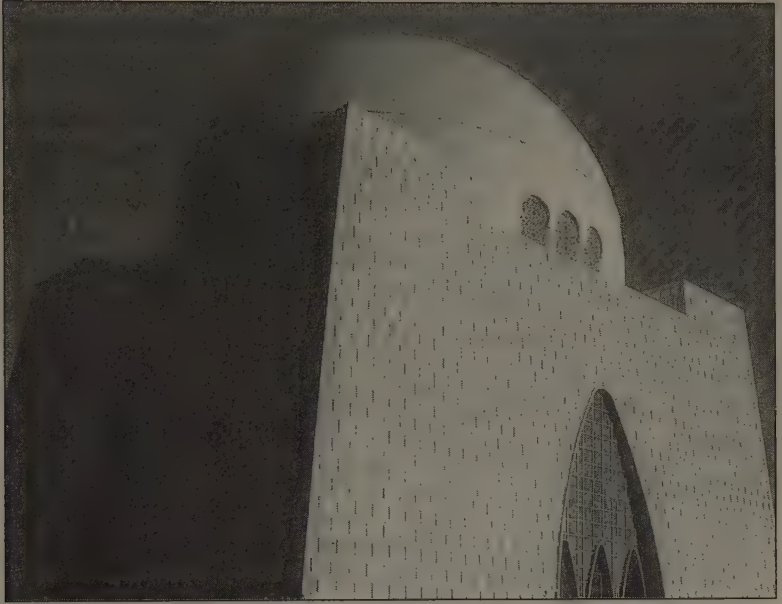
Chundrigar Road is the most important road in Karachi. It captures Karachi's ambition, modernity and energy. The tall, cylindrical building of Habib Bank Plaza, that reminded me of Nehru Centre in Mumbai, is the headquarters of Pakistan's largest bank — and a symbol of modern Karachi. Most of the banks and several commercial and industrial establishments in Pakistan have their head offices on this road. Like Mumbai's Nariman Point, Chundrigar Road is the most prestigious office address in Karachi. Karachi is modern, cosmopolitan and urban unlike Lahore. It is

ethnically, culturally and socially a pluralistic society integrated through its economy. Even its architectural heritage is plural — Hindu, Parsi and British. Its culture is metropolitan in the sense that it offers anonymity and space, and greater personal liberty to everyone.

In a cover story on Lahore and Karachi in its Annual 2002 issue, *Herald* has aptly caught the duality of Karachi. It says, 'Karachi has it all: energy, speed, pluralism, entrepreneurship, creativity and ambition. But underneath this veneer lurk the myriad problems faced by any Third World metropolis.' Its swanky malls and exclusive restaurants stand side by side with *katchi abadis* and those whose daily diet consists of scraps salvaged from these restaurants.

Karachi *Saddar* (cantonment) suffers from perennial traffic jams. It is a big market place full of shops including a number of Banarasi *sari* shops. I had no time to shop in Karachi, no time even for window shopping. The only shopping I did in Karachi was of small artefacts made of onyx to be given as gifts back home. Onyx is a speciality of Pakistan. I would rather call it the 'national stone' of Pakistan. Onyx which is mostly found in different and pleasing shades of green and yellow and sometime also of pink and white is sculpted into a variety of things of utility and decoration, like tea-sets, candle stands, flower vases, glasses, paper-weights, chess kits, and big elephants and small animals. The manager of Sindh Handicrafts where I bought pretty onyx artefacts was Gujarati speaking. On learning that I was from Mumbai, he immediately enquired about the oldest Gujarati daily published from Mumbai, *Gujarat Samachar*, and expressed his unhappiness over his children's inability to read their mother tongue, Gujarati.

Karachi like Mumbai is not a tourist place. Unlike Lahore it has little to offer a tourist. The most important landmark in Karachi is the tomb of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Situated on a large raised platform, this grand tomb designed in Turkish style



*Jinnah Mausoleum*

that was approved by Jinnah's sister Fatima, is impressive and stately. It is not just a tourist attraction but a modern centre of pilgrimage in Pakistan. A beautiful structure worth seeing in the city is Mohatta Palace. Designed in Anglo-Mughal style by Aga Ahmed Hussain and built in yellow and pink Jodhpur stone in 1926, Mohatta Palace was the family residence of Shivratn Mohatta of Marwad in Rajasthan. There are some small constructions in typical Hindu style of architecture within the premises of this graceful palace. At one end of its courtyard stands a small Hindu temple used by the Mohatta family. Offices of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Pakistan were located in Mohatta Palace when Karachi became the capital of Pakistan in 1947. Later it was a home to Fatima Jinnah. In 1955 it came under the control of Sindh Administration. Mohatta Palace is well maintained even today. It has been converted into a tourist attraction as well as a cultural



centre. On my visit to the palace I saw an exhibition of traditional costumes and textile art of Pakistan. Yet another beautiful structure in Karachi is Govardhandas Hindu Gymkhana Building. I just had a glimpse of it through its iron gates for want of time. People visit Kothari Parade of 1920 at Clifton to enjoy the sea breeze in the evening.

Karachi Municipal Corporation building, Sindh High Court, and the Sindh Assembly are magnificent, old Churches look impressive, especially St. Patrick's Church in Saddar is big and splendid yet simple. Trinity Church of 1855 and St. Andrews Church of 1868 are constructed in different architectural styles. I was quite impressed by the austere yet grand looking Sind Madressah of 1885 and also by the D. J. Science College of 1887. There is nothing to write about new constructions in Karachi. They are as in any other big city made of concrete, glass and granite.



*M*y way to Karachi University (founded in 1951) waded through the newly developed colonies of high rise apartment buildings standing close to each other. University campus is vast and styled on the American model. Security at the university was very tight. Every person seeking entry to the campus faced interrogation. Foreigners showed their passports and Pakistanis, identity cards. I met Dr. Mutahir Ahmad from the International Relations Department. I also wanted to meet Dr. Moonis Ahmar of the same department but he had then gone to Islamabad seeking visa for Delhi. Later I was happy to know that Dr. Ahmar was selected for ASIA Fellowship and went to Bangladesh for nine months.

Dr. Ahmad made a pertinent comment while talking about the internal situation of Pakistan. He said that the very religion in

whose name Pakistan was created was now dividing the country. Islam in Pakistan had become sectarian and therefore a threat to the nation. Many religious groups functioned in the nature of welfare organisations and gained popular support. He felt, though India too was beset with numerous problems they were offset successfully to an extent by its democratic culture that was largely intact. The internal situation in Pakistan aggravated when Pakistani governments started using *jihad* as conduit for foreign policy. Kashmir in his view was the key issue between India and Pakistan but in Sindh and Balochistan it failed to rouse the same emotions among the people unlike in the other two provinces. Dr. Ahmad drew my attention to some of the pamphlets lying on his table. One among them titled *Hindu majhabki tareekh aur Hindi Musalman* (History of Hinduism and Indian Muslims), published obviously by some extremist Islamic organisation, was vitriolic about Hinduism. Printed on high quality paper it mentioned neither the author nor the publisher. Dr. Ahmad said such anonymous literature kept coming up. Perhaps it had links with Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Ahmad brought to my attention the increasing number of girl students on the campus. But, he said, the rate of dropouts was also high. I saw several girls wearing *hijab*. In his opinion it was a new trend among girls and when questioned about it, they got away with evasive explanations. I had experienced this in Islamabad. I was given innumerable explanations justifying *hijab* — to prevent the head from the Sun and the hair from dust and pollution, to hide unkempt hair or un-dyed hair and so on.

My next meeting was with a noted Pakistani economist, Dr. Akbar Zaidi. He had taught Economics at Karachi University for a while and later went into independent consultancy. He too was an ASIA Fellow like me, but from the second cohort and waiting for clearance from Delhi as his project was related to India. Like

me Zaidi waited endlessly and finally his patience bore fruits. As I was leaving Pakistan his permission came from India and he was granted visa for a year. But by December 2001, Indo-Pak relations had nose dived so much that I thought Zaidi might simply not make it to India. But he came and stayed on for a year. Though his grants were for nine months, he stayed on in India for three more months on his own to utilise his visa fully. In September 2003 I had the pleasure of meeting both Zaidi and Ahmar at the ASIA Fellows Conference in Bangkok.

Zaidi lives away from Karachi University. The first thing that struck me as I reached his apartment was numerous potted plants that lined up from the staircase landing to the entrance of the apartment. Dr. Zaidi was emphatic about *jihadis'* close connection with Pakistani army, the ISI and intelligence agencies. He said that some former army men had turned into staunch *jihadis*. In his opinion various factions in the Pakistani army constantly played games against each other. I met Dr. Zaidi on 12 September, the day after 9/11. Naturally it loomed large over our conversation. I was surprised when he said that the common reaction in Pakistan about the events of 9/11 would be 'It served "them" right'. But later I discovered that, that was how the common and even the not-so-common Pakistani reacted. The Muslim world was convinced that the US was anti-Islamic. Zaidi spoke about the Muslim anger against the Americans that stemmed from the Muslim conviction that globalisation was nothing but Americanisation and therefore it was not only economic in its content but also cultural. This is also the reason for common Pakistani's admiration for Osama bin Laden. For them he was a hero, the only Muslim who had the guts to take on the Americans. I had seen Osama's picture displayed proudly and reverentially in some shops in Pakistan. Some parents, I was told, also named their sons after Osama. Zaidi analysed the impact of 9/11 on Pakistan perceptively. It had presented

unexpected and unique opportunities to Pakistan to put its house in order by reigning in *jihadis*, to get out of economic morass and to rehabilitate itself in international politics. He spelt out five conditions Pakistan would have had to fulfil in return for the last two benefits. They were to apprehend Osama, reign in *jihadi* activities in the country, improve relations with India, limit its nuclear programme and improve internal administration. It is more than two years now. Has Pakistan fulfilled any of these conditions? And yet how successfully it has wrenched itself out of the economic morass shedding the pariah status it had acquired after the military coup in 1999. Pakistan has indeed rehabilitated itself in international politics successfully.

Mahmood Sham, the editor of the Urdu daily *Jang*, whom I met at his office, pointed to a major flaw in western thinking that treated the Muslim world as homogenous. Though poverty, low levels of education, and the absence of democratic regimes were common to the Muslim world, its internal fissures made it difficult to function in unison. Despite this, he said, some Pakistanis dreamt of creating a bigger Muslim state including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and the republics of Central Asia. *Jang* (war) was once known to be anti-India. That, I thought explained its name. But as Sham informed *Jang* was launched in Delhi in 1944 and was named so because it meant war on British imperialism. *Jang* is published from Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Quetta. It has a combined sale of 800,000 copies in Pakistan while its London edition sells 25,000. Its closest competitor is *Nawa-e-Waqt*. According to Sham, *Jang* is an independent daily and he assured me that it did not pursue anti-India policy any more.



Once the capital was shifted from Karachi its political importance was obviously on the decline. After the green revolution of the 1960s, importance of Punjab, Central Punjab in particular, in the country's economy grew phenomenally. Though Karachi remains the only megalopolis of Pakistan and continues to lead the country in economic as well as social matters, its importance has certainly declined. Punjab benefited the most from the changing economic, political and social situation in Pakistan.

Karachi started changing rapidly. At the partition thousands of Muslims from Delhi, Mumbai and North India had migrated to Karachi as *mohajirs* (refugees), but established themselves quickly in the new land and also provided the necessary services to Pakistan in its early years. If traders and industrialists went from Mumbai, civil servants and administrators migrated from Delhi and northern India. They were mostly Urdu speaking, well educated Muslims and bred in the widely acclaimed Aligarh tradition. Urdu became the national language of Pakistan giving *mohajirs* an edge over Sindhis and other ethnic groups. In fact Urdu was not spoken in any part of the region that became Pakistan. *Mohajirs* defined the culture of Karachi. Language, literature, entertainment, and food, in fact every aspect of life acquired the stamp of the *mohajir* culture.

But soon waves of internal and external migrations transformed the demography and sociology of Karachi. The Pathans and Punjabis from Pakistan arrived here for better economic prospects. Biharis from Bangladesh and refugees from Afghanistan came to Karachi for both economic and political reasons and the migrants from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Philippines reached the city in search of livelihood. The very *mohajirs* who had sidelined Sindhis as well as Sindhi (language) were now marginalised as a result of major economic changes in Pakistan and demographic changes in Karachi. Added to these was the revival of the Sindhi language that had suffered a setback and stagnation for some time after the partition, along with the assertion of Sindhi pride and rights.



Fortunes of *mohajirs* started dwindling. The situation in Karachi turned explosive. Ever since Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) was launched in 1985 violence became the order of the day. Karachi became the Beirut of Pakistan. For nearly 10 years the streets of Karachi were stained with blood due to violent eruptions between rival political and ethnic groups. The daily violence affected trade and business in the city resulting in the flight of industry to Punjab. The dwindling employment opportunities made the youth take to guns. By the mid-1990s Karachi witnessed more than 2,000 deaths including those of the two American diplomats murdered in March 1995. In the past three or four years Karachi has found some respite from ethnic violence but to be replaced by the sectarian one. Shias and Sunnis are at each other's throat. It is said that Sunni wrath is mostly directed towards Shia doctors. There is one more source of violence in Karachi, crime. Karachi's geographical proximity to the Gulf countries makes it a centre of international mafia activity. Like Mumbai, Karachi too has gang wars, police encounters and killing of innocent citizens. Therefore the sprawling, heavily guarded bungalows of Karachi have ramparts like protection walls surrounding them.

There is yet another link between Karachi and Mumbai. Several of the notorious goons of Mumbai and the 'most wanted men' of India have found safe haven in Karachi. The most infamous among them, are Dawood Ibrahim (Kaskar) a prime suspect in the Mumbai bomb blasts of 1993, and Tiger Memon, the main accused. A prominent functionary of the ISI is said to have been instrumental for Dawood's asylum in Karachi. Indian Intelligence for long have accused Pakistan for sheltering Dawood and his team but the latter has always vehemently denied any operations of Dawood and Company from Pakistani soil. Therefore, when the Inspector General of Sindh Police, Syed Kamal Shah admitted to Dawood's presence in Pakistan and to his Karachi properties in September 2003, the Indian authorities felt vindicated. Dawood's D-Company

in Karachi owns many fabulous properties among which is the Kawish Crown Plaza, a plush 10 storeyed Shopping mall in Clifton that witnessed two bomb explosions between July and September 2003. Dawood and his gang of eight are reported to have made heavy investments in prime properties in Karachi and are also said to be major players on the Karachi Stock Exchange. They are said to be indulging in gold and drug smuggling and in the parallel credit business — the *hundi*. (*Outlook*, October 6, 2003). On 16 October 2003 India received a shot in the arm when the US declared Dawood Ibrahim as a 'global terrorist' and charged him with Al Qaeda links, financing LeT to destabilise India. US also called for a freeze on Dawood's assets in UN countries. India immediately put pressure on Pakistan demanding that Pakistan should hand over Dawood to India and Pakistan promptly, as predicted, denied Dawood's presence in Karachi. According to Pakistan's Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Dawood was neither a Pakistani citizen, nor did he live in Karachi. The story that appeared in *Herald*, November 2003, said that Dawood had left Karachi and moved to Islamabad.

Despite the routine violence in Karachi I found daily life in the city normal. I faced no difficulty in my nine-day stay in Karachi though not a day passed without violent killings. In one instance six people were killed in one go and in another, the hankering between the Deobandis and Barelvis, the two prominent schools among Sunnis, in connection with the shifting of a vegetable market had taken a toll of one life. Violence is a matter of routine in Karachi and Karachians take it in their stride. Despite the ethnic and sectarian strife and the orgy of violence of the past few years, Karachi has retained its vigour. Both the city and its residents have the determination to survive. Karachi, like Mumbai is a resilient city.



M. H. Askari had suggested that I meet Professor Sayed Haroon Ahmad. I met Dr. Sayed at his Psychosocial Centre in Clifton in Teen Talwar area. Sayed, a psychiatrist by profession is deeply interested in the psychological analyses of social and political processes in Pakistan. Explaining the social stagnation in Pakistan he said that intellectual thinking in Pakistan took place within the framework of Islam that did not permit questioning the faith. One had to accept Islam as a package deal. In his opinion Islam, *Quran*, Kashmir and India were not really the moot issues in Pakistan; they were merely 'pronouncements' to instigate and mislead people, mostly the youth. Though Pakistanis considered themselves a part of the global Muslim *ummah* their cultural roots unmistakably lay in South Asia. In his opinion Jamaat controlled students unions of universities and supplied weapons on campuses. He said the former ideological division of the world was replaced by religious division. In the history of Islam there never was any provision for a permanent army, so *jihad* was encouraged to fight injustice. But in the present situation *jihad* was rampantly abused and some people got completely carried away by the idea. Dr. Sayed knew of parents who were proud of their sons involved in *jihad* in Kashmir. In Islamabad I had met a former army Major who was very happy over his son's martyrdom in Kargil in 1999. Why did *jihad* attract the youth? Dr. Sayed explained that *jihad* was an emotional concept. It encouraged people to shed passivity and become active. In *jihad* there was no reference to the past or the future. It was concerned with the 'now and here'. It posed questions having direct bearing on individual life in concrete terms and encouraged individuals to find their own answers. Therefore *jihad* lent personality to an individual. The young men who joined *jihad* were often lonely and introvert. They were in search of some achievement and *jihad* filled them with a sense of achievement. Dr. Sayed said that there were a few young men returning disillusioned from *jihad*. But their number was small.

My last meeting in Karachi was with Dr. Hamza Alavi, a veteran Pakistani sociologist and political analyst. Dr. Alavi, a Marxist with special interest in the revolutionary potential and struggles of the peasantry, lived in the UK for 45 years working at Manchester University. Upon retirement he returned to Pakistan and lived in Karachi. It took me almost an hour to find his house in Garden East area of Karachi. I liked his old style house that I found simply charming. In 1945 he was in Mumbai working in the Reserve Bank of India when he was helped by two renowned economists, Dr. Dhananjayrao Gadgil and Dr. C.D. Deshmukh. He was also associated with Gokhale Institute of Economics and Politics in Pune for some time. I had read a few of his articles and was struck by his profundity and scholarship. But when I met him he was well into his eighties and unwell, and therefore not very coherent with his thoughts. Dr. Alavi was critical of Mahatma Gandhi and his role in the Khilafat Movement. In his opinion Gandhi's Khilafat movement was responsible for drawing mullahs and consequently Islam into Indian politics. Mullahs were not organised but Khilafat helped organise them that resulted in the formation of Jamaat-e-ul-Ulema Hind. In Dr. Alavi's opinion Gandhi played a negative role in Indian politics and Khilafat brought Indian Muslims together. Later this sentiment of Muslim unity grew stronger and India was partitioned. All of us in the Indian subcontinent, he said, were paying for the results of the Khilafat Movement. I thought he was offering a very simplistic explanation for the partition of India. On 1 December 2003, as I was still working on the manuscript of this book, I got the sad news of the demise of Dr. Alavi in Karachi. I still remember the frail figure of Dr. Alavi at the threshold of his beautifully quaint house, bidding me goodbye.



*I*f Karachi has earned the dubious distinction of being the crime and terror capital of the world, it has also set an example to the world through two exemplary initiatives in the construction of the civil society. Karachi's problems are many and varied. Karachi is one of the fastest growing cities of the world — it is said that Karachi is growing at the rate of five per cent a year — and struggling for the upkeep of the minimum urban services and maintenance of law and order, and security of life and property. When the state apparatus was almost paralysed and rendered helpless in this city torn by endemic violence and killings, two citizens have stood tall, filling the void created by the crippled governmental institutions, through their relentless humanitarian work and imparting to people lessons in self help. They are Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan who passed away in 1999, and Abdul Sattar Edhi. No account of Karachi could be complete without mentioning their contribution to the city and its humanity. Dr. Khan's name was synonymous with Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) launched in 1980 in the depressed settlement of more than a million residents of Orangi in Karachi with the help of the BCCI and the World Bank. A rare combination of a scholar and activist, Dr Khan was an internationally renowned sociologist and a polyglot proficient in a number of languages including Hindi, Pali and Sanskrit. A former member of the prestigious Indian Civil Service (ICS), Dr. Khan devoted himself to developing rural areas and low-income urban settlements through Comila Project in the then East Pakistan and Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi. His biggest contribution was the lessons he taught to the common man, in self help, in changing his life circumstances. OPP programmes include education, health, housing and credit for small enterprises. Orangi, the township of about one million inhabitants has its own sanitation system, a higher literacy rate than that of the city and has successfully reduced infant mortality rates. OPP has been replicated not only in Pakistan



but in a number of developing countries around the world. While in Karachi I tried to contact his long time associate Ghulam Kibria but in vain.

In 1974 Abdul Sattar Edhi established the Edhi Foundation, which over the years has become the largest and the best organised social welfare system in Pakistan. The Edhi Foundation operates through local volunteers and private donations, in a spirit of tolerance and solidarity that goes beyond racial and religious barriers. Soon after Edhi family's migration to Pakistan in 1947, Abdul Sattar Edhi became involved in charity work and established a welfare trust of his own, the Edhi Trust. The range and scope of the work of Edhi Trust expanded with remarkable speed under the driving spirit of Abdul Sattar Edhi. His organisation started its activities in 1948 by shifting injured people to hospitals, and has since then developed a service which attracts funds worth \$ 5 million per year, with no government assistance. His radio-linked network includes 500 ambulances throughout Pakistan, and the Foundation has also set up 300 relief centres, three air ambulances, 24 hospitals, three drug rehabilitation centres, women's centre, free dispensaries, adoption programmes and soup kitchens that feed 100,000 people a month. The ambulance service even picks up corpses and arranges for burials. Edhi Foundation helps the poorest and the most destitute, not only in Pakistan but in other countries too. Today branches of Abdul Sattar Edhi International Foundation provide regular services in New York, London and Dubai, while preliminary work for starting branches in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Sudan, Yemen and Afghanistan — and it is said even in India — has already been completed.

While in Karachi I was keen on visiting Mohenjo-Daro. But one needs a visa for Mohenjo-Daro. I was told that I could obtain it in Karachi. The events of 9/11 changed everything. Phone calls from Mumbai kept urging me to return. It appeared that visa



*Beautiful interiors of a Mosque at Thatta near Karachi*



*A devotee praying at a Mosque in Thatta*

would not come easily. Therefore I decided against spending time on it but to finish my work quickly and return to Islamabad. As my work in Karachi got over I decided to fly to Islamabad the very next day. Karachi's Quaid-i-Azam Airport is big and impressive and of international standards. It is rated as the best airport in South Asia. My flight took off as scheduled. I had a window seat that offered me a view of changing topography from Sindh to North Punjab in a little over one and half hour journey. At the airport Karim Bhai had sent a taxi. It was Sunday afternoon and the roads were empty. I reached the Royal Guesthouse in just 25 minutes. I was away from Islamabad for 16 days and in a fortnight the weather had changed remarkably, signs of autumn were now visible in Islamabad.

## *Takshshila — And the Time Stood Still*

*I*slamabad and Taxila (Takshshila) are separated by Margalla Hills. Islamabad is situated in the east and Takshshila to the west. Adjoining the historical city of Takshshila is the new town of Taxila. The old Takshshila has historical remains and perhaps the oldest university in the world, while the new Taxila is an industrial town manufacturing cement, sugar, heavy industrial goods and defence equipments including tanks. Takshshila is 30–32 km away from Islamabad on the way to Peshawar. A little before entering the Takshshila region, at the Margalla Pass, stands a Nicholson Memorial Tower on a small hill, erected to commemorate the victory of John Nicholson — assistant to Sir Henry Lawrence of Lahore — at Attock and Margalla Pass in the pursuit of Sikhs during the Punjab Campaign of 1848–49. It is said that the natives of the region regarded him as a demigod and worshipped him as 'Nikkul Seyn'. Some distance ahead, on the left, one can see a small portion of the original Grand Trunk Road built by Sher Shah Suri.

Takshshila is situated on the banks of a small river, Tamranala, a word which appears to be an evolved form of Dharmanala. The river had supposedly taken its name from Dharmarajika Stupa built close to it by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC. Hathiyaal Mound on the bank of the river is a storehouse of the relics from Bronze Age. History of Takshshila is both complex and curious. Its most ancient rulers were the Takshakas, the snake worshippers,

who perhaps lent their name to the city. Another etymological explanation of 'Takshshila' is the 'city built with cut — sculpted (taksh) — stones (shila). History tells us that Aryans entered Takshshila nearly fifteen hundred years before Christ and founded the kingdom of Gandhara that flourished and prospered for almost a millennium. Gandhara kingdom had two capitals, Takshshila and Pushkalavati (now Charsadda) near Peshawar. A large number of remains of Aryan constructions made of Kanjur stones have been discovered on the Hathiyal Mound.

Briefly, Takshshila became a part of the Achaemenian (Achaemenid Dynasty ruling the Persian Empire between 550–330 BC) Empire. Later it sought independence and came under the control of the local ruler Omphis or Ambhi. History also tells us that when Alexander the Great defeated the last Achaemenid ruler, Darius III, and moved towards the Indus, Takshshila offered no resistance. Ambhi submitted himself to Alexander and Alexander enjoyed Ambhi's hospitality almost for a week at Takshshila. In their short rule the Achaemenians had left their indelible mark on Takshshila. They were the first to introduce the Satrap system of government in India. The title Satrap or Kshatrapa meant the protector of the kingdom. Later the Bactrian-Greeks, Parthians, Sakas, and Kushans successively borrowed this pattern of Kshatrapa administration. The Mauryans took from them their system of administration, the art of sculpting stones and provision of rest houses on highways. Ashoka's Lion Capital with four lions sitting back to back, and now the national emblem of India, is said to be influenced by Achaemenian heritage and the Kharoshthi script, derived from the Aramaic alphabet that was prevalent in the region was also a legacy of the Achaemenians.

Takshshila prospered as a province of the Mauryan Empire. Mauryans built a royal highway from Takshshila to Pataliputra, the Mauryan capital, and continued further to the mouths of the



Ganges — a forerunner of the Grand Trunk Road. Tradition associates Ashoka with the viceroyalty of Takshshila during the reign of his father, Bindusara. Takshshila embraced Buddhism under the tutelage of its Governor, Kunal, the son of Ashoka. The Mauryan Empire could not survive for long after Ashoka's death. The Greeks who were settled in Central Asia by Alexander — the Bactrians — made a bid for independence, carved the Central Asian Greek kingdom that incorporated the Indus Valley including Takshshila. Menander, the most well known of the Bactrian rulers took personal interest in Buddhism, which made a considerable headway in the region during his time. It was during this period that the combination of Buddhist philosophy and the Greco-Roman art led to the emergence of the Gandhara tradition of art. The Bactrians were followed by Scythians, Parthians and Kushans who ruled Takshshila. The third Kushana ruler, Kanishka earned a name for himself as a patron of art and learning and a promoter of Buddhism. He is said to have convened the fourth Buddhist Council near Peshawar and built Kanishka Vihara that was to be a Buddhist pilgrimage centre for several centuries. Under Kushans, Takshshila prospered once again. It was the golden age of Gandhara Art. It was perhaps the last time Takshshila experienced prosperity. It ceased to be the capital after the Huns invaded the region and Buddhism lost its royal patronage. In the eighth century Takshshila became a part of the kingdom of Kashmir, then fell to the Turks and eventually came to be ruled by a number of Muslim rulers.



*I* began my tour of Takshshila from Taxila Museum located on the right side of the gate that regulates the entry to Takshshila region. Foundation of this Museum was laid by the then Governor General of India Lord Chelmsford in 1918. This museum,

constructed in the Greek style has six galleries organised thematically. These galleries had been arranged under the supervision of the then Director General of Archaeology, Sir John Marshall. Taxila Museum is a local museum in the sense that all the objects displayed in it have been discovered during the excavations in Takshshila. Originally the museum was planned on a large scale but only one fourth of what was originally planned has been actually built. An interesting feature of the museum is that while most of the colonial construction in Pakistan was done in red sandstone, black stone has been used in the construction of this Museum.

In the central gallery, upon entrance, is arranged the stupa excavated from a cave in Mohara Moradu Monastery. It is flanked by a map of Takshshila on one side and a neat arrangement of small objects found in the region on the other. The two walls in the gallery are covered with big sized glass showcases exhibiting stone sculptures, depicting the life of Buddha, and a number of specimens of Gandhara Art. The shimmering floor tiles in the second gallery are said to be from the Kushan Age. Most of the art objects here are from the monastery at Jauliyan, the place of Takshshila University. In the third gallery is laid the statue of Buddha in a sleeping position discovered from Bhamala Vihara (monastery) along with a display of several Buddha heads in various coiffures. Adjoining the central gallery is a small room full of precious jewellery and coins. Though coins belong to the local rulers of the region, the gold jewellery is both local and foreign in its make. Most of the ornaments have used lapis lazuli and blue stones studded in gold filigree. One of the eye catching pendants has a fine artistry depicting two horse riders. All pieces of jewellery appeared to be made with great care and are unique specimen of artwork indicating a highly refined taste of their makers. The beauty of some of the necklaces displayed is indeed ageless and I thought

that if they were to be showcased in jewellery shops anywhere in the world today, they would fetch instant buyers. I had experienced a similar feeling when I saw the ancient Egyptian jewellery displayed in the famous Egyptian Museum in Cairo in 1998. The fifth gallery of Taxila Museum has preserved a major source of ancient history of the region, the Ashokan inscriptions in Aramaic and manuscripts in Kharoshthi and Brahmi scripts. One also finds several articles of cast iron representing different eras. The last gallery contains myriad articles of domestic use like silver vessels and utensils, cosmetic trays, terracotta plates, storage jars made of china clay, mortars and many others things.

Takshshila is spread over a large area. One can visit just a few important sites in a day. Therefore I had to keep my museum visit as brief as possible. Just opposite the Museum is a small nice restaurant of the Pakistan Tourism Department and behind it a Museum Shop selling souvenirs, many of which were made of lapis lazuli and other precious and semi precious stones. I had greatly liked an exquisite medium sized box made of lapis lazuli and studded with multicoloured stones. I took the box in my hands a couple of times, but it was expensive and beyond my means, so I gave up the idea of buying it. But I did buy an oval shaped pendant of lapis lazuli set in silver as a memento of my visit to Takshshila.



*T*akshshila was made of three towns — Bhir Mound, Sirkap, and Sarsukh. Perhaps these are the contemporary names of the ancient sites. Bhir Mound, close to the Museum is the earliest township dating from the time of Achaemenid kings of Persia. The town had a life of four centuries, from sixth to second century BC. According to historians Ambhi welcomed Alexander in a grand reception at this place. Bhir Mound shows no trace of town



*Main Road Sirkap*

planning. Its main road is irregular and on it opens a maze of narrow alleys, as if built at the whim of private builders. The extensive excavations conducted by the Archaeology Department of Pakistan at Bhir Mound in 1997–98 indicate unplanned construction of houses. The earlier houses were made of ordinary stones and timber, while later construction was of superior quality Kanjur stone.

The main township of Takshshila was at Sirkap founded by Bactrian Greeks at the western slope of Hathiyaal Mound. It flourished for four hundred years from the 2nd century BC to 2nd century AD. Remains of a thick wall running around the city are still visible. It was evidently a planned town in a Greek chess board style design. The main street, some 20 feet wide runs north-south with lesser roads running at right angles in east-west. Rows of shops, places of worship and stupas stand on the sides of the main street with residential quarters behind them. The Buddhist and Jain stupas are built in a combination of Greco-Roman and Indian

styles of architecture. The partial remains of a Buddhist temple and a Solar Disc, a device to measure time are also visible in the vicinity. The most important historical monument on this road is a place of worship that has a Two-faced Eagle carved in stone. The main structure of this temple is built in Greek style but it has a Chaitya Arch and a gate resembling those of stupas in Mathura and Sanchi. The Two-faced Eagle was the symbol of Shakas that was later adopted by the Byzantine Empire. It seems to have travelled to Europe later and the European armies made it their own as the symbol of military prowess. A number of statuettes of gods and goddesses were discovered during the excavations at Sirkap. Gold and silver ornaments, coins and other fine memorabilia found at Sirkap indicate that it was undoubtedly a prosperous town of well to do and highly cultured inhabitants.

A hill at the south end of the Sirkap holds remains of Kunal Stupa and a royal palace. It was a hot August afternoon and the climb up the hill looked daunting. I was already tired but my guide cajoled me to go on top of the hill. I was not sure of making another trip to Takshshila so I thought I should make the best of this trip. I succumbed to the guide's goading and climbed the hill and found it was worth the trouble. The palace bears the influences of Mesopotamian culture. It has two large chambers, presumably the king's and the queen's, a *darbar* room, and other galleries. According to a legend, Ashoka's son Kunal was blinded by his stepmother on this hill. The story of Kunal's blinding was familiar to me from school textbooks, but not the place. By the time we climbed down the hill, however, I was thoroughly exhausted.

Walking back through the main street in Sirkap, the guide pointed to a big tree and said that it was the place where Christ's Apostle, Saint Thomas used to meet people when he visited Takshshila in 40 AD. Legend associates St. Thomas with Gondophernes, the Parthian ruler, who held his court in Takshshila



at the same time. It is a place of pilgrimage for Pakistani Christians. Later, Saint Thomas reached Kerala in 52 AD for the spread of Christianity in India.

Greeks, Shakas, Parthians and Kushans ruled Sirkap. According to historians Kanishka could have founded the third town of Takshshila, Sarsukh, three km away from Sirkap. Sarsukh, bigger than both Bhir Mound and Sirkap, was spread over an area of five kms. This town is supposed to have been modelled on Central Asian towns. But there is very little to see at Sarsukh as excavations there are in a nascent state.

The first Buddhist stupa in the region was Dharmarajika Stupa. Fifteen metres tall and 25 metres in circumference it stands on a platform atop a small plateau. There is a broad pathway to go around the Stupa. Its façade is decorated with fine carvings. The place of worship adjoining the Stupa has, presumably, the remains of two huge Buddha statues. Most parts of the statues are destroyed but the portions from the feet to the knees are still visible indicative of the size of the statues. I was reminded of the deliberate and planned destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas. Remains of some small stupas, monastery, and meditation rooms of *bhikshus* are scattered around in the vicinity. I felt the entire environ bears close resemblance to Sanchi Stupa and its surroundings. Several valuable artefacts discovered in this region have found a safe haven in Taxila Museum.

While at the stupa and monastery at Mohara Moradu, hidden in a small valley, one tends to lose a sense of time and place. After a small climb up and down, and again going up you reach this mysterious looking place. Flowing below is a small rivulet which looks like it has been flowing since the beginning of the world. It had almost dried up in the scorching summer. It is a very quiet place, so quiet that even a slight ruffle of leaves due to light breeze sounds noisy; a place very apt for a monastery. It gave me a feeling

as if I was standing at the end of the world. The surface of the stupa bears carvings of episodes from Buddha's life. The monastery is situated to the east of the stupa on an adjoining tableland. Remains of gilded wood carvings are still found at this place. A small stupa, in one of the rooms in the monastery, is in an absolutely fine shape even now. Similarly the main hall, the kitchen and storeroom of the monastery are in fairly good condition.

The crowning glory of Takshshila is undoubtedly the monastery and stupa at Jauliyan. Takshshila lies on the border of Punjab and the Frontier Province. The road going to Jauliyan passes through the Haripur section of the Frontier Province. The monastery and the stupa are on the top of a steep hill that separates Takshshila valley from Haripur valley. Jauliyan is the seat of the Takshshila University that was renowned for its learned teachers. Buddhist and other sources show that young men from all over India sought education in this university. Among the most famous learned men of Takshshila were Panini, the great Sanskrit grammarian known for his seminal work, *Ashtadhyayi*; Kautilya, the author of the celebrated *Arthshastra*, the chief master of statecraft and the mentor of the first Emperor of India, Chandragupta Maurya; and Charaka, a master of Indian medicine. Despite being a Buddhist monastery, the university is said to have laid emphasis on secular studies.

The climb on the hill was thoroughly exhausting. On entering the premises from the north-west one is at the lower quadrangle surrounded by prayer rooms and with five small stupas scattered around. On climbing a small flight of steps one reaches the main stupa surrounded by small and big images of Buddha and Bodhisattva. Behind this stupa was another stupa lavishly decorated with precious stones. Presently it has found a place in Takshshila Museum. To the east, at a slightly higher altitude is the main square-shaped monastery with monks' rooms on all sides. The monastery was planned to provide simple needs of daily life for

the monks. The rooms are provided with niches in walls for keeping utility items like lamp and have openings above niches for air and light. The open quadrangle has a water tank too. Perhaps originally this monastery was two storeyed as indicated by the remains of a flight of steps made in stone. On the outer side of the main wall there is provision for bathroom, kitchen, and storeroom and also for a drainage system for the disposal of waste water.

Several foreign tourists visiting Pakistan were at Jauliyan on that hot Sunday afternoon. But despite the commotion caused by tourists, curiously, Jauliyan environs were filled with a certain stillness. The only sound was that of a wisp of breeze. I thought if I closed my eyes I could see Takshshila University bustling with activity. I could see the disciples of great masters, coming from far off places, engaged in studies of grammar and mathematics; I could listen to discussions on astronomy, literature and art, and may be, even see Panini!

Takshshila is full of remains of the Buddhist era. Apart from Dharmarajika, Mohara Moradu, and Jauliyan, tourists visit Bhallar, Bhamala, Giri, Jandial, Kalwan, and Pipalan too. It was impossible for me to cover all these places in a single day. One needs at least two days to see Takshshila. But I decided to visit Jandial temple, a landmark in the temple architecture in ancient India, before returning to Islamabad. Jandial is close to Sirkap. The temple consists of a square inner sanctuary, a meeting hall in front of a big raised platform, a courtyard and the four Ionian pillars constructed in the classical style, flanking the outer and inner entrances. The excavators at Jandial found no traces of icons. Therefore Sir John Marshall had inferred that it could be a temple of fire worshipping Zoroastrians with no successors. The raised platform might have been used for the worship of the Sun, the moon and the stars along with other natural elements.

*Buddha Head*

I had to rule out further visits to any sites. I had reached the limits of my physical endurance by then. I have not yet visited Nalanda in Bihar, another great university of ancient India that flourished under the great Guptas. But now I am keen on visiting it. A strange idea crossed my mind. Travel companies could offer a combined tour of Nalanda and Takshshila and the Indian and the Pakistani Governments could issue a combined visa for the tourists. The Sun had started setting. Takshshila was looking both romantic and mysterious in the twilight. Pakistan's tourism department could organise light and sound show, *san-de-lumiere*, a show that can easily transport the human mind back into history, at Dharmarajika,

Jauliyan, Mohara Moradu, or at Sirkap. I had the opportunity of watching a beautiful light and sound show at Sphinx in Cairo that transported the viewers into the times of the Pharaohs. I had seen such an excellent show at Red Fort in Delhi too. The story of Takshshila, situated at the confluence of ancient Indian, Central Asian and West Asian cultures, could be narrated effectively and innovatively in this manner. As I was walking through Takshshila, I recalled history lessons learnt at a college course in Ancient Indian History and Culture. Takshshila then, was a distant place both in terms of geography and time, almost mythical. And now I felt the myth had become the reality.



## *Last Days in Pakistan*

As I returned from Karachi not only had the weather changed in Islamabad but the situation in Pakistan had changed drastically. There was an air of uncertainty about everything. That made the future of my stay in Pakistan also uncertain. People talked about 9/11, kept speculating about the impending war on terrorism, the future of Afghanistan, Osama and Al Qaeda, and the options before Pakistan. Internationally all eyes were riveted on Pakistan. Suddenly Pakistan and General Musharraf were at the centre stage of world politics. There was a lot of excitement in the air all around. I used to be glued to the TV mostly watching the BBC. The people I had met a little earlier like Rahimullah Yusufzai now appeared on the BBC again and again. Pakistanis generally had taken Musharraf's support to the American war on terrorism unkindly. People were staunchly opposed to it and the news of violent protests was pouring in from Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta. But Islamabad was quiet. Though the seat of hectic diplomatic activity and the centre of intense official parleys; the daily life in Islamabad remained as placid as ever. It appeared totally unconcerned with the events that were churning the world. Professor Khalid Mahmud assured me that there would be no problem in Islamabad. In fact Rukhsana suggested to me that I could leave the guesthouse and go and stay with them. And nothing happened in Islamabad. One day mullahs in Islamabad–Rawalpindi region decided to protest against Musharraf's policies by observing a '*bandh*'. The day they selected

for the rather belated show of their strength was a Friday. Anyway everything comes to a halt on Friday afternoons. Thus their *bandh* was automatically 'successful'. Col. Aziz too had assured me that Islamabad would be safe but advised me to refrain from visiting crowded places.

In the meanwhile my family and friends in Mumbai had started sending messages urging me to return immediately. But I decided not to take a hasty decision. I had been in Islamabad for five months and had to organise my departure properly. I had a few loose ends to tie. I had collected some 70 books and innumerable paper cuttings and a huge amount of photocopied material. All this had to be sent to Mumbai. I packed my books and papers in cartons. Col. Aziz arranged to send one box by air mail on an experimental basis. In the next few days all boxes were sent to Mumbai. I kept wondering whether the boxes would reach Mumbai safely? Will I get my books and papers?

Even after sending my precious boxes home I was wavering about my return to India. Should I continue to stay in Islamabad for some more time or return home? Earlier I had planned to interview some VIPs and controversial people at the fag end of my stay in Pakistan at the end of October. But in the prevailing situation that was next to impossible. Yet I felt I should stay on. It was a great opportunity to watch and understand the happenings in Pakistan and Afghanistan from close quarters. It was like being on the war front, a rare opportunity that I was unwilling to forego. Both Aparna Reddy and Ajita Verma were perplexed at the situation. Should they stay back or leave for India with the children? But schools were on and both the Reddys and the Vermas could not leave Islamabad at this critical juncture.

One evening I called Ismat. On hearing my voice over the telephone she screamed, 'What are you doing here? Get out of this country at the earliest? If possible go to Lahore tomorrow and take

the next available flight to Delhi', she advised. Ismat spoke rapidly in excitement. She being Pakhtun was thoroughly agitated over the American policy on Afghanistan. She warned me that US might take control of Pakistani airports and ban both incoming and outgoing flights, making my return to India problematic. Ismat's rhetorical outbursts made me rethink about returning home. Dr. Lourdes Salvador, the Director of ASIA Fellows Program too sent e-mails to Hong Qu, ASIA Fellow from China who had arrived in Islamabad a little before 9/11, and me, requesting us to leave Pakistan immediately. I spoke to Colonel Saab and finalised my departure for 27 September. I had two important meetings to conclude before leaving.

One was with Dr. Zafar Ansari, Director, Research, International Islamic University. At the entrance of the University premises a guard requested me to cover the head. This was my first experience of covering the head in Pakistan. Islamic University has evolved over the years from making a humble beginning as a department in Quaid-i-Azam University to becoming a full-fledged University in 1980. In 1985 it was redesignated as International Islamic University. Today it is an autonomous university with international Board of Trustees, and Egypt and Saudi Arabia as its major donors. It has had four Vice Chancellors from overseas, especially from Al Azhar University, Egypt. Dr. Ansari spoke on several issues. He expressed a serious concern on the misunderstanding between Islam and the West. While reviewing the history of conflict between the two briefly, he pointed out that Islam posed a twin challenge to the West — political as well as doctrinaire. Islam is both religion and state, and the two could not be separated. Talking about the nature of Islam he said that his faith permitted dissent. There was a provision of *ijtehad*. But the general decline of Muslim civilisation, decay in scholarly tradition among Muslims, and the inability of many Muslim societies to cope with

the enormity and speed of changes sweeping the world tended to encourage and emphasise preservative and unitary tendencies among Muslims. He was severely critical of the American policy in Afghanistan and of the American President George Bush for using a primitive and 'cow boyish' language and also for blowing Osama out of proportion. Osama, according to Dr. Ansari was only a small fry.

My discussions with Dr. Ansari were occasionally intercepted by his office staff or students wanting to consult him urgently on some matter. One such interception was by Mohammad Muddasar Ali, a student of the Department of Comparative Religion of the University. To my great surprise Ali said that he wrote a thesis on Hinduism for his Master's. He was interested in the idea of prophecy and revelation in Hinduism. According to him Lord Krishna was a prophet. His argument was that there was hardly any difference between Hinduism and Islam as far as the concept of revelation was concerned. He said he proposed to write his PhD dissertation on some aspect of Hinduism. Dr. Ansari spoke highly of Ali. In a country where Hinduism is an anathema Ali had done a wonderful job. He had studied his subject with detachment and empathy. Dr. Ansari wanted him to learn Sanskrit, but that was hardly possible in Pakistan. I would have liked to talk to Ali at length but I had another appointment that day and it was not possible to arrange another meeting as my days in Pakistan were numbered.

From the International Islamic University I went to meet Dr. Ghulam Mustafa Azad of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), a constitutional body created by the constitution of 1973 (formerly Islamic Advisory Council) to make recommendations to Parliament and Provincial Assemblies for bringing the existing law into conformity with the injunctions of Islam. Dr. Azad began saying there was no dichotomy between a Muslim State and an Islamic

State. In his opinion this is an unnecessary argument and should be avoided. He believed that East Pakistan separated because Islamic ideology was not adequately protected in the region. Therefore Islamic ideology must be protected in Pakistan zealously. He firmly believed that even after 1400 years *Quran's* relevance to the contemporary Muslim society had remained intact. Dr. Azad defended Law of Evidence that does not accept woman's evidence in some cases and where acceptable, prescribes that witness of two women is equal to that of a man, the Zina Ordinances dealing with adultery under the Hudood Laws of 1979 (discussed in subsequent sections); and the infamous Blasphemy Law. He provided his rationale for each of them. But he pointed out that the Council was only a recommendatory body and its advice was not binding on the government. He said the Council was not in favour of family planning but the law of the land did not prohibit its practice. The Council also supported the system of separate electorates for minorities. They were abolished by Musharraf in January 2002. Pakistani society, he said was very emotional about Islam and that made it so 'beautiful'.



I had packed everything, closed my account in the bank and was ready to depart from Pakistan on 27 September. The Institute's President Khalid Mahmood, Senior Fellow Brig. Bashir Ahmad and Col. Aziz gave me a farewell lunch in Islamabad Club and gifted me a beautiful leather bag. My friends in the Institute too loaded me with gifts. In the meanwhile news of growing Islamic agitation kept coming from various places in Pakistan. But President Musharraf seemed to have handled it well. Yet watching him on TV I felt, he suddenly looked aged in a fortnight's time.

I met Ismat and Shah Jahan, and the Vermas and the Reddys. Early in the morning on 26 September, Colonel Saab called to



inform me about his sister's death in Lahore the previous night and his imminent departure for Lahore. He regretted his inability to see me off at the airport the next day and said that he had entrusted the task to Professor Saab. At the Institute Nasreen and others had organised a farewell lunch for me. Later Nasreen came to the guesthouse and we chatted till evening. When it was time for her to leave we both felt sad and wondered if we would ever meet again. In the afternoon, Pakistan Airways had informed me that Lahore–Delhi flight for 27 September was cancelled due to low occupancy and that I could take the flight the next day. It had meant making yet another trip to the Foreigners Registration Office in Islamabad to change the date of my departure from Pakistan on my Residence Permit. Anyway I decided to leave Islamabad on the 27th as scheduled and halt at Lahore for a day with Professor Khan's family. On the 26th night I dined with Rukhsana and Professor Saab in an Italian Restaurant in Jinnah Supermarket. Then as we were enjoying the mandatory after dinner ice cream I felt a light nip in the air. At the end of September the weather was really pleasant in Islamabad. Leaves of Tahali trees had slowly started acquiring autumn colours.

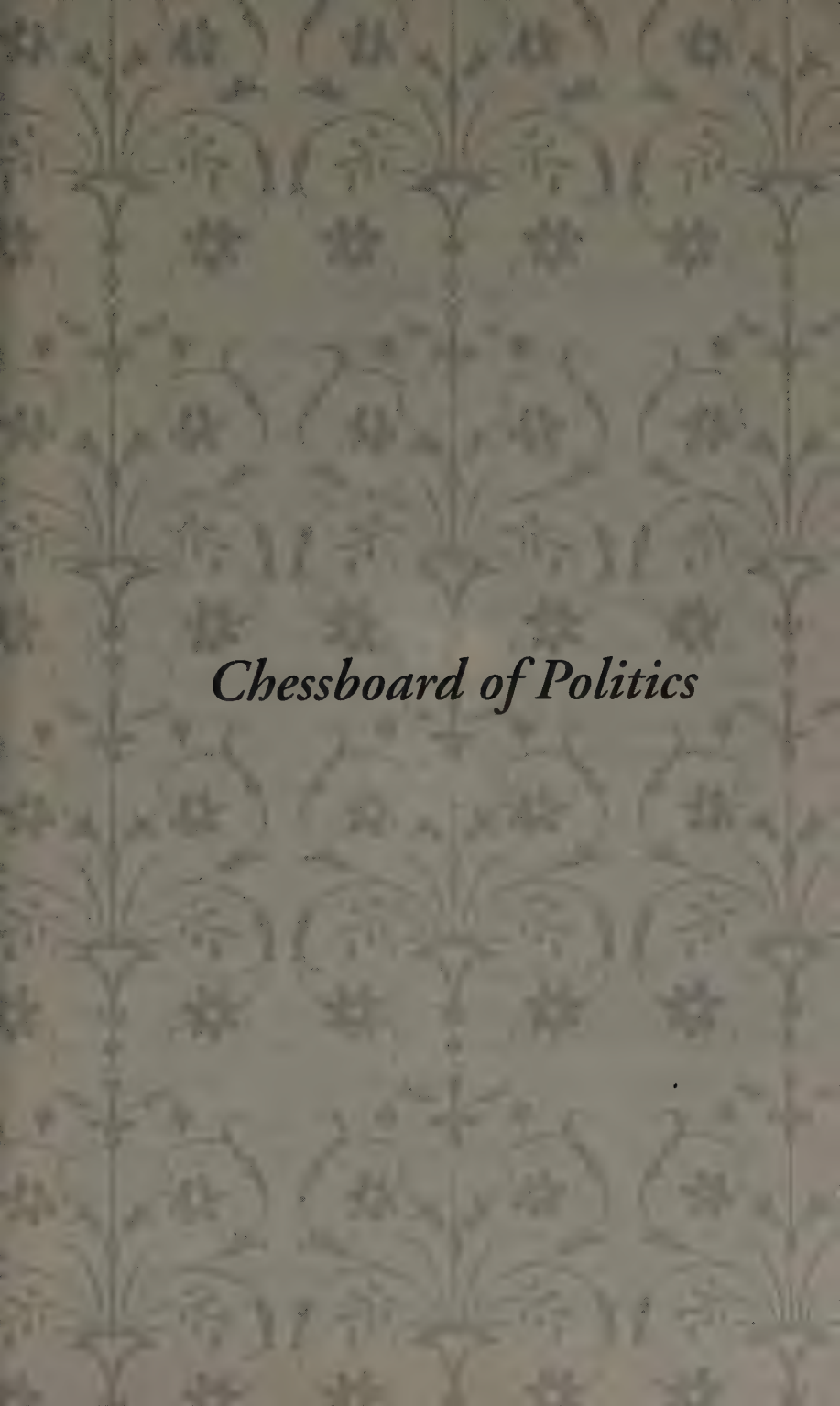
The morning of 27 September was my last morning in Islamabad. I had begun liking the city despite my initial dislike for it. Shah Jahan came early in the morning and gifted me a traditional Sindhi scarf *ajrak*. Professor Khan had called in the morning and I told him about my day's halt at Lahore. He had anyway planned to see me at the airport in Lahore. Professor Khalid Mahmud bid me farewell at the airport in Islamabad and my journey back to India started at 11 in the morning. A Pakistan Airways pilot occupied a seat next to me in Islamabad–Lahore flight. On watching me read a newspaper article on terrorism he asked what I thought of 'our' country's policy on terrorism. I told him that I was an Indian. We spoke all through the journey. He

told me about the mild nature of Sindhi Islam, influenced by Sufism. He also said that a Hindu lady tied *rakhi* to him for years on Rakshabandhan day. In an hour's time I reached Lahore. Some political parties had announced the day as National Solidarity Day to express support to President Musharraf. In the evening I visited Anarkali but could not visit Lahore Museum. I have reserved it for my next trip to Lahore.

Next morning after confirming Pakistan Airways flight to Delhi I called home to inform about my arrival that evening. Around one in the afternoon Professor Khan and his nephew reached me to the airport. As I was waiting in the lounge I met Dr. Mubashir Hasan, and I.A. Rahman, the well known human rights activist of Pakistan and the President of HRCP who was recently awarded the prestigious Nuremberg International Human Rights Peace Award for 2003. I had tried to meet him in Lahore in August but did not succeed. We decided to have an interview at the airport lounge as there was more than an hour to go for the flight. Rahman lamented the shrinking size of liberal discourse in Pakistani society and the consequent lack of dissent. He claimed that Islam in the Indian subcontinent was the most liberal of all Islamic traditions. It resulted mainly out of political requirement of Muslims living among the Hindu majority. In Pakistan there was no such compulsion. Pakistani establishments were more concerned about adjusting to Saudi Arabia and therefore to *Wahhabism* (ideology of a very conservative Islamic sect founded by Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab in the 18th century in Saudi Arabia that rejects any innovation after the 3rd century of Islam). *Wahhabism* found support in Pakistan through Deobandis; and though they were small in number, they had guns with them. Zia-ul-Haq and Deobandis together imposed conservative Islam and shrunk the 'thinkable' space in Pakistani society. Yet it was not the common Pakistani who craved for more Islam but the lumpen element,

petty bourgeois, and the upper echelons of the Pakistani Army who were engaged in the project of Islamisation of Pakistan. He was sure that people did not want religion all the time. Sindhis, Balochis and Pathans would any day go for autonomous provinces than a centralised Islamic state.

That was my last interview in Pakistan. The flight took off from Lahore and within no time it entered the Indian airspace. I looked down from the window and could not see the boundary between the two countries. Within 50 minutes we reached Delhi. Waiting for my flight to Mumbai at the lounge I wondered if I had really spent five months in Pakistan. I was certainly happy to return to India but felt sad on thinking that perhaps I would never be able to meet my Pakistani friends again.



*Chessboard of Politics*

*Pakistan Physical*



Based on Survey of India Map



## *Five Decades in Search of Political Stability*

*I*n the last few years even the supporters of Pakistan have been sceptical about its future. Observers of Pakistan including some Pakistanis have expressed doubts about Pakistan's ability to survive as a nation-state. Some have written it off as a 'failed state'. Stephen Cohen, a noted South Asia expert called Pakistan a 'paranoid state'. During the Afghan crisis after 9/11 commentators on international politics had predicted fragmentation of Afghanistan at the end of the war, Pakistan closely following in the heels. In the early months of the current year Pakistan became a 'disgraced' state engulfed in the quagmire of the nuclear scandal that exploded on the country with a big bang. Americans stopped short of calling Pakistan a 'rogue state'. Prophecies of doom abound about Pakistan including those by Indians.

Pakistan was born in a great human tragedy. Almost one million Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were killed and ten million people were rendered homeless as they were forced to leave behind their ancestral abodes, properties, and relatives in India or Pakistan during the communal carnage that resulted from the partition of India. No exact account will ever be available of the families separated, children missing or women kidnapped, molested or raped and people killed while crossing the newly drawn border between the two countries. Indian Muslims' struggle for a separate and independent state resulted in the creation of Pakistan at the

culmination of India's freedom movement in 1947. Many of Pakistan's problems were inborn. Pakistan inherited the economy primarily based on agriculture, with limited industrial base and inadequate basic infrastructure. The territories that constituted Pakistan had two limitations: inadequate social development and restricted political participation. But on the positive side it had the fertile Indus basin, well laid canal system in Punjab, raw material for industry — mainly jute in East Pakistan and cotton in the West, well established judicial and administrative system, and educational and health services. But what Pakistan needed was peace, good governance and effective leadership that could shoulder the responsibility of nation-building.

Political history of Pakistan has indeed been intriguing. It has been a history of conspiracies, plots and stratagems — the Rawalpindi Conspiracy of 1951, the Hyderabad Conspiracy of 1973, the Attock Conspiracy of 1984; of treason and sedition accusations and trials — Murtaza and Shahnawaz Bhutto sedition trial with other PPP leaders in 1981, Maliha Lodhi accused of sedition in 1992, Najam Sethi accused of treason in 1999, and Makhdoom Javed Hashmi, President of Alliance for Restoration of Democracy and the leader of the opposition charged for treason in January 2004 for inciting mutiny against the government and armed forces, defaming the army and forging documents under the Pakistani Army Seal (Hashmi was arrested in October 2003 for publicising a letter purportedly written by an army officer who criticised the policies of Musharraf); of prime ministers hanged or sent into exiles or self imposed exile — Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto respectively — all with the active involvement of the men in *khaki*.

Pakistan is yet to discover its political form and style. Political stability and democracy continues to be elusive. Pakistan had opted for democratic polity with a parliamentary form of government

and federal set up but the pendulum of its political system/process kept moving between democracy and military rule; parliamentary and presidential system; and federal and one unit arrangement. Both democratic governments and military regimes chose the path of centralisation of power, populism and Islamisation of Pakistan to secure their legitimacy and in belief that such measures would quickly resolve their country's problems. In the past 55 years Pakistan has not been successful in creating healthy civil society and in promoting political development. This is a failure of the Pakistani elite whose political commitment has been one of convenience. Therefore Pakistani regimes have remained devoid of democratic conviction and constitutional morality. Yet a common Pakistani has struggled time and again to re-establish democracy.

Since its creation Pakistan has been in turmoil. It suffered from the lack of political and institutional stability, wars with India, separatist movement in Sindh, cessation of East Pakistan, armed insurgency in Balochistan, ethnic and sectarian violence, and faltering economic and political development. Some of its problems were inborn and also related to its geography, while some were situational. But before tracing Pakistan's political history it may be worthwhile to briefly review its geography. For, a nation's geography goes a long way in making its history.

### **Geographical Pakistan**

Pakistan is one fourth of India in size, but with an area of 796,095 sq km it is one of the larger countries of the world. Situated to the north of the Tropic of Cancer, its territory is spread from the Arabian Sea in the South to Hindukush Mountains in the North. Pakistan is mostly an arid country characterised by extremes of altitude and temperature. Three mountain ranges — the Himalayas, Hindukush and Karakoram — envelop the northern-most regions of Pakistan. Hunza, a small town in this region is situated on the ancient silk route from China to West Asia passing through Central Asia.

The region comprising of Hunza, Gilgit and Baltistan, known as the Northern Areas, is situated to the north west of the Line of Control (LoC) between India and Pakistan and bordering on the south western province of Xingjian (Sinkiang) in China. The Gilgit–Baltistan region of 72,000 sq km was known as Gilgit Agency and controlled by the Gilgit Scouts, a British led militia, before 1947 and constituted the border between the British and the Russian empires. When the British departed from India, Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir made an unsuccessful attempt to bring the region under his tutelage while the locals attempted independence equally unsuccessfully. The British Commander of the region refused to acknowledge the declaration of independence by the locals and handed over the region to Pakistan in November 1947. With a view to keeping the region out of dispute with India, Pakistan separated it from 'Azad Kashmir' or POK for administrative and political purposes and renamed it as Northern Areas. 'Azad Kashmir' is confined to a small stretch of land around Muzaffarabad and Mirpur. While 'Azad Kashmir' has a semblance of self governance with its own President and Prime Minister, Northern Areas are administered by a Council headed by an official appointed by Islamabad. In 1963, under the Sino-Pakistan Border Agreement, Pakistan ceded 5000 sq km area from the Northern Areas to China. China has built the Karakoram Highway through the Northern Areas and Pakistan established close trading relations with Kashgar, a prominent commercial Chinese town in Xingjian through this highway.

Valleys of Hunza, Gilgit and Skardu (Skardu became well known in India during the Kargil 'war' of 1999) are known for their natural beauty and fruit orchards. This region boasts of the second highest mountain in the world, K2 and other mountains like Nanga Parbat, Rakaposhi, Masherbrum, and Gasherbrum all measuring more than 25,000 feet above the sea level. Majority of the people in this

region belong to Ismaili sect and are followers of Aga Khan. The Aga Khan Foundation has done considerable work in this region in spreading literacy and education, and in providing health facilities to the people. Yet the Northern Areas are backward in almost every respect. The Indus, Pakistan's most vital water resource flows through this region but it hardly derives any benefit from the river. The region has remained backward for want of university, daily newspaper and radio and TV station. Shias who are in majority in the Northern Areas accuse Pakistani government of inducing demographic changes by settling large number of Sunnis in the region. A reader from the Northern Areas writing in *Herald* (November 2002), pointed out that 'allegiance to Pakistani religious and political parties has created an identity crisis among the people of Northern Areas and deprived them of their legal rights'. There have been intermittent news of revolts in Gilgit but they have been put down successfully by the Pakistani Army. While Pakistan extends its 'moral' support to Kashmiri 'freedom fighters', freedom has been denied to freedom seekers in the Northern Areas. Pakistan has internationalised the cause of Kashmiri freedom but has managed to keep the struggle for freedom in the Northern Areas away from international attention.

High in the Hindukush in the North Western Frontier Province and wrapped in time are the picturesque valleys of Swat, Chitral and Kalash known for their quaint cultures. The quaintest part of this region is the land of Kalasha mostly confined to the three valleys of Birir, Brimbet and Rumber shadowed by steep mountains and situated about 35 km away from Chitral. This is the land that was known as Kafiristan — the land of the infidels. The Kalashas are ancient tribes believed to be the descendents of the Greek armies of Alexander who invaded this region in 327 BC. Kalashas have physical features that can pass off as Greek and their women have light hair and blue eyes. Some anthropologists trace them to Central



Asian origin. The Kalasha men are distinguished by their ankle length black robes. Till recently this region had been very backward and remote; so remote and mysterious that it formed the setting for Rudyard Kipling's novel *The Man Who Would Be King* that was made into a film by the same name in the 1970s. People here have suffered both economic hardship and persecution at the hands of Muslim extremists. In recent years this entire region has been painstakingly developed by Pakistan as a tourist attraction keeping an eye on international tourists.

Below the Hindukush range in the NWFP is the Safed Koh Range punctuated by the Khyber Pass on the Pakistan–Afghanistan border. To the south of Safed Koh is the extensive Balochistan Plateau with the average height of 2000 ft and a large topographical variety. The plateau lies to the south west of the Indus and is laced by a series of mountain ranges; the Tobakakar, the Siahian, the Suleiman, and the Kirthar. At the centre of the Balochistan Plateau are the Brauhi Hills pierced by the famous Bolan Pass; and towards the South, descending on the Makran Coast, are the Marri and Bugati Hills.

Between the Himalayas and the Potohar Plateau in northern Punjab lay Hazara, Murrie and Rawalpindi ranges. The 5000 sq miles of Potohar Plateau situated at a height of 1200 to 1900 feet above the sea level and is sandwiched between the Indus in the west and Jhelum in the east. To its north are the Kala Chittah and Margalla Hills and to the south, the Salt Range. The southern end of the Plateau is bounded by the Thal Desert. Situated between the Jhelum and the Ravi are the plains of central Punjab. In the eastern region of the province stand the Pabbi Hills, southern Punjab is occupied by Cholistan Desert, while large parts of Sindh are covered by Thar Desert extending from the Indian territory of Rajasthan.

Indus is the life line of Pakistan. As Egypt is a gift of the Nile, Pakistan is a gift of the Indus. The Indus divides Pakistan almost vertically. It forms the demarcation line between the two main topographic areas of Pakistan — the Indus Plain, which extends principally along the eastern side of the river, and the Balochistan Plateau, which lies to the south-west. Rivers Kabul and Kurrum join the Indus from the west, while Sutlej, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum are tributaries of the Indus from the east, and water the canal system in Punjab. The Indus Plain in Pakistan varies in width from about 80 to 320 km and covers an area of about 518,000 sq km. Pakistan's agriculture as well as industry is heavily dependent on the Indus as energy in Pakistan is largely generated from its hydraulic capacity apart from the thermal energy.

No major river of Pakistan originates in the country. They either originate in India or flow through the Indian territory. The Indus Water Treaty signed in 1960 between India and Pakistan awarded the Beas, Ravi, and the Sutlej exclusively to India, and the Indus, Jhelum and the Chenab to Pakistan except for limited use by India. There is a deep seated fear in Pakistani mind that if India plays politics of water Pakistan could soon turn into a desert. Giving vent to this fear, one of the Pakistani participants in the seminar in May 2003 said that Pakistani nation was under siege because water as a weapon of war was more deadly than a nuclear weapon. Chenab in particular has become the 'river of contention' between India and Pakistan. The upcoming Baglihar Hydroelectric Project in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir in India has become controversial because Islamabad insists that it violates the Indus Water Treaty. India, as a major concession, agreed to Pakistan's long standing demand of allowing a Pakistani team to inspect the Project and the Pakistani team visited in October 2003.

The biggest geographical lacuna in the creation of Pakistan in 1947 was the separation of East Pakistan from the Western wing

by the vast expanse of Indian territory. Apart from the cultural and, linguistic differences, economic disparities, and the imbalance of political power between the two wings, the geographical distance too played a significant role in the division of Pakistan.

It is important to understand that Pakistan is strategically situated on the world map. Though Pakistan is a part of South Asia, it is situated at the westernmost edge of the region and forms a bridge between South and West Asia (Middle East). To its north-east is China and in the north it enjoys proximity with the republics of Central Asia — part of the erstwhile Soviet Union. Its Western frontiers run along with Afghanistan borders for 2300 km. Its proximity to the Gulf countries, common borders with Iran through Balochistan and port of Karachi on the Arabian Sea contribute to Pakistan's strategic position in the world. At the same time its size, its population of over 140 million (2002 estimate) yielding an average population density of about 185 people per sq km makes it the seventh populous country in the world. The British legacy of the army and bureaucracy, the modernised English speaking elite, availability of fair amount of raw material despite limited industrial achievements have been important factors strengthening Pakistan's position in the western perception. Moreover, with the adoption of the policy of Non Alignment by India, and its refusal to join the western camp and participate in the military alliances, it was obvious that the West would look to Pakistan for the fulfilment of their strategic goals and to contain the Russian influence in the region. Pakistan was important for them in the 1950s at the peak of the cold war and remains important even today after the demise of the communist empire.

### **Tottering Feet of the New Nation**

It is generally observed that in the heat of the freedom struggle the issue of nation building in post independence era often takes a

back seat or is completely overlooked. The process of creation of Pakistan suffered the same fate. The period from the germination of the idea of Pakistan to its actual creation was rather brief. It took only seven years from the passing of the 'Pakistan Resolution' on 23 March 1940 to its birth on 14 August 1947. During this period the events moved with such mind boggling speed that the leaders of the All India Muslim League demanding the state of Pakistan probably had no time to think seriously about state building and national unity. Pakistan had learnt some lessons in parliamentary government during the British rule. There was some experience in running the institutions of local government elected with limited franchise. But this experience was not adequate enough to cope with the post independence problems faced by Pakistan. Numbers are crucial in parliamentary democracy as it is based on the 'majority principle'. The political system in Pakistan failed to implement this principle. The Bengali majority of East Pakistan was not represented in the political system, the army and the bureaucracy. Original framework of the federal structure had made provision for autonomy to the eastern and western units of Federation. But the problems faced by the new nation made centralisation of power mandatory. Faster economic growth was an essential requirement for the political stability of the country. But the differences and the long term conflict with India resulting from its attempts to wrest Kashmir forcibly, compelled Pakistan to concentrate on strengthening its armed forces.

The most important issue was the nature of the political system. Pakistan was created on the principle of self determination of Indian Muslims. The Pakistan Movement was founded on the belief that the interests of Indian Muslims could be secure only in an exclusive state of the Muslims. It was also believed that the political system of the new state would be based on the democratic canons of popular sovereignty and equality, and not on religion. But in the

Pakistan Movement these principles were in the nature of platitudes and perhaps received no serious consideration. No Government of Pakistan succeeded in resolving the ideological dilemmas that confronted Pakistan in its early years and therefore the military regimes of Pakistan, including the present regime of President Pervez Musharraf, have apparently not been successful in distinguishing between good governance and good administration. Good governance involves encouraging increased participation of people at all levels, freedom of expression, plurality of ideas and actions, progressive ideology and expanding democracy in every way. Good administration is indeed its essential condition; even then, governance and administration are not one and the same.

From 1947 to 1951 the country functioned under unstable conditions. The government was grappling with a number of problems like creating a new national capital to replace Karachi, organising bureaucracy and the armed forces, resettling refugees, and contending the aspirations of provincial politicians. It failed to offer any programme of economic and social reform, and consequently to capture popular imagination. The death of its founder Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah in September 1948 was a big blow to Pakistan and created a major political void in the country. His place as Governor General was taken by Khwaja Nazim-ud-Din, and Liaquat Ali Khan became the first Prime Minister of the country. Till then the task of constitution making had hardly made any headway. Liaquat Ali was killed in Rawalpindi in October 1951 followed by political re-arrangement. Khwaja Nazim-ud-Din, an East Pakistani, became the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister Malik Ghulam Muhammad, the Governor General. Nazim-ud-Din could not arrest the declining popularity of the Muslim League in East Pakistan. His government, though in majority, was dissolved by the Governor General in 1953. This marked an end to the parliamentary government in Pakistan. Later



though Mohammad Ali Bogra, another East Pakistani was appointed as the Prime Minister, the real power lay in the hands of the Governor General. Provincial elections were held in West Pakistan in 1951 but were postponed in East Pakistan until 1954. In these elections the Muslim League was completely routed in East Pakistan by the United Front (UF), and the UF demanded federal elections. When Ghulam Mohammad overlooked the demand, the UF which constituted the majority in the Constituent Assembly retaliated by withdrawing the powers of the Governor General. To overcome the political crisis the Governor General dissolved the Constituent Assembly on the pretext of its inability to make the constitution.

The appeal of the president of the dissolved Assembly against the dissolution was rejected by the Sindh High Court but upheld by the Federal Court. Ghulam Mohammad was directed to hold fresh elections for the Constituent Assembly. By then it was obvious that Pakistani politics was increasingly getting into the grip of the bureaucracy and the army. Bogra's cabinet comprised of Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, Major General Iskander Mirza and a senior bureaucrat, Chaudhary Mohammad Ali besides others. Bogra proceeded on leave on medical grounds and was soon replaced by Chaudhary Mohammad Ali, a West Pakistani. In September 1955 Iskander Mirza became the Governor General of Pakistan. The new Constituent Assembly, no longer dominated by the Muslim League, met soon thereafter and enacted a bill integrating four West Pakistani provinces into one political and administrative unit. After nine years of efforts Pakistan succeeded in framing a new constitution which was adopted on 2 March 1956 and promulgated on 23 March 1956. It proclaimed the Dominion of Pakistan as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Mirza was elected President of the country.

Once in power Mirza increased his grip on administration and declared that Pakistan was fit only for 'controlled democracy'.

The new constitution notwithstanding, political instability continued as no party was able to provide a stable majority in the National Assembly. Within two months of the constitution Governor's rule was clamped on East Pakistan with the President taking over the powers of both the Governor and the Chief Minister. With the collapse of the coalition government of the Muslim League and the United Front, the Prime Minister, Muhammad Ali lost office in September 1956. He was succeeded by Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, who led the coalition government of the Awami League and the Republican Party. His relations with the President remained perpetually strained and his tenure came to an abrupt end in September 1957.

The succeeding coalition government of four parties — Muslim League, Republican Party, Krishak Shramik and Nizam-e-Islam — headed by Ismail Ibrahim Chundrigar, was more unfortunate. It lasted only for two months. Chundrigar was replaced by Malik Feroze Khan Noon of the Republican Party. By now Pakistani politics was reduced to utter triviality. East Pakistan was on the verge of exploding with discontent. President Mirza found his chances of getting re-elected as President rather grim. He proclaimed martial law on 7 October 1958, dismissed Noon's government, dissolved the National Assembly, and abolished all political parties as if signing the death warrant of the constitution. Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, was named Chief Martial Law Administrator.

### **The First Military Regime of Pakistan**

Within 11 years of its creation since 1947, Pakistan had seven Prime Ministers and four Governor Generals. Pakistan was in search of a suitable political system and government during these years. The very people who had created the country albeit through limited franchise were now told that they were unsuitable for democracy.

On the day after taking over as Martial Law Administrator, Ayub Khan assured the people that the ultimate objective of the Administration was re-establishment of democracy, which people would be able to understand and implement. In a broadcast to the nation on assuming the new responsibility Ayub Khan admitted that it was a drastic step taken by the government but with 'utmost reluctance'. Yet he was convinced that there was no alternative to it except disintegration and complete ruin of the country. History would never forgive them if the prevailing chaotic conditions were allowed to continue any further. Ayub Khan was critical of politicians for launching free for all power politics beginning with Liaquat Ali Khan. In the next 20 days Ayub Khan forced President Iskander Mirza to resign and on 27 October 1958 assumed the Presidency through a Presidential Cabinet Order. Prime Minister's position was abolished and the parliamentary system was banished from Pakistan for the next 15 years.

Ayub Khan ruled the country absolutely for 11 years. But his regime is remembered for some notable achievements. He successfully blunted the sharp edge of his authoritarian regime by adopting populist measures. While he dismissed hundreds of civil servants, banned the leading political leaders from participating in politics for six years and held the corrupt politicians and bureaucrats responsible for the burgeoning miseries of the masses, he brought about major reforms in Pakistan. He brought effective control on prices of consumer goods, reformed educational and legal systems, introduced housing policy for the middle class and improved family and labour laws. Among his most noteworthy measures was the appointment of a land reforms commission that distributed some 2.2 million acres of land among 150,000 tenants. Though these reforms did not dismantle the feudal framework of Pakistani society completely, its biggest contribution was loosening the stranglehold of feudal lords on Pakistani politics. Ayub Khan also promulgated the Islamic Marriage and Family Laws Ordinance

in 1961, imposing restrictions on polygamy and divorce, and reinforcing the inheritance rights of women and minors. During his rule East Pakistan received increased developmental funds that improved its economy noticeably though the overall disparity between the two Units registered hardly any change.

Ayub Khan introduced a new experiment of basic democracy with four tiers of government from the national to the local level. The country was divided into 80,000 basic units electing basic democrats or union councillors, in partyless elections based on adult franchise. The elected councillors constituted the electoral college for presidential elections in 1960 and for elections to the national and provincial legislatures created under the constitution promulgated by him in 1962. The new constitution introduced the presidential form of government, put parliament in limbo and conferred excessive powers on the President. It dropped the term 'Islamic' from the official nomenclature of the country and made it simply Republic of Pakistan. It also did away with the section on Fundamental Rights. The elected members of the legislature from East Pakistan took a strong exception to these changes and forced the re-insertion of the prefix 'Islamic' and also the chapter on Fundamental Rights in the constitution.

In the 1965 presidential elections, political parties announced the candidature of Fatima Jinnah, sister of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Though Ayub Khan was elected to the post, peoples' discontent with his regime became obvious. On 6 September 1965 Ayub Khan declared war on India. He had launched Operation Gibraltar, a low intensity war against India earlier in the year. Pakistan received a major setback in the war tarnishing the image of Ayub Khan. (It must be noted here that though India maintains that Pakistan was defeated in the war, according to Pakistan the war was inconclusive; there were neither winners nor losers.) In January 1966 with the mediation of the Soviet Union Tashkent Agreement was signed between India and Pakistan at Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Ayub Khan's Foreign Minister was unhappy over the Agreement. The Tashkent Agreement and the abortive war in Kashmir, however, generated frustration among the people of Pakistan. Bhutto gave vent to his frustrations openly and resigned his position to spearhead the agitation against the President.

The situation was worsening in East Pakistan by the day. During the war with India, East Pakistan was totally neglected. The Bengalis were nursing a feeling of hurt as they believed that they were altogether abandoned by Pakistani government. As a result the demand for autonomy was revived again. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the popular leader of East Pakistan announced a six point programme for autonomy. West Pakistanis rejected the demand outrightly. Ayub Khan was caught in a tight spot. He and his family faced allegations of corruption. Peoples' discontent was now replaced by rage. Unable to withstand the mounting pressure any further Ayub Khan resigned but instead of transferring power to the speaker of the National Assembly, as stipulated by the constitution, he handed over the power to the commander-in-chief of the army, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan on 25 March 1969.

### **Birth of Bangladesh**

Yahya Khan became the President of Pakistan and declared Martial Law. Like his predecessor he combined authoritarianism with populism. In trying to popularise himself with the masses, he purged bureaucracy, announced several concessions to the working class, improved primary education and issued ordinance against monopolies and restrictive trade practices. Yet he abused the Martial Law to the maximum and suppressed any dissenting voices against the regime. He decided to promulgate a new constitution and held the first ever general elections in Pakistan in 1970 for the constitution of the Constituent Assembly. Popular mood was



upbeat. East Pakistanis looked forward to the provincial autonomy while in the West people anticipated the formation of egalitarian society. Mujibur Rahman's Awami League in East Pakistan received massive support from Bengalis and Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party founded in 1967 emerged victorious. And then the situation turned explosive. Awami League won clear majority in the National Assembly with 160 seats out of 313, while Bhutto's PPP emerged as the largest party in West Pakistan. Sheikh Mujibur and Bhutto failed to reach any agreement on the constitution of the federal government. Yahya Khan was in a fix. He indulged in futile deliberations with both the leaders and postponed convening the National Assembly.

Sheikh Mujibur was on the warpath with West Pakistan and constituted a virtually independent government in East Pakistan. Negotiations between Yahya Khan and Mujibur Rahman failed and Mujib was arrested on charges of treason. Meanwhile Pakistan's army went into action against Mujib's civilian followers who had formed themselves into *Mukti Bahini*, and demanded nothing less than freedom for East Pakistan. The violent clash that ensued between the two pushed Pakistan into civil war. According to Indian estimate 10 million Bengalis had crossed the borders and taken refuge in India. Awami League leaders too took refuge in Calcutta and established a government-in-exile. India finally intervened on 3 December 1971 and the Pakistani army surrendered 13 days later. Pakistan was partitioned paving way for the creation of Bangladesh. Surrender of the Pakistani Army in Dhaka on 16 December 1971 was the most humiliating event in the history of Pakistan. Yahya Khan made a pathetic attempt to boost the morale of the people saying 'We have lost the battle but we will win the war'. Peoples' fury in West Pakistan knew no bounds. Yahya had no other option but to relinquish power and invite Bhutto who was in New York. On 20 December 1971

Bhutto became the first civilian to become the Martial Law Administrator of Pakistan.

### **Tragedy of the Most Popular Political Leader**

Bhutto faced a stupendous challenge to restore national confidence and assuage the feelings of grave hurt of Pakistanis. Exhibiting immense diplomatic skills during the Simla Agreement with India in 1972 Bhutto regained Pakistani territory in the Indian control and also freed nearly 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war languishing in Indian camps. He received a hero's welcome on his return to Pakistan. As he started re-arranging national life in Pakistan, he established a firm grip over the army and the bureaucracy. He isolated the armed forces from the process of decision-making but allocated six per cent of the Gross National Product (GNP) to defence to placate the generals. He nationalised basic industries, insurance companies, banks, and education, and to checkmate the mullahs, who were upset at his socialistic programmes, introduced Islamic Socialism. He also launched land reforms that benefited tenants and middle class farmers. On 14 August 1973 he promulgated the third constitution of Pakistan and became the eighth Prime Minister of the country, and Fazal Elahi Chaudhry, the President. Bhutto used Islam as rhetoric in promotion of domestic and foreign policy. In 1974 he organised the summit conference of the OIC and extended recognition to Bangladesh.

Bhutto was a charismatic leader. His enthusiastic personality brought about some far reaching changes in Pakistan. He raised the slogan of *Roti, Kapada aur Makan* and won the applause from common Pakistanis. It appeared that Pakistan was back on the road to democracy. But the feel good factor was more superficial than real. Relations between the federal government, and Balochistan and the NWFP were tense. Insurrection in Balochistan

had to be put down with a heavy hand through army action. The economic situation was no more encouraging and opposition parties were trying to cash in on the general discontent among the populace. Although discontented, the military remained silent for some time. Bhutto had earned the wrath of entrepreneurial and industrial class because of his nationalisation programme and of land-owning class due to land reforms; his soft Islamisation drive failed to humour the religious leaders, on the contrary they saw him as the enemy of Islam. He was accused of ruling with a heavy hand and was unable to engage the opposition constructively. General elections of March 1977 proved catalytic in sealing Bhutto's fate. Elections stirred a controversy when the nine parties under the banner of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) contested against Bhutto's PPP. Dismayed at the unfavourable outcome of the elections, the PNA accused Bhutto of rigging the ballot. It later boycotted the provincial elections and organised six week long demonstrations throughout the country. The very leaders of religious parties with whom Bhutto had tried to buy peace were now leading demonstrations against him. When Pakistan was almost reduced to anarchy Bhutto started negotiations with the opposition. But it was too late. The political deadlock was broken only with the intervention of the army. At midnight on 4 July 1977, the army chief General Zia-ul-Haq staged a coup. Bhutto was arrested and the third military regime was imposed in Pakistan. Later Bhutto was tried for political murder of one Nawab Muhammad Ahmad Khan in Lahore; proclaimed guilty and hanged to death in Rawalpindi Jail on 4 April 1979.

The first ever democratic regime in Pakistan founded after 24 years (1971) of its creation met with a tragic end in six years time. Bhutto's regime was wrought with two opposing tendencies. On the one hand it encouraged democratic process, on the other it employed coercive measures. Bhutto gave a lift to the downtrodden but persecuted his opponents, and even colleagues to the hilt.

## Baton of Islam

The popular ire in Pakistan was directed against Bhutto and not against democracy. Therefore Zia had to pay lip service to the constitution and democracy. Pakistanis had understood Zia's intervention as a temporary arrangement. Reinstatement of internal order was a major responsibility of Zia. It was expected that elections would be held within 90 days as stipulated by the constitution. But 90 days turned into 11 years.

On 1 October 1977 Zia spoke his mind to the nation. Elections were postponed; people were told that the responsibility of governance was more important than holding elections. Most significantly, Zia spoke of the urgent need to Islamise the constitution. Zia formally assumed the presidency in 1978 and established Shariah as the law of the land. The constitution of 1973 was suspended in 1979, and special benches were constituted at courts to exercise Islamic judicial review. Zia introduced sweeping changes in every sphere of state and society under his programme of Islamisation.

Interest-free banking was initiated in 1981, the Hudood Ordinance promulgated in 1984 providing maximum penalties for adultery, defamation, theft, and the consumption of alcohol. Through the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) of 1981, the Criminal Procedure Code 1981, the Presidential Order of 1982 and the Prohibition and Punishment Ordinance 1984, Zia imposed several restrictions on the Ahmadiyas, (also known as Qadianis or Lahoris) a minority group within Islam. Ahmadiyas are the followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad born in Qadian, Gurdaspur in the 19th century and claimed the prophethood for himself. They were already declared as non-Muslims by Bhutto in 1974 under pressure from the *ulemas* following the anti-Ahmadiya agitation. There was subtle but important difference between Bhutto's declaration and Zia's

restrictions. Bhutto had declared them a 'constitutional minority' through the second amendment of the constitution, whereas Zia declared them a 'religious minority'. As a constitutional minority Ahmadiyas were ostracised from Islam but had the right to worship and preach or propagate their faith. But as religious minority they came to be prohibited from using any of the epithets, descriptions, or titles reserved for holy personages or places in Islam. They were forbidden from calling their place of worship 'masjid' and from reciting *azan*. Ahmadiyas now call their places of worship Darul-Zikar or Baitul Hamd. Zia like Bhutto aimed at establishing *Nizam-e-Mustafa* (Order of the Prophet). He suppressed every voice of dissent by clamping prepublication censorship on newspapers. His drive towards Islamisation of polity and society was applauded by Saudi Arabia. With the outbreak of Afghan crisis and the consequent Soviet intervention in 1980, Zia was transformed from pariah to a close buddy of the western world. The very nations who were not prepared to touch him even with a barge pole were now eager to befriend him. Americans wanted him to protect their interests in Central Asia and contain Soviet Union from spreading its tentacles in the region. Afghan *mujahideens* received American aid of weapons and money through Zia. All this obviously worked in his favour.

Soon the people who supported Zia against Bhutto understood the price of their support. By 1981 disillusionment with the third military regime was quite visible in Pakistan. Zia issued a PCO on 24 March 1981 to remain operative during the Martial Law. The order held the constitution of 1973 in abeyance and provided for the appointment of Majlis-i-Shoora or a Federal Council consisting of people appointed by the President. During this period Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) was revived, particularly in Sindh but was swiftly crushed by Zia. In a referendum held in December 1984 Zia extended his presidency for five years and in February 1985 he held elections for the National



Assembly. A civilian cabinet under Mohammad Khan Junejo of the Muslim League took office in April. Junejo demanded the end of the Martial Law and it was ended in December the same year. On 1 March 1985 Shooraa was dissolved and the constitution of 1973 was amended widely. The eighth amendment to the constitution enhanced the powers of the President considerably. It conferred on the President the power to dissolve the National Assembly in his own right. This amendment brought political disaster in Pakistan in the 1990s when the Pakistani presidents dissolved three democratically elected governments in succession. However Zia remained dissatisfied. In May 1988, he dissolved the Junejo government and ordered new elections. But three months later he was killed in a mysterious plane crash near Bahawalpur in southern Punjab. One more military regime in Pakistan came to an ignominious end. A caretaker military regime took power till the next elections. Zia's death was followed by serious problems. Pakistan was deep into Afghan crisis. It had severely affected its economy, polity and society. Ethnic and religious groups had already begun testing their strength pushing the country into bloody violence.

### **Mirage of Democracy**

Following Zia's death, President of the Senate Ghulam Ishaq Khan took over as the acting President. Elections were held in November 1988. PPP emerged as the largest single party in the National Assembly and Benazir Bhutto the leader of the PPP and daughter of the slain Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the first woman Prime Minister of a modern Islamic state. It was a historic moment for Pakistan loaded with expectations for restoration of democracy. In Punjab the PPP lost badly to the Pakistan Muslim League. Its leader Nawaz Sharif became the Chief Minister of the province. Relations between the Prime Minister and the Punjab

Chief Minister remained tense from the very beginning. Within a short time the tension exploded into a major political conflict. Political process in Pakistan came to a halt. At the same time Benazir Bhutto and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan failed to establish even working relations between them. On 6 August 1990 within 20 months of Benazir taking power, the President used his prerogative under the eighth amendment of the constitution and dismissed her government, on charges of abuse of power and corruption. Fresh elections were announced for 24 October 1990 and Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi was made the caretaker Prime Minister.

Muslim League led the front, Islami Jamhoori Ittehad emerged victorious in elections and Nawaz Sharif took oath as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. PPP launched an immediate attack on Nawaz Sharif charging him of adopting unfair means in elections. The League on rebound incriminated PPP leaders including Benazir's husband Asif Ali Zardari for corruption. Sharif launched major policy changes, particularly privatisation of state enterprises, improvement in infrastructural facilities by constructing new airports and motorways, and encouraging foreign investment. Much to the jubilation of Islam *pasand* parties he promised to introduce Islamic law in the country. Using his political acumen Sharif successfully maintained a balance between the army, bureaucracy, religious parties, and radical provincial organisations. But the President and the Prime Minister remained at loggerheads, the two remained obdurate. Sharif refused to resign. In April 1993 Ghulam Ishaq Khan once again evoked his powers under the eighth amendment to dismiss Nawaz Sharif's government and dissolve the National Assembly. Balkh Sher Mazari was appointed as a caretaker Prime Minister. The League decided to fight a judicial battle. Nawaz Sharif appealed to the Supreme Court for the reinstatement of his government and the Speaker of the Assembly, Gohar Ayub Khan challenged the President's decision to dissolve

the Assembly in the Lahore High Court. Within a month the Court reinstated Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister and restored the National Assembly. But Pakistan remained politically paralysed as the President and the Prime Minister had reached an impasse. Finally both resigned from their respective positions on 18 July 1993. Moin Ahmad Qureshi a former Vice President of the World Bank, was invited to be a caretaker Prime Minister and the President of the Senate Wasim Sajjad took over as Acting President. Elections were held on 6 October 1993.

Benazir Bhutto became the Prime Minister for the second time though her party did not enjoy decisive majority in the National Assembly. And Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari became the President in November 1993. Benazir continued the policy of economic liberalisation and concentrated on social development. Feudal powers were restricted, political power was devolved, women got more privileges but she made no serious attempt to dismantle the Islamic edifice of the polity carefully constructed by Zia. History repeated itself once again. Her government was accused of rampant corruption. The opposition increased pressure on the government. Benazir had irked the judiciary by messing up top judicial appointments. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court restored the rights of the judiciary. To add to it, people of Pakistan were in no mood to stand by Benazir and her Pakistan People's Party.

Benazir's government was dismissed for the second time in less than seven years by President Leghari on 5 November 1996 on charges of corruption, inefficiency, abuse of power, extra judicial killings in Karachi, and most importantly for involving the President's name in the murder of Mir Murtaza Bhutto, Benazir's estranged brother. Benazir appealed to the judiciary against her dismissal in vain. She was replaced by Malik Meraj Khalid as caretaker Prime Minister.

Elections were held again in February 1997. Popular response to elections was predictably poor. Only 30 per cent of the voters exercised their right. But Sharif's party had unprecedented majority in the Assembly — 130 out of 260 seats. Bhutto's PPP was far behind with just 16 seats. In the fiftieth year of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif had the good fortune of occupying the highest political office in the country for the second time in less than four years. On assuming power, Sharif promptly revoked the eighth amendment of the constitution. He felt secure. He focused on improving relations with India and trimming down the army's size as well as its influence on politics. His government encouraged economic reforms and trade. Nawaz Sharif, a businessman by profession was keen on increasing trade with India. Yet in 1998 India and Pakistan were involved in an eyeball to eyeball confrontation after the two conducted nuclear tests in summer. Despite the tests by the beginning of 1999 India and Pakistan, in a short lived phase of bonhomie, started the Delhi–Lahore bus service that was inaugurated with great fanfare with Vajpayee taking a historical bus ride to Lahore. In February 1999 India and Pakistan signed the Lahore Agreement much to the chagrin of the Pakistani army and the religious groups. In the summer of 1999 Pakistan opened a blitzkrieg on India by forcibly occupying Indian territories in the Kargil region and brought the two nuclear neighbours on the threshold of another war.

Even before the Kargil debacle Sharif's popularity was already on the decline. He had left no stone unturned to abort Benazir's political future on charges of corruption. But at the same time his family's increasing fortunes had started turning the heat on him. In 1998 he had forced the then Chief of the Army Staff General Jehangir Karamat to resign from his post and made serious attempts to introduce the controversial fifteenth amendment to the constitution to impose Shariah. Pakistan's setback in Kargil and

the humiliating way in which the Kargil episode was concluded at the instance of the American President Bill Clinton had sent shock waves through Pakistan. The US had warned Sharif of the possibility of military coup in Pakistan. On 12 October 1999 the world witnessed a high drama in the skies. Nawaz Sharif announced the dismissal of Pakistan's Army Chief General Pervez Musharraf while he was on board a plane returning from Sri Lanka. But Musharraf proved more than a match for Sharif when he moved swiftly and orchestrated the capture of power in Pakistan by the army, and sacked and arrested Sharif along with his family members, all from the skies. Events moved swiftly leaving the world completely astounded. That was the beginning of the fourth military regime in Pakistan. Pakistanis rejoiced in the streets that night. Their joy was more for the end of Sharif's regime than the army takeover. Pakistanis have always looked for short term measures for sprucing up their politics.

### **History Repeated?**

Musharraf did not proclaim Martial Law in Pakistan. He did not impose censorship on the press, nor did he constrict the basic rights of the people. Is Musharraf different from the previous military rulers? At the outset he projected an image of a progressive, liberal, Muslim army leader. Cohen calls him 'quasi-secular'. He coined for himself a new title — Chief Executive of Pakistan. A little before the Agra Summit of 2001 he designated himself as the President, easing out Muhammad Rafiq Tarar, President of Pakistan since 1997. When people expressed apprehensions about the trial of Nawaz Sharif and wondered if he would meet the same fate as Bhutto's, Musharraf granted him amnesty and packed him off with his family to Saudi Arabia.

Musharraf received support from Pakistanis. Voices of protest were muffled, and few and far between. As stated earlier, though



initially condemned by international leaders he received acceptance and also applause after 9/11. Without any political experience Musharraf has not only successfully kept Pakistan afloat and saved it from economic doom but made it a frontline state during the Afghan and the Iraq crises, and restored its 'honour'. Pakistani journalists who were critical of Musharraf in the beginning started arguing in favour of Musharraf for want of a suitable alternative to him. In the roller coaster kind of Pakistani politics Musharraf has survived till date successfully. He has expanded his powers systematically and while doing so gradually turned public opinion on his side. He gave a 'U' turn to Pakistan's foreign policy at the opportune time by ending, at least formally, Pakistan's relations with Taliban and won applause from the West. He often spoke about making Pakistan a progressive and economically empowered nation by undertaking re-construction of its social and political order, withdrawing support to extremist Islamic groups operating in Afghanistan and Kashmir, and by banning *jihadi* organisations. At the same time he maintained a 'balance' by issuing occasional threats to India and making anti-India statements.

The rapid events following 9/11 and the American war in Afghanistan changed Musharraf's fortunes for the better. Taking advantage of the situation, Musharraf called for a countrywide plebiscite on 30 April 2002 to legitimise his Presidency and ensure continuation in the office for the next five years. Pakistanis had no options in the plebiscite as Musharraf had no political contestant nor was there any alternate political programme to choose from. They could vote either for or against Musharraf. Official sources quoted the voting percentage at 73 out of which 97.5 per cent votes were said to be cast in Musharraf's favour. The plebiscite was boycotted by major political and religious parties in Pakistan. In their estimation not more than 30 per cent Pakistanis had cast their votes. Whatever may be the truth, Pervez Musharraf became

the President of Pakistan for the next five years. Dissenting voices were feeble and short-lived. Even the American government had preferred to look 'the other way by way of compensation for his support in the Afghan crisis. Musharraf continued to 'blackmail' the US with great finesse. By constantly threatening the Western powers that if he was removed Pakistan would fall into the hands of religious extremists, he has successfully created the scenario of 'after me the deluge'. The Supreme Court of Pakistan had instructed Musharraf to hold General Elections by October 2002. Elections were held accordingly. As many as 21 political parties participated in the elections. Only six or seven out of them turned out to be of consequence, while others were not even worthy of a mention. Musharraf permitted both Pakistan People's Party – Parliamentary (PPPP) and Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) to participate in the elections while prohibiting their leaders Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from contesting them. Both the former prime ministers were in exile — Sharif in Saudi Arabia and Bhutto in self-exile in Britain — during elections. Also the President laid down the minimum educational qualification of bachelor's degree for candidature, in a country with poor rates of literacy. PML-N was systematically broken and a new party PML-Q (Quaid-i-Azam) was created as the 'King's Party'.

Undoubtedly the war in Afghanistan and American policy towards Islamic nations held considerable sway on the elections. The election outcome rudely shook the liberal, progressive Pakistanis who till then were proud that religious parties in Pakistan had never received any meaningful support in elections. Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a front of six religious parties had the final tally of 60 seats in the National Assembly of 341 members (general and reserved seats). MMA had surprisingly acted as a cohesive body of Shia-Sunni-Deobandi-Barelvi combine. MMA is led by Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani of Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan

(JUP-NO) of the Barelvi sect. Its deputy leader is the high profile Qazi Hussain Ahmed of Jamaat-e-Islami. Other members are pro-Taliban Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) of Maulana Fazl-ur-Rahman, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUS-S) of Maulana Sami-ul-Haq, both Deobandis, Sajjid Mir's Jamiat-e-Ahle-Hadith, and Pakistan Islami Tehrik, a Shia group headed by Allama Sajjid Naqvi. In the Provincial Assemblies of North Western Frontier Province and Balochistan, Majlis turned out to be the single largest group with 53 out of 99 and 13 out of 51 seats respectively and took initiative in forming the governments. In the NWFP Majlis won 29 out of 35 seats in the National Assembly. MMA could boast of little success in Punjab and Sindh. In Punjab it was the King's Party, PML-Q, who called the shots, while in Sindh PPPP emerged as the leading party. PML-Q emerged as the largest party in the National Assembly with 117 seats followed by PPPP with 80 seats. But even in Sindh, Islamist parties won six National and eight Provincial Assembly seats.

A systematic obliteration of the mainstream political parties, prominently the PPP and the PML-N by the military regime and methodical exploitation of public anger at the American war in Afghanistan, particularly the soaring rage in the NWFP and Pakhtun areas in Balochistan expressed through the continuous anti-American rhetoric that weaned the voters from the regular political parties, worked towards the benefit of the religious parties. Added to this was the newly introduced requirement of the bachelor's degree for candidature for election that disqualified a number of politicians but proved advantageous to those holding madrassa 'degrees' that were declared as equivalent to bachelor's degrees by the Election Commission. Political rallies of the regular parties were banned officially but the Islamist parties could successfully circumvent such bans by using madrassas and mosques for political mobilisation.

Since no political party got a clear majority in the National Assembly the result was hung legislature and coalition government. All this was obviously going in favour of Musharraf. PML-Q candidate Mir Zafrullah Khan Jamali became the Prime Minister of Pakistan. European Union observers dubbed the elections as 'flawed' and were apprehensive about Pakistan's return to democracy with concentration of political power in the hands of the President and a military dominated National Security Council.

There was a tug of war between President Musharraf and the parliament on two major issues. First, the Legal Framework Order (LFO), introduced in August 2002 with 29 constitutional amendments by Musharraf is deemed to have virtually replaced the 1973 constitution by giving the military a strong constitutional role through the National Security Council, and weakening legislatures with the presidential power of dissolution and political parties with a threat of disbanding them. The PPP, MMA and PML-N had refused to accept the validity of LFO. Second, the opposition had been persistently demanding that the President gave up his mantle of the 'General' by immediately resigning from the post. Initially Musharraf was least in a mood to oblige the opposition but on 24 December 2003 he announced that he would step down as military head in December 2004 as part of a deal with Islamists hardliners to end the parliamentary deadlock. On the first day of the year 2004 Pervez Musharraf won a vote of confidence from both Houses of Parliament — 56-1 in the Senate and 191-0 in the Assembly — and also from the four Provincial Assemblies, that has ensured him of five-year term as President. The Islamic hardliner parties agreed to support him while the mainstream opposition parties staged a walk out. A couple of days earlier, the 1973 constitution was amended validating the LFO with the help of the Islamic coalition.

A third major confrontation is likely to be on the demand for the enforcement of the Shariat Bill and the implementation of a

number of 'Islamic' recommendations of the Council of Islamic Ideology, which have been pending for a long time. These demands may be instantly supported by MMA, PML-Q and PML-N and opposed by Musharraf who has constantly spoken of his vision of Pakistan as a progressive and moderate state.

Musharraf had until recently continued to give moral support to *jihad* in Kashmir though in November 2003 his government offered India a ceasefire on the LoC and later also made a bold announcement of dropping the demand for plebiscite in Kashmir. Of course while doing so he maintained that Pakistan had never supported terrorism, rather Pakistan itself was a victim of terrorism. Prime Minister Jamali has been chanting the same mantra. Musharraf has acquired a perfect knack for convincing the US of Pakistan's firm support in the war on terrorism by claiming the arrest of a couple of Al Qaeda terrorists whenever the terrorist activities in Kashmir reach the peak and India points a finger towards Pakistan. Musharraf has kept the US oscillating and fortified his position within the country and also safeguarded the national interests of Pakistan. 'Bush and Mush' a fictitious telephonic dialogue between the American President George Bush and Musharraf published regularly by *The Friday Times*, is not only humorous but also shows Musharraf's political astuteness.

In the meanwhile *jihadi* groups in Pakistan that had gone into hibernation for some time have re-activated themselves. They have re-surfaced under new names making the best of legal loopholes and have sought support from the poorer sections of the society under threat. It is reported that in the past one year nearly 40 new *jihadi* publications have come into circulation. Among them a periodical, *Allah's Army*, and a daily, *Islam*, are said to have become quite popular.

Sectarian violence in Pakistan has remained unabated with short intermissions. Sectarian extremists, many of whom went



underground after a prolonged crackdown during which several top leaders were arrested or killed in 2002, have resurfaced despite official efforts at containment. President Musharraf had been unambiguous as far as domestic sectarian terrorism is concerned though his policy on Islamic terrorists elsewhere has been ambivalent. His 'war against terrorism' within Pakistan did target sectarian terrorist groups vigorously. In 2002 there was a marked decrease in the fatalities in sectarian violence compared to the previous five years. Yet in 2003 sectarian violence appears to be on the rise. By the first week of July 2003 there have been 17 incidents of sectarian violence killing 88 people. Perhaps the goriest for all was the killing of 53 people in a Shiite mosque in Quetta during Friday prayers on 4 July. Six people were killed in Karachi in another incident in the first week of October and Maulana Azam Tariq, chief of the defunct Sipah-e-Sahaba (re-named Millat Islamiya), was shot down with his four associates in broad daylight on 6 October 2003 on the otherwise placid streets of Islamabad. The incident was followed by riots in Pakistan.

But Pakistan's intent and role in international war on terrorism has been raising doubts for some time. Though western governments describe Pakistan as a close ally in the global war against terrorism, cracks have started appearing in the perception of western public about Pakistan's role. As *The New York Times* put it, 'Pakistan's behaviour has fallen well short of what Americans are entitled to expect from an ally in the war on terrorism.' And if Musharraf's role is not up to expectations then, 'America must look for ways to reduce its dependence' on him. *Washington Post* echoed the same feelings when it titled a piece on the issue 'Doubts about an ally'. When Musharraf visited Canada in mid-2003 he was greeted by the most influential Canadian daily *Globe and Mail* as 'Ottawa's unwelcome visitor'. In an interview with the same daily Pakistani President created a sensation when he said that he believed Osama bin Laden was alive and moving freely between Afghanistan and

Pakistan. Husain Haqqani, Pakistani scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace at Washington, states that several new books particularly published in the US accuse Musharraf from past sponsorship of Al Qaeda to an official cover up in the Daniel Pearl murder, to revived backing for Taliban (in *Indian Express*, 2 October 2003). The last charge finds a ready support from Afghanistan. For some time Afghanistan has been accusing Pakistan of nursing Taliban with a view to destabilising the Afghan regime led by Hamid Karzai. Afghanistan has alleged that Mullah Omar has found sanctuary in Quetta in Balochistan. Pakistan is said to have 'done a Kargil' on Afghanistan in the summer of 2003.

America's wars on Afghanistan in 2001 and on Iraq in 2003 have actually helped Pakistan in its economic resurrection like the Afghan crisis of the 1980s. During both the wars Musharraf has performed successful tightrope walk between the strong domestic opposition to extending any support to the US, and the American pressure demanding the same. In return the US has rewarded Pakistan with hefty economic aid. Also the US agreed to lift the sanctions imposed on Pakistan in the wake of military rule in 1999. Normally a war adversely affects economies of the neighbouring countries even when they are not party to the war. This rule does not seem to apply to Pakistan. Wars or major crisis situations have saved Pakistan from the economic muddle time and again and have reversed political fortunes of its rulers albeit creating other problems in the long run.

If the first month of the year 2004 brought accolades to President Pervez Musharraf from the international community for achieving a 'breakthrough' with India during the SAARC Summit, the month of February brought him disgrace and embarrassment. The father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan admitted to his clandestine international nuclear trading that involved the transfer of technology, nuclear components, designs

of centrifuges, sketches etc. to North Korea, Iran and Libya. Khan's admission was long overdue. With a series of international exposes, Musharraf government had launched a four month long investigation into Khan's activities. It was obvious that the nuclear transfers were not possible without the blessings of Pakistan government and the army. But Musharraf has a proverbial capacity to survive. He quickly distanced the government from Khan and his associates, granted him clemency and closed the controversy atleast for the time being. He has successfully circumvented the ugly episode that had the international ramifications and that might have invited sanctions for nuclear proliferation against Pakistan. But the saving grace for Pakistan is that it has not violated any international treaty obligation as it is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

How much change has President Musharraf brought about in Pakistan? Khalid Hasan says, little. 'While few would question that Gen. Pervez Musharraf is a man with liberal — if not Kemalist views — most would agree that his liberalism, despite its early promise, has made little difference. Every retrogressive and discriminatory law remains in use and no one believes any longer that the general will move to strike the Ziaist body of legislation from the books.' (*The Friday Times*, 19 December 2003) Hasan concedes that liberalism and the no non-sense approach are Musharraf's virtues, but at best, only private virtues. According to him there was little evidence or hope of their being translated into public policy.

## *Movers and Shakers of Pakistani Politics*

Complexities of Pakistani politics are difficult to fathom. A large number of factors determine the pattern of politics in Pakistan. These factors do not stand in isolation with each other nor do they function independently. The intricacies of inter-factorial and intra-factorial relations are simply mind boggling for an outsider. I have made an attempt to unravel some of them below. Social factors, political economy, and politics of culture are discussed in Part III of the book. I present below some of the major influences on Pakistani politics; Islam, Army, the US, and Afghanistan. The India factor is deliberately left out, as this book does not purport to discuss Indo-Pak relations. But a hint of the 'ghost' of India and its impact on Pakistani politics and society is subtly visible in several places in the book.

### **Islamisation of a Muslim Nation : Politics of Islam**

The oxymoronic title of this section reveals, in my opinion, the crux of the main argument in the following pages. The rulers of Pakistan have used Islam as a political tool or a strategy in an attempt to tide over some of the complex problems the nation faced since its birth. The process of Islamisation was prompted primarily by a crisis of national identity, quest for legitimacy of successive regimes, and concern for security. The term Islamisation does not denote uniformity of usage. Its usage has been symbolic,

or rhetorical as many Pakistanis tend to suggest, but also substantive in terms of its impact on Pakistani polity and society. I do not treat the phenomenon of Islamisation as the sole determinant of the Pakistani political process. Instead, I have argued that the failure of politics and the quick-fix mentality of the Pakistani rulers led them to take recourse to Islam. The demand for Islamisation of Pakistan did not come from the people. It was imposed on them by the political leadership that could not resolve problems of constitution making and nation building that was ambivalent on the choice of the system of government, that lived with an obsessive fear of the Indian threat and that used Islam as antidote for everything.

The state-led Islamisation means that the state appropriates the right to interpret and manage Islam depending on the issues that confront the state. The interests of the state (regime) take priority over that of Islam leading, to use Jamal Malik's apt phrase to 'colonisation of Islam'. The contest is not between Islam and secularism but between Islam and the state. Sayyed Vali Reza Nasr in his article on 'States and Islamization' in *Muslims And The West* provides a typology of Muslim states based on the nature of the mediating role of Islam: The Rejectionist Secularist; the Opportunist Islamizer; and the Thoroughgoing Islamizer. While Pahlavi Iran and Algeria are classified in the first category, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan and Indonesia in the second, and Malaysia under Mahathir Mohamed and Pakistan under Zia-ul-Haq in the third as the 'Thoroughgoing Islamizers'. Though Islamisation of Pakistan is normally ascribed to the Zia regime, in the 56 years of its history Pakistan has fluctuated between Islamic ambivalence of the early years, Islamic opportunism of Ayub Khan (he could be categorised more as a reluctant Islamiser) and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Islamic thoroughness of the Zia regime. The tidal wave of Islam has had its highs and lows, sometimes engulfing the entire society as it



happened during the Zia years or at times breaking at the shores with varying intensity.

### *Islam and National Identity*

A major theme running through Pakistan's contemporary history has been the search for national identity. A senior political leader in my interview with him in Islamabad made a cryptic remark that neatly sums up this crisis of identity. He said, 'In 1947 we were a nation in search of a country. But now we are a country in search of a nation'. This crisis itself is the result of the interplay of the particular mix of Islamicity and ethnic consciousness in the Pakistan Movement, the ruling elite's manipulation of Islam, and Pakistan's feudal socio-economic structure. In the Pakistan Movement when the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent demanded a separate state for themselves on the basis of a two-nation theory, they were using Islam as ethnicity. Muslims claimed to be a separate nation, different from Hindus in language, culture and religion. Judged from this perspective the demand for a separate Muslim state had communitarian underpinnings rather than communal. The demand came primarily from the Muslim minority regions in India notably the United Province, Bihar and Hyderabad for fear of being submerged in the Hindu majority. Ironically the Muslim majority provinces of India except Bengal joined the movement almost at its fag end. Yet Islam was employed rhetorically to rouse Muslim masses that shouted the slogan of 'Islam in danger' and chanted *Pakistan ka matlab kya, la ilaha illalah*. (What is the meaning of Pakistan? There is no God but Allah.)

But the creation of Pakistan changed the role of Islam. The assertion of the distinctly separate linguistic and cultural identities of three out of four provinces of West Pakistan and Bengal in the east soon after the emergence of Pakistan threw a gauntlet at Islam. Now Islam was no longer paraded as ethnicity but was charged

with the task of containing expressions of ethnic identities. Pakistan was created not merely to protect the religious interests of Muslims but more importantly political, economic and cultural interests too. This was the vision of the founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Going by his oft quoted Presidential address in the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947 it can be safely said that he visualised Pakistan as a modern, progressive and a secular state. Jinnah had said:

You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed — that has nothing to do with the business of the state... in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense... but in the political sense as citizens of the state.

Jinnah's notion of Pakistani nationalism comprised of religious freedom, political equality and the state's distance from religious and sectarian differences. Yet it could not be overlooked that he repeatedly invoked the Islamic idiom. He hoped there would be 'renaissance of Islamic culture and ideals' in Pakistan. On other occasions he spoke of creating a state of 'our own concept', of taking 'inspiration and guidance from the Holy *Quran*' and making Pakistan a 'bulwark of Islam'. The fact that it was sought as homeland for a religious community was bound to throw up the issue of Islam's place in the polity.

The long arm of Islam did not prevent violent assertion of Bengali identity culminating in the secession of East Pakistan in 1971. Paradoxically after this debacle the Pakistani regime resorted to more Islamisation in a manner that made Islam appear as the panacea for any expression of provincial ethnicity. The roots of growing ethnicity lay mainly in Pakistan's feudal socio-economic structure and the process of economic distribution. The convergence

of dominant interests of *mohajirs* and the Punjabi elite with the co-option of landowning classes from Sindh and Punjab led to the regional imbalance in economic growth. Therefore a secular conception of Pakistani national identity was possible if it contended with socio-economic imperatives. The success of such an approach would have hinged on large scale social reforms and an equitable distribution of scarce economic resources.

### *Islam and Legitimacy of the Regime*

Islam has been employed symbolically and rhetorically to legitimise both the constitutional set up and the regime from time to time. This 'arose from the attempt to utilise an insufficient conceptual plan to provide the philosophical underpinning for a state that had no historical precedent'. The March 1949 Objectives Resolution that subsequently became a preamble to the later constitutions had proposed government under the 'guidance' rather than the 'instruction' of Islamic principles. While commenting on the Objectives Resolution, Paula Newberg writes 'The resolution's generality could not hide the profound disagreements about the character of the future constitution or state, for example, its characterisation of the role of Islam was simultaneously prominent, obscure and legally undefined'. The 1956 constitution designated Pakistan as an Islamic Republic. But the constitution remained ambivalent on Islam's relationship to the state, nor did it throw any light on how Islamic principles would be applied and implemented in the legal framework of the state. Though emotive in value it was seen as an essential concomitant of the state.

Despite his modernistic orientation Ayub Khan accepted symbolic importance of Islam in Pakistan's politics and used it selectively. He criticised the *ulema* for their demand for an Islamic constitution but made peace with them to minimise their opposition to his programme, and also sought their help, when

Fatima Jinnah contested the Presidential election against him, by requesting the *ulema* to declare that a woman could not head the state under Islamic law. Under the Bhutto regime this Islamic symbolism was converted into Islamic populism. He had to establish his Islamic credentials under the weight of frequent challenges from his opponents. Drawing upon egalitarian principles in Islam he propagated the idea of Islamic Socialism to the chagrin of the *ulema*. For him Islamic symbols were a tool of political mobilisation and he wanted to prevent religious parties from monopolising this tool. His rule was at once populist and repressive, and as the criticism and opposition to his rule mounted he used Islam more and more in the hope of checkmating his opponents. He banned gambling and alcohol, made Friday a weekly holiday replacing Sunday and gave the slogan of *Nizam-e-Mustafa*. Symbol and rhetoric of Islam gave way to reality of Islamisation when Zia-ul-Haq undertook to literally recreate the Prophet's order. His regime made serious attempts to transform all aspects of polity and society into Islamic ones through sweeping changes. Revenue system, banking, legal system, laws dealing with various crimes, education, culture, democratic freedoms — every possible thing in Pakistan was brought under the sweep of Islamisation. The next four democratic regimes, two of Benazir Bhutto and two of Nawaz Sharif did little to veer the country off from the Islamic path. On the contrary Sharif who was regarded as the spiritual successor of Zia, in his second term attempted the fifteenth amendment of the constitution by introducing the Shariat Bill ostensibly to strengthen Islamic foundation of the country but aimed at strengthening his own position as the Prime Minister despite his overwhelming majority in the National Assembly.

As stated earlier Musharraf is a modern man committed to making Pakistan a modern, 'moderately' Islamic and a progressive state. His 12 January 2002 speech in which he made an emotional

plea to the nation to end *jihad* by asking Pakistanis what the country had gained by Islamisation, and his resolve to liberate the country from Islamic extremism, was hailed in western capitals as groundbreaking. In order to match his words by deeds he also banned some hardcore militant Islamic organisations in Pakistan. Giving due credit to his integrity of intention and sincerity of efforts in this direction, two important issues could be raised. Firstly, to what extent his efforts at 'delegitimising' Islam from the public arena, was also aimed at increasing his own legitimacy and acceptability in the western capitals, particularly in Washington. Secondly, taking into consideration the 'globalisation' of the radical Islamic outfits emanating from Pakistan, will he really succeed in reining them effectively in the near future?

### *Islam and Security*

Pakistan's concern for security has been multidimensional. It had tried to identify itself with the Muslim states of the Middle East from the beginning and secure benefits from such identification. But in the initial years Pakistan's Islamic overtures did not find favour with Islamic countries like Egypt or Turkey nor was Pakistan very keen about pursuing them as they were not seen as suitable to satisfy Pakistan's urge for national security emanating from its perception of the Indian threat and for its economic needs.

Separation of East Pakistan in 1971 proved a watershed in the process of Islamisation. The ambivalent and hesitant Islamic symbolism of the yesteryears gave way to closer and more deliberate identification with Islam. The rhetoric of Islam as already observed became more strident internally. Externally the loss of the eastern wing altered Pakistan's geo-political focus and got riveted on Islamic West Asia. Thus Pakistan's foreign policy in 1972 clearly indicated the new emphasis on Islamic links across the borders. This coincided well with the development of a new Islamic consciousness among



the Muslims over the world. This could be attributed to a number of developments in the Muslim world such as Arab–Israeli war of 1967 and 1973 resulting in the occupation of Arab territory by Israel, growing Israeli militancy, 1969 Rabat summit of the heads of Muslim countries and the consequent establishment of OIC. The oil crisis of early 1970s gave an opportunity to the oil producing Middle Eastern countries to raise the price of oil thereby raising their self confidence in the international system. Later Zia’s Islamisation drive at home became well tuned with his Afghan policy that won for him a broad based support at home especially from the religious parties. Pakistan wanted a satellite Islamic state across the borders that would serve the larger interests of Pakistan.

Zia’s Afghan policy continued under the successive regimes of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. Pakistan formulated the doctrine of ‘strategic depth’ in Afghanistan to meet the Indian ‘threat’, and developed strong bonds with Taliban using Islamic and linguistic-cultural bonds among Pakhtuns of both the countries. A close connection between the internal and external manifestation of Islamism also changed the course of the Kashmiri struggle. From the 1990s its discourse has moved clearly from national liberation and self-determination to Islamist *jihad* to which Pakistan claims to extend, as noted earlier, only ‘moral and diplomatic’ support.

Economic dimension of security was equally important. Pakistan had close relations with Iran and Turkey as partners in CENTO (Central Treaty Organization), and later as members of the Regional Cooperation for Development (1964) founded to promote economic relations between the three. But the real economic benefit came only after 1970 when Pakistan forged close relations with the Arab world. In a situation of serious economic dislocation following the Indo-Pak war of 1971 the Middle-Eastern countries helped Pakistan in the rehabilitation of its war-shattered economy. The Gulf countries provided market for export of goods

as well as labour. The remittances sent by the labour met critical foreign exchange requirements of Pakistan. From 1973 the oil-rich states began to underwrite the cost of economic programme in Pakistan. Pakistan entered into joint ventures with Islamic countries in fertilisers, textiles, and cement.

The support from Muslim countries that helped in resolving Pakistan's crisis of confidence following the loss of its eastern wing in 1971 was crucial. The western reaction to the excesses of the Pakistani army in East Pakistan had given a strong blow to Pakistan's image and had resulted in international isolation. The lack of firm support from the US and also from China in 1971 had left Pakistan frustrated. It was in this situation that Pakistan found solace in regular consultations with Muslim countries, particularly the Arab. Again it was the same support that helped Pakistan to countenance the Soviet pressure with confidence in the wake of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Pakistan has been deeply influenced by the Iranian revolution of 1979 that came as a strong reaction to the attempts of Reza Shah and his son to brutally modernise their country sidestepping Islam. All major concerns related to contemporary revival of Islam — religious, social, political and power were incorporated in the Iranian revolution. It rejected all 'wrong doings' of the Shah's regime such as westernisation, centralisation of power, corruption and unjust distribution of wealth, and underscored cultural purification, participation of people in politics, and social justice. Hence Khomeini's Iran became a model for the Muslim world. Despite the sectarian divide between Sunni Pakistan and Shia Iran, Pakistan was influenced by the revolution. It inspired the orthodox Islamic elements in Pakistani society and lent moral support to Zia's Islamic programme. Several lay Pakistanis and army officers spoke the language of Islamic revolution. Iranian revolution had caused a great churning of ideas in Muslim countries from Morocco in West Africa to Malaysia and Indonesia in South East Asia.

The Gulf War of 1991, and the plight of the Bosnian Muslims after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s have added militant and radical dimension to the Islamic movement everywhere in an unprecedented way. It is too early to assess the impact of American war on Iraq and Pakistan's likely participation in the maintenance of post war cooperation by sending troops to Iraq, on Islamic extremism in Pakistan.

### *Impact of Islamisation*

What has Islamisation given to Pakistan — a cohesive national identity and a confident national persona? Several articles and readers' letters in the newspapers that I came across during my stay in Pakistan do not testify this. Has it satisfied the security concerns of Pakistan? Yes, for some time and to some extent. It appears it was more a phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s, and perhaps, overall, more emotive than substantive. Otherwise the fear of Indian 'threat' looms large or at least it is perceived so. India's 'predatory' moves till recently were discussed in the media almost on a daily basis. Support of the Muslim countries has not strengthened Pakistani position on Kashmir vis-à-vis India. Its usefulness in securing legitimacy to the constitutional order and rulers proved to be more elusive. The comfort of Islam in securing legitimacy for the rulers was short lived in every single case. Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto relinquished power unceremoniously as the result of widespread mass agitations. The powerful agitation for democracy in Pakistan till date, Movement for Restoration of Democracy came in early eighties during the Zia rule.

Pakistanis who believe that Islamisation has been nothing more than peripheral, were eager to point out to me that there has always been very low voter support to religious parties. The question was not of the quantum of electoral support and resultant political influence but of the amount of social and cultural influence they

wielded over people. The Zia regime strengthened the orthodoxy in the country, shrinking space for liberal democratic and secular ideas that left long lasting impact on social, cultural and political life in Pakistan. Even in terms of sheer numbers, religious parties/groups have grown from 30 in 1977 to 245 in 2003 of which 28 openly take part in politics, 104 claim to focus on *jihad* and 82 on sectarian concerns. Twenty parties are Tablighee groups involved in evangelical activity. The remaining 23 are involved in activities of a mixed nature according to *Daily Times* of Lahore. The bogey of Islamisation, however symbolic or emotive, has emboldened such groups over the years. For them Islamisation has been more than a rhetoric. If the rulers meant it to be a political rhetoric, mullahs want to make it a social reality. If not the political order, they would like to construct the social order on Islamic principles. And no government official, high or low has normally been prepared to question the increasing emphasis on Islamic principles. And after the 2002 elections MMA has come to rule in the heart of the tribal belt along the borders of Afghanistan in the NWFP and they seem to be working towards their Islamic goal. Emboldened by their electoral success, they have imposed Shariah over the objections of the federal government. They seem to be going to a ridiculous extent of segregating female patients from male physicians who perform electrocardiograms and ultrasound examination, for 'men could derive sexual pleasure from women's bodies while conducting ECG or ultrasound'.

An obsession with the construction of Islamic polity raised a critical question — Who's Islam? Sunni's or Shia's? It has widened the rift between the two major sects among the Pakistani Muslims giving way to sectarianism and gory sectarian violence in the country. The political ascendancy of Deobandi School among Sunnis has relegated to the background the mild and syncretic Barelvi Islam. The abuse of perverted logic of the Zina Ordinance,

prescriptive dress code, restrictive representation in art and culture during the Zia regime led to the shrinking of public space for women. Proliferation of madrassas has served effective recruiting agency for Islamic militancy. The Quranic concept of *jihad* abused by the *ulema* and exploited by the army has been used by the state as a tool of foreign policy.

In sum one tends to broadly agree with the perceptive analysis of Pakistani society by a Pakistani scholar, Salim M.M. Qureshi. According to him Islamisation had given Pakistan its 'anti-Indian preoccupation, had generated a latent anti-western psychology in Pakistan, intensified conservatism that made Pakistan almost a closed society, and along with the long-term authoritarian rule, has inflicted an almost mortal injury to the development of a Pakistani intellectual community. The Ayub regime made it impossible for Pakistani scholars to critically examine subjects of fundamental concern to Pakistan. The Zia regime explicitly prohibited any criticism of the Islamic ideology and the Ideology of Pakistan or any examination of the personality of Jinnah.' Most significantly, according to Qureshi, 'These policies have dried out the fountain of scholarship in Pakistan, making it almost an intellectual desert.'

As collective entities, state and society may be Islamised more easily than people who are disparate entities at the individual level. To what extent have the people of Pakistan been Islamised? Islamisation programme, especially by Zia was pursued within a complicated ideological framework. It was not in conformity with the popular culture in Pakistan, in which most people are very religious 'personally' but not 'publicly'. Cohen makes a similar observation, 'Although most of Pakistani Muslims are devout, they are not particularly radical'. An unexpected outcome was that by relying on a policy grounded in Islam, the state fomented factionalism: by legislating what is Islamic and what is not, Islam



itself could no longer provide unity because it was then being defined to exclude previously included groups. Disputes between Sunnis and Shia, ethnic disturbances in Karachi between Pakhtuns and *mohajirs*, increased animosity toward Ahmadiyas, and the revival of Punjab–Sindh tensions, can all be traced to the loss of Islam as a common vocabulary of public morality. Islamisation drive led to the state constructed ideal image of women in Islamic society that was far removed from the one existing in popular sentiment and from the reality of everyday life. Richard Kurin's study undertaken in the early 1980s in a Punjabi village of Chakpur reveals that people actually resented the narrowly defined Islamisation programme of the government and the city based *ulemas* who were far removed from the needs of the people.

According to I.A. Rahman under the spell of Islamisation Pakistani society had become more religious in the recent years but the people had not been 'Islamised uniformly'. In his opinion majority of Pakistanis refrain from propagating Islamic extremism. There exists a large fringe of population that is conservative but not necessarily extremist or militant; though there is always a danger of this fringe getting easily co-opted by the radical elements depending on a situational exigency. Yet it must be remembered that Pakistani Muslims belong to the liberal and syncretic tradition of Islam that has been increasingly decimated over the years but not completely erased from the Pakistani society. A Pakistani lives with multiple identities of *biradari*-kinship-tribe, language, province and class apart from that of the faith. Islam could not bulldoze these identities. Pakistani politics has been dominated by ethnic, linguistic and economic issues and not by Islam alone. A Sindhi, Baloch or Pakhtun in Pakistan aspires more for provincial autonomy than for a centralised Islamic state.

Even though an average Pakistani has struggled to keep the impact of Islamisation at bay from his day to day life, its adverse impact on Pakistani body politic is glaringly visible. It may not be

possible to deal with the entire gamut of the impact, therefore only three major issues are discussed briefly below: Shia-Sunni conflict, Madrassa and *jihadi* culture and Blasphemy Laws. A brief account of the Hudood Ordinances with special reference to the *Zina* could be found in a section on the Status of Women and Women's Movement in the chapter entitled 'Social Kaleidoscope'.

### *Shia-Sunni Conflict*

About 97 per cent of Pakistanis are Muslim, 70 per cent of whom are Sunnis and 20 per cent Shias. Though Sunnis are divided among various sub-sects they follow the Hanafi School of jurisprudence. Majority of Sunnis are Barelvis, who unlike Deobandis, an influential group among Sunnis, are not puritanical in their attitude towards religion and venerate *pirs*, *fakirs* and *Sufi* saints and visit their tombs. Deobandis enjoy considerable political influence, especially in the NWFP and Balochistan. Shias follow the Jaffaria School of jurisprudence. Therefore there are ideological differences between the Shias and Sunnis. According to Sunnis and Wahabis, Shias are 'wayward Muslims'. Instances of Shia-Sunni violence are not new to the Indian subcontinent, but in the initial years of Pakistan relations between the two sects were said to be fairly cordial.

Shia-Sunni conflicts started mostly during the Zia regime. Differences between the two communities got politicised and took violent turn when his regime decided to make Pakistan an Islamic state based on Shariah and enforce Hanafi legal system. The Shiite Iranian revolution had drawn Pakistani Shias into politics in a big way. Leaders of Teherik-i-Jafariya Pakistan (TJP) an organisation of Pakistani Shias formed in 1979 had received training in Iran. Shias saw Zia's Islamisation programme as a challenge to their community. They argued that the Islamic laws of Shias did not permit imposition of *zakat* (tax levied on the gross assets of Muslims, at the rate of 2.5 per cent, a religious duty) and *ushr* (tax

at the rate of one tenth of the produce) on their community and demanded that they be excluded from the taxes. Zia relented and also agreed that Shias would be governed according to their own Islamic laws. Concessions made to Shias angered Sunnis, particularly the Deobandis and in 1985 in an attempt to counter TJP, they formed Sipah-e-Sahaba (SES). Both the bodies formally declared their opposition to violence but the radicals in these organisations who were unwilling to accept moderation in their activities soon founded organisations like Sipah-i-Muhammad (SiM) of Shias and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) of Sunnis. Both the organisations have systematically exploited the differences between the two communities and with trained terrorists, mostly educated in madrassas, as their active members have pushed Pakistan into a sectarian carnage over the past 13 to 14 years. It is alleged that Sunni madrassas receive hefty donations from Saudi Arabia, and Shias from Iran. In this way Saudi Arabia and Iran fight a proxy war on the Pakistani soil. Musharraf announced a ban on both LeJ and SiM and warned their parent organisations, SeS and TJP respectively, of strict vigil on their activities in his Independence Day speech in 2001. But it hardly caused a dent in their activities. In his much hailed speech of 12 January 2002, Musharraf had admitted to this reality. This is because these organisations lay low immediately after the proscription, their cadres go underground for a while but after a brief period of hibernation openly resume their activities without altering organisational structures. The SeS even re-commenced publishing its official mouthpiece, the monthly *Khilafat-i-Rashida*, which it had discontinued immediately after the ban. It also ran a highly effective electoral campaign for its candidate, slain Maulana Azam Tariq, who won a parliamentary seat from the Jhang constituency in Punjab in October 2002. Similarly, while retaining its existing organisational infrastructure, the TJP joined the MMA under a different name — the Teherik

Millat-i-Islami Pakistan. Shia-Sunni riots continue in Pakistan, attacks on Shia Mosques have become more frequent, Shia doctors, engineers, civil servants and teachers continue to be the victims of Sunni rage in Pakistan and they retaliate with equal fury. According to the data provided by *South Asia Intelligence Review* (1.51, 7/7/2003) there have been 1813 instances of sectarian violence in Pakistan between 1989 and 6 July 2003 in which 1467 people have been killed and 3370 injured. According to another estimate, over 600 Shias have been murdered since Musharraf's coup in 1999. The US based Human Rights Watch found the escalation in sectarian violence 'alarming' during the Musharraf regime. Musharraf dismisses the sectarian groups as 'a wild, illiterate minority'. Minority it is; but a deadly potent minority.

### *Madrassa and Jihadi Culture*

It is common knowledge that traditional Islamic education is imparted through madrassas. Much maligned Pakistani madrassas have registered manifold increase in the past 25 years. No exact count of madrassas is available but several estimates place their numbers anywhere between 8000 and 15000 providing education to more than 500,000 students some of whom also come from Afghanistan, the Arab countries, Central Asia and even from the far East. John Esposito, American scholar of Islam puts the figure at 9000. Pakistan's Education Minister Ms. Zubeida Jalal, in an interview with *The Asian Age* (13 November 2003) placed their number between 15,000 and 20,000 and the student population of 1.5 million between the age group of 7 to 14. Jessica Stern, American expert on terrorism, whose article 'Pakistan's Jihad Culture' in *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2000) is widely quoted, has dubbed madrassas as 'jihad factories'. But Pakistanis across the political spectrum point out that all madrassas are not

engaged in making militants. It is said that nearly 1500 madrassas preach *jihad* and regularly send a select few for training in militancy. According to Jalal, Madaris do not make militants. Rather 'it is after the children leave madrassas that the organisations (terrorists groups) entice them'. Dr. Mubarak Ali has interesting comment to make on the issue. In his opinion much of this talk about madrassas producing *jihadis* is exaggerated. Madrassas create narrow-minded, sectarian students but not terrorists. He points out that not all the Taliban was madrassa-educated. But many in fact were educated in modern schools or colleges. He bluntly states that it was the Americans who motivated madrassa students to engage in armed *jihad* and prepared for them special textbooks that glorified 'holy war' during the Russian occupation of Afghanistan.

Without splitting hair over the issue, it can be safely said that some madrassas have been the source of ideology, inspiration and supply of manpower to Taliban and to nearly 50,000 Pakistanis fighting in support of Taliban. A mention is already made of madrassa at Akora Khattak and its contribution to Taliban in a chapter on Peshawar. Those who returned from *jihad* in Afghanistan aided the growing violence within the country and tried to establish a social order by issuing *fatwa* for banning radio and TV, trying to stop girls from attending schools in parts of the NWFP, intimidating women activists of NGOs and gleefully blackening the faces of women on commercial hoardings. All this is a part of *jihad* culture. Some of the madrassa trained *jihadis* crossed the River Oxus and went northwards to Central Asia and the Caucasian region. Most of the madrassas are sponsored by political parties belonging to Deobandi and Wahabi sects. These political parties work in collaboration with Afghani groups like Hibz-e-Islami to provide training in militancy.

Apart from madrassas there is a mushrooming of religious groups preaching *jihad* in Pakistan. The most infamous among



them Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, 'a wholly owned subsidiary of the ISI' and now regarded as 'the global successor to Al Queda' is actively engaged in Kashmir. This is the extremist wing of the Markaz-Dawa-wal-Irshad madrassa of Ahle Hadith organisation. Surprisingly Makaz itself was established by some university teachers. One of them is the infamous Hafeez Muhammad Saeed of Lahore Engineering and Technological University. Lashkar is the biggest *jihadi* group active in Kashmir. Since 1987 Markaz has grown speedily. Its aim is to propagate a 'pure' version of Islam; therefore it is inclined towards Saudi Arabia. It wants to purify Islam in the subcontinent as it has been defiled by Hindu influence. Markaz runs schools, hospitals, dispensaries and publishes booklets in English and Urdu for propagation of its work. One peculiarity of the Lashkar is that most of its activists are not trained in madrassas but are the students of mainstream schools and colleges.

The list of *jihadi* groups in Pakistan is long. Their origins, lineage, connections are all extremely complex. Hizbul-e-Islami of Jamaat-e-Islami is also active in Kashmir; so also is Harkat-ul-Mujahideen under the influence of Jamiat-ulema-e-Islam of Maulana Sami-ul Haq. Harkat's major activity has been in Afghanistan and its centre Kabul. Harkat-ul-Mujahideen is the new incarnation of Harkat-ul-Ansar banned by the US in 1995. In 1999 Masood Azhar, a former member of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and a prisoner in India for his terrorist activities in Kashmir, founded a new extremist organisation Jaish-e-Muhammad on his release by the Indian government following the hijacking drama of Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu. In the past two years this organisation has indulged in brisk activity in Kashmir.

President Musharraf announced a ban on Lashkar-e-Jhangavi, Jaish and Teherik-e-Nifaz-e-Sharia-Muhammadi, spoke at length about his intention of bringing about sweeping changes in madrassa education, introduced a permit system for opening a

new madrassa, made an impassioned plea to the people of Pakistan to wage *jihad* against backwardness, ignorance, hunger and poverty and pleaded their cooperation in the reconstruction of Pakistan based upon liberal interpretation of Islam in his 12 January 2002 speech. He said that Pakistan was a fortress of Islam and emphasised the empowerment of the country to serve Islam in the best possible manner.

The real dispute is not of Musharraf's intentions, but of their implementation. After some lull in sectarian violence and 'cross border terrorism' in 2002 everything appears to be back to square one. Musharraf's government retracted from some of its major steps. Hafeez Muhammad Saeed of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba was arrested but released soon. Musharraf has made several compromises with Islamic groups. These extremist groups have shown an infinite capacity to reincarnate themselves under new names, making a complete mockery of the bans and warnings issued by Musharraf. Jaish-e-Muhammad in its new incarnation became Khudum-ul-Islam; Sipah-e-Sahaba re-emerged as Millat-i-Islamia Pakistan, and Teherik-e-Jafria Pakistan, as Islami Teherik-e-Pakistan. They were banned again on 15 November 2003 under the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 and 'the crackdown was launched and successfully completed by sealing dozens of offices and centres set up and run by these renamed parties'. Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, now renamed as Jamaat-ul-Dawa was put on the watch list. The Federal Government proscribed three more terrorist groups on 20 November 2003; Jamiat-ul-Ansar, Hizb-ul-Tehreer and Jamaat-ul-Furqan. These six groups had reportedly flouted the law by changing their names, as under the Act an organisation banned once for extremism cannot function under another name. Jamaat-ul-Furqan is a breakaway faction of the JeM, which is led by Maulana Masood Azhar. Jamiat-ul-Ansar is the renamed outfit of the outlawed Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), which is led by Fazlur Rehman Khaleel. Hizb-

ut-Tehreer is a London-based Islamist outfit, which advocates the establishment of Islamic law worldwide. How long will this game continue? According to the news reports from various sources, the footprints of terrorism emanating from Pakistan are now found across the globe from Latvia in the Baltic region to Turkey to Xingjian in China, to Indonesia and Malaysia in South East Asia to Australia.

As stated earlier an average Pakistani is religious and committed to Islam but is not an extremist or terrorist. Extremists are fewer in numbers and terrorists still fewer. Their political support base was very limited, confined to five to seven per cent votes until the elections of 2002. But they enjoy a brute force of holding the society at ransom and have considerable sway on public psyche. Religious leaders who normally lack public support may find their power multiplied manifold at a critical juncture. Pakistani middle class is still limited. It is reasonably religious and modestly modern. The urban middle class joined the movement against Zia and his Islamist programme but the movement itself proved to be short lived. Once Benazir came to power, it wilted gradually.

Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, widespread anti-American sentiments, growing Islamophobia in the West, a feeling of total 'sell-out' by Musharraf to the US, growing Indian presence in Afghanistan, and frustration over the continued deadlock with India over Kashmir — all add muscle to the religious parties in Pakistan. Will this change in the near future? It is difficult to predict anything at this juncture.

Many liberal and professional Pakistanis fear that Pakistan has now become more fundamentalist and are deeply concerned about the rise in sectarian violence. Earlier it was the state that was fundamentalist while the wider society was considerably free but now, they say, that it is not the case any more. They are also concerned about the damage caused to Pakistan's international image. But barring a few, they seem to avoid taking explicit stand

on the issue that might rock their own boat. Pakistan's politics has alternated between military dictatorship and 'feudal democracy' and has caused frustration among people, economic hardship and social problems, and forced them to take refuge in religion.

Musharraf has aroused *jihadi* anger. *Jihadis* led by Al Qaeda were the prime suspects in an attempt on Musharraf's life on 14 December 2003. In less than two weeks on the Christmas day two suicide bombers made another unsuccessful bid on his life by attacking his convoy in Rawalpindi barely two km from his residence. Musharraf's crime: He had abandoned *jihad* and *betrayed Islam*. His recent initiatives on the issue of recognition of Israel and his offer to abandon the United Nations resolutions on plebiscite in Kashmir have incensed Islamists in the Pakistani army as well as in the public. Musharraf has changed tracks since 9/11. Though he has projected an image of a liberal, moderate leader, his earlier history has been otherwise, says military analyst Hasan Askari Rizvi. As a Director General of military operations Musharraf had overseen the ISI cooperating with Taliban and as the army chief he had masterminded Kargil with hundreds of *jihadis*. Musharraf's new 'nationalistic' policy of 'Pakistan First' is completely at odds with *jihadis'* pan-Islamism.

### *Blasphemy Laws*

A review of the Blasphemy Laws of Pakistan may help in gauging the extent of Islamisation. Blasphemy Laws are a legacy of the British administration. In 1860, the British Government had introduced Sections 295, 296, 297 and 298 in the Indian Penal Code to impose a two-year imprisonment and fine on those who defiled or damaged places of worship, disturbed religious rites, or uttered words intending to offend religious feelings of any community. Pakistan inherited these sections in 1947. In the early years of Pakistan these laws were rarely invoked. In the first 35

years there were only six blasphemy charges under these laws. However, there was a demand for strengthening the Blasphemy Laws from certain quarters of Pakistani society, from the very beginning of the formation of Pakistan.

Prior to the 1980s, Section 295-A of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) dealt with defiling religious objects or places and outraging religious feelings with deliberate intent to insult the religion of any class. It carried a maximum punishment of 10 years with a fine. Section 295-B stipulated life imprisonment for defiling, damaging or desecrating a copy of Holy *Quran* wilfully or of an extract therefrom or using it in any derogatory manner or for any unlawful purpose. From 1980 to 1986, the PPC was amended with zeal to include severe punishment for blasphemy or insulting the feelings of Muslims.

The most draconian addition came in 1986, when Zia promulgated Section 295-C stipulating fine, life imprisonment or death to whoever by word, either spoken or written or by visible representation or by imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly defiled the sacred name of the holy Prophet Mohammed. It defined blasphemy in such a sweeping manner that the law was bound to be misused. In 1990, Nawaz Sharif's Federal Shariat Court amended Section 295-C, eliminating life imprisonment and making death sentence mandatory.

Blasphemy Laws of Pakistan, while purporting to protect Islam and the religious sensitivities of the Muslim majority of Pakistan, are said to be vaguely formulated and arbitrarily enforced by the police and the judiciary often under religious and social pressure, causing abuse, harassment and persecution of minorities especially Christians. In the last decade, approximately 1500 Ahmadiyas and an equal number of Christians have been charged with blasphemy. In 1994, a case was brought before the Lahore Court under this law against three young Christians Manzoor, Rahmet and Salamat Masih. Salamat Masih was illiterate and 12 years old



when he was condemned to death for writing graffiti against Prophet Mohammad on a mosque. Their case received international attention and invited prompt condemnation from the world community. Later of course the court had freed the accused. But in 1998 Rev. Dr. John Joseph, Catholic bishop of Faisalabad and a high profile human rights activist, shot himself dead in the corridors of a sessions court in Sahiwal in protest against the death sentence given to one Ayub Masih for blaspheming Islam. There have been attacks on Christians in Shanti Nagar, Khanewal and other towns in Punjab on accusations of blasphemy.

But it is not only the non-Muslims who bear the brunt of Blasphemy Laws, even the Muslims are not spared by the Islamic extremists for whom even a proposal for the amendment of these laws itself constitutes blasphemy. In 1994 there were rallies and campaigns in Pakistan and even outside the Pakistan Embassy in Washington, against any move to amend the Blasphemy Laws. One of the targets was Iqbal Haider, the Minister for Law in the government of Benazir Bhutto, who was dubbed as infidel and a hefty sum of \$ 40,000 was said to be put on his head. In the same year stickers had appeared in Lahore, invoking the support of the people to find and kill three Christian leaders of Pakistan's National Assembly. One of them was Julius Salik, the Minister for Family Planning. The other two were Rufus Julian and Tariq Quaiser. The call was also to kill a human rights activist, Asma Jahangir for providing counselling to many Christians and other minorities implicated in blasphemy cases.

In the year 2001 the editor of English Daily *Frontier Post* was booked under the blasphemy laws for publishing a 'blasphemous' letter of a reader. Dr. Younus Sheikh, a well known human rights activist was accused of blasphemy for allegedly making derogatory remarks about the Prophet in the classroom and was arrested in October 2000 and sentenced to death by the Additional District and Sessions Court, Islamabad on 18 August 2001. He moved the

Lahore High Court against the death sentence. I recall the protests organised in his support by liberal activists in Islamabad during my stay in the city. On 23 January 2004, a Pakistani newspaper *The Daily Times* came down heavily on the Blasphemy Law in its hard hitting editorial 'Our legal and social extremism' and announced the news of Dr. Sheikh's release. It wrote that 'after having extricated from a legal system that nets people through extremist decrees like the Blasphemy Law, he could not live in Pakistan for fear of his life. The release has also brought exile for Dr. Sheikh, who has had to leave Pakistan for the safety and tolerance of an alien country and society'. According to another source Dr. Sheikh left Pakistan and headed for Geneva. In August 2002, Rukhsana Bunayad became the first ever Muslim woman to be tried for charges of blasphemy law. She was alleged to have committed sacrilege against *Quran* in a public meeting.

It is often argued in defence of the laws that no death sentence has been actually carried out by the law until today. But this is a weak argument, for, those who have been freed by the superior courts were not freed in the real sense of the term. In most cases, mobs took the law in their own hands and have tried to kill the accused. Some of those who were freed have sought asylum in other countries. It has been found that the law is manipulated by people to register false cases against adversaries and rivals. Once a person is accused of blasphemy, the stigma of accusation, and the fact that the burden of proof lies on the accused, makes the chances of acquittal bleak.

### **Army in Pakistani Politics**

A.R. Siddiqui in his book *The Military in Pakistan : Image and Reality* makes an incisive comment. The image of the army in Pakistan preceded the national image and dominated it. The Pakistani armed forces had little in their arsenal at the birth of the nation but they had a highly evocative image of a *mujahid* or *ghazi*

in Pakistani mind. The army enjoyed the reputation and image far exceeding its size and effectiveness, writes Siddiqui. History of the territories that became Pakistan is a history of numerous invasions by outsiders. In the long history of the region different armies have crisscrossed this territory for several centuries and interacted with people both in conflict and cooperation. Punjab remained the main source of army recruitment during the British rule. Therefore the militaristic tradition of this region is centuries older than Pakistan. At the partition army's importance rose with the sudden departure of the majority of civilian officers who were either British or Hindus that caused a major breakdown of the administrative machinery. It was during these difficult days that the army bore the brunt of civilian tasks like maintaining law and order in the time of worst communal riots and unprecedented transfer of population, providing refugee camps, shelter to the uprooted, protection to women and later, management of the evacuee property. The efficient handling of these myriad problems earned the confidence of the people for the army from the very beginning. Apart from the historical factors and events at the partition, Kashmir issue and tense relations with India, delay in framing the constitution, failure of political leadership and very significantly the collusion between the army and Islam have augmented the importance of the army.

Pakistan inherited the British tradition of apolitical army. Discipline, professional attitude and high standards have been the main features of Pakistani army but from the very beginning the army got closely involved with the country's political process. The image of political leadership in Pakistan is tainted. It has been accused of corruption and abuse of power. On the contrary the army's image has been positive and people have reposed immense confidence in the army's ability and integrity and the army has cashed in on this confidence. Each time the army took over Pakistani

politics, Pakistanis looked upon it as the saviour. It is a different story that each time people have been thoroughly disillusioned. But Pakistanis keep repeating the same mistake again and again.

The 'perennial threat' to Pakistan's security from India is the lifeline of Pakistani army. The 'injustice' done to Pakistan at the time of the partition, India's 'duplicity' in Kashmir, India's 'devious act' in the creation of Bangladesh, India's 'deceit' in Siachen and India's 'repression' in Kashmir are the issues that come handy to the army to perpetuate its importance and therefore are constantly kept alive in the political discourse. Kashmir is like a canon fodder for the army and in the future when the Kashmir row is resolved, Pakistani army might have to invent one.

Pakistani army men occupy various civilian positions whether in service or after retirement. Importance and influence of the army is derived from its professional stature alone, but is doubly enhanced due to its handling of many important civilian tasks for the society. *Fauzis* have been appointed to hundreds of important civilian positions. Mubashir Zaidi, in an article written in *Herald*, (reprinted in *The Indian Express*, 24 October 2003) points out that 'from sports to universities to power plants, Khaki runs Pakistan'. Quoting figures from the Pakistani defence ministry he states that the trend has increased since Musharraf took over in 1999. As many as 513 serving military officials have been posted on the top civilian posts since then, and currently, according to Prime Minister Jamali, 658 military men in all are working in civil posts. Ministries, top personnel of prestigious commissions and corporations like National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), Pakistan Telecommunications Authority, and many other offices are manned by army officers. Retired army men have been appointed to the top positions in the University Grants Commission, in Federal

Directorate of Education, as Vice Chancellors of Universities, in National Islamic University, on Pakistan Sport Board, Cricket Board, and Hockey Federation and to many more posts. The list is endless. Moreover army men are involved in business, commerce and industry too, thus exercising a grip over the country's political economy. In fact it is virtually ubiquitous in all walks of Pakistani life — political, social and economic. It plays an important role in deciding the priorities of policies in these sectors and also has a substantive say in the disbursement of resources for social development. Recently Jamali in an interview with three Pakistani journalists said categorically that his government had resolved to reduce army's hold over civilian posts (*The Asian Age*, 25 November 2003).

Pakistani army is said to be the most durable and the most well entrenched institution in the country. One of the factors promoting its overall influence is its almost mono-ethnic composition. It is predominantly Punjabi with their share reaching 65 to 70 per cent and Pakhtuns constituting 25 per cent of its strength. Army's importance is not limited to domestic politics alone but extends to formulating Pakistan's foreign policy. It has gained confidence with its long interaction with the American army. It has secured control over the political and social system through close alliance with religious groups, and used Islam subtly and sometimes blatantly for enhancing its own power. There is one more dimension that adds to the weight of the army. Pakistan is a self proclaimed ideological state, though the exact meaning and nature of this ideology has always remained ambiguous. Protection of its ideology is a vital component of its national security. Pakistani army is the custodian of its ideology.

Pakistani army made Islam an important component of education and training of its men from the beginning despite its high professional standards and modernity. In the 1965 and 1971



wars with India, Islam was employed liberally to increase the morale of soldiers. In the 1971 war when 90,000 Pakistani soldiers were languishing in Indian camps as POWs, many of them took to the path of religion and spirituality for overcoming the frustration and the resultant depression. Studying Islam, reading of *Quran* and learning Arabic helped them to cope with their situation. On release from India they reached Pakistan deeply influenced by Islam. They have contributed in Islamising the Pakistani army in a big way. Later when Zia took over as the Chief of the Army in 1976 he brought to bear his religiosity on the cadres. He regularised and upgraded the post of religious preacher attached to the army units. He gave a new slogan to the army, 'Iman' (Faith), 'Taqwa' (piety and abstinence), and 'Jihad-fi-sibillah' (holy war in the name of God). Zia was successful because by this time the recruitment pattern in the army had undergone major changes. The earlier recruits who came from well to do urban educated and westernised classes were now replaced by middle and lower middle class aspirants from small towns and villages of Pakistan who were enthusiastic about Islam. They were said to be the willing supporters of Zia's programme. Some Islamic organisations like Tableeghi Jamaat were allowed to maintain close contacts with the army. Later Jamaat-e-Islami also obtained this privilege and the importance of Islam in the army grew in leaps and bounds.

Events in Afghanistan since 1979 gave a boost to Islamic elements in the army. Many in the army maintained close contact with Islamic organisation and Afghani *mujahideens*. The ISI was engaged in supplying American weapons to rebels and helping them to plan strategies against the Soviet army. Muslims all over the world stood behind Afghanistan and the Islamic extremists backed *mujahideens*. The retreat of the Soviet army from Afghanistan in 1989 was a moment of glory for the Pakistani army. It was an incredible achievement. It gave them confidence that similar success

stories could be repeated elsewhere to challenge the non-Muslim dominance over Muslims anywhere in the world.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, predictably, American policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan underwent major changes. It stopped military aid to Pakistan and later economic aid too. The US dissociated itself from the Afghan movement and designated a few Islamic organisations as terrorist groups. Pakistani Islamic organisations and the Islamists in the army reacted strongly to this U turn in the American policy. In 1995, during Benazir's rule some radical Islamists in the army were court martialled on charges of having conspired to overthrow the civil government and the top notch army leadership.

But perhaps it may not be fair to make sweeping generalisations about the Islamic radicalisation of the army. The top cadres are still said to be modern and professional and free from the taint of religion. Stephen Cohen who authored a book *The Pakistan Army* almost twenty years ago maintains even today that Pakistani army is not as Islamist as is widely perceived and calls it the 'most cohesive institution in Pakistan'. One of the former army chiefs too believed that Islamisation of the army is more of bogey raised by outsiders than warranted by reality. In his opinion the latter day army recruits who came from comparatively humbler backgrounds than the previous recruits from elite families were more professional about their jobs because for them the army job was a source of livelihood unlike for the latter for whom a career in the army was more a hobby and a matter of prestige. According to Cohen, far from Pakistani army getting more and more Islamised, its political dominance and the institutional integrity remains the chief reason for the marginality of radical Islamic groups.

Cohen admits that it was Pakistani army that unleashed the Islamic forces through radical Islamic groups and equipped and trained them and also provided them with overall political and

strategic guidance, but all this amounted to a 'limited strategy of using radical Islamic groups as instruments of Pakistani foreign policy especially against India'. Aqil Shah, a Pakistani political and security analyst supports Cohen's views. He says, 'the military and the religious right share a set of illiberal attitudes, a deep hostility to India and an aversion to political moderation'. Pakistani army values the support of religious groups. In the words of Musharraf, they constitute the 'first line of defence' in war with India. But in the Military-Islamists nexus it is the military that still calls the shots.

Pakistan army is like a double edged sword; it is the chief obstacle to the emergence of democracy in Pakistan and also the principle barrier to Pakistan's movement toward political extremism. Army has become like another political party, a contender for political power, but a party without any accountability.

### **Pakistan-US Relations**

The most important reason for the US seeking Pakistan's friendship was its geographical position. Pakistani leadership had understood this right from the beginning and exploited its geographical position in Asia to the fullest extent. Pakistan's geographical proximity to the Soviet Union was perceived as 'dangerous' for both the US as well as for Pakistan. Pakistan wanted American help to protect itself from the communist menace that was at its doorstep and the US in turn needed Pakistani help to contain Russian ambition in the region. When the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan visited the US in 1950 he described the two countries as 'fellow travellers on the path of peace and democracy'. Of course the US interest was more in India but spurned by the Indian leadership and by the growing friendship between India and the Soviet Union, the US decided to court Pakistan. As a new nation Pakistan needed solid political support as well as economic and military aid.

By 1952 Pakistan came to be counted as a reliable partner of the US in its war on communism. In those days a story made its rounds in India, which I happened to read some time ago. John Foster Dulles, the then American Secretary of the State in conversation with Walter Lippmann, well known American essayist and journalist, said that Pakistanis were the true fighters in South Asia for they had the Gurkhas. On being corrected by Lippmann he said, they were Muslims. Lippmann corrected him again saying that India too had a large Muslim population. Dulles said that Pakistan would be a frontline state to wage a war against communists in South Asia.

Pakistan was not too happy with the 'measly' American economic aid in the early years of their relationship. But by then Americans had already started intervening in the domestic affairs of Pakistan. In the first few years of the 1950s America's displeasure of the left movement in Pakistan and its hold over labour organisations, mass media and higher education became amply evident. Leftist parties in Pakistan were banned. Pakistani labour organisation affiliated to a pro-Soviet organisation, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions came to be affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions after the establishment of the America sponsored Pakistan Confederation of Labour (PCL) in 1954. Soon PCL started receiving generous donations from the Asia Foundation, heavily funded through American grants, and was provided with various labour training schemes sponsored by Americans. Even Jamaat-e-Islami found itself drawn into the American net. Jamaat's support of free economy obviously favoured Americans' interests in Pakistan. In order to finish the left movement in Pakistan the US unabashedly followed a policy of encouraging and using Islamic organisations.

Tentacles of American influence systematically established hold over every sector of Pakistani life including the intellectual one.

The US not only intervened in the curriculum in higher education but also came to gain control over the students' movement in Pakistan. A number of university teachers were offered sumptuous scholarships by American universities and a select number of journalists from the print media were flown to the US for training. A group of economists from the reputed Harvard University was made available to Pakistani Government for economic advice.

Pakistan joined two US sponsored military alliances in the 1950s — the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954, and the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO) of 1955. SEATO was an alliance of nations to provide defence and economic cooperation in South East Asia and the South Pacific region. Pakistan withdrew from it officially in 1972 as its interest in South East Asia waned after the separation of East Pakistan. CENTO was a mutual defence and security organisation that functioned, between 1959 and 1979, to provide joint defence against possible aggressors and to encourage the economic and scientific development of the member nations: Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. Pakistan's reason for joining these alliances was obvious. It wanted firm American support against India. But whenever it needed such support desperately, it failed to come. Pakistanis narrate any number of examples of such 'deceptions' by the US. In 1962 during the Sino-Indian conflict America kept Pakistan under tab from playing 'mischief' as Ayub Khan was eager to maximise on the situation by opening a front in Punjab while India was busy battling the Chinese forces in the extreme north-east of India. In the follow up of the Chinese aggression on India, US also offered military aid to India. During the Indo-Pak war in 1965 too, US disappointed Pakistan. History repeated itself in the 1971 Bangladesh war when the Americans 'betrayed' Pakistan yet again. Pakistanis also accuse the US of duplicity in dealing with India and Pakistan in its nuclear policy.



Pakistan–US relations have been riding on a roller coaster. Despite the close ties between the two in the 1950s, in 1957 the then American President Dwight Eisenhower dubbed American friendship with Pakistan as a ‘big blunder’. When Pakistan took strong exception to the remark, Dulles in a pathetic effort to save the situation said that if US–India relations were ‘intellectual’, US–Pak relations were ‘emotional’! Once, Pakistan was regarded as the ‘most allied ally’ of the US. In the 1970s this friendship was waning. Pakistanis were furious at American ambivalence and inconsistency. There was a thaw in the cold war, the mood in both the US and the USSR was upbeat and the two had also signed the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT–I) in May 1972 and the talks for SALT–II were under way. Pakistan’s importance for Americans had declined. But the international political situation remains ever so fluid. Russian intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 ended the short lived rapprochement between the two superpowers. Overnight Pakistan became a frontline state. As stated earlier, Zia was rehabilitated. He understood Pakistan’s indispensability to Americans in the new situation. Zia bargained hard. Initially he spurned the American aid of four billion dollars as ‘peanuts’ but after Ronald Regan took office as the American President, Zia settled for the aid of six billion dollars in the next five years and forty F-16 fighter planes for a price. Pakistan in turn promised not to develop nuclear know-how and proliferate it to other countries. For the next seven to eight years Afghan *mujahideens* received uninterrupted American help through Pakistan.

International situation took another turn in 1989. Soviet Union retreated from Afghanistan and within a year broke up. Communist regimes in Eastern Europe were disbanded and curtains were finally drawn on the cold war. Policy of containment of communism was now rendered obsolete and Pakistan’s utility for Americans was

over. In the post cold war years, differences between the two, mainly on nuclear issues, came to the fore. In 1990 economic aid to Pakistan was halted. For the next decade the Pakistan–US relations kept tumbling down so much so that in June 2001 Richard Armitage, American Deputy Secretary of the State called it a ‘false relationship’. Pakistanis were immensely angry and hurt at this description.

There is widespread resentment against the US sweeping across Pakistan. It was evident in the reactions of Pakistanis to 9/11. Yet the same events proved a boon to Pakistan. But even during the Afghan war relations between Pakistan and US were not smooth. When it came to the formation of an interim government in Afghanistan at the end of the war western countries simply set Pakistan aside and took decisions. The terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001 brought India and Pakistan on the brink of a war and gave a setback to Pakistan internationally. When things started looking up for Pakistan, the brutal killing of the American journalist, Daniel Pearl in February 2002 and the killing of the two family members of an American diplomat in a terrorist attack on a church in Islamabad in the following month, saw sea-sawing of the American–Pakistani relations once again. By the beginning of April that year the western media had started indicating its disillusionment with Pakistan. It targeted Musharraf in particular. The *Washington Post* pointed to the gap between Musharraf’s much publicised intentions and the deeds. It also accused Musharraf of retracting steps from the bravado of his 12 January speech. By the end of 2002 Afghanistan had almost faded from the western memory and seemed to be left in the lurch. Pakistan’s relationship with the US appeared uncertain. But Pakistan’s stars were on the rise. The Iraq war brought the two together again in 2003.

Americans still need Pakistan both in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Pakistan is willing to support them on its own terms. Religious

zealots in power in the NWFP call it a 'sell out'. But that may be far from the truth. Musharraf has not been an American puppet as the zealots in Pakistan often make out. As already noted earlier he has proved to be a smart operator. Pakistani journalist Ayaz Amir quotes Ahmad Rashid, well known Pakistani authority on Taliban, who wrote, 'Musharraf is playing a deft game, exploiting his leverage over the Americans while doing just enough to curtail criticism'. Bush does not appear to be seriously concerned with criticism of Musharraf in western media; for Pakistan continues to be a lynchpin in the war on terrorism. Therefore the situation is that 'while the US may be leading Pakistan on a puppet string, tactically, it is Musharraf who seems to be leading them by the tail', writes Amir. But Amir admits that Pakistan continues to be portrayed negatively in the American media that suggests that Pakistan could be the weirdest and most sinister place on the earth.

There is no love lost between Pakistan and the US. Stephen Cohen's comments on the US–Pakistan relationship sound dismissive (*The Indian Express*, 13 November 2003). He trivialises it by saying 'something of a temporary liaison'. He was of course talking in the context of the Afghan crisis. He said there was short-term strategic interest and harmony because Pakistan provided military bases and cooperation and 'we have given Pakistan a couple of billion dollars'. The only objective of American foreign policy has been the protection of American national interest at all costs. It deliberately overlooks the inconsistencies in its reciting the mantra of democracy and promoting the rightist authoritarian/military regimes in other countries at the same time. History shows that totally cussed military rulers are overnight turned into great bosom pals by Americans. American foreign policy is firmly based on the adage that 'there is neither a friend nor an enemy in politics, only interests make friends and enemies'. Pakistanis have learnt a hard lesson. I was given a friendly advice in Pakistan that India

should refrain from getting too close to the US lest it suffer the same fate as Pakistan.

### **Pakistan and Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is close to Pakistan socially, culturally and historically. Yet relations between the two remained tense since the creation of Pakistan. Immediate reason for the tension was the unacceptability of the Durand line, eastern border of Afghanistan drawn with the British by sir Henry Mortimer Durand in 1893. It divides the unity of Pakhtuns of Afghanistan and the NWFP artificially into two nationalities, while the ties of ethnicity, Pashto language and *Pakhtunwali*, a customary code of behaviour have remained fiercely strong across the border. 'The line ran remorselessly through homes, villages, fields, common grounds, and dividing tribes and even families.' The Afghan Government had kept a close watch on the events leading to the creation of Pakistan in 1947. It protested against the incorporation of the tribal areas of NWFP mostly populated by Pakhtuns into Pakistan and demanded plebiscite that was promptly rejected by Pakistan. Vengefully Afghanistan voted against the admission of Pakistan in the UN. Relations between the two countries remained severely strained during the next several years. Clashes between Pakistani forces and Pakhtun tribesmen on the frontier became common when the latter, with the approval of the Afghan government, launched a movement of self determination for the establishment of an independent state of Pakhtuns — Pakhtunistan or Pathanistan.

Afghanistan turned to the Soviet Union for support after the United States and Pakistan signed a military aid pact in 1954. In 1955 the USSR and Afghanistan issued a joint statement advocating peaceful coexistence, universal disarmament, and UN membership for China, and the Soviet Union extended technical and monetary aid to Afghanistan. Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan

changed for the better in the late 1950s. But the change proved to be short-lived. In 1961 Pakhtunistan dispute came to the fore again and relations remained sullen till 1967. Yet during King Zaheer Shah's regime in Afghanistan tensions between the two were controlled effectively. But with the beginning of political turmoil in Afghanistan in 1973 the relations between the two neighbours nose-dived quickly.

In July 1973, however, Muhammad Daud, the cousin of Zaheer Shah and the former prime minister of the country, who was removed by the King in 1963, seized power, deposed the King, and proclaimed Afghanistan a republic. He was killed in April 1978 in a violent coup d'état. The new rulers, first Noor Muhammad Taraki, and later Hafizullah Amin, suspended the 1977 constitution and launched socialistic programmes to the ire of devout Muslims of the mountain tribes, and also of Pakistan. The tribal Muslims rebelled and Taraki and Amin were forced to turn to the Soviet Union. In December 1979 Afghanistan was occupied by Soviet troops and that was the beginning of a protracted international crisis involving the US and Pakistan and other Muslim nations too. Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan was the ultimate danger signal for Pakistan. Afghanistan was a buffer between Pakistan and the Soviet Union that had vanished all too suddenly. It was feared that, if the Soviet Union remained in Afghanistan, then using Afghanistan as a spring board, it would enter Pakistan through the Khyber and Bolan Passes and realise the old dream of Russian Tsars of capturing the warm water ports on the Arabian Sea.

But the rise of Taliban in 1994, in the long run proved to be a bigger menace to Pakistan than the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988–89 led Afghanistan to anarchy, chaos and uncertainty arising out of internal strife among *mujahideen* factions. After the Soviet withdrawal,



Pakhtuns, the majority ethnic group in Afghanistan was marginalised in the new power structure as the government in Kabul was constituted by a coalition of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and other minority groups. Taliban, the predominantly Pakhtun *mujahideen* faction, that emerged from Kandahar in southern Afghanistan under the leadership of Mullah Muhammad Omar was allegedly trained and armed by the Frontier Constabulary, a quasi-military unit in the Frontier Province in Pakistan. The US and Pakistan jointly fathered Taliban. It was the offshoot of *mujahideens* carefully nurtured by Americans with arms and money. Its ideological father was Pakistan. By 1996 Taliban had captured the whole of Afghanistan except the north eastern corner of the country that remained under the Northern Alliance till the American war on Afghanistan in 2001. Taliban regime was outrightly Islamic fundamentalist and overwhelmingly repressive in nature. The Americans walked out of Afghanistan and left Pakistan alone to tackle Taliban. The ISI, the army, and religious groups in Pakistan were involved with Taliban. Taliban regime was recognised by only three countries: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Pakistan. With the American attacks on Afghanistan in October 2001, Saudis were the first to cut off relations with Taliban, followed by the Gulf countries. Pakistan dragged on for some time but was soon forced to disown Taliban.

The enormity of the consequences of Afghan crisis of the 1980s on Pakistan unfolded gradually. It brought in its fold refugees, weapons, drugs and the resultant social and economic crisis despite the immediate economic bounty conferred by the US. Afghan refugees who were earlier confined to the NWFP later spread to Islamabad, Karachi and other places in Pakistan. At one point of time Pakistan hosted nearly three million refugees straining its administrative and infrastructural facilities and stretching its budget to the point of breaking. Though the outside funding came for the

refugees in the initial years of crisis, it dried up fast once the western interest in Afghanistan was over with the Soviet withdrawal. And even when international charity was provided the responsibility for absorbing and settling refugees ultimately lay with Pakistan. Afghanis competed with Pakistanis for unskilled jobs, and indulged in illegal and anti-social activities in camps. Refugee children were a major cause of worry. The lack of adequate facilities for their education drew them into crime at a young age. They were easy fodder to madrassas and religious extremists. Refugee families were often headed by women, with men either killed or left behind in Afghanistan, who for want of any other source of livelihood turned to the flesh trade. The better off Afghanis who migrated to Pakistan with pots of money, at the beginning of the crisis lead a good (permissive) life in Pakistan 'posing threat to Pakistani social values'.

Americans sent massive aid to *mujahideens* for three years, 1985–87. It supplied them with weapons worth 1350 million dollars. Apart from the US, Afghan *mujahideens* also received substantial aid from Saudi Arabia, Iran, China and others that came via Pakistan through the ISI. Obviously all weapons did not reach the *mujahideens*. Many remained in Pakistan exploding the Kalashnikov (AK 47) culture in the country. Kalashnikov was used rampantly towards the end of the 1980s when several parts of Pakistan were in the grip of political violence. Dacoits, students, political activists, and religious zealots who used knives as weapons a decade earlier, had started handling Kalashnikov with ease.

As the Afghan crisis deepened in the 1980s it turned Pakistan into a narco-state. Afghanistan has been traditionally a poppy growing region. As the trade in narcotics gained ground in Pakistan, it became a major supplier of heroin to the western markets. The provinces of Balochistan and the North Western Frontier lying along the Afghan border witnessed brisk activity of drug smuggling for a decade. Even before the Afghan crisis Pakistan had shown

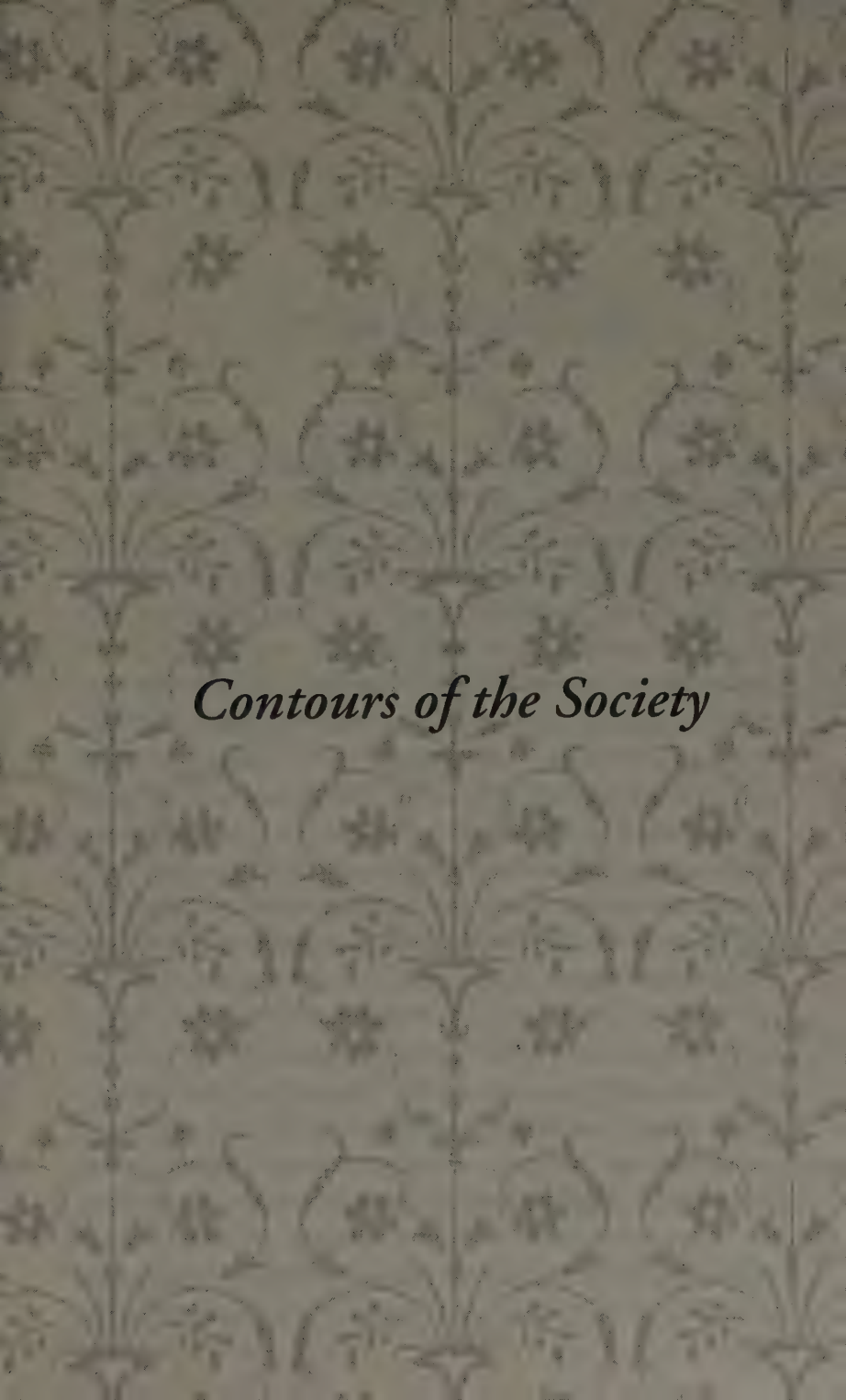
signs of going into the snarls of narcotic trade. Following the revolution in Iran the Khomeini regime had adopted stringent measures to end the narcotic activity in the country. The Iranian dealers were quick to shift their business to Afghanistan for the cultivation of poppy, and Pakistan for exporting drugs to the West. Zia's puritanical Islamic policies pushed the opium trade underground but encouraged the cultivation of poppy and cannabis to finance terrorist activities in India, writes Veena Kukreja. Drugs created not only a parallel (drug) economy which at the end of the 1980s is said to have accounted for nearly 60 per cent of Pakistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but also a class of narco barons and their subsequent nexus with politicians on the one hand and with the army and the ISI on the other. Narco power started eating into the Pakistani political system when the narco barons gained entry into the portals of power as members of the councils of ministers or legislative assemblies. Narco power has threatened the very roots of Pakistani society, for drug trade tends to have complex relationship with the economy, polity, society and crime. According to one estimate there are five million drug addicts in Pakistan.

Pakistan had incurred the suspicion of the neighbouring states because of its close relations with Taliban. Iran and the Central Asian Republics had condemned Taliban. Iran made no bones about its suspicion that Taliban was a Pakistani creation, undertaken jointly with the Americans and Saudis with a view to controlling Iran; while Central Asian republics expressed fear about their internal stability as a result of growing Islamic extremism in their countries supported by Taliban.

Was Pakistan's Afghan policy erroneous? It is a matter of debate within the country even today. Many Pakistanis admit to the gravity of mistake in supporting Taliban. Some had feared Talibanisation of Pakistan. But they could not see a way out for Pakistan. It was

difficult for any Pakistani regime to end its relations with Taliban. It was not just a question of the survival of the regime but also of the internal backlash that might have pushed Pakistan into turmoil. Events of 9/11 provided a golden opportunity to Pakistan. At the end of 1979 as the Soviet troops marched into Afghanistan, keeping the broad national interest in mind Pakistan involved itself in Afghanistan to gain the 'strategic depth'. Exactly 22 years later for the protection of the very national interest Pakistan wriggled out of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan problem is far from over. News from Afghanistan narrates opposite stories about the situation in the country. The *Loya Jirga*, the grand tribal council, held in December 2003 to approve a new constitution appeared to be oriented towards the status quo in the country and though the draft constitution with its thrust towards strong presidency was discussed, it does not address to Afghanistan's war-lord dominated power politics. It is said that all major decisions in the *Jirga* were made by gun trotting men behind closed doors. Taking into consideration Pakistan's, especially NWFP's, ethnic, linguistic and cultural relations, and the sharing of a long border with Afghanistan, Pakistan will continue to bear the brunt of the events in Afghanistan. But the biggest worry of Pakistan will always be India's overtures to Afghanistan. An Afghan official's comment says it all: 'if India gives us biscuits, Pakistan acts as if it is nuclear material'.



*Contours of the Society*





## *Social Kaleidoscope*

On my return to Mumbai I was often asked if I had to wear *burqua* in Pakistan. I was surprised at the question as it came mostly from the educated people. Similarly when I presented a beautiful onyx flower vase to a friend, he was surprised and said sarcastically, 'Oh, they make such nice things in Pakistan!'. It is a universal experience that people's knowledge about other societies is often poor and one sided. One does not know whether to pity the western, especially American ignorance or to react indignantly at the questions they ask about Indian women. Sensational news about other societies travel fast and our opinions about them are conditioned by such news. Often our prejudices about others are rooted in history. In course of time, people undergo transformation — their habits, customs, lifestyle and ideas change but we continue to cling to our beliefs about them because we are convinced about the rightness of our beliefs. Our prejudices about others are rooted in our deep seated intolerance of others. Perhaps we nurture preconceived notions about other societies in an effort to soothe our egos about our society. I think Indian and Pakistani societies are beset with mutual prejudices and with bloated images of their own societies. Often our view of other societies is uni-dimensional. Societies are complex and their understanding is nuanced; and Pakistani society is no exception to it. I have tried to delve into some aspects of Pakistani society and culture; the aspects which interested me. I have paid particular attention to minorities,

women, mass media, education and political economy. But before I expound on these issues it is necessary to understand the diversities and complexities of Pakistani society.

### **Complexities of the Social Structure and Sociology of Politics**

Indians look at Pakistan only through the prism of Islam. India's dispute with Pakistan, concern for internal security, and the historical conditioning of Indians compel them to understand Pakistan only in one way. There is an interesting paradox about Pakistan. It is an immensely pluralistic country yet overwhelmingly Muslim at the same time. While emphasising the centrality of Islam in Pakistani society and polity, its rich socio-cultural diversity in terms of ethnicity, language, *biradari* (kinship networks), and tribe must not be overlooked. Punjabis, Sindhis, Pakhtuns, Balochs and Mohajirs are the major ethnic groups in Pakistan. There are at least 69 spoken and living languages in Pakistan out of which 16 could be said to be major. Among the non-Muslim minorities are Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Kalashas, Parsis, Buddhists and Bahais. Of the 97 per cent Muslim population Sunnis constitute 70 per cent and Shias 20. Others are Ahmadiyahs, Makrani Shidis, and Zikris.

Pakistani society is predominantly an agricultural society and the features of feudal system are more or less intact even today. Land is a major source of wealth. The persistence of *zamindari* system, a flawed system of land distribution, opposition to land reforms, feudal social structure and orientation, the long spells of partyless politics during the Ayub and Zia regime, and relative lack of well developed pressure groups contribute to the burgeoning influence of *biradari* factor in Pakistani politics. There is yet another explanation for its strong hold on politics in Pakistan, particularly in Punjab and Sindh. Family and kin have overarching significance

in Pakistani society providing its members with both identity and protection. This is true even of the most westernised elite. Family is the basis of social organisation and *biradari*, an extended kinship. The dominance of the *biradari* factor in Punjab politics was clearly *visible* in the 2002 elections, when votes were mainly cast along *biradari* lines that brought 23 candidates belonging to the traditional political families of the province in the National Assembly mainly through PML-Q and PPPP. The Islamic appeal of MMA was so peripheral that it won only three out of 147 National Assembly seats from the province.

Punjab has an extensive network of *biradaris* that are diverse in origin, politically powerful and socially influential. Though most Punjabis trace their ancestry to pre-Islamic Jat and Rajput communities, Punjabi society is proliferated with *biradaris* that have their hold in different regions of the province; Arains, Awans, Chaudharies, Cheemas, Gujjars, and Khokkars in northern Punjab, and Abbasis, Gilanis, Gardezis, Khars, Khakwan, Khosas, Makhdooms, and Qureshis, in the south. Lahore and its suburbs are dominated by Arains, while Cheema Jats dominate Gujranwala, and Virk Jats, Sheikhpora. Rawalpindi and Jhelum areas are controlled by Jats, Gujjars and Rajas. A large community of Kashmiri settlers in Punjab has its sway on the politics of Gujarat, Gujranwala, Lahore, and Sialkot districts. They fled their homes in Kashmir decades ago to escape famine, poverty, forced labour and the 'repressive' Dogra regime. Other Punjabis trace their origin to Afghanistan, Arabia, Balochistan, Persia, and Central Asia. Agriculture and army jobs have traditionally held the diverse *biradaris* together and fused them into an ethnically coherent Punjabi community. Sociologists point out that an important aspect of Punjabi ethnicity is social networking among the local kinship group needs as opposed to individual wants. These networks in turn perpetuate not only friendly relations within

*biradaris* but also the structure of the community itself. Kinship obligations are central to the Punjabi identity and concerns. Punjabi domination in the higher ranks of the military and civil service, the federal government and even in the industry is resented by many Pakhtuns, Balochs, and Sindhis, who are proportionately under-represented in public positions. Even the most popular political leader of Pakistan, Bhutto, a Sindhi, owed his popularity and PPP's political success to the support he received from Punjab. Roots of provincialism in Pakistan, apart from other sources are to be found in this all pervasive and unbridled Punjabi domination. Therefore Islam has been employed widely to counter the growing menace of provincialism.

During the British rule, Sindh was reduced to the backyard of the Bombay Presidency. It remained poor and backward except for Karachi whose prominence increased after Sindh's separation from Bombay. Sindh's fortunes changed little after the creation of Pakistan for, it has been made to play the second fiddle to Punjab. Contours of the Sindhi society have been shaped by three major forces; a handful of *biradaris* like Chandios, Jilanis, Talpurs, Khuhros and Bhuttos; powerful landlords, *waderas*, whose stories of exploitation of women and repression of the poor farm labour, *haris* abound in Sindh; and the Pirs of Hala and the most (in)famous Pir of Pagara. Urban Sindh has been dominated by *mohajirs*. Ethnic conflict in the southern province of Sindh between indigenous Sindhis and Urdu-speaking *mohajirs*, claimed hundreds of lives during the 1990s. Traditionally the Sindhi Muslim was poor, backward and uneducated and the middle class barely existed. At the time of independence Sindh was beset with extremes of wealth and poverty. Since the creation of Pakistan Z.A. Bhutto was the only Sindhi leader who had stirred the masses so deeply that they rose above *biradari* links and voted for him and his party. The disciples of Pir of Pagara are reported to have said, *sir Saeen da, vote Bhutto da* meaning 'our life is for the Pir but vote for Bhutto'.



Hindu-Muslim relations in Sindh were cordial and they have survived the trauma of the partition. It is the Sindhi Sufi tradition that bound the two together. Sufi poet saint Shah Abdul Latif is revered by both Muslims and Hindus alike. Despite the fact that Pakistani establishments kept the communal equation unsettled in Sindh, the bonds between the two communities have not been snapped altogether. If along with the Mumbai–Karachi ferry service, Munbao–Khokrapar (Rajasthan–Sindh) rail link is also revived as proposed by India in October 2003 as a part of the package of confidence building measures between the two countries, then it will be a double bonus to the Sindhi community living on either side of the border. Saeed Naqvi, a noted Indian journalist describes Sindhis as ‘an Indo-Pak bridge’.

Pakhtuns of the Frontier Province are the most interesting and intriguing ethnic group in Pakistan. They are said to be one of the largest tribal groups in the world spread over the NWFP, Balochistan, and tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. NWFP was created in 1901 by separating it from Punjab. The province contained settled districts administered by the British and autonomous tribal agency areas ruled by tribal chieftains under the British supervision. In 1947 the British handed over these autonomous agencies to Pakistan to the chagrin of Afghanistan. Successive Pakistani regimes had permitted autonomous administration until they started the hot pursuit of Al Qaeda after 9/11. Afridi, Bangash, Khattak, Mohammadzais, Qazilbash, Ramzai, and Yusufzai are the most prominent of Pakhtun tribes. Pakhtuns claim to be the descendants of Qais, a trusted comrade of the Prophet. Though Pakhtuns are pious Sunni Muslims, Islam is but only a part of their identity. Central to their identity is *pakhtunwali*, the social code of conduct of Pathans. The notion of honour is most vital to *pakhtunwali*. The three essential constituents of Pakhtun honour are *zan*, *zar* and *zameen* — woman, gold

(money) and land respectively; and the loss of any one of them is a matter of great shame and complete loss of face for a Pakhtun. He is shunned and ostracised from the clan and his only option is said to be to go and work as a night watchman in Karachi! His honour demands observation of sexual propriety on the part of his female relatives.

A Pakhtun has three duties under *pakhtunwali*, hospitality or *melmstia*; refuge to anyone, including the enemy, seeking protection; and revenge or *badal*. Violence is a permanent attribute of the Pakhtun society. It is said that revenge and feuds are an endemic feature of social relations and an index of individual and group identity. Cherrie Lindhome, the American anthropologist observes that there are only two types of men among Pakhtuns, powerful and weak. Therefore Pakhtuns inculcate the values of aggressiveness, fearlessness and exaggerated self respect among their children from the very beginning. Commenting on the struggle for power within a Pakhtun family, Pakistani sociologist Adam Nayyar draws attention to the fact that in Pashto there is only one word for the cousin and the enemy. There is a hierarchy of enmity among Pakhtuns. Pashto saying says it all succinctly: 'I against my brother, my brother and I against my cousins, and our cousins and us against our enemy'.

Pakhtun society is intensely egalitarian. There is no hierarchy among the members of the tribe. The leader of the tribe is first among equals. It is evident in their *jirgas*, the tribal councils called to resolve intra-tribal or inter-tribal issues and for consideration of disputes with the government. Although decisions of a *jirga* are binding, within the council all are considered equals. To attempt to coerce another member of the *jirga* is to invite feud within the tribe. But it must be remembered that the egalitarian principle is not applied universally. It is essentially equality among men. Writing in the popular Pakistani newsmagazine, *Newsline*, in the

context of a documentary named *Swara*, Tehmina Ahmed hits the nail on the head. She says, 'that the code of the Pakhtuns, Pakhtunwali, has connotations of courage and chivalry in popular understanding. While it glorifies male notions of honour, it brings nothing but misery to women.' *Swara* is a custom by which Pakhtun girls are given away in marriage to make amends for crimes committed by men. How *jirga* takes cold blooded inhuman decisions regarding women became evident to the world in 2002 when the Mastois *jirga* ordered a gang rape of Mukhtaran Bibi, a *Quran* teacher, as punishment to revenge her 14 years old brother's alleged attempts to seduce an older woman of their tribe considered to be of higher social status. There are also ways of dispensing tribal justice for crime like murder through the tradition of *Diyat* and *Qisas* that allow payment of blood money and revenge or retribution instead of legal punishments awarded by the court of law. These traditions were revived by Zia and made a part of the Penal Code from 1990.

Pakhtun separatist nationalism is now a thing of the past. It is well known that Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's 'Red Shirts' had supported the Congress in the Indian freedom movement and refused to join Pakistan. From then upto 1970 Pathan politics was caught in the conflict between the Muslim League and the Red Shirts. Elections of 1970 changed all this, when the young leadership of the PPP and the religious leaders Jamiat-ul-e-Islami gained foothold in the NWFP. By then the province was on the way to becoming part of the Pakistani mainstream. A number of developmental projects in the province increased opportunities for employment of the youth and now the province's representation in politics and army is next only to that of Punjab. In 1988 a Pakhtun, Ghulam Ishaq Khan was appointed to the highest political office of the country, the President.

Balochs live in inhospitable terrain and harsh environs. A Pashto expression describes Balochistan in the most degrading manner. It is 'the dump where Allah shot the rubbish of creation'. Geographically it is the largest province in Pakistan but Balochs are comparatively a small group. This region has been a part of the Persian Empire a number of times and also annexed by the Greeks as part of Alexander's Empire, Arabs, Mughals, and Afghans briefly, and became a part of the British Empire in the late 19th century. Western part of Balochistan was incorporated into Persia (Iran) in 1872. Who are Balochs? Explanations abound. They could be the tribes migrating from Syria, may have connections with the Kurds, or their origin could be traced back to Medeans or Parthians of the pre-Christian era. Brauhi/ Brahvi, a language spoken in Balochistan, apart from Balochi, is said to have several words from Dravidian languages. May be at some point in history, people migrated from southern India to this region. But this is disputed by some scholars. Another explanation for Brahvi is that a group originally called 'Ibrahimi Baluches' is now called 'Brahvi Baluches'. There are two small communities living on the Makran Coast of Balochistan: Zikris and Makrani Shidis. The majority of Balochs are followers of Sunni Islam, but Zikris subscribe to the idea of Mehdi, revealed Imam or promised Messiah. They are said to be the followers of Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri, a contemporary of Akbar. They are called Zikris because of their practice of constant recitation of the names and attributes of God — *zikr*. Their beliefs, considered heretical, occasionally cause tensions between them and the Sunnis. Zikris do not observe *sardari* system. The other group, Shidis, is of African origin with dark skin and Negroid features, and was brought as slaves centuries ago. Though Muslims by faith, their complexion and ethnic origin has led to their social exclusion.

For many in Balochistan life is nomadic, though some are engaged in dry-land farming and fishing in the coastal region.

Like their neighbours in NWFP, Balochs too are organised in tribal system based on *sardari* pattern. But if Pakhtun society is egalitarian, Baloch's is hierarchical. It is stratified and is characterised by what is known as feudal militarism. A typical tribal structure is a neat pattern of hierarchy — has a *sardar* or the topmost leader at the apex followed by *hakims*, minor leaders, the lower-level tenant farmers, and *hizmatkar*, descendants of former slaves at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Bizenjo, Bugti, Jamali, Leghari, Mazari, and Mengal are some of the important Baloch tribes. I was told that there are also some Hindu and Sikh tribes in Balochistan and most interestingly even a 'Marhatti' tribe. I wanted to know more about the tribe. But information was not easily forthcoming. Then I learnt that they could be the Maratha soldiers taken as slaves by Ahmad Shah Abdali in the third battle of Panipat in 1761, when he defeated the Maratha forces. Baloch *sardars* who had assisted Abdali in the battle got most of the slaves as the bounty of war. If this is true, I wondered how these Marathas live today. What language do they speak? Obviously not Marathi. What religion do they follow? Do they have any inherited historical memories and do they know anything about modern Maharashtra? But I fantasised, some day I would go to Balochistan to study the tribe of Marhattas and make a major sociological discovery.

Two simultaneous ideological trends have been operating in Balochistan. While their social organisation has been influenced by the traditional feudal tribal system that has survived the ravages of time, contemporary Baloch nationalism has taken inspiration from the radical Marxist-Leninist ideology. Ever since the creation of Pakistan there was discontent among Balochs, for some Balochi speaking areas had been awarded to Punjab and Sindh. Relations between the provincial and the federal governments were considerably strained on this issue. Baloch *sardars* demanded that



Baloch areas in the two other provinces be returned to Balochistan. This was the starting point of Baloch nationalism. As the situation became difficult President Iskander Mirza dismissed the government of Balochistan and clamped Martial Law. Balochs revolted but the revolt was suppressed with an iron hand. In 1972 Bhutto appointed Ataullah Mengal as the chief minister of the province under popular pressure. This was the first representative government of Balochs. But within nine months the Mengal government was dismissed on charges of corruption. It was followed by a violent confrontation between Baloch insurgents and the Pakistani army between 1973 and 1977. Balochs were demanding restructuring of the Pakistani political system along confederal lines instead of greater regional autonomy. In 1977 Bhutto successfully suppressed the insurgency. Shah of Iran was equally interested in its suppression lest the Iranian Balochs derived inspiration from across the border.

Despite the differences in their histories, regional cultures and social organisations Balochistan, Sindh, and the NWFP have been united in common cause; opposition to the Punjabi dominance. It is confined not only to the number of Punjabis in civil and military services, or their hold over politics but also Punjab's 'unfair' share in the wealth and resources of the country, and the disproportionate benefits of developmental activity that accrue to Punjab. One of the ongoing causes of their distress, especially in Sindh and the Frontier is the ambitious Kalabagh Dam first announced in 1988 along with Basha Dam and Greater Thal Canal project all on the Indus. Punjab is in favour of the Kalabagh, while Sindh and the Frontier think otherwise. Sindh will be affected most severely as a huge dam on the upper Indus will reduce the flow of water to Sindh. For the Frontier, the dam would raise the water level in the central part of the province causing irreparable harm to its fertility. Kalabagh Dam has become a symbol of

patriotism because Pakistan needs more water and hence more dams on the Indus; but Punjab's gain is the loss for the other two. How will the patriotic puzzle be resolved?

Like history, culture and religion, language plays no less an important role in forging national identity. But if it can be an instrument of national unity, it also confers a distinct identity to a linguistic group. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, spoken by eight per cent of the country's population as mother tongue today. But none of the linguistic groups from the region that became Pakistan ever spoke Urdu. It was spoken by the U.P. and Bihari Muslims who were at the forefront in the Pakistan Movement and who came to dominate Pakistani Government and administration after their migration to the new country. The language of barely three per cent of the people in 1947 became the national language overnight and was instantly converted into a symbol of Pakistani patriotism. There was another reason for Urdu's superior status in Pakistan. Over the years Urdu had come to be erroneously identified as the language of the Indian Muslims. The Hindu-Muslim divide in India was also the Hindi-Urdu divide. Such flawed perceptions continue in India even today. The first shots of opposition to Urdu, after the creation of Pakistan were fired by the Bengali Muslims. Tariq Rahman writes that the Urdu-Bengali controversy was triggered during the Constituent Assembly debates in 1948 when one of the Bengali members, Dhirendranath Datta raised the question of the use of Bengali along with Urdu and English. Both Liaquat Ali Khan and Khwaja Nazimuddin provoked Bengalis by rejecting the demand outrightly. Later Jinnah spoke his mind to Bengalis in Dhaka in categorical terms when he said that the state language of Pakistan was going to be Urdu and Urdu alone. The language riots of 1952 were spearheaded by the students of the Dhaka University. They opened the floodgates of the Bengali linguistic and cultural grievances and consequently economic and political grievances also finally leading to the creation of Bangladesh.

The *Bhasha Ondolan* of East Pakistan had an impact on the Sindhis, Balochs and Pakhtuns who too started protesting against the imposition of Urdu. Punjabis accepted Urdu willingly because it was Urdu and not Punjabi that has been the language of education and literary expression in Punjab. Punjabi had been a language of spoken communication. Therefore Punjab had no problem with Urdu being awarded the status of national language. It is only in the past few years that Pakistani Punjabis have become conscious of their mother tongue and are trying to build bridges with the Indian Punjabis across the border. But many parents complain of the inability of their children to speak Punjabi. Madeeha Gauhar, Pakistan's renowned stage actress, director and political activist and the founder of the theatre group Ajoka, who visited India in November 2003 with her new play *Bullah*, a play based on the life and teachings of Baba Bulleh Shah, the revered saint poet of Punjab, and staged performances in various cities of Punjab observed, 'Punjabi language is growing there. We feel ashamed of the fact that there is not a single daily Punjabi newspaper in Lahore while there are so many (Punjabi newspapers) in the Indian Punjab. We prefer to speak in Urdu with our children even if we are of Punjabi origin. We have to correct ourselves.' Another member of the troupe made a similar observation. 'They (Indian Punjabis) do not feel shy of speaking Punjabi as we do.'

Of the 16 major languages of Pakistan, Balti, Burushaski, Shina, and Chitrali, also known as Khowar/Khawar are spoken in the northern regions. The first three are spoken in Northern Areas, in Hunza, Baltistan and Gilgit. While, Balti belongs to Sino-Tibetan group, Burushaski is classified as an isolated language, and Shina, an Indo-European/Indo-Aryan like most other languages of Pakistan. Chitrali, as mentioned previously has traces of Sanskrit. Pashto and Hindko are the two major languages spoken in the Frontier Province. Hindko is also spoken in parts of the Attock

division of Punjab. Apart from Punjabi, its three other variations are spoken in Punjab: Saraiki in southern Punjab, Pothwari/Potohari/Pahari around Muree and Rawalpindi region in the north, and Chhachi in some areas of the Attock division. Sindhi and Urdu are the predominant languages in Sindh with a sprinkling of Gujarati in the Karachi region; and Makrani is spoken by a small section of Baloch population apart from Balochi and Brauhi.

Of all Pakistani languages, Sindhi is the most advanced. Sindhi literature and the legacy of Sufi Islam in Sindh have contributed greatly to Sindhi identity jealously protected by Sindhis. Imposition of Urdu and the dominance of *mohajirs* intensified this identity. Sindhis came to believe that the *mohajirs* in collaboration with the Punjabi ruling elite were out to colonise and exploit Sindhis. There was complete polarisation of the *mohajirs* and Sindhis after the language riots of 1971. Therefore Sindh became the real battlefield of linguistic politics in Pakistan. In 1972 a bill to accord the status of the provincial language to Sindhi was introduced in the Sindh Assembly. *Mohajirs* demanded similar status for Urdu. A vehement opposition by Sindhis to such demand resulted in major language riots in Karachi and Hyderabad. Sindh politics has been the politics of linguistic fronts. G.M. Syed had led Sindhis under the banner of *Jiye Sindh*, Sindhi National Alliance and many other organisations. Punjabi and Pashto speakers in Sindh had launched the Punjabi-Pakhtun Ittehad to protect their interests. The cutting edge of Sindhi nationalism might have been blunted today but Sindhis are ever vigilant about their rights. Sindh National Council is active and vows to fight for 'national rights and civil liberties of Sindh'. Sindhis are well organised internationally into several bodies, the most prominent among them being The World Sindhi Congress (WSC) that regularly holds international conferences since 1994 inviting active participation from Indian Sindhis also. WSC is one of the most prominent human

rights advocacy organisations for Sindh and Sindhis. The main objective of WSC is 'to create a better understanding among the international community about the disadvantaged status of Sindhis in Pakistan and about Sindhi peoples' struggles for their human rights, including the right to self-determination'. In 2003 the expatriate Pakistani Sindhis have held a number of protests against Musharraf in London, Los Angeles, New York and Washington for his 'anti-Sindhi policies' including his recent clearance to the Indus projects mentioned above. Sindhis and Balochis have also formed a joint Sindhi Baluchi Forum (SBF) that has been protesting 'against oppression and occupation of Sindhi and Balochi nations'.

Saraikis are conscious of their separate linguistic identity and demand a separate Saraiki province. They claim antiquity for their language. It is said to be the language of the Sun worshippers who ruled the territories of southern Punjab nearly three thousand years ago. The demand for a separate Saraiki province was made in the 1960s. The two Saraiki political parties, the Pakistan Saraiki Party and the Saraiki National Party and at least half a dozen cultural organisations continuously stress the distinction of Saraikis from Punjabis. Their movement is not too strong but is alive and kicking. In a couple of articles I read on the issue I found their authors quoting Indian example of the creation of a number of new states to meet popular demands of different linguistic groups and asking why the same was not possible in Pakistan.

### **Minorities in Pakistan**

Despite the ethnic and linguistic plurality of Pakistan its communal profile is 'over tilted'. It is communally a monolithic society where Muslims constitute 96.28 per cent of the 140 million people. Religious minorities in Pakistan constitute 3.72 per cent of the population that prominently includes Christians and Hindus who are almost equal in strength. Sikhs are a small community but



important for political reasons. Ahmadiyas or Qadianis are 286,212 in number, Schedule Caste, 332,343, and others 96,142 including Parsi, Buddhist and Bahais. As observed above overwhelming majority of the Muslim population and constant projection of Islamic identity underplays Pakistan's diversity.

I was often told that the non-Muslim minorities were well protected in Pakistan. I was also told that communal riots rarely occurred in Pakistan. This is true because communal riots normally take place when the minority communities *qua* minorities are numerically strong. With miniscule population of minorities, possibility of communal riots is bleak as minorities lead a self-effacing existence. This is more true of Hindus than Christians in Pakistan. Minorities in Pakistan suffer from physical attacks, social stigmatisation, and psychological insecurity and economic marginalisation. Christians and Hindus are mostly confined to menial jobs. Most Christians work as street sweepers. I was amazed to see Pakistani Muslims practice a kind of 'untouchability' vis-a-vis Christians. The notion of 'purity and pollution' appears to be in vogue even in some offices where the same glass for water is often not shared by the two communities. The reintroduction of the joint electorate system in 2002 elections meant that all candidates had to visit minority communities soliciting their votes in the election. A Christian school teacher from Muzaffargarh said that some 'Muslim leaders even ate and drank with Christians, something they had never done before'. Instances of minority harassment, often violent, have been reported in connection with land grabbing. In the past couple of years Christian groups in Faisalabad, Gujranwala and Khanewal in Punjab have been attacked by 'land mafia'. HRCP has documented numerous cases of encroachment on minority rights.

But more serious than the social harassment is the number of formal, state constructed measures through discriminatory laws

and practices that have bulldozed minority rights, thwarted their integration into the mainstream inviting Muslim violence against them. The problem is not just of overwhelming Muslim majority but of the blurred distinction between the state and religion that reduces non-Muslims to second class citizenry. Discrimination against minorities is inbuilt in the constitution and law. Article 260 of the constitution defines 'citizenship with reference to majoritarian Islamic parameters'. The article first defines a Muslim by an exclusionary definition of Islam, then defines non-Muslim with reference to a Muslim thus defined. Iftikhar H. Malik in his report on *Religious Minorities in Pakistan* draws attention to a glaringly ironic inscription in the main hall of the Federal Ministry of Religious Minorities Affairs of Pakistan that says 'Of course, Islam is the best religion in the eyes of GOD'. Pakistani passport mentions the faith of its holder. In 1992 the Nawaz Sharif government had mooted an idea of indicating religious affiliations of citizens on identity cards too. These cards required for a wide range of activities, like schooling, opening a bank account, registering to vote, voting, and obtaining a passport could have opened a floodgate of discrimination against minorities. Members of minority groups protested and the decision was revoked. The worst case of institutionalised separatism for minorities was the Separate Electorates System (SES) introduced by Zia in 1984 and abolished by Musharraf, to the great relief of minorities, in January 2002. The General Elections of 2002 were held on the basis of joint electorate with reservation of seats for minorities and according to the post election reports minorities were mighty pleased to go back to the old system. Under SES Muslim voters voted only for Muslim candidates while the non-Muslims of each denomination only for the non-Muslim candidates of respective denomination contesting for a few reserved seats. Voters had no right to vote for candidates outside their own religious affiliation. Ten seats were

reserved for minorities in the National Assembly: four each for Christians and Hindus, one for Parsis and Sikhs together and one for Ahmadiyas. SES was also applicable to Provincial Assembly seats. It meant, for example, Christians from all over the country would vote to elect four representatives who might be total strangers to them. The indiscriminate and insidious use of blasphemy laws, particularly against Ahmadiyas and Christians has been already discussed at length earlier. There is one more disadvantage for the women and minorities in blasphemy cases: only a Muslim male can initiate a blasphemy case against an individual, women and the non-Muslims are prohibited from the same. The law of evidence — *Qanoon-i-shahadat* — enacted by the Zia government is prejudiced against women and non-Muslims; it equates the evidence of two women and two non-Muslims to that of a Muslim male.

Minorities are mostly invisible in Pakistani public life. Rarely do they occupy offices of public importance or acquire a name in public activity. Exceptions do exist. Sir Dorab Patel, a Parsi and Bhagwandas, a Hindu had been appointed as the judges of the Supreme Court. C.E. Gibban, the former Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly; Cecil Chaudhary, former army officer and active member of the Human Rights movement; Eric Siprian, a noted intellectual of the left movement; Yusuf Yohanna, well known cricket player; Colin David, artist; Benjamin Sisters and Irene Parveen, reputed singers; are all Christians. Ardeshir Cowasji, well known journalist; M.P. Bhandara, industrialist, member of parliament and a freelance writer; Behram Awari, proprietor of Awari Group of hotels and Jamshed Marker, a diplomat; are all Parsis. There are hardly any prominent Hindus in Pakistan. Years ago Ms. Mangatrai was the principal of the prestigious Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore. Rochiram is an advocate in Sindh whom I had met at the Bangalore Convention, and lately two fashion designers, Deepak Pherwani and Sunita Acharia have carved

a niche for themselves in the world of Fashion. Minorities have little role to play in decision making. A member or two from minority communities are offered ministerial berths as a formality. Junius Salik was Minister for Population Affairs, politically a minor department, in Benazir's government. SES system required him to reach his Christian brethren from across the country that constituted his constituency. But that was difficult. He found novel ways of attracting attention and reaching the constituents. Once he 'crucified' himself, on another occasion he called a press conference in a cemetery.

Though attacks on Christians are more common, the community is better organised through the Church and other activities. Majority of them live in Punjab and are scattered in cities like Hyderabad, Karachi, Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Quetta. Christians are a visible community as they are active in education and health sectors. Hindus are found largely in the interior of Sindh, in Karachi and Hyderabad, and in the vicinity of Quetta in Balochistan. Apart from urban Hindus who are educated and in professions like teaching and medicine, the majority of them are poor, uneducated and in menial jobs. Hindu and Christian girls are kidnapped, forcibly married and converted to Islam. But Hindus are almost a non-visible community, leading a low profile life and normally as a group do not incur the wrath of the majority community. This is also because it is necessary for Pakistan to showcase Hindus to the world. Problems of Pakistani Hindus are directly related to the Indo-Pak discord due to communalisation of relations between India and Pakistan. Whenever hostilities between the two countries mount or the communal tensions in India escalate, Hindu women in Pakistan suffer atrocities and temples are desecrated. However it must be noted that the communal carnage in Gujarat in 2002 in which hundreds of Muslims were killed hardly provoked any anti-Hindu reaction in Pakistan.

Sikhs are found mostly in Punjab and a small number in the NWFP and tribal areas. It appears that the historical antagonism and a sharp divide that came between the Sikhs and Muslims during the partition are now firmly put behind and the Pakistani Government has adopted a policy of cajoling Sikhs. The Wagah checkpost is thrown open for Indian Sikhs to cross into Pakistan for the annual Nanakana Sahib pilgrimage, the Panja Sahib shrine near Hasan Abdal is well looked after, and the Pakistan Government, I was told, was interested in inviting investments from Sikhs residing in other countries. I am tempted to narrate briefly the story of a Pakistani film, *Tere Pyaar Mein* that I watched in Islamabad. It is a syrupy romance between an Indian Sikh girl and a Pakistani Muslim youth. When the Pakistani boy comes to India to meet the girl, Indian army officers confront the girl's father about the presence of the Pakistani boy in their house. A major altercation follows and the Indian army men shoot him down. Before breathing his last the father wonders aloud if the Sikhs made a right decision to join India at the partition. I do not believe I am over reading the latent politics of this statement. Concentrated in Karachi is a small community of Parsis, low profile and well educated, and mostly engaged in business and industry. This is also true of the Bahais too who are middle class and largely in intellectual professions.

The near non-existence of the non-Muslim minorities in Pakistan raises a fundamental question about the Pakistani polity and society. Going by Jinnah's speech of 11 August 1947 it was envisaged that Pakistan would have a sizable portion of minorities, particularly Hindus. Immediately after the partition, Pakistan had nearly 20 per cent Hindus. Today they are less than two per cent. As Indian scholar Bharat Karnad argued at a seminar in Islamabad in May 2003, the sizable presence of Hindus in Pakistan would have had the political effect in moderating the country's politics.



Religiously mixed societies on either side of the border would have prevented what a Pakistan scholar in Sweden Ishtiaq Ahmed calls 'pathological politics' in both the countries. Karnad pointed out that India has no Hindus or Hindu religious and cultural sites in Pakistan barring the Sikhs, therefore, has hardly any stakes in Pakistan. But India has a huge Muslim minority, centres of Islamic pilgrimage and seminaries. Socially too, with the exodus of Hindus, Pakistani society has been bereft of cultural plurality and social variety depriving it of an internal self correcting mechanism. This happens to all mono faith societies. It would do well for certain sections of Indians, who are bent upon converting India into Hindustan literally, to understand the implications of such designs.

### **Status of Women and Women's Movement**

When President Musharraf introduced a widely criticised move of barring non-graduates in Pakistan from contesting elections, nobody could have imagined its unintentional fall out — political empowerment of Pakistani women. Out of 60 women who filed nominations for the 271 general seats of the National Assembly in the October 2002 general elections, as many as 13 were declared successful. This is the largest ever contingent of Pakistani women elected to the general seats in the highest law making body in Pakistan. Add to it 60 women from the reserved seats in the National Assembly and 17 of the Senate, and 139 women members of the Provincial Assemblies. Women constitute a formidable force indeed, in Pakistan's law making bodies, by South Asian standards and compared to the previous Pakistani records. Five women were elected to the National Assembly in 1996, two in the Senate and only one among all the members of the four Provincial Assemblies. Apprehensions are expressed about the effectiveness of these women legislators as most of them are a cover for the politically ambitious

male members of their families. Yet their numbers should not be undermined.

This is only a fraction of Pakistani woman's story. A profile of Pakistani women emerging out of the demographic data is not very encouraging. There are 937 women for 1000 men. Little over 28 per cent women are literate in Pakistan. Women constitute 4.3 per cent manpower in management jobs, 6.17 in professional, 5.35 in civil services, and 2.13 in judicial services. Five to six women per thousand lose life during the childbirth. Worse still are the figures about crime and violence against women, which include battery, rape, burning, acid attacks and mutilation.

Yet in the past few years women's condition has improved slowly but surely. There is a growing awareness about women's education indicated by the swelling number of girls attending school. In socially undeveloped regions like Balochistan and the NWFP too, the number of girls seeking education along with boys has multiplied in the last few years and the number of women stepping out of the constraints imposed by *purdah* has been on the rise in Pakistan. *Purdah* was more prevalent in the two frontier provinces of Pakistan and women's social mobility limited. With the MMA victories in 2002 there are ominous signals emanating from these provinces. Increasing number of women are said to have taken to *purdah* in the last one year in NWFP and girls' education is being opposed by the mullahs. But in more populated and developed provinces of Sindh and the Punjab women enjoy far greater mobility. I don't remember seeing a woman in *burqua* in Islamabad but they are seen in Lahore and Karachi occasionally. Its use is mostly confined to lower class urban women. Some Pakistanis are of the opinion that they had seen more *burquas* in Delhi and Mumbai than in their own country. But Pakistani women are increasingly taking to *hijab*, a sartorial fashion now prevalent in the Muslim world but essentially imported from Muslim women in the West. It is a cultural export from the Muslim diaspora to

the natives. I recall Shirin Mazari saying that *hijab* was the result of globalisation and Islamisation.

Despite the fact that women in big cities have access to education and jobs I felt that their presence in the public domain was limited. In Islamabad one rarely comes across educated, middle class women walking on roads. In fact everyday when I walked to the Institute and back, more often than not, I was the lone woman walking on the road. The only women I saw were those who worked, I guess, as house maids or street sweepers in the morning. Even in the Faruqi market near the guesthouse, which I visited often, I came across women infrequently. Women in higher white collared jobs and professional women normally travelled to work in their own or office vehicles. Once on a Sunday morning I was in Rawalpindi going through old book bazaar on pavements when suddenly I realised there were no women. There were only men around. This was how I felt in Qissa Khawani bazaar in Peshawar. I wondered where all women had vanished. Of course one feels different in Lahore and Karachi. But by and large Pakistan is a very 'male-ish' country. May be I over-reacted as I am used to seeing women everywhere in Mumbai. In the past few years women in Delhi have also become more visible though, until the late 1970s Delhi too was male-ish.

Though social reform in the subcontinental Muslim society was protracted in the early 20th century and the progress in women's literacy moved at a snail's pace, it is said that only four out of every 1,000 Muslim women were literate in 1921 as the Pakistan Movement gathered momentum, a number of Muslim women were drawn into it. Jinnah was particularly sensitive to women's position in the Muslim society and had said in a speech in 1944, 'No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you; we are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within

the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live.'

Women's movement in Pakistan arose out of Women's Voluntary Service, an organisation founded by Begum Rana, wife of Liaquat Ali Khan in 1948, to help in the rehabilitation of millions of displaced people and the refugees after the partition. Women provided not only first aid and food packets but more crucially, emotional support and encouragement to them. This was perhaps the first opportunity for thousands of women to step out of their seclusion. Encouraged by women's participation in the activities of helping the refugees, All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) was founded in 1949. Its immediate objective was to encourage and provide facilities for women's education and health and accelerate their economic empowerment by establishing vocational training centres. After independence, elite Pakistani women campaigned for women's political empowerment through legal reforms. The most prominent among them were Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz and Shaista Ikramullah, members of the parliament and advocates of women's rights, who played a major role in facilitating the passage of the Muslim Personal Law of Sharia in 1948. The most significant aspect of the law was the recognition of women's right to inherit all forms of property. The duo also demanded ten per cent reservation for women in all law making bodies. In 1955 APWA launched a struggle against polygamy which resulted in the issuance of the Muslim Family Law Ordinance covering marriage and divorce, in 1961. The Ordinance is considered as a landmark development in empowering women.

Yet things are not in favour of women when it comes to divorce. In Pakistan men have the right of *talaq*. Women can demand *khula*. Right of *talaq* is substantive, for, a man can demand *talaq* without giving any evidence, explanation or reason. A man may 'confer'

the right of *talaq* on his wife. When a husband gives consent to his wife's application for dissolution of marriage it is called *talaq-e-khula*. A refusal from the husband for *talaq-e-khula* forces a woman to approach the family court. A woman seeking dissolution of the marriage under *talaq-e-khula* has to table evidence for the reasons purported for divorce in the application. No evidence is needed if the divorce is sought under *khula*. Her desire to end marriage is enough ground for *khula*. But under *khula* she suffers financial loss as she has to compensate monetarily or has to lose part of her *meher*. Men seeking *talaq* have to apply for it formally. On application, in the next 90 days efforts are made by a tribunal for rapprochement between the couple. If unsuccessful, the formal procedure for *talaq* is undertaken. Though the law stipulates protection of women's economic rights in divorce, the reality is otherwise. It is said that often women get minimum *meher*. Nor does she receive adequate compensation or share in the property earned after marriage.

Political participation of Pakistani women started rising from the time Fatima Jinnah contested the presidential election in 1965. In the 1970 elections it rose still further. Women made big strides in education, employment, professions and politics in the first half of the 1970s. There have been a growing number of women's organisations that helped in securing for women a steady flow of moderate reforms though their impact on the majority of women remained peripheral. Discrimination and violence against Pakistani women is perpetrated both by law and custom.

Zia's Islamisation drive pushed women into the dark ages. He introduced a number of legal and social changes that reversed many of the advances made by women earlier. They were prohibited from participating in cultural programmes and sports, were prescribed a dress code, could not be appointed in Foreign Service and were totally robbed of their personality through a number of



Islamic laws imposed on the country. Hudood Ordinances were enforced in 1979. These Ordinances are a compilation of five laws dealing with the offences of theft and armed dacoity; *qazf* (bearing false witness); use and trafficking of drugs and consumption of alcoholic beverages; rape and abduction of women; and *zina* (adultery and fornication). Zina Ordinance took the maximum toll on women.

The Zina Ordinance makes adultery and fornication an offence. Under this Ordinance, a man and a woman are said to commit *zina* if they wilfully have sexual relations without being validly married to each other. Prior to this Ordinance, fornication was not an offence under the Pakistan Penal Code, as adultery with a married woman was treated as a private offence for which only the man could be punished. Under the Zina Ordinance, an offence of rape is committed when a person has 'sexual intercourse with a woman or man, as the case may be, to whom he or she is not validly married' and where the act of sexual intercourse is committed without the consent of or against the will of the victim.

The Zina Ordinance made no distinction between adultery (*zina*) and rape (*zina-bil-jabr*). Rape is not considered a more heinous crime than adultery. The demarcation line between the two is so thin in practice, that when a woman comes to the court with a case of rape, there is a possibility that she might herself be convicted of adultery if she cannot prove the rape. The onus of providing proof in a rape case rests with the woman. If she is unable to prove her allegation, bringing the case to the court is considered equivalent to a confession of sexual intercourse without lawful marriage. This is not just a matter of polemics; Amnesty International has pointed out instances of this kind. A man could be convicted of *zina* only if he were actually observed committing the offence by four adult, pious Muslim men, or through a voluntary confession by the man in a competent court of law. The

confession could be retracted before the execution of punishment which results in stalling the punishment, but a woman could be convicted simply because she became pregnant. Under the Ordinance two types of punishments are prescribed. The maximum or the *hudd* punishment is stoning to death for married persons and a hundred lashes for the unmarried. There is also a lesser punishment called *tazir* that is inflicted in the cases where the evidence is given by a woman or by a non-Muslim. Another obnoxious feature of the *zina* was that even young girls could be subjected to punishment as the adulthood in case of a girl is defined as the age of 16 or attainment of puberty, whatever is less.

The Zina Ordinance has overlived Zia and makes women's life miserable even today. The case of Zafran Bibi that aroused a great deal of ruckus in Pakistan in 2002 proves the point. Zafran Bibi, a woman from Kohat was alleged to have committed adultery with the brother of her husband as a result of which she gave birth to a child while her husband was in jail on murder charges. She was awarded a punishment of death by stoning by a sessions court as it found the woman guilty of the offence of adultery. According to the trial court it could not be rape, as Zafran did not raise alarm or lodge a complaint. The burden of the proof for her lack of consent rested squarely on her. Proving the lack of consent is a gruelling task for a hapless rape victim because under Pakistani law she is not protected from character assassination. According to *Qanoon-i-Shahadat* if a man is prosecuted for rape or for an attempt to overpower woman, it may be shown that the woman was of generally immoral character. Later in Zafran Bibi's case the Federal Supreme Court reversed the judgment of the trial court when it accepted Zafran Bibi's testimony and ruled that there was nothing to prove that she was a woman of easy virtue.

The one and only positive outcome of the imposition of the draconian laws by Zia in the name of Islam was the launching of a robust women's movement in Pakistan under the aegis of the

Women's Action Forum (WAF) in 1981. Though its immediate objective was to respond to the implementation of the Islamic code introduced by Zia, its larger objective was to bring about socio-legal reforms and strengthen women's position in the society generally. Though the Forum was led by the elite women its impact went much beyond the confines of their class. Women's groups were formed in major cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. Women's issues came to be discussed at the national level. Women's questions found a place in the manifestoes of various political parties including the religious. Political parties established women's cells within their setups. Women's Action Forum led public protests in Lahore in 1983 against the proposed Law of Evidence, which was completely discriminatory against women as it gave unequal weight to testimony by men and women in financial cases and forced its modification. Another focal point of protest was the compulsion of wearing *chaddar* in educational institutions, media and in public forums. Several women artists defied such diktats. Fundamentally, they objected to the assertion that women and men cannot participate as legal equals in economic affairs.

WAF was equally assertive over the debate on the passage of the Shariat Bill in 1986 whose purpose was to bring all laws in Pakistan in conformity with the Islamic law. While opposing the bill, WAF raised the principles of justice, democracy and fundamental rights of citizens. In May 1991, a compromise version of the Shariat Bill was adopted, but the debate over the civil law vs. Islamic law continued in the early 1990s. Pakistani women were enthused by the activities of WAF. In the 1980s rural women in Sindh launched a movement called *Sindhiani Tehrik*. The two movements collaborated and fought for women's rights in the 1980s. Benazir Bhutto's prime ministership owes itself to women's power created by these movements. Ayesha Jalal, reputed Pakistani American political historian makes a pertinent comment on women's

situation during the Zia regime. She says, 'The relationship between women and the State in Pakistan has been both compelling and paradoxical. After nearly a decade of state sponsored attempts at stifling women's voices in the public arenas and pushing back the boundaries of their social visibility, Pakistan became the first state in the Muslim world to have a woman Prime Minister.' But WAF lost much of its zeal after the Zia regime. In a way, it could be said that Zia was the 'creator' of this movement. The more he tried to suppress women, the more they retaliated with gusto.

Like other South Asian societies Pakistani society is male dominated, traditional, and orthodox about women. It believes that woman's liberation poses a challenge to male dominated power structures at the familial, political and public levels. Pakistani social structure is bogged down by the Islamic tradition, tribal culture and feudal mentality. Therefore violence against women is not yet criminalised fully. It is camouflaged and explained away as customary. This is the most frightful thing about the situation of women in Pakistan. The most obnoxious of these customs are 'honour killing' or *karo-kari*. Under honour killing a woman is put to death by her family members if her behaviour is perceived by them as 'dishonourable'. This custom, originating in the tribal culture is widespread in Sindh and parts of Punjab too. In Sindh it is known as *karo-kari* which literary means 'with blackened face', and in Balochistan *syah kari*, 'black like ink' — *syahi*. In some cases even a man is killed under this practice. Sometimes *karo-kari* is used as a conduit for killings of other kinds. In some cases to cover a man's murder committed out of rancour, rivalry or revenge, men kill a woman from their own family and then accuse the dead man and woman of illicit relationship and conceal the original murder under *karo-kari*. The statistics of killings under these heinous customs is indeed shocking. In 2002, according to a voluntary organisation, Madadgaar, 423 cases of *karo-kari* were reported in

Sindh, 319 in Punjab, 36 in Balochistan, and 45 in the NWFP. Even more shocking is the fact that in a large number of cases the perpetrators were close relatives such as the husband, a brother, in-laws, the father and even a son. The first eight months of the year 2003 reported 631 cases of honour killing, six of them of minors, who were butchered and one of them hacked to pieces. The number of such killings has increased by the year, as the perception of what constitutes 'honour' widens. Even a rumour, or in an extreme case, a man's dream of his wife's adultery, was enough to provoke the use of this lethal weapon against the woman. Women are not even given a chance to clear up possible misunderstanding.

These customs and the Zina Ordinance are easily manipulated to use against women who for various offences such as refusal to marry according to parental choice or enter prostitution, seeking separation or divorce from husbands, and deserting home because of ill treatment and torture from in-laws, can be charged for adultery and then eliminated.

In April 1999 Samina Sarwar was gunned down in the office of her attorney, Hina Jilani, a leading member of the women's movement. Samina was killed at the instance of her parental family, educated and eminent, particularly of her mother for bringing dishonour to the family by contemplating divorce from her estranged husband. Samina's murder gave worldwide publicity to the Pakistani custom of honour killing for the first time. The November 2003 issue of the *Newsline* narrated a spine chilling story of gruesome killings of Shazia Khaskheli and Mohammad Hassan Solangi, a young, recently married couple, who were brutally murdered in Sanghar in Sindh in the name of *karo-kari*. Before they were killed they were subjected to gruesome torture in full cognisance of the town's people — hundreds of whom were present at the scene — and the authorities. The couple's only crime was



that they married of their own choice. The list of women and men killed under *karo-kari* is endless. Pakistani women received a shot in the arm when on 18 December 2003 a full bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan ruled that Muslim girls can marry without their *wali's* (guardian's) consent after reaching puberty and an admission by the couple is sufficient proof of marriage. The consent of the *wali* is not required and an adult and sane Muslim female can enter into a valid *nikah* of her own free will.

Benazir's coming to power in 1988 was expected to give a boost to women's movement and their rights. But that was not to be. Her biggest challenge was to remain in power that called for maintaining a delicate balance among various political forces including the Islamist groups. During the election campaign she had promised the repeal of the Hudood Laws but during her two brief stints as Prime Minister she could hardly keep her promise.

The foregoing narration of *zina* rules and honour killing should not be taken to mean that the Pakistani woman lives in the middle ages even today. She has also been brushed by the winds of progress and modernisation. There is a growing awareness about women's education in Pakistan though the literacy rate for women is still poor. But girls are going for higher education in large numbers. I was told that girls were especially interested in medical education. But the number of women doctors practising after marriage is small. Number of girls taking up higher education in engineering, business administration and information technology is growing. Women join the army in various capacities and fly planes too. The percentage of women in the workforce has increased from three in 1981 to 13.32 in 1999.

The four challenges that confronted women in Pakistan in the early 1990s were 'increasing literacy, gaining access to employment opportunities at all levels in the economy, promoting change in the perception of women's roles and status, and gaining public

voice both within and outside of the political process.' There are some 70 organisations in the country working for women's cause. One of the most prominent among them is the Aurat Foundation of Lahore and the other, Shirkatgah. One significant development in recent times was the appointment of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), a statutory commission, the first of its kind in Pakistan, under a Presidential Ordinance in July 2000 to protect and promote women's rights and interests. It is headed by Justice (Retd) Majida Rizvi. It has recommended the repeal of the Hudood Ordinance. The recommendation has not been unanimous as two out of the 22 members of the NCSW, one of MMA and the other of CII voted for the reform of the Ordinance. Religious parties have promptly declared their opposition to the repeal. Many in Pakistan fear that the NCSW's recommendation would be the first victim of the growing political influence of religious parties in Pakistan.

In brief Pakistani women have fought bravely on several fronts in the past 56 years; against the traditional values of *chaddar aur chardiwari*, the deadly combination of the army rule and the Islamic forces, which during the Zia regime attempted to reduce women to faceless and voiceless creatures, and the custodians of tribal cultures that treated women on par with *zar* and *zamin*. In this struggle women like Benazir Bhutto, Asma Jahangir, Razia Bhatti and Tehmina Durrani have shown exceptional courage in their own fields. Najama Siddiqui became a pioneer of women oriented writing. Maliha Lodhi, Pakistan's former ambassador to the US was the first woman editor of a Pakistani newspaper. Justice Majida Rizvi and Justice Khalida were the first women judges of the Sindh and Peshawar High Courts respectively. Anita Ghulam Ali made a revolutionary transformation in the field of education in Sindh. Fehmida Riaz, Kishwar Naheed and Atiya Dawoor effectively gave vent to the women's helplessness and sufferings through their

writings. Sheema Kirmani and Madiha Gauhar have carried the message of women's liberation all over Pakistan through their theatre companies. Hilda Saeed and Sehal Zia of Shirkatgah and Aurat Foundation respectively, Mumtaz Rashdi of Smajsudhar Tehrik, Nighat Saeed Khan of Women's Studies Foundation, Dr. Zahira Khan of Reid Foundation, Uzma Noorani, one of the pioneering names in the women's movement have contributed substantially to the women's cause in Pakistan and changing woman's consciousness about herself. Today Sherry Rehman, a firebrand member of the National Assembly is at the forefront with many other women in similar positions in a fight for the repeal of the Hudood Laws. And it is not just the educated upper class women who have been showing courage. It was reported that the gang raped Mukhtaran Bibi from a non-descript village of Meerwala showed exceptional courage, resolve and resilience when she was subjected to endless interviews and interrogations during her trial and when she became the object of continuous international gaze for some time.

Like her South Asian sisters the Pakistani woman has a long way to go. There is no single image of the Pakistani woman. She is a reflection of the variety and contradictions of the social structure, culture, geography, and class. The most challenging task before her is not to bring about legal reform alone but more importantly the transformation in the social and cultural mindset that deprives her of her freedom, and let her shape her own life.

## The Media

### *Print Media*

An educated Indian is always curious to know the extent of freedom enjoyed by the Pakistani press. One may safely say that the print media in Pakistan enjoys a large degree of freedom. One need not go to Pakistan to understand this. Articles reprinted from Pakistani

newspapers in the Indian newspapers like *The Asian Age* and *The Indian Express* bear ample testimony to the freedom of the Pakistani print media. Pakistani press has struggled hard from the very beginning in procuring and protecting its freedom. It is only when one is in Pakistan over an extended period of time and reads newspapers regularly that one understands certain limitations of the Pakistani press. But more about it later.

The press in Pakistan is mostly confined to English and Urdu because other language publications except in Sindhi are insignificant both in their numbers and influence. According to statistics provided by *Pakistan Chronology* published by the Ministry of Information and Media Development in 1998 there have been 424 dailies, 718 weeklies, 107 fortnightlies, and 553 monthlies in Pakistan. *Statistical Pocket Book of Pakistan 2001*, for the same year gives different statistics: 277 dailies, 365 weeklies, 92 fortnightlies and 492 monthlies. What is interesting about these figures is that they indicate a drastic fall in the number of publications from the previous year that is 1997. The total number of publications — newspapers and periodicals — provided by the *Pocket Book* for 1997, was 4455 and for 1998, 1344. There is of course no explanation provided for their declining numbers.

Though the provinces of Sindh and Punjab have a history of publication of English dailies and periodicals dating back to the latter half of the 19th century, the history of the contemporary Pakistani Press may be said to have begun from the 1940s. The most prestigious newspaper of Pakistan the *Dawn* was launched as a weekly by Jinnah in 1940 from Delhi. Later from 12 October 1942 it was converted into a daily. Like *Dawn*, four other dailies started publication before the independence. They were *The Pakistan Times* and the *Morning News* in English and the *Jang* and the *Nawa-e-Waqt* in Urdu. *The Pakistan Times* was an influential daily of the 1950s. Sometime later in the 1950s it broke its

association with the Muslim League and with its two Urdu siblings, the daily *Imroze* and the weekly *Lailun Nahar* moved towards the left. Several reputed intellectuals from the progressive movement in Pakistan were associated with *The Pakistan Times* published by Progressive Papers Limited (PPL). Its first editor was the celebrated Pakistani poet and thinker Faiz Ahmad Faiz. Among others who were associated with PPL were Mazhar Ali Khan, Ahmad Ali Khan, Sayyad Sibte Hasan, Zaheer Babar, and I.A. Rahman, all well known Pakistani intellectuals in the left movement. It was disparaging in its criticism of Pakistan's decision to participate in the military alliances sponsored by the US. In 1959 Ayub regime took over the publication of the *Times* and in 1964 PPL was taken over by the newly established National Press Trust. That proved to be the requiem for *The Pakistan Times*. The newspaper known for high quality editing, liberal ideology and forthrightness was the first victim of government intervention.

Differences between the Pakistani Government and the press had started immediately after the killing of Liaquat Ali Khan. The Constituent Assembly was informed in 1954 that 50 newspapers were issued strict warnings in 1952 and 53 papers for publishing objectionable writing or for having trespassed press regulations. Similar action was taken against 39 newspapers in 1957. The Press and Publication Ordinance was promulgated in 1963 that proved the death knell of freedom of the press. The severest blow to press freedom was served by the Martial Law of 1977 which clamped the pre-publication censorship on the press. When the editors started leaving blank spaces in newspapers in protest, it was construed as cognisable offence. Several publications were proscribed and three journalists were beaten up on the street mercilessly. Pakistani Press heaved a sigh of relief when the Martial Law was revoked in 1985. After the 1988 elections, when the democratic government of Benazir Bhutto came to power the 1963 Press and



Publication Ordinance was repealed. Not only the government adopted a liberal posture but even the press that was put on trial, had resolved not to succumb to any repressive measures of any government in future. But democratic governments too intermittently keep the press on its toes. A reference is already made to Nawaz Sharif's treatment of Najam Sethi, the editor of *The Friday Times* in the summer of 1999.

President Musharraf has formally not imposed any restrictions on press freedom. But sometime ago the *Dawn* offices in Karachi were raided. In 2002 his regime brought pressure on the journalists who established a link between the attacks on the Indian Parliament in December 2001 and the murder of the American journalist Daniel Pearl in February 2002. In protest Shaheen Sehbai, the editor of *The News* resigned in March citing undue pressure being brought on him by the management of the Jang group at the instance of the ISI. Sehbai accused the group of forcing policy decisions on him quoting government requirements, failing which he and three other journalists were to be sacked.

Among the English newspapers I personally preferred *Dawn* over the others. It has a quality of serious writing that other newspapers lacked. Among its regular writers are Ayaz Amir, M.H. Askari, M.P. Bhandara, Ardeshir Cowasji, Irfan Hussain, M.B. Naqvi and Fazlur Rahman. Each of them has an inimitable style of his own. I was familiar with their writings before going to Pakistan and I read their articles with interest even now. In fact I have preserved many of their articles for future reference. I enjoyed going through the Sunday edition of *Dawn*. Printed on ordinary paper (newsprint), unlike glossy art paper supplements of some Indian newspapers, it covered art, music and culture in depth. Every Tuesday *Dawn* brings out another quality supplement, 'Books and Authors', that has long excerpts from published books or forthcoming ones, book reviews, write ups on Pakistani and foreign

authors, and information on Urdu publications. It is a comprehensive supplement providing information about the world of books.

*The News International*, in my opinion, tends to be spicy in its headlines, news presentation and articles. On an average it publishes four to five articles on political issues daily, which I felt were repetitive, devotes three to four pages for international news and one page each for news from Kashmir and Afghanistan. Bollywood gossip occupies a fair amount of space in its Sunday supplement. *Nawa-e-Waqt's* English sibling *The Nation* has a special page on Kashmir. Generally the only news about Kashmir is: 'atrocities of the Indian forces in Kashmir'. *The Friday Times* is a weekly tabloid. It combines serious writing with a peppery style. I found one advantage in this weekly. It gives snippets of all types of writings on India; funny, mischievous, venomous, condemning 'manipulative' Hindus, and many more things translated from the Urdu press. I found the weekly both informative and entertaining. In July 2001, a new weekly tabloid, *The Independent* and from March 2002 a new daily, *The Daily Times* were launched from Lahore.

Pakistani newspapers are exorbitantly expensive. Buying more than one newspaper is a real indulgence. During my stay in Pakistan the *Dawn* and *The News* were sold at Rs. 13 and Urdu *Jang* at seven. The *Herald* and the *Newsline*, two popular monthly news-magazines cost Rs. 60 and 75 each. There is plenty to read in newspapers as advertisements are few and unattractive too. That makes Pakistani dailies 'arid'. Normally I am critical of *Bombay Times*, a daily supplement of the *Times of India* (TOI) in Mumbai for its frivolity. But in Pakistan whenever I got to see Indian newspapers in the Institute the first thing that I picked up was *Delhi Times*. (Institute received the Delhi edition of the TOI.) Pakistani English dailies also provide ample space for readers' letters.

They were a good source for understanding the nuances of mundane life in Pakistan and the Pakistani psyche. I found readers' letters in *The News International* particularly interesting. Its readers asked all sorts of amusing questions from whether nail polish is acceptable to Islam, to who authorised General Musharraf to become the President of Pakistan? There was a letter berating Indian actresses' physical exposure on the screen with amusing heading 'Indian navel force'. Many a reader offered good wishes to the Agra Summit as many others expressed scepticism about its outcome. One thing I noticed during the Summit; while the Indian media — print and audio-visual — was euphoric about the Summit, Pakistani newspapers were restrained and serious in their comments hoping for the best.

No account of the Pakistani press could be complete without mentioning Pakistan's unique weekly newspaper, the *Outlook* started by Iqbal Hasan Burney in 1962 as 'a journal of opinion'. Commenting on the nature of the journal, M.H. Askari wrote it was a response 'to the challenge of galloping autocracy in Pakistan and the wanton rejection of the democratic system through their machinations by an elite of civil and military bureaucrats'. Its closure was 'engineered' in 1964 during the Ayub regime. With the advent of the democratic regime under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Burney re-launched *Outlook* in 1972 but was forced to close it down again in 1974.

My acquaintance with the Urdu newspapers was limited to their visual impact. I learnt the Urdu script and I could read and write alphabets individually. But I found Urdu writing so complicated that I was really intimidated by it. So I could never read Urdu newspapers. I simply glossed over them. Sometimes with Nasreen's help I made attempts to read headlines and news headings and would soon get exasperated. I gathered that most of them professed staunch views on many things and were normally

anti-India. I found something very intriguing about the Urdu newspapers. In the space provided for day, date and month below the masthead, some of them also published Hindu months as *Chait*, *Besakh*, *Jeth*, *Sawan*, *Bhado* and so on. On making enquiries I was told that Pakistani rural folks identify seasons according to the Hindu calendar. Their familiarity with the Arabic calendar is normally confined to the month of *Ramazan*. In Pakistan the monsoon is described as *Sawan-Bhado*.

Apart from the formal encroachments on the freedom of the press by various establishments from time to time, the informal constraints on the Pakistani press cause equal concern. Religious political parties and groups, and extremist organisations are highly sensitive to criticism and do not hesitate to strike journalists or newspaper offices. The remnants of the feudal social structure, social and political influence of the mullahs, shrunken sphere of social activity during the successive military regimes that tends to permeate the society even during normal times generating intolerance, and the constant fear of the abuse of the blasphemy laws impose substantial constraints on the freedom of the press. Consequently the culture of dissent and intellectual opposition has remained rather weak in Pakistan. All this puts limitations on the freedom of expression. Criticising the Quaid — Jinnah — is strictly prohibited and the Pakistan Ideology is a holy cow. Any criticism of either is tantamount to blasphemy. Though Pakistanis tend to be highly self-critical, there is no unflinching criticism of an individual or event. Also a thorough follow up of an issue is conspicuous by its absence. After the Tehelka expose revealing the malaise in the Ministry of Defence in India in 2001, I recall an article by Ayaz Amir, wondering if a Tehelka was ever possible in Pakistan. I felt many newspaper articles are written in a general way. There are a number of articles on issues like democracy and human rights, written in crisp language but saying little. Issues

are rarely discussed in depth; writings tend to be descriptive and hence devoid of any substantive comment. Moreover most of the articles are oriented to political events. Rarely does one find serious articles of socio-cultural significance or writings that trigger a prolonged debate on such issues in the society. Of course exceptions do exist. It must also be noted that when it comes to discussing foreign policy of the country, Pakistani press is highly critical and spares none.

*Herald* and *Newsline* make up for the limitation of newspapers to a large extent. *Herald* is published by the *Dawn* group and *Newsline* is run by women. Its founder editor was Razia Bhatti and is currently edited by Rehana Hakim. Both are big sized bulky magazines offering lot of interesting information to the readers that may not be easily found elsewhere. I have used these magazines for collecting information, and in depth analysis of various subjects like madrassas, *jihad*, Shia-Sunni violence, scams of various kinds, election results of 2002 and even Dawood Ibrahim. Interviews with prominent people, art and culture, *haute couture* in Pakistan, book and film reviews including those of Hindi movies appear regularly in these magazines. They provide a comprehensive picture of Pakistani polity and society. In fact I would recommend them to anyone interested in understanding Pakistan comprehensively.

### *Electronic Media*

Pakistan started TV transmission from two centres in 1964. By 1998 PTV programmes relayed from five centres covered 87 per cent of the population. PTV is controlled by the government, therefore looking for imagination and variety in PTV programmes is futile. In 1989 Shalimar Television Network (STN) was started by Pakistan Government. STN telecasts programmes are made by a private company, Network Television Marketing. The STN



channel that was initially available in three cities has now reached more than 10 cities. By the 1990s, PTV was hit by financial mismanagement, suffered heavy losses and was cracking under overwhelming debt. Its popularity among viewers had nosedived and worse still, it had begun to lose advertising revenue to Hindi channels from India. To overcome the crisis in the electronic media the Nawaz Sharif government launched PTV World in 1998. PTV World too could not meet the challenge of increasing globalisation and market forces. Finally the Musharraf government was compelled to approve an ordinance permitting independent electronic media in January 2002. Today, two years later, Pakistanis are delighted to have access to several private channels such as GEO, Indus Vision, and ARY Digital among others.

According to a Pakistani commentator the very reason for starting television in 1964 is to be found in Ayub Khan's recognition of the medium's value in promoting his image and garnering support for his second term in office. This set the tone for the future regimes of Pakistan. Successive governments have used PTV as a propaganda tool. But with the opening up of electronic media several new political shows are telecast on all channels including the PTV. Some of the new programmes such as 'News Night' on PTV, 'Do Toak', 'Such Kya Hai' and 'Khuli Baat' on Indus Vision, and P.J. Mir's interviews with politicians on ARY Digital are said to be immensely popular with viewers. The latest sensation in the electronic media is the TV Drama 'Umrao Jaan Ada', billed to be the most expensive TV production as yet, on GEO.

During my stay in Pakistan a controversy raged over PTV's language policy. PTV telecasts programmes in Urdu, English, all provincial and some local languages too, but the complaint was that not all provincial and local languages got adequate representation. The Pashto speakers especially were irked by the fact that the Middle East Prime Time on PTV World had

programmes only in Urdu, English and Punjabi giving no representation to Pashto and other languages. Pakhtuns are said to be the largest ethnic group among the expatriate Pakistanis in the Gulf and they felt totally neglected by the Middle East Prime Time.

I found PTV dramas (serials, in India) realistic, with a strong storyline and screenplay and well directed, but tediously slow moving, lackluster and with poor production quality. On the positive side I would say they were not long winding and endless, running into hundreds of episodes like Indian TV serials. I had liked a serial based on Urdu short stories; stories that matured through ordinary day-to-day events conveying deep meaning and making serious comment on human life like the short stories of Premchand. There was also a serial running on some historical episode of the 19th century. But programmes were limited and in a programme based on film music the same songs were repeated so often that I almost learnt some of them by heart. Variety was conspicuously absent in music programmes, whether classical or pop. But in Urdu pop I liked two songs, picturised on Lahore and Karachi. They were well produced and highlighted the distinct character of each city. I liked a ghazal programme by Tahira Sayyad, daughter of the celebrated ghazal singer Malika Pukhraj. But otherwise PTV had a dearth of good programmes and it was often compensated by discussion programmes, some of which I found useful but others utterly boring. PTV news bulletins were nauseatingly one-sided, focused more on individuals than events. They mostly highlighted government policies, people in power and highly placed officials and without exception laced with a zing of Kashmir. I suspected that often they rehashed the same old clippings on Kashmir.

It is said that the new private channels are preferred over the international news channels like CNN and BCC. That is obvious because the latter covers Pakistan peripherally with issues related

to Pakistan that have international significance. But the private channels of Pakistan show Pakistan in detail. In the discussions on ARY, INDUS NEWS and GEO, Pakistanis get opportunities to express their views and grill their rulers. The problem persists with the entertainment programmes. Pakistanis lap up Indian channel programmes like anything because they are 'bold and glamourised'. They have been popular in Pakistan ever since satellite transmissions started transcending national boundaries. Even before the satellite invasion, Lahoris had the privilege of watching the historic Hindi serial of the 1980s, *Buniyad* that depicted the saga of a family on the backdrop of the partition. It is said that *Mahabharat* too had become popular in Lahore. There has always been a sizable Pakistani audience for family 'soap operas' like *Ghar Ek Mandir*, Amitabh Bachchan's *Kaun Banega Karorpati* that was hugely popular in Pakistan with audience in full empathy with contestants. Zee TV's news bulletins were once popular in Pakistan. But the channel's popularity waned during the Kargil war as its news bulletins were deemed to be one-sided by Pakistanis. Since December 2001 Indian channels and Star TV have been banned in Pakistan with a view to protecting Pakistanis from 'vile Indian propaganda'. People were said to be unhappy with the ban. But those who had digital decoders on their individual dish antennas continued watching Indian programmes. The ban had made even the advertisers unhappy because their business suffered as the PTV programmes were unpopular with large sections of Pakistani audience and the private channels had just appeared on the entertainment scene.

The ban on Indian channels and the introduction of a number of new private channels has not ended Pakistani craze for the Indian TV programmes. The ban worked alright for a few months. There appeared to be a consensus among Pakistanis that venomous Indian propaganda invading Pakistani drawing rooms must be stopped. But it is difficult to sustain 'patriotic zeal' for long. The resolve

proved short-lived. An article in *Herald Annual 2002* makes interesting reading in this connection. It says that detesting India for its arrogance and military jingoism was one thing but watching *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, one of the most popular serials on an Indian channel, is another matter altogether. It seems another serial *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki* is so popular in Pakistani homes that regardless of the situation on the border, the magazine reports, thousands of housewives choked the telephone lines of cable operators forcing them to restart showing Indian channels. The more interesting part of the story is that there was a covert nod from the authorities, and the cable operators were prudent enough not to air any Indian channel in the cantonment area. Worst still, it appears, is that the newly introduced Pakistani channels are just trying to copy Indian channels to beat the popularity of the latter. I wonder why it happens. There are plenty of good literary works and talent available in Pakistan. In fact using Pakistani talent the electronic media can help in promoting national cultural identity of Pakistan that has remained evasive for long. I remember times, decades ago, when Pakistani dramas were popular among the discerning audiences in India.

Islam looms large even on the electronic media. Each channel devotes at least 10 per cent of its time to Islamic programmes to gain legitimacy and counter the objections of the religious groups, who want to chastise the TV channels that spread '*fabashi* and *uryaani*' (obscenity and shamelessness) through their programmes. The problem is more ticklish in the NWFP where the MMA Government has passed a Shariat Law, and directed the regional PTV station in Peshawar to focus more on religious programmes and give them more air time. Minority religions hardly enjoy any time slots in these programmes.

Proliferation of new channels has forced PTV to spruce up its own house. It has expanded its activities rapidly in the past couple of years. It still has the coverage of wide-ranging area. According

to the study conducted by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), PTV-1 covers 38 per cent of the area catering to 86 per cent of the population. PTV World, a news and current affairs channel covers 29 per cent of the area and caters to 75 per cent of the population. Its news channel service covers some eight per cent of the area with 40 per cent of the population. It also targets viewers in South Asia and the Middle East. A new channel, PTV National was launched in June 2003 that transmits regional programmes. Prime TV telecasts PTV dramas and documentaries for the people, especially Pakistanis living in Europe.

All in all, opening up of the electronic media has been welcomed in Pakistan. Its impact will have to be assessed only in the long run. Its most important impact will be presumably on the opening of the Pakistani society in three ways. It may reduce the socio-cultural stranglehold of the mullahs, may contribute to the strengthening of political dissent through a variety of politics oriented programmes and eventual democratisation of the society, and may provide varied and qualitative entertainment programmes for audiences.

### *Advertising*

Advertising in Pakistan has changed considerably in the past two years. This is evident from the news magazines and newspapers. It is ironical that while the mullahs in Pakistan, particularly in the NWFP are blackening the faces of women on the billboards, fashion models in *Herald* and *Newsline* are increasingly wearing revealing dresses with halter necks, spaghetti straps, and even skimpy bikinis. Proliferation of television channels in Pakistan has opened up new vistas for the corporate world and multinationals through sponsorship of programmes. This in turn has brought about rapid changes in the advertising world. Two years ago, as I saw it, the world of advertising was limited and backward, both in concept



and technology. This is the result of the suppressed social and cultural ethos. Even today it is difficult to predict which commercial will be objected by whom, when and why. Somebody had remarked that advertising in Pakistan is like walking on a ground infested with mines. Some years ago a billboard advertising Jazz mobile on a main road in Karachi was set on fire because the model was wearing a sleeveless outfit. A press advertisement of Habib Oil caused commotion a couple of years ago because it showed a mother kissing a daughter. Mobile phones or oil are innocuous products. Pakistani advertising firms do tightrope walking while preparing copies for publicising contraceptives, lingerie, sanitary napkins or issues like AIDS that need public education. A couple of years ago Wahedna D.N. B. & B's TV commercial of Procter and Gamble's 'Always' sanitary napkins drew considerable flak. Hundreds of letters of protest were sent to PTV. Ministry of Religious Affairs was asked to intervene. This was despite the fact that the Pakistan Censor Board had granted clearance to the commercial in advance. Urdu newspapers played a big role in blowing up this controversy. On the one hand they published the controversial advertisement and on the other, also wrote editorials condemning it along with the publication of hundreds of letters protesting against it.

Opposition to 'bold' copies is understandable. But even the remotely suggestive ones meet with strong disapproval from certain sections of the society. An advertisement for lingerie made by an agency named Circuit was censored. Actually the billboard showed only the face of the model. But its punch line 'Fashion and so much more' created all the trouble. 'Jockey' brand of undergarments displayed their products on live models. But that was sacrilegious. When it was opposed, the advertising agency made models of sticks and wires and displayed the product.

The biggest challenge faced by advertisers is making copies for publicising contraceptives. A 'pill' could be mentioned but not its purpose. AIDS commercial is not supposed to talk about sex, or

contraceptives or permissiveness. Therefore the entire AIDS campaign revolves round precaution in blood donation or transfusion, the use of a new needle and so on. Educative and purposive advertising has been hit badly due to narrow notions of decency and vulgarity arising out of fanatical and puritanical ideas of religion propagated by certain groups.

### **Education and Intellectual Activity**

Levels of literacy, educational progress, quality of higher education and research are measures of social development of a nation. Education is also an effective means of nation building. Pakistan happens to be the least literate nation in the most illiterate region in the world, South Asia. According to the 1998 statistics, percentage of literacy was 38.9. But the Economic Survey of 2002-2003 places it at 51.6. Among the SAARC countries Pakistan is the only nation whose expenditure on education declined constantly throughout the decade of the 1990s.

In the past 56 years Pakistan has had a number of educational policy documents. A quick survey of these policies reveals that their primary intent has been on the preservation, furtherance and inculcation of Islamic values among children. Educational policies in Pakistan appear to have been consumed by Islam and Islam alone. The First Educational Conference called in 1947 emphasised that Pakistani educational system would be inspired by Islamic ideology. According to the recommendations of the National Commission for Education appointed during the Ayub rule in 1959, responsibility for primary education was transferred to the provinces. The Second Plan again reiterated the focus of educational policy on 'Islamic Studies and Religious Education'. The main objective of the New Education Policy announced in 1969 was stated to reduce the gap between the madrassa education and the general system of education. Bhutto regime brought about major

changes in education policy by nationalising education and making it a fundamental right. But the policy remained committed to designing curricula compatible, among other things, to the basic ideology of Pakistan. Education was a major component of Zia's Islamisation drive. In 1977 he called the National Education Conference with a view to bringing education in line with Pakistani faith and ideology. Education was a means of turning children into 'good Pakistanis and good Muslims' imbibing the ideals and principles of Islam. Some of the far reaching changes brought about by Zia's educational policy were making the subject of 'Islamiyat' compulsory in schools and colleges up to graduation, compulsory teaching of Arabic in all schools to students of all religions, emphasis on the ideology of Pakistan in the curriculum and encouragement to madrassa education by establishing equivalence between madrassa certificates and university degrees. Commenting on the nature of Zia's educational policy Khwaja Ashraf who was a college teacher during the Zia regime and later migrated out of Pakistan points out that 'at the intermediate level, Zia got removed all the references to the evolution and origin of species from Biology courses and chapters related to time and space and astronomy from Physics courses. He removed selections of writers from Urdu courses that developed critical thinking among students and replaced them with those that projected religious and submissive outlook'. Nawaz Sharif's government was firmly committed to Islamist agenda in education and made no change in Zia's policies as far as the thrust towards Islamisation of education was concerned. The National Educational Policy 1998–2010 is an ambitious document prepared by the Sharif government, aimed at strengthening the ideological frontiers of Pakistan based on Islamic teachings and to equip the nation with requisite knowledge and skills.

Despite nationalising education and making the right to education a fundamental right, their impact on education system

remained marginal. The main reason for this was not so much the paucity of funds, though allocation for education has always remained poor, but the lack of commitment to education by Pakistani regimes. Education was nationalised but it did not lead to corresponding increase in peoples' participation in the educational process. The feudal and the orthodox religious elements in the society have opposed both the spread and the qualitative improvement of education, for they feared that such development could become a threat to their hold over society. Educational policies were announced from time to time but suffered from the lack of effective implementation. In 1986–87 under a five point programme a new pattern of schools, 'Nai Roshani' was launched to impart free education to children between the age of 10 and 14. But it seemed to have achieved little. This is not to say that the education sector has not expanded in Pakistan. Literacy rate has gone up from 16 per cent in 1951 to 51.6 per cent in 2003. The number of primary schools increased from about eight thousand in 1947 to around 170,000 in 2003. Gross enrolment at this level increased from 770,000 to about 20 million. Pakistan began with two universities in 1947, one at Dhaka and other at Lahore. Today Pakistan has 45 universities and nine degree awarding institutions in the public sector, and 31 and 15 respectively in the private sector.

Though presently Pakistan is at the 89th place in UNESCO's Education for All Development Index, Musharraf's military government has undertaken an ambitious plan to reform education sector in every respect through the Task Force set up in 2001 and Education Sector Reform (ESR) Action Plan of 2002. The main thrust of the Reform is on increasing literacy and modernising education and most importantly on advancing gender equality in education. Under the Education Sector Reforms 2001–05, the National Literacy Campaign envisages making 13.5 million people

literate to enhance the literacy rate to 60 per cent by 2005. The Compulsory Primary Education Act has also been promulgated. A Virtual University (VU) has been established as a top priority project of the Ministry of Information Technology (IT), to exploit the potential of IT as a key contributor to the socio-economic development of Pakistan. VU imparts IT education through TV and the Internet thus replacing the conventional method of classroom teaching. The Model University Ordinance has been approved. IT facilities have been provided to the universities. Higher Education Commission has been set up to formulate policies, guiding principles and priorities for higher educational institutions for the promotion of socio-economic development of the country. Despite the impressive looking reforms proposed there is a seething discontent in Pakistan's higher education sector. There is a fear that privatisation of higher education may deprive most middle class students of university education. Many teachers and students are said to be wary of these reforms and see the Model University Ordinance as a conspiracy of the World Bank that will make education a saleable commodity in Pakistan.

There are three types of schools in Pakistan. Government schools cater to nearly nine million children, preparing them for the matriculation examination conducted by various boards. Curricula for these schools are prepared by the Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education and the textbooks are prepared by the Provincial Textbook Boards under the guidelines of the Wing. Then there is a large number of schools in the private sector providing education to another five million students, children of mostly well to do parents. Beacon House is a big chain with schools spread across the country. Education imparted through these schools is based on the British system with 'A' or 'O' level examinations. There is also a provision that permits students to receive education in government schools till the ninth standard



and then take an A or O level examination through self-study. And there is the much maligned madrassa system catering mostly to poor students. Failure of successive Pakistani Governments to make adequate provisions for the primary education is one of the major causes for the proliferation of madrassas. Poor students get not only free education but also other facilities that attract poor parents to this system. Despite Musharraf's resolve to curb the numbers and regulate the functioning of madrassas, the news is that they are proliferating. Though madrassas have been accused of combining traditional Islamic education with militancy that churn out a deadly mix of narrow vision and irrationality, there are many who are trying to combine it with modern education in maths, science, English and computers. Some like Mubarak Ali suggest introduction of social sciences education too so that it would help in 'opening the minds' of the students.

Several Pakistani educationists believe that a major problem with government school education is the curricula and textbooks, particularly in the subject of Social Studies, Pakistan Studies, Civics, English and Urdu. Surprisingly the Zia legacy in textbooks by and large still remains untouched and Pakistani children continue to learn distorted history even today. Pakistani textbooks have reduced history to fiction and mythology. But in the past few years there is awareness created about these mammoth distortions.

The first shots were fired by the well known Pakistani historian, Professor Khurshid Kamal Aziz who wrote a critique of history (*Social Studies* in English, *Mu'ashrati Ulum* in Urdu) textbooks used in Pakistan, under a provocative title *The Murder of History in Pakistan* in 1993. Any detailed discussion about Professor Aziz's findings is uncalled for within the scope of this book, but I can't resist making a reference to perhaps the most hilarious statement in history writing in Pakistan, made in a fifth standard *Mu'ashrati Ulum* book in Urdu (p.139) of the NWFP Textbook Board (not dated) cited by K.K. Aziz (p. 20). The statement is, 'previously it

(India) was a part of our country'!!! Dr. Mubarak Ali's *History On Trial* (1999) is a terse comment on historiography in Pakistan. A recent full length study of the curricula and textbooks in Pakistan titled *The Subtle Subversion*, sponsored by SDPI in Islamabad is an exhaustive and illuminating analysis of the 'historical falsehood and inaccuracies', 'gender biases' and 'insensitivity' to the religious diversity of Pakistan found in the textbooks under scrutiny. Even presently one of the guidelines for class IV and V states that students must be made to feel that they belong to a Muslim nation and they have to become life-sacrificing warriors — *janbaz mujahideens*. When Zubaida Jalal took office as the Minister for Education she had initiated a process of consultations aimed at educational reform, but even after two years 'things have remained absolutely unchanged'. The study states that the material in the textbooks examined was 'directly contrary to the goals and values of a progressive, moderate and democratic Pakistan'. A.H. Nayyar and Pervez Hoodbhoy have done considerable work in exposing the toll taken by curricula and textbooks on the system of education in Pakistan. A critical study of school histories of the freedom struggle in India and Pakistan was recently authored by an Indian educationist Dr. Krishna Kumar, aptly titled *Prejudice And Pride*. To sum up I may quote a history teacher from the Punjab University at Lahore, who said that history in Pakistan 'always comes down to religion and anti-Hindu feelings'.

Before going to Pakistan I had acquired a few textbooks prepared by the Sindh Board. Even a cursory glance over them indicated that Pakistani history does not distinguish between the independence movement and the Pakistan Movement. History of 'Pakistan' begins with the victory of Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh in the 8th century. Later in the narration of the 19th and 20th century history till the creation of Pakistan only three events are emphasised — Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh

Movement, the establishment of the All India Muslim League in 1906 and the Lahore Resolution of 1940 followed by a brief narration of events from 1940 to 1947. I wondered how the students could link these events without any reference to the Indian freedom struggle. Could Pakistan come into being had India not become independent? Farrukh Saleem in his two part article 'Ministry of Education', published in *The News International* (14 and 21 December 2003) makes an incisive comment on text book writing in Pakistan. He writes that Punjab Textbook Board with the Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education has somehow become the principal source of what can only be termed as 'hate literature' and 'half truths' and propagate 'Taliban-like values'.

As a college teacher of Political Science I was interested more in learning about the state of higher education and research particularly in social sciences and the intellectual activity in general in Pakistan. I read a number of articles on these issues during my five months stay in Pakistan, which gave vent to two major grievances in higher education. The first was about the dismal state of research in Pakistan. The dimension and quality of research appeared to be the major cause of concern of the writers of these articles. Very often the writers indulged in comparison with India. Pakistanis generally believe that the system of higher education and quality of research in India is superior. There is an appreciation of the fact that thousands of Indians earn doctoral degree in different disciplines of study annually. Sometimes the authors of articles asked why Pakistan did not start institutions like IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) and IIM (Indian Institute of Management). Many of the senior university teachers in Pakistan have their doctoral degrees from foreign, mostly American and British universities. Things are changing now and many of the younger teachers have doctoral degrees from Pakistani universities. Musharraf's regime has undertaken major programmes with a view

to removing this lacuna. While I was in Pakistan I had read the news report stating that the Government of Pakistan had planned to send a hundred teachers and researchers from Pakistan to universities abroad for research at the cost of more than Rs. 800 million. It had also decided to disburse grants over Rs. 600 million to the QAU to encourage research leading to the doctoral degree. Science teachers with PhD were to become eligible for extra allowances. I read about the Punjab University at Lahore deciding to get 100 theses evaluated from foreign universities. The other scheme announced by this University would make Indian researchers and research guides envious of their counterparts in the Punjab University. Every candidate obtaining a PhD from the University would get an award of Rs. 50,000 and his guide Rs. 100,000. On reading this, how much I wished that I got at least two candidates from the Punjab University working with me for PhD before returning to India!

The second grievance was about the state of social sciences and the treatment meted out to social scientists in Pakistan. Most Pakistani universities neglect social sciences. Though this is a part of the global trend, Pakistan's social and political systems are responsible for this maltreatment of social sciences. There are certain conditions for the development of knowledge in any society; the intellectual and ideological ethos of the society, the extant value system, the class divisions and the pattern of power distribution. In the process of Islamisation of Pakistan even social sciences have been Islamised. *Islampasand* groups have cultivated traditional and puritanical values in the society and have discouraged and rejected scientific rationalism. Social sciences and humanities deal with ideas. They have a potential to encourage individual thinking, to formulate and express opinions irrespective of the prevalent opinion in the society. They encourage people to defy authority, if necessary, be it political or religious and lay the foundations of open society.

Any political regime founded on exclusive ideology tends to suppress the expression of independent opinion, and critical assessment of ideas. Moreover long praetorian interventions are not conducive for free promotion and expression of ideas, which is the basic function of social sciences and humanities. Therefore social sciences in Pakistan have been forced to rediscover their 'relevance through Islam'.

Pakistani intellectuals are aware of the 'dismal state of social sciences' in their country. I recall reading a newspaper article by a Pakistani writer, few years ago, who said Pakistan had become an 'intellectual wasteland'. Akbar Zaidi's analytical article on the subject of the State of Social Sciences in Pakistan, published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Vol. XXXVII, No. 35, 2002) comprehensively deals with all issues regarding the subject from the number of 'active' social scientists, publications, institutions of research, to finances and accountability. Zaidi's lament is that no Pakistani social scientist in the last three decades, 'has developed, reconstructed, reformulated, expanded upon, disputed or rejected, any theory or theoretical formulation, qua theory, or in the specific context of Pakistan'. This is corroborated by Inayatullah who wrote that most socio-scientific literature in Pakistan was not oriented to the growth of knowledge and that generally it lacked theoretical orientation and theoretical research in a volume titled *The State of Social Sciences in Pakistan*. This is because social sciences as academic disciplines have declined in universities. In the QAU, which was developed as the centre for excellence there are no departments of Philosophy, Political Science or Sociology. Going through the academic publications in Pakistan, I discovered that many of them were in the nature of empirical studies (data collection), documentation or applied research produced by those working in various professional research institutions and NGOs, heavily funded by foreign donors who lay down their preferences and priorities in the area of research.



I was amused reading a small news item in *Dawn* on 21 August 2001 that said that the NWFP government had decided to banish social sciences and humanities from college curricula. Disciplines of Political Science, Philosophy, History and Literature were deemed to be worthless and hence, could not be funded by the government that faced a severe resource crunch. The government had further decided not to fill the posts vacated on retirement of the teachers of the said disciplines. I have no idea if this policy was finally implemented.

Pakistani intellectuals are fighting pitched battles against Islamists. In the summer of 2003 it was reported that the teachers of the English Department of the oldest and the most prestigious university in Pakistan, the Punjab University in Lahore, discovered that a junior member of the department, Shahbaz Arif, was recruited by the university administration apparently to 'purge' the syllabus of 'vulgar, obscene, and morally corrupt' elements. An internal memo circulated by Arif, who is said to hold PhD in Linguistics from the Essex University in Britain, pointed his finger to Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, for the vulgarity of the title of the book and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* for its description of a 'monstrous breast'. Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* was nothing but anathema, for, all characters in Hemingway's work were sexually astray: men homosexuals; women lesbians or promiscuous and Brett Ashley nymphomaniac. Sean O'Casey's play *The End of the Beginning* was targeted for the sentence, 'When the song ended, Darry cocks his ear and listens.'

As the controversy intensified, university authorities hurriedly issued clarifications and denials. But even the department held on firmly to its ground. The Department's Chair Shaista Sirajuddin is known to be outspoken, progressive and secular and has kept Islamists at bay. And there are others like her. If Pakistan has become an 'intellectual wasteland' it is not for want of intellectuals, but

for the intellectual culture that has been deliberately and systematically decimated by certain social, political and religious forces discussed in this book. This is not to absolve the intellectual class of its responsibility but to stress the challenges encountered by it. Some among them have accepted the challenge and taken these forces by the horns as has been indicated by the proliferation of dissent literature in Pakistan during the Zia rule. Some like Mehedi Hasan, Professor of Journalism at the Punjab University have faced accusations of blasphemy, while others call truce with those forces and seek refuge in self censorship professed in the name of national interest and Islam. It was really brave of a woman producer Nighat Risbi to stage a performance of an utterly feminist play 'The Vagina Monologues' written by Eve Ensler, which is a series of women's tales about birth, sex and relationships and other intimate subjects, in Islamabad in the summer of 2003. The play had sent shock waves in the West wherever it was staged. Nighat said that though some women among the audiences were outraged, others felt 'empowered'.

### **Political Economy**

In a preface to the latest Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2002–2003, Pakistan's Economic Advisor has claimed that in the midst of rising uncertainties in international economic environment Pakistan's economy has not only demonstrated greater resilience but its economic fundamentals have been further strengthened. Pakistan's Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz has lauded his country's economic performance saying that it is rare that a country has witnessed so many of its macro indicators registering significant improvement in a single year. Going by Pakistan's economic brinkmanship in the past few years it is indeed an impressive achievement. The history of Pakistan's political economy is as intriguing as its political history.

Pakistan's political economy is striking on two counts. First and foremost it is the political economy of defence and secondly since it is an economy propelled by western countries and international financial institutions, and remittances from the expatriate Pakistanis, it is severely conditioned by the international political situation. Political economy of defence arose due to perceived threat from India. The process was started in right earnest after the demise of Jinnah by *mohajir* bureaucracy, Punjabi military elite, and the feudal lords of Sindh and Balochistan acting in unison. Together they have remained a formidable force preventing the growth of political parties and civil society in Pakistan. In such a situation control of the army and bureaucracy in Pakistan became self-perpetuating. Ayesha Jalal argues that the Pakistani 'state of martial rule' originates in its 'political economy of defence'. Pakistan's military manpower ranks seventh in the world. The share of defence spending as a portion of total government spending has always remained extraordinarily high. In the first few years after the partition defence spending reached as high as 80 per cent of the federal government revenue and nearly 74 per cent of the total expenditure in Pakistan. This could have almost wiped out any developmental activity but for the massive foreign and military assistance from the US. The major spurt in defence spending came after the 1965 Indo-Pak war. The aftermath of the war saw the withdrawal of military assistance to Pakistan by Americans that took a toll on developmental activity because of the diversion of domestic funds to defence. After 1970 defence spending increased as a percentage of the GDP. It was 5.6 per cent in 1976-77. During the Zia rule it increased at the annual rate of over 9 per cent, going down slightly to 7.6 per cent at the end of his regime in 1987-88. In the eleven years of Zia the defence budget registered an annual increase of 16 per cent. Despite the promises of cut in the defence expenditure, Benazir could hardly achieve anything towards that goal because of the predominance of the army in the body

politic. In 1997–98 defence consumed nearly 25 per cent of the federal budget. In 2000–2001 Pakistan's defence expenditure was still at 5.4 per cent of the GDP as compared to the world average of 2.5. But according to the Economic Survey defence spending has come down to 3.9 per cent in 2002–2003.

There has been sporadic buoyancy in Pakistani economy from time to time. This is the result of foreign assistance which Pakistan received as a compensation for its assistance to the US in realising its global ambitions. This gave an aura of artificial prosperity to Pakistan especially in the 1980s. Pakistan's economy is marred by heavy foreign debt. It receives considerable economic assistance from foreign countries and from international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In fact IMF was providing US\$ 1.56 billion as a 'lifeline' for the economy but it did not succeed in promoting confidence among potential foreign investors. Pakistan rescheduled debts with the Paris Club members at the end of the decade. In the 1990s public debt of Pakistan had risen from 91.3 to 103 per cent of the GDP and the debt servicing rose correspondingly from 38 per cent to 64 per cent from the beginning to the end of the decade in the 1990s. For the same period development budget fell from 6.5 per cent of the GDP to 3 per cent.

Pakistan's political economy has passed through four phases. In the first few years after independence Pakistan followed the capitalist mode of development that extended into Ayub era with some changes. The second phase was launched with Bhutto's populist slogan of Islamic socialism, which was combined with the extensive programme of nationalisation. It was followed by Zia's policy of denationalisation and his elaborate experiments with Islamisation of the economy, especially of the banking sector. In the fourth phase beginning from the 1980s there has been hectic activity on the privatisation scene launched firstly by Benazir Bhutto

and later fervently taken up by Nawaz Sharif. Each phase remained more controversial than the other and had a deep impact on Pakistani polity and society.

The first budget of Pakistan in 1947 projected a revenue of Rs. 150 million. It is said that the government had to borrow Rs. 80 million from the Habib Bank to pay salaries to the government employees and meet other contingencies. Pakistan's economy was then dominated by feudal aristocracy and a class of merchants. Its small class of entrepreneurs had mostly come from India and belonged to trading communities like Bohras, Memons, and Khojas. Pakistan's industrial base was small. The fear of India undoing Pakistan loomed large. In the given situation it decided to adopt economic policy based on capitalistic development model, encouraged private enterprise and sought foreign aid.

During the first few years of Ayub regime Pakistani economy grew at impressive rate of 5.5 per cent annually. The major credit for this rate of growth goes to the massive foreign funding that Pakistan received during these years. Ayub successfully laid the foundations for industrialisation of Pakistan. He popularised the notion of the 'developmental state' with a trickle-down effect. For him growth came first, equitable distribution could wait. He believed that if the size of the pie was big, everybody could have a share in it. In his efforts to reconstruct the economy, he followed the model that was in vogue but the results were mixed at best.

In 1967 Bhutto founded PPP, the first party to talk in terms of distributive justice and Islamic socialism. It was a shrewd strategy designed by Bhutto to appeal to all segments of the society; feudal, tribal, religious, conservative and westernised elites. Earlier regimes had adopted capitalistic growth model that emphasised industrialisation for development and was based on the belief that economic inequities were imperative for growth. Islamic socialism brought the focus back on agriculture through land and labour reforms. It



undertook a sweeping programme of nationalisation of industries, financial institutions, education and health sector. Most major industries like iron and steel, heavy engineering, cement and public utilities such as banking and water were nationalised during the 1970s. With the control of large scale manufacturing sector Bhutto's policies encouraged the growth of small scale industries. Through various programmes implemented under Islamic socialism Bhutto attempted to bring under control the two major elements in the Pakistani society that dominated its economy: the landed aristocracy, and the industrial barons. It is said that Pakistani economy was controlled by 22 industrial families of Adamjee, Dawood, Fancy, Habib, Nishat, Rangoonwala, Saigol, and Valika to name a few. These 22 families owned 66 per cent of the total industrial assets, 70 per cent of insurance and 80 per cent of banking. The first half of the 1970s gave a jolt to the industrial sector on two occasions. Firstly, with the separation of East Pakistan, the government of Bangladesh nationalised 260 industrial units with assets exceeding Rs.1.5 millions owned by non-Bengalis. Hundreds of small scale units owned by West Pakistanis were abandoned or sold to Bangladeshis. Secondly, Bhutto's Nationalisation Order of January 1972 that nationalised 31 industries broke the back of industrial families either by wiping them off completely from the industrial map of Pakistan or by forcing them to divide and split. Two years later in the second phase of nationalisation Bhutto nationalised banks, life insurance, petroleum and shipping companies.

Bhutto's economic reforms had some definite achievements such as increased agricultural output, extension of the banking sector to the rural areas, meeting the requirements of the urban poor through labour reform and education and health policies. His Islamic socialism encouraged involvement of masses in the politics of the country. Bhutto's achievements are best summed

up by Bidanda Chengappa in the following words, 'Bhutto used his ideology to supplement the nature of political discourse with economics that no other national leader had done till then. He essentially attempted socio-economic development of a nation which was predominantly feudal, partially tribal and only peripherally urban in character.' It is not that there were no negative fall outs of Islamic socialism. According to Shahid-ur Rehman, the author of the provocative publication *Who Owns Pakistan?*, nationalisation stunted Pakistan's economic growth. One of the industrial barons Nasim Saigol is said to have bemoaned that 'but for Bhutto's nationalisation Pakistan would have had its share of Birlas and Tatas and joined the ranks of Asian Tigers'. Bhutto's economic policy was based on ideology instead of rational economic considerations that resulted in macroeconomic mismanagement like budget deficits, inflation and arbitrary spending. Land reforms were wanting in implementation. Islamic socialism effectively lasted for three to four years. Religious groups like Jamaat were increasingly getting impatient with the policy, and Bhutto. Wider participation of the people was detrimental to the army's interest and US was particularly unhappy because policies of nationalisation and public sector enterprises ignored the foreign consultants thereby reducing American intervention in Pakistani policy. Later part of the Bhutto regime turned authoritarian causing disenchantment among various sections of population. Thus Islamic socialism remained short-lived and Pakistanis had started demanding denationalisation even before the fall of Bhutto.

Zia period registered higher growth rates of GDP and the manufacturing sector, and presented a promising picture of the economy. Zia introduced three simultaneous trends in the economic policy of Pakistan. He started liberalisation of the economy through a programme on denationalisation; he embarked on Islamisation of the economy by introducing Islamic reforms in

banking; and thirdly, increased the economy's reliance on foreign aid. In 1979 Zia published a White Paper on Economy that blamed Bhutto's economic policy as the core of all economic ills of Pakistan. It stated that 'in the name of social justice, ill conceived, ill prepared and inadequately analysed changes were introduced in hurry, with only short-term objectives in view, with the result that instead of achieving social goals of better social justice, they only succeeded in stifling growth'. Coming down heavily on nationalisation policy it said that policy of nationalisation was an economic tool employed to combat political opposition. It served as a means of patronage for the government and support for the party. It said that nationalisation was undertaken in a discriminatory manner and used for victimisation of political opponents. Zia looked for support from the class of landed aristocracy, industrialists and entrepreneurs and offered to them sops in the name of denationalisation.

The major objective of Islamic economics is not confined to levying of *zakat* or *ushr* and implementation of the laws of inheritance according to Islam, but in the elimination of *riba* to establish a just monetary system. *Riba* refers to any unlawful gain by way of excess or deferment and the traditional *ulema* include modern interest in this category. The debate on *riba* had begun during the time of Ayub Khan. The 1962 constitution enunciated that '*riba* shall be eliminated'. But the resolve had to be abandoned soon because of the opposition of Islamic groups who could not arrive at a consensus among them on the definition of *riba*. The 1973 constitution required that the financial structure of the country be transformed in accordance with the dictates of Islam. Zia sought legitimacy through Islamisation programme and wanted to take steps towards rapid Islamisation of the economy. The basic question was of elimination of *riba*. According to Izzud-din Pal there was support for creating interest free economy among various sections of the people in Pakistan. Professional Pakistanis were

ambivalent about *riba*. Petty businessmen were interested in its elimination in the hope of a reprieve from their debt. Even the big businessmen stood to benefit if their reckless borrowings were written off and the cost of the loan was wiped off.

Islamic banking was introduced in 1985. Practices of banks and other financial institutions are partly regulated by Islamic law. Under the 1985 legislation, they are not permitted to pay interest on domestic transactions or under a 1991 Federal Shariat Court ruling to charge interest. Instead they operate a system of investment partnerships with customers through an optional but complicated system of 'profit and loss sharing' bank deposits replacing interest, and rent-sharing replacing mortgage. Foreign banks are exempted from Islamic banking. While the bankers wanted to move with caution, the Council of Islamic Ideology was eager to implement the programme immediately.

The bankers and the Council had major differences on Islamic banking in several important respects. Later in 1991, The Federal Shariat Court declared that all laws relating to interest were abominable according to *Quran* and *Sunna* must be brought in conformity with Islamic injunctions, as interpreted by the Court by 30 June 1992. The ruling of the Court remains in abeyance even today. Islamic banking has resulted in the creation of a dual system. Banks and other related financial institutions in Pakistan run on Islamic lines but the governmental financial machinery functions on the basis of the western framework. The system of Islamic banking is said to be full of loopholes and functions under a layer of subterfuges. It is difficult to assess exactly the extent of Islamisation of Pakistani economy but one thing is certain that it led to a spurt in the literature on *riba* and 'Islamic Economics' in Pakistan at least for some time.

Both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif advocated privatisation on the grounds of inefficiency and corruption of the state

enterprises. Benazir appointed a commercial firm to report on privatisation. It recommended a strategy of widespread ownership and identified 14 units for privatisation. It took off earnestly under Nawaz Sharif's first term. If Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had gone for nationalisation speedily and zealously, Sharif was equally speedy and zealous about denationalisation. Sharif's haste for privatisation was spurred, apart from other reasons, by his background as industrialist. Sharif's family enterprise, The House of Ittefaq is an industrial conglomerate that made a humble beginning with Ittefaq Foundry way back in 1939 and over the years had grown into five enterprises. Within six weeks of his coming to power in the first term Sharif had privatised the Muslim Commercial Bank. When his government was dismissed on 1 April 1993 it had privatised two banks, 68 industrial units and 10 per cent shares of Sui Northern Gas Pipeline, which opened the floodgates of a major financial scandal in Pakistan. One of the grounds for his dismissal as stated in the Dissolution Order was lack of transparency in the privatisation process and in the disposal of public properties. Politics of the entire decade of the 1990s, until General Musharraf took over in October 1999, was that of one up-manship between Benazir and Nawaz Sharif in the game of privatisation. The drive for privatisation in Pakistan was abrupt, rapid, uneven and politically motivated. In the absence of a regulatory mechanism it was bound to produce negative results by increasing corruption, unemployment and poverty.

Policies of economic liberalisation of the 1980s and early 1990s stimulated increase in the growth rate. But the growth rate started declining with the reduction of investment by western countries as a result of waning interest in Pakistan at the end of the cold war. This is despite the fact that Pakistan has a liberal foreign investment policy compared to its neighbours in South Asia. Therefore Pakistan's economy has remained vulnerable to international situations. Dom-



estically, the country's high rate of population growth, low levels of human resource development, heavy military spending and continuing sectarian and political violence, nature of economic policies that were targeted more towards earning revenue than development, and to top it all the rampantly corrupt polity have contributed to slow economic growth and the consequent problems.

The present government of Musharraf has poverty alleviation and institutional reforms on its economic agenda aiming at economic revival. The three fundamental elements of this programme are: empowerment through devolution of power at local level, creation of opportunities through accelerated growth and increased social sector spending, and provision of security through social safety nets. Speaking at the National Security Workshop at National Defence College in Islamabad in May 2003, President Musharraf said that the sincere efforts and pragmatic economic policies since October 1999 had restored the country's economic sovereignty and Pakistan was on the way to becoming a modern dynamic and progressive Islamic Republic. He claimed that his policies have helped in ending despondency of the economy through improvement in law and order situation, reform of education system, poverty alleviation programmes, human resource development, science and technology, political restructuring and success on the diplomatic front. (*Pakistan Observer*, 27 May 2003)

According to the figures provided by the Economic Survey, Pakistani economy looks buoyant. The GDP growth rate that had slid from 6.1 per cent in the 1980s to 2.2 in 2001–2002 has dramatically risen to 5.1 per cent in 2002–2003. The savings rate which remained stuck at 13 per cent for many years has risen by six per cent to 19. Exports too are looking up with 20 per cent growth in the last one year. And most importantly more than 75 per cent of exports now constitute manufactured goods. The most comforting fact for Pakistan is that the foreign exchange reserves

have gone above \$ 11 billion. Another major success of the present fiscal year has been the sharp increase in real GNP growth, registered at 8.4 per cent in 2002–03 compared to the previous year's growth of 5.3 per cent, which is mainly on account of extraordinary increase in net factor income from abroad due to a considerable increase in the inflow of remittances from the expatriate Pakistanis and foreign direct investment. With population growing by 2.1 per cent, the real per capita GNP grew by 6.3 per cent as against 3.1 per cent in the previous year. In dollar terms, per capita income jumped from \$ 419 to \$ 492, an increase of 17.4 per cent. But these figures fail to impress Pakistani critics of the economy who argue that while the economy looks promising, the old problem of the gap between growth and welfare remains un-bridged. Poverty in Pakistan has increased by five per cent from 26 in 1987–88 to 31 per cent in 2000–2001. Pakistan's record on distributive justice has remained abysmally poor. The highest 20 per cent of the income group seizes nearly 50 per cent of the country's income while hardly six per cent of the income accrues to the lowest 20 per cent.

I found something interesting about Pakistan's economic situation. Though the Pakistani state has been on the verge of economic collapse for long, and though the number of people living below the poverty line has increased in the last few years, I did not get to see rampant poverty in Pakistan. Even a poor Pakistani looked properly fed and clothed compared to his Indian counterpart. During all my stay in Pakistan, I don't remember seeing a miserable looking beggar. Pakistanis say that when they visit India, they are struck by pandemic poverty in the country. People of Pakistan do not betray the state of the national economy. There are several reasons for it. Pakistani culture is a consumerist culture. There is a tendency to spend more on living well than accumulating savings, among all sections of the population. This

is corroborated by the fact that the savings rate in Pakistan remained low for long. The traditional family values motivate people to help the members of even extended families. The hefty remittances coming from the expatriate Pakistanis not only helped the economy, but also families in improving living conditions. Islamic organisations both from within and outside the country support charity and lend support to the poor. Adoption of import culture by Pakistani government from the beginning has imparted a prosperous look to the nation albeit superficially.

Provision of infrastructure for industrial economy has been weak in Pakistan. I remember reading a newspaper report at the time of the Simla Agreement in 1972, which said that the Pakistani officials who had accompanied Bhutto were amazed to see indigenously manufactured Ambassador cars in India. Tariq Mahmud, whom I had met in Jordan in 1998, had said that Pakistanis were surprised to see the Indian leaders still moving mostly in white Ambassadors. Service sector in Pakistan has remained limited. The talent available in a sector like information technology has not been absorbed due to limited industrial base. Technical education has been neglected for a long time and therefore there is little value addition to manufactured goods or natural resources. Pakistan has rich deposits of gemstones but the value addition that is required to reach them to the international market is not done in Pakistan. It is said that most of the gemstones reach India spuriously, they are cut and polished and finally exported as Indian gems.

The most urgent need in Pakistan is the development of its human capital. Musharraf has mentioned this repeatedly. Pakistan's Human Development Index (HDI) rank fell from 138 to 144 in just one year, 2002–03, and Nepal and Pakistan are the only two non-African countries to be classified in the low human development group. On Gender Development Index (GDI)

Pakistan's rank is 120 out of 175. But Pakistani regimes have constantly whipped up the fear of the genie called India and spent excessively on defence and weapons, and neglected social development, education and health of the masses.



The foregoing account provides glimpses of the Pakistani society. During the Afghan crisis when Taliban rose to prominence with Pakistani help, serious apprehensions about the future of the Pakistani society were raised by many within and outside Pakistan. Those fears have not been expelled yet. Signals emanating from Pakistan are mixed and uncertain. Yet it would augur well to quote the major findings of a nationwide survey conducted by *Herald* in 1997. It revealed that the overwhelming majority of Pakistanis yearned for a tolerant and progressive Pakistan and were in favour of giving equal rights to minorities and women. Seventy four per cent wanted a ban on sectarian groups, 81 per cent demanded a ban on hate-inciting sermons in mosques, 67 per cent rejected Talibanisation of Pakistani society, 59 percent wanted to give women the right to divorce, 63 per cent believed in giving equal weight to evidence of men and women, 74 per cent favoured family planning and 74 per cent supported joint electorates. I hope that the findings of a similar survey if held in 2004 will not be dissimilar.

## *Cultural Dilemmas*

*B*efore I left for Pakistan I was advised by Indian friends to refrain from talking about cultural similarities between India and Pakistan because, Pakistanis treat such references as verbal encroachment on Pakistan. Therefore during my stay in Pakistan I carefully refrained from making such reference. But I did not know how to react when Pakistanis, without my prompting, talked about cultural similarities between the two countries.

As Pakistani establishments cashed on Islam for political purpose, the responsibility of defining Pakistani culture fell on the establishment. According to Jinnah, Muslim culture of Pakistan was, in essence, the culture of Indian Muslims evolved over centuries and therefore also an integral part of the Pakistani culture. But in an effort to provide a separate and distinct face to Pakistan every regime tried to de-link Pakistan from its cultural moorings and made efforts to link it with the Arabic culture through Islam; this created the cultural crisis of Pakistan. To be different from India was essential to provide a rationale for the two-nation theory and for Pakistan's battle for separate identity. Both, the regime and the mullahs believed that this was possible only by Islamising Pakistan more and more. They wanted to create a culture approved by Islam, which meant denial and shunning of art, music, dance and theatre. The well known Pakistani writer and poet and the former Director of National Council for Arts, Kishwar Naheed says that such efforts exist in all Muslim countries. She further asks if there are people



who have no liking for music, an urge for fine arts, and for fun and laughter. But Muslim states are hypocritical, says Naheed. Regimes are not willing to give to people what they like and therefore culture and audio-visual arts receive no encouragement in such countries.

Sheema Kirmani, a well known classical dancer and a choreographer, a leading theatre personality and radical activist is accused of being 'un-Islamic'. Her views on Pakistani culture are blunt. In her opinion there is internal conflict about culture in Pakistan. Questions about national identity, denial of historical links with India, ignorance of cultural heritage are all part of this conflict. Pakistan has not yet been able to define its culture. Sheema wears *saris* and big *bindis* and the culture-police in Pakistan are critical of her dressing. Agha Sajjad Gul, a known name in Pakistani filmdom says that Pakistan did not develop any culture apart from talking about Islam and Kashmir.

Madeeha Gauhar makes a pertinent comment about Pakistan's problem with culture. She says that the cultural frontiers have been always vulnerable in Pakistan and Pakistani cultural identity had to be guarded jealously (and also zealously) though this cultural identity has never been defined clearly. The circumstances of Pakistan's creation have left the country cold towards art and culture.

Pakistan did not result from the conventional nationalist politics in the sense that demand for its creation was not based on past grievances but on anticipated grievances from the 'oppressive Hindu majority'. A strong national movement may create a new state. But the role of a mature state in keeping the nation together by balancing the diverse aspects of nationality that become visible only later, and harnessing it into a harmonious whole is a crucial one. A strong emotional upsurge of nationalism experienced during the freedom movement needs to be concretised to convert it into a bedrock of the new state. Many a freedom movement has often failed to foresee the mammoth challenge of state formation and

construction of a national identity that awaits the formalisation of freedom. Similar fate befell the newly created state of Pakistan. Lawrence Ziring writes that 'absolutely nothing was done to fit into the larger scheme of an abstract national identity, the very tangible constituent parts from which the country was ultimately formed'.

The crisis of national identity also results from the continuous tension and war of attrition with India, not to talk of actual wars between the two countries. 'Hindu' India is the 'other' in the collective psyche of Pakistan. Vilification, demonisation and hence the rejection of the 'other' is essential to establish a national identity of Pakistan as that rejection constitutes the *raison d'être* for the creation of Pakistan. The question, who and what is a Pakistani meets with a most 'logical' yet most ridiculous answer: he is an 'un-Indian'. But while doing so Pakistan rejects a part of its own identity. It is unable to define Pakistani culture after disowning a huge chunk of cultural heritage. Therefore Pakistani historians, notably Punjabi or Sindhi, encounter a dilemma: to own or not to own the Indian influence on Pakistani culture. And it is here that Pakistan falls into an identity trap. Irfan Hussain a well known Pakistani writer has captured this dilemma succinctly. He writes, 'Leaders, with little understanding of history denied geographical and cultural realities. They seemed willing to turn Pakistan into a Middle Eastern rather than a South Asian nation, ignoring the contributions Muslims had made in India over a millennium ... they sought to justify the existence of Pakistan by presenting an image of a country severed from the heritage of culture and history and sealed off from the map of South Asia. All this has served as a kind of deracination which left a nation orphaned of the past.' This was contrary to Jinnah's understanding of cultural nuances of Pakistan. Thus a 'flawed' sense of identity was promoted by not merely embracing Islam but through a puritanical version of Islam.

Despite partition, many aspects of the cultural baggage remained undivided. This became a real problem for Pakistani regimes. The constant recurrence of the 'ghost of India' evidenced in music, art, literature and most importantly in the very life of common Pakistani, unnerved the establishment. Islam and Urdu were employed with full force in an attempt to create a Pakistani identity. In order to reinforce the Islamic identity Pakistan also attempted leaving its original home in South Asia and finding a place for itself in the Middle East, the birthplace of Islam and the homeland of Arabic culture. Suroosh Irfani, the Co-director of the Graduate Programme in Communication and Cultural Studies at the National College of Arts, Lahore traces the roots of Pakistan's cultural problems in the decline of an Indo-Persian cultural matrix that constituted a foundational plank of the subcontinent's Muslim identity, and to the ascent of Arabism or 'Arabist shift', a tendency to locate Pakistani culture in the Arab past and to imagine Pakistan in the Middle East. Arabism robbed Pakistan of eclectic culture and consequently of a creative South Asian Muslim identity and triggered 'a slide towards a tribal, anti-intellectual and misogynist view of Islam promoted by a narrow interpretation of the *Koran*'. Does the change from *Khuda hafeez*, the usage widely employed in the subcontinent as equivalent of 'good bye', to *Allah hafeez* used on PTV, symbolise a shift from the Persian to Arabic culture? 'Khuda' is Persian, 'Allah', Arabic. I was given another explanation for this shift. *Khuda* is a generic term for (any) god, *Allah* is specific. But Irfani assures that a pacifist Indo-Persian matrix remains alive and kicking at the grassroots level which is also corroborated by my experience of living in Pakistan.

Curiously while rejecting the overall subcontinental cultural influence, Pakistan makes attempts to take a leaf out of the Muslim and Mughal history of the subcontinent selectively bereft of the context. Pakistan's veneration of Aurangzeb and dislike of Akbar is

too well known for elaboration here. But other attempts have been utterly ridiculous. It has named its missiles after the medieval Muslim conquerors of India — ‘Ghori’, and ‘Ghazanavi’ perhaps in a subtle attempt to spite India — clearly overlooking the fact that Pakistan was nowhere on the horizon at the time of their conquests of India. Ghori is said to be a befitting reply to India’s missile ‘Prithvi’. Indian missiles are named after the five elements and Prithvi stands for the Earth. But, I was told that Pakistani establishment deliberately associated it with Prithviraj Chauhan, the Rajput prince defeated by Muhammad Ghori, Muslim conqueror of northern India in the 12th century. In another such attempt, Pakistan has tried to claim the *mazar* of the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar who died in Rangoon in Burma (Myanmar) in 1862. Pakistan has made efforts to claim the monument as its own by first demanding that the grave be shifted to Pakistan. On the refusal of the Burmese Government Pakistan is said to have announced a huge sum for its renovation. (*The Asian Age*, 17 November 2003)

Pakistan’s first ever cultural policy was announced in August 1995 by the National Commission on History and Culture with as many as 12 objectives and 33 ‘essential steps’ for meeting those objectives (*The Nation*, 3 August 1995). It is rather surprising that there is no mention of Pakistan’s cultural matrix or a delineation of its cultural milieu. The entire document is couched in general terms. Interestingly in the second ‘step’ there is a mention of the impact of Arab, Iranian, Central Asian and western culture but any reference to Indian cultural impact is carefully avoided. The main plank of the policy was ‘the principles laid down by Islam and the founding fathers of Pakistan’. Can Islam provide adequate definition of Pakistani culture? Religion is indeed an essential element in defining culture, but certainly not the only one, nor the adequate one. Once, commenting on Indonesian culture, the

former Indonesian President Abdul Rehman Wahid had said, 'our faith is Islam but civilisation is Indonesian'. Narrowly constructed religion based definition of culture is bigoted on two counts; it ignores the non-ideological components of culture that are reflected in the mundane such as language, art and literature, dress and cuisine and social observances, and, more importantly, it overlooks the reality of nationhood. Cultures are essentially eclectic and syncretic and this is perhaps more easily understood by common people than the makers of cultural policy. A conservative perspective of history and religion only help in creating inclusionary and short-sighted models of cultural nationalism. The comments that appeared in most of the Pakistani newspapers following the announcement of the Cultural Policy had nothing substantive to offer. The most incisive comment came from the *Dawn* in its editorial of 4 August 1995. It said that Pakistan did not need a cultural policy, what it did need desperately was 'a bit of cultural openness'.

In recent years there have been attempts to provide civilisational basis to Pakistani culture pioneered by Professor Quadratullah Fatmi and extensively propounded by Aitzaz Ahsan in his widely acknowledged book *The Indus Saga*. It may be appropriate at this juncture to consider at some length Ahsan's effort to establish 'secular' roots of Pakistani nationalism by providing it a territory-based civilisational character than the commonly accepted communal one. He names the territory of contemporary Pakistan as *al-Sindh* — the Indus region — and of India as *al-Hind* and argues that both have been separate civilisational entities through history. That makes Pakistani personality the 'Indus personality'. The book begins with espousing the civilisational differences between the 'Indus' and India that could be dated back to more than five thousand years but curiously ends with elaborating communal differences between the Hindus and Muslims at the end of the



British rule in the mid-twentieth century. Are civilisational and communal differences one and the same? Is there no difference between civilisation and faith? What is the Indus identity? What are the ingredients or parameters of the identity of a community? Ahsan does not tell his readers what were the distinct contributions of Indus civilisation in al-Sindh. Civilisation is not constituted by separate racial identity alone though it is certainly an important factor. Nor can civilisation be constituted only eclectically — drawing upon neighbouring cultures. A distinct civilisational identity of a community of people is constituted by their contribution to art, literature, philosophy and science, the technologies they employ and the distinctness of their social and political organisations. It is such achievements that distinguish one civilisation from the other. Also a pertinent question arises when the author equates the Indus region to Pakistan today. He states the Indus has always been Pakistan, 1947 was only a reassertion of that reality. This amounts to unbroken civilisational continuity and also the acceptance of the Indus heritage by Pakistan. Now this creates a problem. Ahsan states *Vedas* belong to the Indus and *Mahabharata* to India. Does Pakistan today accept *Vedas* as its literary or philosophical heritage? Further he mentions the luminaries of ancient Taxila University, Panini, the grammarian, Charaka, the master of Indian medicine and Kautilya of *Arthshastra*. Panini was a Sanskrit grammarian and Charaka belonged to the *Ayurvedic* (ancient Indian or more precisely Hindu) system of medicine. Is Sanskrit or *Ayurveda* or *Arthshastra* accepted as Pakistani heritage? Ahsan's efforts are indeed laudable. His book was a big hit among the educated Pakistanis who accept and support his line of argument. But the moot point is: has the pre-Islamic heritage become a part of the mainstream discourse on cultural or national identity in Pakistan?

All this poses a crucial question. Does culture get divided with the partition of land? Do territorial boundaries and cultural frontiers

coincide perfectly? A flow of culture is like a course of a river. As it is not possible to divide water by striking a shaft on its surface, so also the flow of culture can not be abruptly divided by fencing the land. People of Pakistan have understood this well, but the Pakistani regime and the culture-police are still engaged in dividing waters by striking a shaft.

### **Pakistani Silver Screen — Lollywood**

Lollywood (Lahore is the centre of Pakistani film industry) reels under immense impact of Hindi films. It has been dwarfed by Bollywood. Pakistan produces small number of films and that too is on the decline. Pakistan Film Producers Association statistics shows that 64 films were produced in 1995, by 1999 their number had come down to 51. But the number of Urdu films for the same period has gone up from 15 to 28 while that of Punjabi and Pashto films have come down in the same period from 14 and 23 respectively in 1998, to six and 17 in 1999. Sindhi film world is almost non-existent. In 1996 two films were made in Sindhi, and in 1997 just one.

Before the partition India had three major centres of film production, Bombay, Calcutta and Lahore. Every centre had its own distinction, and culture of film-making. After the partition Lahore centre got decimated considerably. Most of the film producers, directors and actors came to Bombay, earned reputation, flourished and contributed greatly to the Indian film industry. Few went from India to Pakistan. The most prominent among them was Noor Jehan who continued to sing and act in Pakistani films for many years after her migration to Pakistan. The 'lara lappa girl' of *Ek Thi Ladaki* fame, Meena K. Shorey too migrated to Pakistan but had little to contribute to Pakistani films. For sometime after 1947, Lahore continued to rehash the same old pre-partition formula films. Interestingly the first ever Pakistani film released in

1948 was named *Teri Yaad*. Pakistani film critics feel that Pakistani producers make loud, garish imitation of C grade Hindi movies. But this is a trend more of the 1980s. Till then better films were made and better Hindi films were copied like *Darshan* which was said to be influenced by the Hindi hit *Jab Jab Phool Khile*. Pakistani film *Baharein Phir Bhi Ayengi* was alleged to have lifted a song from the popular Hindi film *Brambachari*. Piracy from Hindi film music is rampant in Pakistan. Hindi film music is so popular that Pakistani weddings revolve round the tunes of Indian mega movies like *Hum Apake Hain Kaun*. But it must be stated that it is not just one way traffic. Copying goes both ways. Indian music directors have lifted several Pakistani tunes without acknowledgement. Hindi film songs like 'Mera Piya Ghar Aya O Ramaji' set to tune of the famous Pakistani singer Nusrat Fatehali on which India's heart-throb Madhuri Dixit gyrated sensuously (I was told that she was Pakistan's heart-throb too and her marriage to American doctor 'broke' many hearts in Pakistan), have been hugely popular in India. 'Aaja Mahiya', the hit track from the Hindi film *Fiza*, is said to be a direct copy of a Lollywood song of Shazia Manzoor.

Punjabi cinema is said to be cheap, lewd and raunchy. Even Pashto films imitate Punjabi films and I recall reading a couple of articles on the double meaning dialogues in Pashto films, a trend that was popular then. Whether Punjabi, Pashto or Urdu, film posters are kitschy, showing women in garish make up, wearing tight leather pants, handling guns and with blood streaking down the face. Once, Col. Aziz narrated an interesting anecdote about Punjabi movies. When he was posted in East Pakistan his Bengali colleagues used to occasionally screen Bengali movie for the Punjabi soldiers. By way of reciprocation Col. Aziz decided to screen a Punjabi movie. Bengali audience was stunned by the movie. They asked the Colonel if Punjabi women lifted men with such ease. He answered, 'Unfortunately not'.

Though some members of the Pakistani film industry propose regular screening of Hindi films in Pakistan so that the competition from Hindi films may help in raising the standards of Pakistani cinema, not all seem to agree with the proposal. Pakistanis have a love-hate relationship with Bollywood and Hindi TV soaps. An article by Rashida Bhagat puts it vividly. Top businessmen in Karachi pine for Aishwarya Rai; the middle classes patronise the illegally obtained video cassettes/VCDs of Indian films, which are easily available in Lahore and Karachi. Posters of Aamir Khan, Aishwarya Rai, Preity Zinta and many others are much in demand. But at the same time, Hindi films and TV soaps are blamed by some Pakistanis for corrupting people across the border. And it is not just the mullahs who are saying so. Even the educated liberal Pakistanis are wary of Indian movies. They are aghast at the 'half-naked' Bollywood actresses dancing around with suggestive movements. I was confronted with the question again and again that how could Indians give up on their cultural values and heritage and ape the West blindly. Some wondered if Indian women had become as 'permissive' as depicted in some TV serials, while some expressed an alarm over the adverse impact of these films on Indian children. I sensed a genuine concern about Bollywood's impact on Indian culture in these questions and not in the least was there any intention to spite India. Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed of Jamaat-e-Islami, in the article mentioned above, blamed Bollywood for the growing incidence of violence against women and rape of teenaged girls in Pakistan and defends *purdah* as it makes women safe and protected from such incidence.

I found production quality of Pakistani films poor. *Tere Pyar Mein*, the movie I saw in Islamabad was popular in Pakistan as it was a 'befitting' reply to the Hindi movie *Gaddar*. But it was poorly produced. It was like watching a Hindi movie of the 1970s. Its production technique, direction and even the acting style

appeared to be more than two decades old. There was another popular movie running around the same time, *Ghar Kab Aaoge* that was said to have assistance from Indians in dance direction, music and recording. *Yeh Dil Aap Ka Hua* is a hugely popular latest movie in Pakistan whose director Javed Shaikh had hired three Indian singers Kumar Sanu, Kavita and Sonu Nigam according to a website report. Zeba Bakhtiyar and Somy Ali are two Pakistani leading ladies who have tried their luck in the Hindi film industry. But no Pakistani artist has hit it so big in the Hindi filmdom as Adnan Sami who was shot to fame in Bollywood with the song 'Mehbooba Mehbooba' in the film *Ajnabee*. A couple of years ago he was reported by an Indian newspaper to have said, 'Pakistani film playback is not at all a lucrative career because the films don't do well commercially. As an artiste, I wouldn't want to be associated with Pakistani films.'

But things were not always so grim with the Pakistani film industry. In the 70s and early 80s, the industry boasted of a number of film studios that produced over a hundred films annually. *Aina*, produced in 1977 was one of the most popular films in Pakistan that ran for four continuous years. In the 1960s and 70s Pakistani cinema catered more to the middle class sensibilities and produced films like *Jahar-e-Ishq*, *Adami*, *Chingari*, *Neend*, and *Badnam* to name a few. It also dabbled with patriotic themes and made movies like *Shahid*, *Farangi*, and *Zerqa* that became popular. Pakistani cinema briefly went through the phase of art/parallel films. Khalil Kaiser's *Clerk*, S.A. Rashid's *Aaspass*, Riyaz Shahid's *Sasural* are said to be some of the pioneering works in the art film movement. Ahmad Basheer and Ashfaq Ahmad tried to keep the movement alive, but anyway it proved to be short-lived. In the last two decades films shot on foreign locales, depicting mindless violence as in Hindi films, have become popular. Their directors have also been riding on a high wave of popularity.



Among the leading ladies of Pakistani silver screen, Meera, Reema, known as Aishwarya Rai of Pakistan, Sangeeta, Kavita, Resham, Zeba and Noor have been much sought after. Zara Sheikh of *Tere Pyar Mein* is also riding high on popularity charts. The list of the notable male actors include Sultan Rahi, Muhammad Ali Nadeem, Babal Ali, Momi Rana and Shaan. Among the playback singers the most reputed have been Shaziya Manzoor, Mehnaz, Saira, Naseem, Tahira Sayyad, Nasibo Lal, Waris Beg and Arshad Mahmood while M. Ashraf, Nisar Bazmi, Khwaja Khurshid, Ahmad Wijahat are well-known music directors. Sangeeta has made a directorial debut; another woman director is Shameem Ara. But the first woman director of Pakistani films was Noor Jehan who directed a movie named *Chan Way*, way back in 1951. And now Pakistani cinema has found a courageous woman director in Sabiha Sumar whose film *Khamosh Paani* depicting the travails of a Sikh woman, played by a well known Indian actress Kiron Kher, abducted, married to a Muslim and converted to Islam during the partition. The film produced by Sadanand, a Sri Lankan with assistance from the French and German film companies spans a period from the partition to the Zia regime and is said to be an incisive comment on the fermentation of Islamic extremism in Pakistan. *Khamosh Paani* was filmed entirely in Pakistan and was expected to be released in Pakistan in early 2004. It won laurels at the Locarno Film Festival and accolades from the audience in Mumbai when it was shown in the Sixth International Film Festival under the banner of Mumbai Academy of Moving Images (MAMI) in November 2003. The film may prove to be a catalyst of new cinema in Pakistan.

### Performing Arts

Theatre lovers in Pakistan lament that by and large Pakistan has anti-performing arts culture. There is a bias against dance as well as drama. There is little support from the state or the private sector.

Sheema Kirmani is very appreciative of the Indian playwrights like Utpal Dutt, Girish Karnad, Habib Tanveer, Vijay Tendulkar and Ratan Thiyam and also of the rich tradition of the Bengali and Marathi stage. Urdu literature, according to her does not have a tradition of drama because the Persian literature from where Urdu has taken its literary forms did not have the form of drama. According to Shoeb Hashmi, a renowned playwright, drama had no place in the traditional Muslim culture. The first ever Urdu play was written in 1853, titled *Indersabha* but probably it was never performed.

Karachi saw the emergence of Parsi theatre after 1880 and the Parsi plays were staged in the Katrak Hall in the city. Growing social sensibilities provided impetus to the emergence of the Urdu theatre. Two plays *Zood Pashemani* by Abdul Majid Daryabadi, and *Mewai Talakh* by Abdul Halim Sharar came as scathing attack on the practice of child marriage and *purdah* system respectively. After 1947 Khwaja Moinuddin's *Lal Kilese Lalukhet* and *Mirza Ghalib Bundar Road Par* threw light on the condition of *mohajirs* in Pakistan. Around the same time Rafi Pir, Imtiaz Ali Taj, Aslam Azhar, Shoeb Hashmi gained reputation as playwrights. Ali Ahmad launched a theatre company in Karachi appropriately called NATAK — National Academy of Theatre Arts Karachi. Latif Kapadia, one of the most prominent stage actors gained recognition through NATAK. Rahat Azami started Theatrewallas, which produced mostly comedies and satirical plays.

Pakistani theatre was put on trial during the Zia regime. It had to combat censorship, no objection certificate and proscription. But the repression helped Pakistani theatre, especially of Karachi, to re-emerge as a powerful force. In Lahore too theatre experienced a great ferment. This was the period of hectic activity for drama companies like, Ajoka, Dastak, Punjabi Lok Rehas, Teherik-e-Niswan and others who created 'protest theatre' in Pakistan. Formed

in 1983 with a group of young cultural activists in Lahore at the peak of the Martial Law, Ajoka of Madeeha Gauhar represents the alternative theatre movement in Pakistan. It is a theatre 'with a radical, social and political content' and promotes peace, human rights and social justice. In 20 years of existence it has deftly handled a variety of powerful themes. Its very first production was Badal Sircar's *Juloos*, a radical political play set in West Bengal. In *The Sixth River* it dealt with the problem of communal harmony, in *Dekh Tamasha Chalta Ban* it tackled the issue of blasphemy, *Barri* an allegorical play dealt with women prisoners and *Itt*, with bonded labour. But perhaps its most talked about production is *Aik Thee Naani* starring the grand dames of the Indian and Pakistani theatres, Zohra Segal and Uzra Butt respectively. The play, the life story of two sisters, Segal and Butt, and in a way of also two nations, deals with the quest and rediscovery of Butt's identity who left India for Pakistan in the 1950s after marriage. The play has been staged in India and has drawn enthusiastic response from the theatre lovers from both the countries. The most heartening aspect of Madeeha's work is that she has tried to bridge the Indo-Pak divide through her plays. Ajoka's Indian tour at the end of the year 2003 with their new play *Bullah* has sent them into raptures. They had not expected a standing ovation from an audience comprising mostly of Sikhs. Though Ajoka Madeeha's name has been synonymous with a voice of struggle for secular, democratic and human rights for the past 20 years, Teherik-e-Niswan was occupied with the production of women oriented plays. Its first play *Dard key Faslein* was based on the short stories of Amrita Pritam. Yasmin Ismail worked for the development of children's theatre. A number of works of European dramatists like Bertolt Brecht, Federico García Lorca, and Jean Anouilh have been adapted for Pakistani theatre.

Developing societies have long recognised the significance of the 'street theatre' in spreading messages of social and political

significance. But the street theatre hardly exists in Pakistan. Despite the companies like Ajoka, and the brave attempts of some theatre enthusiasts, Pakistani theatre has still a long way to go. There is dearth of drama theatres in the country, theatre goers are small in numbers, and there is no encouragement or support from the establishment. A play running for 15 days is said to have done good business. Though Karachi has been a major centre of Pakistani drama, theatres have closed down one after the other. Lahore has a magnificent Alhmara complex that houses the Arts Council, a playhouse and many more things but there is no repertory theatre or formal training in dramatics. Similarly there is no school of drama at the national level or departments of theatre at universities.



Once Lahore was considered to be the heart of Indian culture. Music, dance, art and cinema flourished in Lahore. Before the partition Lahore had dance academies for *Kathak* and *Bharatnatyam*, big halls for music concerts and dance recitals. Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar's music school in Lahore was known all over India. The music of Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Bai Saraswatibai, Pandit Onkarnath Thakur, Pandit Amarnath, and Ustad Faiyaz Khan literally rained and reigned in Lahore. It is said that Nesbit Road was known as the 'melody street'. Sonorous sounds of anklets, rhythm and music continuously resonated through the road.

Things changed rapidly after the partition. Pakistan got caught up with inventing a new identity for itself. All things related to the Indian culture even remotely had to be demolished and the first axe fell on the music and dance. Indian Muslims' contribution to the Hindustani classical music needs no elaboration. There has never been a communal divide in classical music. But most of the

*ragas* bore Sanskritised (Hindu) names like *durga*, *kalavati*, *bageshri* or *gunakali*. This was unacceptable to the Pakistani establishment. It is too well known to be elaborated here how Radio Pakistan prevented Bade Ghulam Ali Khan from singing the 'Hindu' *ragas*. To keep his music alive the great Ustad abandoned his home and hearth in Kasur and came to India for good. Pakistan's loss was India's gain but it is a sad commentary on the artificial cultural divide that Pakistani regimes created at the outset. It set out with zeal to invent suitable Arabic names for the *ragas*. But that proved to be a mission impossible. Therefore *ragas* simply came to be called: *subahki ragini* and *shamki ragini* — morning *ragas* and evening *ragas*. But that was not enough. It became necessary to change the words of songs also. Ahmad Basheer's article '*Classical music or a gurgle of death*' on the state of classical music in Pakistan published in 1986 in the Pakistani daily *The Muslim*, and quoted extensively by A.G. Noorani in an illuminating essay 'Secularists in Pakistan' in the *Frontline* (9–23 April 1999) narrates an interesting anecdote. Basheer writes that when classical music came under the sweep of Islamisation, it led to a comic situation. When the words *Jamunake teer mere Krishen Murari* in a song were substituted by *Ravike par mian Abdulki bari*, it became the requiem for classical music in Pakistan. Semi-classical forms like *dadra* and *thumari* and *ghazal*, popularised by the Urdu poetry had also started fading.

In 1972 the National Council of Arts was established for cultural regeneration. It revived classical music and helped it survive the cultural repression during the Zia regime. Music shows were organised on TV. All Pakistan Music Conference became a regular feature in Lahore in the winters. Sitar that was abandoned for long as an Indian instrument was rehabilitated. Farida Khanum, Iqbal Bano, Ghulam Ali, Mehedi Hasan revived the glory of *ghazal* singing. Professor Khalid Mahmud is a connoisseur of *ghazals*. I



had the opportunity of listening to the music of several *ghazal* singers, particularly the *ghazals* of Faiz Ahmad Faiz sung by Nayyara Noor at his place. Professor Khan's house in Lahore is a virtual treasure house of CDs, both classical and Hindi film music. He is fond of the music of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi and Kumar Gandharva and among the younger singers he likes Shruti Sadolikar but finds her name too difficult to pronounce.

Sufi music has had a long tradition in Pakistani society. Shah Abdul Lateef Bhitai, Khwaja Ghulam Farid, Bulhe Shah, Sachal Sarmast were not only great poets but equally great music maestros. *Kawwali* was another old tradition of poetry and music pioneered by Amir Khusro in the 13th century. *Kawwali's* main theme is spiritual and ethical. Indians' notion of *kawwali* is distorted by Hindi films. Nusarat Fateh Ali took *kawwali* to the height of glory not only in Pakistan, but in the entire subcontinent.

In the early years of Pakistan, folk music was neglected. The rulers of Pakistan wanted to create an integrated, unified Pakistan through Islam. They feared that encouragement to various regional folk arts would be tantamount to taking cognisance of their separate cultures not in conformity with the rulers' schema. But at the same time to offset the Hindu cultural influence Zia promoted the regional folk cultures. Today folk music and folk dance have acquired a place in Pakistani culture and it is used to show 'unity in diversity'. Among the dances *luddi*, *zoomar* and *bhangra* of Punjab and *hi jamalo* of Sindh are popular. *Khattak* dances from the Frontier Province are also presented on public occasions.

In the past few years pop music has spread across Pakistan. The most notable among the Pakistani pop groups is Junoon who have a large following in India. The other two groups are Vital Signs and Strings. Of course my knowledge of these groups is extremely limited but I know of a young man in Mumbai who is absolutely fascinated by Junoon, and is bent upon going to Pakistan

to meet the group. He thinks I have a great influence in Pakistan and can help him in getting a visa! In 1998 Junoon had incurred the wrath of the Sharif government on the allegation that they made some unsavoury comments about Pakistan while performing in India when Indo-Pak relations were extremely tense. They were charged with treason and received death threats. During my stay in Pakistan two Indian pop singers, Sukhbir and Lucky Ali performed in Pakistan. Sukhbir received tremendous response from Pakistanis. Interestingly I had never heard of Sukhbir till then.



A noted Pakistani dance and music critic, Serawat Ali says that dance never enjoyed any prominence in Pakistani culture. Classical dance just does not belong to the region of Pakistan. It is basically a 'Hindu' art form; hence condemned in Pakistan. To an ordinary Pakistani, dance is associated with prostitution and titillation says Kirmani. *Kathak* enjoyed some recognition because it was patronised by the Mughal court. But *Kathak* got associated with *mujrah* and the red light area. One of the first orders issued by Zia to Pakistan Television was about banning the *Kathak* programme, 'Payal', by the celebrated Kathak dancer Naheed Siddiqui who later took refuge in London to save her dance. Today she is the most distinguished 'visiting' *Kathak* dancer to Pakistan winning accolades from the press. In one of her press interviews Siddiqui lamented the sorry state of affairs of dance in Pakistan. The most revered Pakistani *Kathak* Guru, Kathak Maharaj passed away in 2001.

*Bharatnatyam* is sacrilege in Pakistan. Sheema Kirmani started with *Bharatnatyam* but now her main interest is *Odissi*. Sheema began learning dance in the mid-1960s and gave her first solo performance in Pakistan in 1984 even while Zia's Islamic

programme was at its peak. She learnt classical dance at a music and dance academy in Karachi set up by Jayakar Ghanshyam and his wife Neelima in 1957 on invitation from H.S. Suhrawardy, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan. Later she learnt *Bharatnatyam* from the noted danseuse Leela Samson in Delhi and then got fascinated by *Odissi*. In 1990–91 with a scholarship from the Indian Council of Cultural Relations she spent a year in Delhi acquiring greater mastery over *Odissi*. I had an opportunity to meet Sheema and witness her beautifully choreographed pieces of modern dance at the Bangalore convention.

Indu Mitha has accepted the challenge of propagating *Bharatnatyam* in Pakistan. Induji who is in her early seventies has been teaching *Bharatnatyam* in Islamabad for many years. Indu Mitha was originally Indu Chatterji, a great-grand-daughter of a priest of the famous Kalibari temple of Kolkata. Her grandfather embraced Christianity, left Kolkata and settled in Lahore. Her father Professor Gyaneshchandra Chatterji was a well known professor of philosophy and eminent educationist. He was the Principal of the Government College at Lahore. Lahore was her hometown. After the partition, at the age of 17 Induji came to Delhi with her family. She continued with her training in *Bharatnatyam* in Delhi and later also in Madras (now Chennai). In 1951 she married Captain Mitha from a Bombay based Memon family. At the partition Captain Mitha was in East Pakistan and later went to West Pakistan. Induji had no problem going to Pakistan as she was born and brought up in Lahore. She became a Pakistani citizen.

I visited her dance class in Islamabad in sector F-8. It was a batch of senior girls aged between 18 and 25, highly educated and working. Sarah Qureshi was an automobile engineer, Saira Khan was an MBA in Finance, Fariyal Aslam was an anthropologist, and Zakia Beg had a Master's in German and Nadia Salman in

French. Anjuman Bano was studying Environmental Science after a degree in Economics. I spoke to all of them. Except Saira (or Sarah?) they had no opposition from their parents to learning *Bharatnatyam*. But she successfully coaxed her parents to granting her permission. Nadia was recently married. She proudly spoke of her husband's encouragement and support in her pursuit of dance.

One evening I visited Induji's house at Chak Shahzad village in Islamabad region for a small private concert of Ustad Ghulam Farid Nizami and Ustad Muhammad Ajmal. A school going girl, Hania Yamin delighted everyone by playing *tabla* beautifully. Hania had taken to playing *tabla* at the instance of her mother. 21 July was a great day for Induji. Nadia and Sultana, Induji's disciples performed *arangetram* at the Islamabad Club auditorium. This small auditorium was jam packed. Late comers had no place to enter. It appeared that the entire elite of Islamabad were at the auditorium. Fashionable women had found a rare opportunity to air their fancy *saris*. Induji's disciples performed the pure dance forms like *allaripu*, *jatiswaram* and *tillana*, and also *varnam*. Sultana with her expressive face danced wonderfully with Nadia providing good company. The audience sat mesmerised as if their thirst for culture was satiated after ages. The whole ambience was of dance and music. I too wondered if I were at Shanmukhanand Hall in Mumbai, or in Islamabad. It was indeed a unique opportunity to witness *arangetram* in Pakistan. I felt a little odd about the fact that Krishna was never mentioned by name but just as *makhan chor* and Nataraj as the god of dance. But according to Induji she has to make a hundred compromises to keep *Bharatnatyam* alive in Pakistan. This is true. Though public dance performance is not banned in Pakistan keeping the dance alive is a challenge. Sheema uses Urdu, Persian and English poetry in *Odissi* performances and Sufi poetry for the *Geet Govindam* of Kalhana, the classical poetic tale of Radha and Krishna. It is to the credit of Induji, Sheema

and their ilk, their disciples and their parents that classical dance survives in Pakistan against all odds.

Serawat Ali's recent article 'Pure society, impure culture' commenting on culture in Pakistan (*The News on Sunday*, 7 November 2003) sounds an ominous warning about an alarming trend gathering momentum on the cultural front in Pakistan since the elections of 2002. He informs that theatres were raided in Lahore and the performers arrested and kept in detention for some time on charges of vulgarity and obscenity a few months ago. Since then raiding of plays had become a regular feature in the various cities of Punjab like Gujranwala or Sheikhpura. Performances were banned mostly on the charge that the contents of plays or dances included in it were obscene and vulgar. He further writes that fashion shows in hotels were banned in the country on the orders coming from no less a person than the prime minister himself.

The MMA government in the NWFP has banned all cultural activity. Once Peshawar provided refuge to hundreds of musicians who had to migrate from Afghanistan during the Taliban rule. 'The entire musical heritage of Afghanistan moved out of its habitat and was protected, preserved and promoted by people living in the province. Now all the performing artists of the province are themselves looking for refuge', writes Ali. A new ministry has been created in NWFP for the 'promotion of virtue and prevention of vice'. The Dabgiri bazaar has for generations been famous for its singing tradition, with local musicians performing at weddings and other celebrations to earn a living. Police-sponsored vigilantes have lit bonfires of videos and harassed musicians, some of whom have reportedly been forced to turn to prostitution, deprived of any respectable means of living.

Ali is afraid that Pakistan is settling into yet another era of strict censorship and a puritanical regime again which views every cultural activity with suspicion on the grounds of morality or religion. He asks, 'What kind of society do we want Pakistan to



be? A closed puritanical society where all the forms of expression and manner of celebration is driven underground? Where no distinction is made between art, entertainment and vulgarity? Where culture is considered a commodity that can be imported to compensate for the absence of any activity at home? The few societies where these activities are banned and nothing is allowed in the name of culture, can hardly serve as the role model for a country like ours.' One can only hope that Ali's fears prove exaggerated.

Though I have no intention of covering Pakistani art in this section, a reference to women artists' struggle to protect their art against the efforts at its Islamisation is necessary. The 1980s witnessed the enforcement of an official art policy that patronised a non-figurative and pseudo Islamic expression. Art was equated with Islamic calligraphy and the safest artistic expression was landscape painting. Salima Hashmi, former principal of the National College of Arts draws attention to the fact that women painters refused to change their themes or genres, and declined to adopt calligraphy while men quickly acquiesced themselves in the new art policy.



Pakistani establishments have been in a perpetual dilemma over the cultural identity of Pakistan and its image. Pakistan's main concern about its 'image' has been 'that we should not be confused with India', writes Omar Kureishi. There is also a regret that when the image started shaping up, it was not a flattering image. Pakistanis have a twin challenge confronting them; to build a positive image of Pakistan and to exorcise the 'ghost' of India. The mullahs and the *khakis* may want to snap everything that remotely smacks of Indian culture and completely wipe off even a stray remembrance of the non-Islamic past, but 'a letter from Pakistan' written by Buk Mai, (I found it on a website, the-south-asian.com,

May–June 2003) says something different. ‘Over here in Pakistan, the maulvi still lilts and gives his *naats* often to the tune of “*Bachpan ki Mohabat ko, Dil se na juda karna*” (from the old Hindi film classic *Baiju Bawara*) in the wee hours of the dawn for the *Fajr* prayers. In the taxis of Islamabad, drivers still swing to Jagjit and Chitra’s ghazals and of course the eternal Lata. Even in the Military Academy of Pakistan [PMA] in Kakul, Abottabad, the cadets relax and brood over the music of Rafi, Lata, Asha, Jagjit/Chitra and Daler Mehndi.’

The composite culture which Hindus and Muslims of India inherited was duly acknowledged by Sir Syed Ahmad, Iqbal and Quaid-i-Azam even while demanding the protection of the Muslim interest and later claiming a separate state for Muslims in the fulfillment of that demand. History, memory and myth have their distinct roles to play in the evolution of culture. At the social level culture is the result of evolution and not deliberate creation. At the personal level it is a matter of individual’s inner feelings and a capacity to blend various strands of cultural heritage in a harmonious whole. Intizar Hussain, one of the finest Urdu writers of Pakistan who migrated from Uttar Pradesh to Lahore after the partition, has made a pithy remark in an interview with Indian scholar Alok Bhalla, that he saw himself as a person who still had one foot in Ayodhya and the other in Karbala.

## *Pakistani Perceptions of India*

An average Pakistani perceives India as a Hindu state. In his opinion India's secularism is a sham, at best an eyewash. This is the opinion of every Pakistani regime. Once, liberal Pakistanis were appreciative of India's secularism. People like Asma Jahangir used to quote Indian example in Pakistan. But now they feel that India has lost its secular orientation. Generally Pakistani opinion of India appears to be influenced by their customary opinion of a Hindu that is rooted in antiquity. A Hindu means a Brahmin or a Bania; both are *chhalak* (clever), outwardly soft-spoken but speak differently on different occasions, manipulate words, employ jargon, and are capable of taking a range of stands on the same issue. Akbar Ahmad, Pakistani scholar and the maker of the feature film *Jinnah*, makes an interesting observation. In his opinion, in comparison with Islam Hinduism has used the media effectively. Hinduism internalises cultures that come in contact with it, imitates them and also decimates them. Hindu philosophers and scholars establish dialogue with the outside world with ease while Muslim scholars always turn inward, adopt defensive postures and prohibit the entry of the outside world into their universe.

There is a tendency to paint a Hindu on the backdrop of the memories of partition. A Pakistani is unaware of the fact that there are numerous communities other than the Brahmin and the Baniya and that they too have changed considerably over the years. In fact Pakistani obsession with 'Brahmin' is quite amusing. This is because

an average Pakistani Muslim has little opportunity to meet a Hindu in his lifetime. His opinion of Hinduism and Hindus is often based on stray and fictitious information. The general opinion is that Hindus are morally corrupt because they practice polytheism, Hindu women are morally degraded due to the custom of *niyoga*, Hindus are prejudiced against Muslims, they are narrow minded and entertain notions of purity and pollution, not only their treatment of the followers of other faiths is obnoxious but they treat their own co-religionists like dirt. I was surprised at the reference to *niyoga*, a practice long forgotten. I am sure that most of the Hindus in India today have not even heard of it. Talking about the Hindu image in Pakistani perception, I am reminded of an anecdote narrated by Saeed Naqvi. On a visit to Karachi, when he went to meet his relatives along with a couple of Indian journalists, he was asked by a small daughter of a relative if the men accompanying him were Hindus. On learning they were Hindus, the girl exclaimed in great astonishment 'But they look like you!'

Of course educated and well informed Pakistanis do not entertain such notions about Hindus but they do hold a critical view of *Hindutvavad* and India's policy in Kashmir. As they are critical of the increasing influence of Islam and the resultant violence in Pakistan, they are also worried about the rising tide of *Hindutva* politics with its anti-Muslim rhetoric in India. They do believe that Kashmir is a major issue between India and Pakistan and must be resolved at the earliest. But they don't believe that a war or *jihad* is the best means of resolving it. There are Pakistanis who support secular, progressive democracy in Pakistan, but it would be wrong to think that such Pakistanis will oppose Pakistan and support India on Kashmir. Such Pakistanis are nationalists and hope that the situation in Pakistan will change positively in future. They are upset by Hindu-Muslim violence in India but also believe

that Indian Muslims must truly remain Indian. There is a class of Pakistanis, mostly in the establishment, which is happy about communal riots in India, as these riots strengthen the validity of the two-nation theory. After the Gujarat riots of 2002 such notions have been reinforced all the more.

Among the educated Pakistanis there is also a class — may be small — which identifies *Hindutvavad* with Zionism. One comes across articles and readers' letters with such implications in Pakistani press. In their opinion Hindu and Jewish extremists have come together to seek revenge against the Muslims. Therefore there is 'Yahud-o-Hanood' axis working against the Muslims of the world. Pakistanis are wary of the increasing warmth of Indo-Israel friendship.

Pakistanis clearly resent the patronising attitude of some Indians towards them and the instinctive reaction of an average Pakistani is of 'brusque defensiveness'. They obviously do not like being included in the expansive Indianness proclaimed by zealous Indians and jealously protect their identity. F.S. Aijazzuddin, a Pakistani art historian and writer has an interesting episode to narrate of meeting a young Indian in Paris, riding on a public bus. The young man asked Aijazzuddin if he were an Indian; and on learning that the latter was a Pakistani, he exclaimed, 'Oh, India and Pakistan, same to same *yaar*.' Pakistanis find such attitude on the part of Indians overbearing. Such inclusionary remarks are interpreted by them as a 'subtle way to turn the clock of history back to pre-1947 setting when everyone in the subcontinent was known as Indian'.

If one draws a balance sheet of the partition then, from the Indian point of view the creation of Pakistan is a great loss but in the Pakistani perception it is a big gain. While Indians reject the two-nation theory and believe that the two communities had co-existed amicably through a weave of common culture for nearly thousand years in the Indian sub-continent, Pakistanis do not credit such theories. Pakistani historians like I.H. Qureshi have claimed



that historically Muslims were always a distinct community and lived in a separate cultural universe though sharing the same geographical space with Hindus. Some Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, believe that the partition caused trifurcation of the South Asian Muslim community. They argue that if India was not partitioned then the Muslims would have derived benefit through their greater numbers. Pakistanis don't buy such arguments. In their opinion the creation of more Muslim states is actually beneficial to the cause of the Muslims. Therefore though the loss of the eastern wing of the country meant humiliation for Pakistan, it found comfort in the fact that Bangladesh did not join India and remained a separate Muslim state. They believe that Muslims in the Indian subcontinent would have always faced stiff competition from the much larger Hindu population, and they would have always trailed behind Hindus in everything, be it education, jobs, economic empowerment or enjoyment of political power. This is often the argument made by the non-resident Pakistanis. In their opinion Indians studying on scholarships in foreign universities are mostly Hindus and rarely Muslims. But as Pakistanis or Bangladeshis several Muslims have got opportunities to study abroad.

Pakistanis are wary of India's 'predatory' moves and the 'game plan' of erasing Pakistan from the world map. Earlier it was the talk of 'Akhand Bharat' of the rightist parties that irked Pakistanis and now it is the oft-mooted idea of a 'confederation of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh' from the top leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party that makes Pakistanis suspicious of Indian motives. And this is not merely a tactical brain washing of the masses by the Pakistani leadership. Even the Pakistani intellectuals are peeved to no end when the Indian academicians and intellectuals, whom they meet at seminars and conferences in India, try to impress on their Pakistani counterparts of the folly of the partition. In recent

times Pakistani leaders have been often warning India that it should not behave as if it were the US and treat Pakistan like Afghanistan or Palestine.

Yet the veteran Pakistani journalist M.B. Naqvi ponders even today if the partition was the right thing to have happened to the Indian subcontinent. He asks, 'Was the Muslim League's victory in 1947, with the help of the British, the best solution of Muslim community's backwardness and poverty? If a separatist and inimical approach had not been brought to bear on the situation in the 1940s to worsen it, Muslims would now be 400 million or more in India that could scarcely be oppressed or seriously discriminated against.' Undivided India would have offered more opportunities for development of Muslims, believes Naqvi, because without their substantial support no government could run in Delhi. ('Pakistan: What should minorities do' posted on <communalism.blogspot.com>, 24 November 2003.)

Younger Pakistanis are in a dilemma. The government-controlled media, religious groups, and textbooks prescribed in government schools paint India in totally negative hues. But the satellite channels beamed from across the border and the experience of Pakistanis visiting India have different stories to tell. They do not know which is correct. I found there is a tremendous curiosity about India among the young Pakistanis and also a desire to put a firm end to hostilities between the two nations. It was heartening to see a picture of teenaged Pakistani boys (*India Today*, 24 November 2003) holding a placard, in Faisalabad during the cricket match between the two countries of 'Under 19', that said 'Peace and Love' and also depicted a line from a famous song on friendship from the Hindi blockbuster *Sholay*, 'Yeh Doste Hum Nahen Toreengee' (words are wrongly transcribed but the sentiments behind them, I am sure, are real). Arshad Waheed, PIPFD activist on his visit to India found that despite the horrendous communal riots that rock India intermittently Indians of different faiths live together

without much difficulty. He was surprised to see that in several places in India *mandir* and *masjid* stand side by side. Writing for a Marathi magazine, *Mauj* (Diwali issue 2003) he says that he found no difference between Pakistanis and Indians and that Indians are 'as nice and as interesting as Pakistanis are' and never felt that they were the 'other'. But, says Waheed that there is a difference between the two. Indians have a richly diverse culture that has deep roots in history and that is forward looking, and the Indians are fortunate because they live under democracy. In response to Ardeshir Cowasji's Article 'Hindus and Muslims' in *Dawn* (2 November 2003) an expatriate Pakistani youth wrote that despite being a Pakistani he believed that 'Pakistan had the bigger share of the blame when it comes to this senseless hatred we have between us for more than 50 years'. He asked who is to blame. And his answer is: the Pakistani generals. He further asked indignantly if they were so obsessed about Kashmir then why they don't send their own children on *jihad* instead of sending them to the most expensive American colleges. (*Dawn*, 16 November 2003)

Pakistan constantly seeks parity with India. It desires that the West give equal importance to India and Pakistan and India is irked to no end by the 'hyphenated' (India-Pakistan) approach of the West. Pakistan and India both indulge in the game of one upmanship. Pakistan's initial response to India's 12 point proposal of October 2003, for improving the relations between the two was obnoxious. It is a different matter that Pakistan relented soon and initiated bold and positive path towards peace a month later. The Indian Prime Minister and the Pakistani President have indulged in slinging match at the General Assembly of the UN in September every year. Despite this there is an increasing awareness and also admiration in some quarters in Pakistan of the progress made in different sectors by India. One thing that Pakistanis admire about India is the openness of the Indian society. A sight of an Indian woman riding a two wheeler even in small towns draws both

surprise and admiration from Pakistanis. Madeeha Gauhar and M.P. Bhandara, have both commented on it after their visit to Indian Punjab. Gauhar says, 'In Indian Punjab a woman's life is very different from ours. She rides a motorbike and can stay at her workplace till late at night. All this reflects that theirs is a non-segregated society, unlike ours.'

Whatever is the average Pakistani opinion about India, barring some exceptions Pakistanis sincerely desire to establish peaceful and cordial relations with India. They look forward to reduction of tensions between the two, establishment of good neighbourly relations with India, dispelling of the clouds of war that hover over the two countries, and facilities to cross the border from both sides with relative ease. It is a universal experience that when Indians and Pakistanis meet in a third country they strike close bonds of friendship instantly to the great amusement and surprise of other nationals. The expatriate Pakistani youth mentioned above wrote, 'I eat with Indians, go out with them, and many of my friends are Indians.' In the past few years cracks have appeared in this bond because both Indians and Pakistanis have succumbed to the pull of 'long distance nationalism'. In fact the cyber savvy expatriate Indians and Pakistanis engage in cyber wars literally spitting venom against each other. It was reported that Pakistani Americans opposed the candidature of Bobby Jindal, an Indian American Republican candidate in the race for the governorship of Louisiana in 2003. Even then all is not lost. My Pakistani friends had informed me that several Pakistanis had wished that *Lagaan* won the Oscar.

Around the Agra Summit a group of Pakistani schoolboys visited India. One of them wrote about their visit that I happened to read on the Internet. The boy had made a cryptic remark. He wrote, 'Nowhere else in the world one can enter an enemy country and feel so at ease.' And I met a Pakistani who likes everything about India except India.

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