

WHO'S ISLAM? BUSH'S OR
MUSHARRAF'S? OR OF THE HOLY
PROPHET?

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WHOSE ISLAM? BUSH'S OR MUSHARRAF'S? OR OF THE HOLY PROPHET?

By Professor Khurshid Ahmad

The Muslim Ummah is beset today with so many internal and external problems and challenges from all over. Its heart has been torn almost into smithereens by the deadly darts of the strangers as well as of its own near and dear ones. There are, however, three most serious challenges of basic nature that need to be taken into cognizance and a suitable approach and strategy be devised and pursued to squarely face them. The Ummah's survival, strength and progress would very much depend on this response. The threat is to the Muslims, not Islam as such, whose safety and survival, the Lord, Who revealed this eternal message of human emancipation has Himself guaranteed. If a nation fails to do its job in this regard, He is All-Powerful to raise another in its place for shouldering the responsibility of this trust, as He has done in the past and to which Allama Iqbal has so brilliantly alluded to in a famous couplet:

Don't you reflect on the episode of the Tartars, Whose marauding hoards tore Muslim lands into tatters?

(Yet, the conquerors were conquered by the very faith they fought to destroy) Ka'ba got new sentinels from the Home of Idols! Iqbal has also made a very succinct observation when he said that the lesson he has learnt from the Islamic history can be summed up by saying that it is Islam that has saved the Muslims not the other way round. The real issue, therefore, is not that of Islam's survival — it is the issue of our own survival and success as a nation and an international community. It is the responsibility of all the right-thinking Muslims and those with the vision to correctly realize and assess the enormity of the challenges and threats facing our national and social existence and make the best endeavors we can to reawaken, reorganize and mobilize the Muslim Ummah so that it may valiantly brave the politico-ideological Sonamis challenging its survival.

Internal Scene:

The prime challenge to our national existence is due to our own internal situation, affecting all aspects of life, from our individual self to the social environment and politico-economic order. The Muslim individual as well as the society today are miles apart from even the minimum level of Islamic standards, our tall claims notwithstanding. The image we are offering of Islam to the world is definitely not the image of the Religion of Truth. We do have good examples among us and perhaps it is due to these that we have been granted the opportunity to survive. It is, however, a fact that in spite of all our Prayers, Fasts, Zakat, Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages, our individual and collective life, by and large, remains enchained by the shackles of ignorance, indifference, hypocrisy, selfishness, injustice, self-worship and materialistic pursuits. Most of us are content with personal piety, whose influence does not fashion public conduct. Consequently, our

perception about the religion itself has become blurred and confused. We feel no prick of our conscience over the life's paradoxes and contradictions. Islam itself is the most oppressed entity in a country that was created in its name with the blood-sacrifice of millions of men, women and children. The Islamic injunctions are being openly flouted. The Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is not just being ignored, but flagrantly defied, and we remain unmoved.

The situation is such that neither our life honor nor property are safe today, nor even our faith. Those who are supposed to enforce the law are out to openly violate it. Crimes are rampant and there is nobody to come to the help of the oppressed. The poor is getting poorer and the moral degradation has reached to a level that the criminals have the liberty to masquerade around unchecked. Suicides had never been a known phenomenon in the Muslim society, are now rising on an alarming scale, while the affluent classes in authority and power are callously enjoying their recluse. The individual corruption has risen to the scale of social corruption. Those at the helm of affairs are lost in their own world of make-believe. They are not just indifferent towards poverty, squalor and corruption all around them, but are also serving as patrons of all the forms of villainy and unscrupulousness. Its latest and most shameless demonstration was seen on the eve of the recent Basant fanfare in Lahore. In the backdrop of the Tsunami playing havoc in South-East Asia and rains and snowfall causing terrible damage to life and property in our own country, and the 5th of February being nationally observed as the day of solidarity with the oppressed people of Kashmir, it was considered necessary, with the active assistance of the multinational companies and the world media, to celebrate the Basant bonanza the same day, resulting in death of over forty persons, serious injuries to over two hundred, at a cost of over two thousand million rupees in one single day. And this was done under the active support and patronage of the highest in the land, in spite of the fact that the festival, as also the way it is being observed, is of Hindu origin, having nothing in common with the Islamic way of life, which stands for decency, modesty and spiritual rejuvenation.

The most serious aspect of this all-pervasive degradation is that our social norms and values are being deliberately tampered with. That which is ugly is being presented as the beautiful, the obnoxious as the most attractive and the deadly as the most delightful. Our national objectives, principles, values and traditions are being scarified at the altar of the so-called 'enlightenment' and 'moderation'. This social degradation has become our enemy number one. Unless a brake is applied to the headlong dash to this perfidy and efforts are made to safeguard our moral and ethical values and socio-cultural norms, nothing would save us from disaster, the divine law of the rise and fall of nations and the Sunnat Allah, the time tested Tradition of Allah Subhanahu wa Taala.

The Role of Leadership and the Ruling Elite:

Our leadership and the ruling elite are the greatest hurdle in the way of any improvement and reform of the current malaise. This is true about Pakistan in particular and the Muslim Ummah in general. Though the individual members of the Muslim society are accountable as well for this state of affairs, the onus, however, falls ultimately on the shoulders of those ruling the roost. Those at the helm of affairs have failed at all levels to play their due role in this regard. The government and the country's elite remain the fount-head of corruption and malaise in the society. It is they who are guilty of violating the constitution, subverting all norms, rules and regulations, and disregarding social and moral values and traditions. The conglomerate of Pakistan's military top brass, moneyed classes, bureaucracy and the so-called liberal and secular political forces top the list of those who are playing havoc with our polity, unity and national existence. It is this class that occupies all the positions of power and authority, which it is using in its narrow personal interests and taking the community towards social and moral corruption, confrontation, injustice and chaos.

While all previous leaderships, mostly secular, share the responsibility for this state of affairs, presently it is Gen. Pervez Musharraf and his associates who are playing a key role in making this national catastrophe. During the five and a half years of his rule, the social rot, misuse of power and corruption have surpassed all earlier limits. Ideological confusion, moral anarchy, social injustice, economic oppression and exploitation, political nepotism, selfishness and unscrupulousness have gone to a level where dozens of poor daughters of the community are subjected to rape and even gang-rape and the rulers stand by the side of the powerful culprits. A senior Grade-22 Registrar of the Supreme Court commits serious financial corruption and is not subjected to any punishment, except simple retirement. The Federal Cabinet includes Ministers, who are wanted by the NAB, some even under trial in the superior courts.

The Chief Minister of a province expels one of his senior Ministers on the charges of corruption and the dismissed Minister in turn accuses the Chief Minister himself of corruption, while the ruling Party's leadership counsels both to keep quiet and maintain 'cease fire'. On top of it all, a retired Major heading a senior position in the NAB itself is caught red-handed and that too while trying to cover up the corruption charges worth billions of rupees of two other retired military officers. Hardly any day passes when there is no case involving a police officer or a government official trying to abuse the law and misappropriate national resources. Unfortunately, nothing eventually happens to anyone of them and they go scot-free. The national army is being used against its own citizens and the distance between the armed forces and the masses is gradually increasing. There is an alarming rise in poverty, inflation and unemployment, but the ruling class is busy increasing its perks and privileges. In the name of national (better-to-say personal) security, fleets of bullet-proof Mercedes cars and Land Cruisers are being imported at an enormous cost of

billions of rupees, while the corrupt practice of performing Umrah on the national expense is being followed religiously.

The Myth of Economic Stability:

Those who are never tired of announcing the good news about the rise in Pakistan's exchange reserves do not apparently feel the pinch of their own conscience towards the common man's plight. Our common man is deprived of even the basic necessities of life. He is caught in the whirlpool of corruption, dishonesty and indifference that has poisoned all the walks of our national existence. On the one hand, there are tall claims about having broken the begging bowl and on the other the poor nation is being burdened on a large scale by the fresh load of foreign debts. During the last five years alone the new loans obtained by Musharraf Government are around six billion dollars.

The State Bank of Pakistan's latest report plainly states that the country's foreign debts have crossed the thirty six-billion dollar mark. The World Economic Forum of Davos (Switzerland), at whose annual sessions Gen. Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz blew the trumpet of Pakistan's economic exploits, in its latest reports, "The Global Competitiveness Report: 2004-05" has drawn a rather dismal picture of Pakistan's economy. The Forum has been publishing its Global Reports since last five-six years classifying the countries of the world under the following three categories: 'Growth Competitiveness Index, 'Technology Index' and 'Public Institutions Index'. Its latest Report, in the compilation of which over one hundred research institutions took part and which is based on 160 indicators places Pakistan at No.91 among 104 countries. This means that in spite of all our tall claims, we are at the bottom line of the countries in the competitiveness struggle, ahead just of 14 nations. India occupies the 55th position in this Index, while 11 Muslim countries are ahead of us and only two figures behind Pakistan. In South Asia, Pakistan lags behind India and Sri Lanka. More shameful is the fact that according to the 2003 Report Pakistan was at 73rd position among 101 nations and now in the present Report it has gone down much below. This shows how far the Government is justified in making fantastic claims which the bare facts do not substantiate.

Like our 'progress' index, our performance on the anti-corruption front is equally dismal. According to the Corruption Index of the universally acclaimed 'Transparency International', Pakistan was placed at sl. No. 92 in a list of 133 countries of the world during 2003. It had received 2.5 out of 10 marks. This 'envious' position has gone down further during 2004 and the country today stands at sl. No.129 of 145 countries, securing 2.1 out of 10. This is the picture of our performance that Gen. Musharraf is trying to camouflage by describing it as 'corruption of tactical nature', while claiming to have eliminated the 'high level corruption of strategic significance'.

As we analyze the factors and causes of the Muslim world's current malaise, it becomes crystal clear that the real responsibility for this state of affairs lies with the national leaderships both in Pakistan and the world of Islam. They are the root cause. These leaderships place themselves before their nations and pursue their personal interests. They always keep their personal whims over and above the law, the national constitution, the rules and regulations and all ethical and moral values. This leadership is neither from the people, nor is accountable before them. On the contrary, their interests are in fact at variance with those of their peoples. The current ruling coterie in Pakistan is actually a political conglomerate of the military leadership, civil bureaucracy, economic elites and the political groups whose sole concern is to cling to power at all cost. The second biggest challenge to our national existence is this very leadership.

The US and Its World Politics:

The third major challenge facing Pakistan and the Muslim Ummah is the present US leadership and its role in world politics. Islam, the Muslim world and Pakistan are the principal targets of its aggressive designs. During the first four years of his tenure as the US President, George Bush Jr. succeeded in devising a strategy and detailed war plans for consolidating the US domination and rendering ineffective every possible power that could challenge the American supremacy, or its surrogate in the Middle East: Israel. Now, at the outset of his second term, he has presented his grandiose plan, after lot of fine-tuning, in his very first 'State of the Nation' address to the US Congress. During his twenty-minute inauguration speech he used the words 'liberty' and 'freedom' forty two times and reaffirmed his resolve to impose his concept of 'democracy' and 'freedom' all over the world. In his address, President Bush described 'freedom' as 'a fire in the mind of man' and added: "His mission was to bring the war of freedom to the darkest corners of the world". This is actually not a movement for freedom but a bloody game to push the world in the name of freedom to the raging fire of war.

Tristram Hunt in his recent article in the Guardian of London has quoted the following remarks of a Senior Bush Advisor, reported by the US journalist Ron Suskind:

"We are an empire now and when we act we create our own reality. As you are studying that reality we will act again, creating other new realities. We are history's actors..... And you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."

(The Guardian of London reproduced in the Nation, Lahore, February 18, 2005)

The arrogance and audacity, now the hallmark of the US foreign policy posture, have removed the mask from the real face of the neo-colonial order being imposed on the Muslim World in the name of freedom and democracy. Colin Powell had demonstrated the same arrogance much before 9/11, when he rebuffed the then Ambassador of Pakistan to US Syeda Abida Hussain, as she tried to defend Pakistan's right to nuclear deterrence. To her remarks that Pakistan had just one or two

'footballs', while America had thousands of bombs in its arsenal, the then Chief of US Central Command, Gen. Colin Powell had curtly replied "Madame! We are America".

It is a fact that the 'Champion of Liberty' America is out to give command which our rulers are there to merely re-echo. The sermons being dished out to us about 'Enlightened Moderation' are nothing but an attempt to make our contours more appealing to the US in pursuance of the dictates of its new world order. From the US Vice President Dick Cheney, the new Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice and the 9/11 Commission's Report, to the reports of a dozen US think-tanks, the CIA think-tank 'National Intelligence Council' and the US Congress Research Service, have declared in unison that America would have to brain-wash the Muslims, and fight what they regard as Islamic extremism, fundamentalism and the Islamic infrastructure that produces the spirit of Jihad in the Muslim world, something the US regards as its biggest threat. They have gone to the extent of pronouncing that the real threat to US and its new world order was not from terrorism, nor even from the Islamic terrorism, which they view as mere symptoms. To them, the real source of this threat is Islam itself and its concept of Jihad that gives rise to what they describe as 'Political Islam'. The Political Islam, they believe, targets Secularism and aims at rebuilding the state and its social order according to Islam as a way of life.

The essence of all that has come from the US policy-makers and institutions by way of reviews and analysis is that the hatred found in the Muslim world against America originates from Islam and its revolutionary approach to life that rejects the duality of the state and religion and aims at establishing the state and society on moral and spiritual values of Islam, ensuring their unity and harmony. President Bush had astounded the Muslim world when he spoke of 'Crusade' immediately after the 9/11 tragedy. To make amends, he went then to Washington's Islamic Center, where he advanced the idea of 'Moderate Islam'. All important reports that have since been emanating from the US intellectuals and institutions have made it a point to drive a wedge between the 'moderate' and 'extremist' Islam. Efforts are also being made discretely to promote secularism in the Muslim world. The 9/11 Commission was a high-powered US body. It declared President Gen. Pervez Musharraf's notion of "Enlightened Moderation" as the most important concept in the US interest.

At page 369 of the Commission's Report, it recommended the following, which has been described as the US state policy by the Fact Sheet issued from the White House on July 30, 2004:

"If in his war of survival for himself and for Pakistan Pervez Musharraf remains firm on his policy of enlightened moderation, America would have to be then ready for difficult decisions. It would have to establish long-term relationship in the context of its strategy for Pakistan's future. In addition to continuing its current assistance, the U.S. would have to increase its support to Pakistan in its war against extremism. This support should be in a comprehensive form, taking into its ambit the areas from the

military assistance to the provision of resources for a better education. And this cooperation should continue till such time the Pakistani leadership remains committed to difficult decisions”.

(USIS journal ‘Khabar-o-Nazar’, August 2004, Vol: II)

The 9/11 Commission Report has the following recommendation for the “The US and Our Muslim Friends” in the Islamic world:

“The US and its friends enjoy a significant position and we can give them a perception that can improve the future of the younger generation. If we pay attention to the views of the leaders of public opinion in the Arab and the Muslim world, a consensus, based on moderation, can be arrived at.”

(9/11 Commission Report, Chapter 12, Page 276)

On September 2004, President Bush in his address at the UN General Assembly, said:

“Since the last few decades, the world has been witnessing an expansion in the sphere of liberty, peace, security and progress. We have got the historic opportunity now to further expand this sphere so that the menace of fundamentalism and terrorism can be countered justly and with dignity and honor”.

He added:

“We will have to help the reformists in the Middle East, as they are striving to build a liberal and peaceful democratic civil society.”

(USIS journal ‘Khabar-o-Nazar’, October 2004, Vol.I)

On June 22, 2004, the US Deputy Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Christina Rocco, in her statement before the Foreign Relations Committee of the House of Representatives, said:

“Assistance should continue to Pakistan for making it a modern and moderate Islamic Republic. ... The objective of all our policies and programmes for Pakistan is that it should be helped to emerge as a moderate and progressive country. We are supporting the country through our programmes of cooperation in the field of security, promotion of democracy, progress and prosperity. These are the programmes which help in countering extremism and instability. ... We are lending considerable support to Pakistan Government’s efforts for educational reforms. It includes reforms in Madaris. ... Our programmes would also help in reforming the political parties. We are paying special attention to the teachers and the leaders of

the civil society, the media, the youth and the Pakistani middle class, who are likely to pose threat to the democratic values”.

(USIS journal ‘Khabar-o-Nazar’, July 2004, Vol:1)

Islam: The Main Target:

The sermon that is being given to the Pakistani nation since last two years on “Enlightened Moderation” has thus its origin in the reviews and reform prescriptions of President Bush, his Administration and the US think-tanks. Its sole target is Islam’s philosophy of life, its dictum of the unity of state and religion, the concept of Jihad, the Muslim’s duty of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil and the Islamic social order. Prof. Dr. M. Shahid Alam of the North Eastern University of America in his book, appearing this month, “Is There an Islamic Problem?” has very candidly and courageously exposed the US designs with full documentation. In his recent article Dr. Alam explains the real objectives before the US leadership as follows:

“The American and Israeli designs on the Islamic world — so it appears to a growing number of Muslims — are even greater than they were before 9/11 when they preferred to dominate the Islamic world through surrogates. Their new designs go further; they are now demanding that the Islamic world — and Islam itself — reform itself on American terms”. **(‘America’s New Civilizing Mission’, The Dawn, Feb.12/5)**

That Islam is the real target can very well be reaffirmed by the fact that the US is keen not just for a change in Deeni Madaris curricula, it is demanding also to secularize the country’s entire educational system. The so called education reforms were initiated by Gen. Pervez Musharraf in 2002. The process was accordingly set in motion to change the country’s academic curricula. The registration of Deeni Madaris and the Agha Khan University Examination Board Ordinance – 2002, are thus part of the same US game plan. The US government documents, recently de-classified and made public under the Information Act, include a Policy Paper of 2002, “Strategy for Eliminating the Threat from Jihadist Networks of Al-Qaida: Status and Prospects”. The Paper claims that the policy the US Administration is pursuing in Pakistan is in furtherance of the same strategy, which seeks “to build up a secular educational system that ends rural Pakistan’s exclusive reliance on the fundamentalist madrasas”.

Educational ‘Reforms’:

The US Administration is extending support to Pakistan for this purpose under eight different heads, which include change of curricula, teachers’ training, transfer of teachers and students, stipends and scholarships. In spite of the full cooperation from Gen. Pervez Musharraf and the Ministers of Education at the center and in the Provinces, the USA is not ready to completely rely on them. The US Congress has now, therefore, formally introduced a Bill (HR 4818), according to

which the 100 million dollars aid being extended by the USA for 'reforms' in education sector, would be subject to use by Pakistan for the implementation of the educational reforms of January 2002. Within 90 days following the Congress approval of the Bill, the Secretary of the State will have to inform the House of Representatives that the US assistance has been used actually for the purpose for which it was sanctioned. Those 'Reforms' have been defined in the Bill as follows:

"The term 'education' reform includes efforts to expand and improve secular education system in Pakistan and to develop and utilize a moderate curriculum for private religious schools in Pakistan".

(The News, Oct. 16, 2004)

The former US Ambassador to Pakistan Ms. Nancy Powell had played a key role in this regard. On 13 August 2003, the US AID entered into an agreement for the implementation of the Agha Khan University Examination Board Ordinance. According to press reports, 44 million dollars were promised in aid for the purpose. It may be of interest to add that the agreement was signed by the US Ambassador Ms. Nancy Powell and the Agha Khan University representative Shams Lakha, but the chief witness of the occasion was Pakistan's Minister for Education then, Mohtarama Zubaida Jalal. It was then reaffirmed by the US Ambassador that the aid would continue for the Agha Khan Board till such time it stands on its feet. It may further be of interest to recall that immediately following the occupation of Iraq; the US had introduced on April 10, 2004, its pre-arranged text books in the Iraqi Schools. These books were prepared in June 2002, a year before the US aggression on Iraq.

President Bush in his television interview stated in unequivocal terms that a change is being introduced on his advice in the Pakistani curricula with the US assistance. This writer raised a Point of Order in this regard in the Senate of Pakistan, in response to which the Education Minister had stated that it was "mere propaganda and nobody can dictate us". The fact is, however, as evident as the broad-day light that every step being taken by the present government, whether in the name of 'Enlightened Moderation', 'War on Terror', 'Opposition to Fundamentalism', or 'Campaign against Extremism', is being done at the US' behest. This is exactly the pattern followed in the historic 'U'-turn on the Afghan Policy just on a single telephone call of September 13 from Colin Powell. That is how the country's military leadership has all along done willingly and meekly on the dictates of the US military leadership.

It is unfortunate that each and every front from where Gen. Pervez Musharraf has retreated in the wake of 9/11 has been of immense importance to the country and the nation. He has thus been guilty of apathy or rather betrayal of Afghanistan, distancing from the world of Islam, doggedly serving as a tool in the hands of the US Imperialism and providing his own shoulders for its war machine, abject surrender of Pakistan's principled stand on Kashmir, betrayal of the Kashmiri Jihad on the Indo-US pressure, surrender on the nuclear front, the ignominious action denigrating the

national hero and benefactor Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan and the blind pursuit of the US policies on education, media and even the training of our Parliamentarians. All of these are the most important fields, vital for the defence of Pakistan's political, economic, strategic and cultural frontiers. The credit for this most ugly 'U'-turn in our policy posture goes to the carrot and stick approach of the former US Secretary of State Colin Powell and his now successor Condoleeza Rice.

Misplaced Criticism of Islam:

The most serious about-face did by Gen. Pervez Musharraf have been the one over Islam and Pakistan's ideology. He is using the deceptive term of 'Enlightened Moderation' for this pitiable posture. But the language used to define this term, its concept, aims and objectives, is the same as the one used by George Bush and the Members of his Administration. Sometimes, the General is apprehensive of 'extremism' and 'fundamentalism', at times he is hard against terrorism, and sometimes he is all for modernism, modernity and moderation. In his play of words, he often uses the strongest metaphors in his diction against the 'Mulla' and expresses his resentment against beard and the symbol of Islamic modesty for women, the 'Hijab'. He gathers his spirit then to advocate 'Secularism' for Pakistan, which, he believes, has nothing contradictory to Islam and attributes this notion to the Mulla's conspiracy, from which he would like Islam to be liberated. He is not only active himself on this borrowed agenda but would like the entire OIC to toe the same line. It would be pertinent, therefore to have a deeper look into the General's pronouncements in order to have a clearer image of his version of the 'Mulla's Islam' and the 'Islam' of Bush and Musharraf.

On 24 September 2003, in his address to the UN General Assembly, General Musharraf said:

"Our faith is dynamic, promoting constant renewal and adaptation, through the process of Ijtihad (or interpretation through consultation). Islam's vision is not trapped in any one period of history; it is modern and futuristic: Islam must not be confused with the narrow vision of a few extremists".

The General ought to ponder over what he has said knowingly or unknowingly (most likely unknowingly) in this statement, as it is tantamount to striking at the very root and source of the teachings of Islam. The golden era of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the Khulafa Al-Rāshideen remains the best example, the criterion, the canon and the role model for the Muslim Ummah. By saying, "trapped in any one period of history", he has made a sweeping remark against this period as well. Islam is undoubtedly modern and also futuristic, but the era of the Holy Prophet and his Glorious Caliphs is for the Muslims, the world over, according to the very dictates of their Faith, the original source of reference. The Tradition of the Holy Prophet and that of the Four Caliphs remain Islam's foremost, irreversible and permanent source that cannot be set aside on any pretext.

General Musharraf's address of January 2004, "OIC – Challenges and Response", was couched in the diction being doggedly used by George Bush and the critics of Islam in the Western media: linking Islam to Fundamentalism, Fundamentalism to Extremism and Extremism to Terrorism.

Instead of taking each of these one by one and scientifically analyzing its pros and cons, he rejects all of them in one breath and toeing the line followed by Bush and Condoleeza Rice tries to promote his own version of Islam in the garb of "Enlightened Moderation".

The Sermon of Modernism- Secularism:

In his attempt to make the Western agenda of secularizing Islam plausible for the people of Pakistan, the General proceeds to declare that there was no contradiction between Islam and Secularism. He says:

"What we need is a renaissance ... We have to adopt the path of moderation, a conciliatory approach, a pacific approach, in order to cleanse ourselves of the charge that Islam is a religion of militancy and is averse to modernization, democracy and secularism".

He leaves no room for his well-wishers to interpret his reference to secularism as intended just to satisfy the Western critics. To the West, the word 'Renaissance' has a definite connotation of a politico-cultural revolution that seeks to find out, in place of Revelation and the religious values, alternate moorings for the society's growth on the basis of rationalism and physical sciences and a rebellion against God, Religion, and Tradition. In a signed article in his name published in the Washington Post (which the Pakistani newspapers reproduced faithfully), the General says:

"I say to my brother Muslims: The time for renaissance has come. The way forward is through enlightenment. We must concentrate on human resource, education, health care, and social justice. If this is our direction, it cannot be achieved through confrontation. We must adopt a part of moderation and conciliatory approach to fight the common belief that Islam is a religion of militancy in conflict with modernization, democracy and secularism." **(Washington Post, June 1, 2004)**

Continuing in the same vein, he took upon himself to explain the West's position vis-à-vis Islam in his address at the World Economic Forum Seminar of Davos **(23 January, 2005):**

"What is the West's perception of Muslims and Islam? First of all, the perception that Islam is a religion of extremism, terrorism, fundamentalism and extremism.

Secondly, that Islam is in conflict with democracy, modernism and secularism. And thirdly, that Muslims refuse to assimilate with the global family”.

He then proceeded to dispel the notion that Islam was opposed to democracy, secularism and modernism. As for democracy, he was more or less correct — though he obviously missed to look at his own paradoxical position of having put on the Presidential cloak as well as the Army Chief’s uniform at the same time, which went against all the canons of democracy. Regarding modernism and secularism, he dilated thus:

“When we are talking of modernism, Islam believes in continuous process of reviewing thought, in accordance with time and environment. Therefore, Islam is modern; it remains current, it can never be anchored in the past. And thirdly, as far as secularism is concerned Islam believes in equal rights of minorities. So without going into details, when a country like Pakistan is known as Islamic Republic of Pakistan it inherently implies that we ought to be democratic, we are to be secular and we are to be modern in concept”.

What one can say about these ‘pearls of wisdom’? The way the General has defined modernism and secularism is nothing but paradoxical. In his paranoia, he thinks Muslims as being misfit into the global family, and tries to raise his sword against those whom he views as bigoted Muslims. He says that there are some misguided people who cannot go hand in hand with him; they acquire neither modern education, nor learn English language or enjoy music — “These are a handful of people. Don’t bother about them”, he tells his patrons in the West.

The Truth about Secularism:

Who can bring home this fact to General Pervez Musharraf that just as ‘Renaissance’ has a special historic perspective for Europe, ‘Enlightenment’ too is a well-known term in its civilizational and ideological history! According to the West, ‘Enlightenment’ aims at finding out solutions to all their issues on rational grounds and not in the light of the Revealed Text! To them, the Day of Reckoning and the spiritual side of life have no relevance and the arena of all their activities is entirely this material world. ‘Secularism’ is the third essential part of the trinity, of which ‘Renaissance’ and ‘Enlightenment’ are the other two. Secularism, in its very concept, is opposed to the philosophy of life that calls for reorganizing the affairs of this world on the basis of the knowledge and values acquired through the Religion of Truth and the Revelation. To claim that Secularism stands for religious tolerance and better treatment of the minorities is something that betrays ignorance about the political science and world history.

“An Encyclopedia of Religions”, compiled by Vergilius Ferm and printed by The Philosophical Library of New York, defines ‘Enlightenment’ as follows:

“The Enlightenment: The name of the movement which characterizes the general atmosphere of the 18th century. Its origin is to be sought in the mental climate of age and spiritual emancipation of man in Renaissance era, which, with its materialistic and individualistic tendencies evoke in the minds of people a proud consciousness of the autonomy of reason. As a historic phenomenon, the Enlightenment movement represents the effort of applying the role of reason to actual life”.

Regarding ‘Renaissance’, the same Encyclopedia of Religions has the following to say:

“A venue of intellectual and aesthetic awakening and of secular culture which may be thought of as originating in Italy in the 14th century. Whether for better or for worse, the Renaissance certainly had the character of a revolution. Its key note was a secular humanism implying recognition of human and mundane values as having validity unconditioned by theological condition or ecclesiastical approval.”

(P. 655-656).

This Encyclopedia explains the meaning of ‘Secularism’ as follows:

“Secularism: Specifically a variety of utilitarian social ethic (named and formulated by G. J. Holyoak, 1817-1906), which seeks human improvement without reference to religion and exclusively by means of human reason, science and social organization.”

(P.700)

As ‘Secularism’ has the pivotal position in all these terminologies, it may be of interest to quote some more references here in order to determine its real import. Victor Lidz, a Professor of Haverford College of Pennsylvania (USA), in his article in The Social Sciences Encyclopedia, says:

“Secularization refers to a displacement of religious beliefs, rituals and sense of community from the moral life of society. Everyday experience in ‘secularized’ society tends to be carried on without routine invocation of the sacred. It was however, the philosophy of Enlightenment that provided the pivotal impetus towards thought giving secularization. They propose that society should be founded on moral principles devised by rational enquiries into the universal nature of human social life”.

Charles D. Smith in his article on ‘Secularism’ in The Oxford Encyclopedia of Modern Islamic World (Vol IV), explains the meaning of ‘Secularism’ thus:

“The term secularism signifies that which is not religious. It is rooted in the Latin word *saeculum*, which initially meant ‘age’ or ‘generation’ in the sense of temporal time. It later became associated with matters of this world, as distinct from those of the spirit directed towards attainment of paradise. ... Secularism or secularization process derives from the European historical experience. It meant a gradual separation of almost all aspects of life and thought from religious association and ecclesiastical direction.” **(P.20)**

Islam Versus Secularism:

It is evident from the above explanatory notes and historical evidences that Islam and Secularism are diametrically opposed to each other. We would like to make it clear that as for the mundane world and issues like human rights, freedom, justice, education, health care, economic progress and the social wellbeing, these are not only the most desirable aspects according to Islam, but are also an integral part of the Islamic social order. Similarly, tolerance for the opposition, goodwill for the peoples of other faiths, complete safeguard to the rights of the minorities and co-existence with the different cultures and schools of thought, are the essential features of the Islamic polity. The difference between Islam and Secularism is, however, of a fundamental and substantive nature. Islam subordinates everything to the supreme authority of the Divine Revelation, while giving reason its due place. It links the attainment of good in this world with the attainment of good in the Hereafter. There is no place in Islam for living in isolation from the society like a hermit. It wants to reshape and reorganize the entire human life in the light of the revealed guidance on the foundations of truth and justice. Islam thus rejects the philosophy of life that is concerned with the material wellbeing of this world only and draws its sustenance from reason alone; Islam substitutes this with an all-embracing vision that seeks to rebuild the mundane world and seeks its progress in such a way as to ensure the human being’s ultimate success in the life hereafter. The injunctions from Allah Subhanahu wa Taala and His Holy Prophet (PBUH) serve as the beacon to guide the humanity towards its ultimate goal of success in both the worlds. This is a vision that is totally at variance with the concept of secularism and, there is no room, therefore, for a patch-work with Islam of the secular ideology which was the product of ‘Renaissance’ and ‘Enlightenment’ in the West and which led to so many conflicts, exploitations, social upheavals and intellectual anarchy in the world.

The Islam of the Holy Prophet:

Islam does not believe in the compartmentalization of life into the spiritual and the temporal. It demands the Believers to enter into the fold of Islam as a unified whole:

“O ye who believe! Enter into Islam wholeheartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the Evil One for he is to you an avowed enemy.” **(S.II: Al-Baqarah, 208)**

According to Islam, to look exclusively for the worldly gains and to seek the bliss of both the Worlds are two distinct philosophies of life, having different objectives, temperaments and consequences. Secularism aims exclusively at the worldly gains, while Islam stands for success in this world and salvation in the Hereafter. The Holy Quran has succinctly explained the difference between these two distinct philosophies of life as follows:

“There are men who say: ‘Our Lord! Give us (Thy bounties) in this world!’ But they will have no portion in the Hereafter. And there are men who say: ‘Our Lord! Give us good in this World and good in the Hereafter; and defend us from the torment of the Fire!’ To these will be allotted what they have earned; And God is quick in account.”

(S.II: Al-Baqarah, 200-202)

Islam in fact means the Way of Life that seeks to bring the human life as a whole under the orbit of total submission to Allah. This is the course He has been pleased to approve for mankind:

“The Religion before God is Islam (submission to His Will)”. **(S.III: Al-I-Imran, 19)**

And “If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).”

(S.III: Al-I-Imran, 85)

According to Islam, the Sole Arbiter and Legislator for all the matters concerning human life are Allah Subhanahu wa Taala and His Holy Prophet (PBUH). They are the ultimate Criterion and the Judge to decide in anything concerning the Muslim society, it may relate to the religious tenets, the social interaction, the family relationships, the economic issues, the politics, the judiciary, the domestic matters, or the international relations. God and His Apostle alone have the authority to decide in matters concerning the Halal and Haram (the Permissible and the Forbidden) in all spheres of human life. Iman or Faith means to surrender and give back this option about ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ to the Lord. He, who does not comprehend this point, has no real understanding of Islam.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has said:

“A Believer is he, who subordinates his personal whims and desires to the Guidance revealed unto me.”

When one does that, his life mirrors the following verse of the Holy Quran Say: “truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death are (all) for God, the Cherisher of the Worlds:

No partner hath He: This am I commanded, and I am the first of those who bow to His Will’.”

(S.XI: Al-Anam, 163-164)

The purpose of this Religion, is on the one hand, to worship the Lord and seek His Pleasure in respect of everything and on the other to establish the order of justice and equity among the people and enrich the human life with goodness and virtue as desired by Him:

“We sent aforetime Our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them The Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice”.

(S.LVII: Al-Hadid, 25)

The qualities of Iman (Faith) and Taqwa (Love and Fear of God) are responsible not only for the spiritual growth and proximity with the Lord, but also for the wellbeing of this material world. Allah Subhanahu wa Taala says:

“If the people of the towns had but believed and feared God, We should indeed have opened out to them (all kinds of) blessings from heaven and earth”.

(S.VII: Al-Araf, 96)

Islam harnesses the world and its entire potentials for the benefit of the mankind. This is what is meant by the ‘Vicegerancy of man’. The Holy Prophet (PBUH), says that a Muslim is like the horse tied to the peg with a rope, with the result that the parameters of his freedom are determined by the length of the rope with which he has been tied. This means that human beings are definitely free but their freedom is subject to the bounds determined for him by Allah Subhanahu wa Taala and His Holy Prophet (PBUH). This is the difference between the Believer and the Unbeliever.

Islam is neither the religion of the Mullah; nor can it be subordinated to the wishes of any Bush or Mush. It is the Eternal and Universal Guidance, revealed by the Lord through His Apostle for the humankind, and only that is authentic which has the sanction from the Lord and His Holy Prophet (PBUH). This is the definition given by the Holy Quran of those who believe and are worthy of Allah’s blessings. The Holy Book says:

“Those who follow the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures) , — in the Law and the Gospel; — For he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. So it is those who believe in him, honor him, help him, and follow the Light which is sent down with him, — it is they who will prosper.

Say: ‘O men! I am sent unto you all, as the Apostle of God, to whom belonged the dominion of the heavens and the earth: there is no god but He: it is He that gives

both life and death. So believe in God and His Apostle, the unlettered Prophet, who believeth in God and his words; follow him that (so) ye may be guided’.

While following this path, the man willingly surrenders the freedom of all his options to the Will and Command of God and that is what is meant by Islam:

“But no, by thy Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make the judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them (obediently) with the fullest conviction.” **(S. IV: Al-Nisa, 65)**

It is in the very essence of Islam and inherent in the character of a person as a Muslim to totally and unconditionally surrender and accept whatever he has been enjoined to do and stop from whatever he has been forbidden. And that is the real manifestation of Taqwa:

“So take what the Apostle assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you. And Fear God; for God is strict in punishment.” **(S. LIX: Al-Hashr, 7)**

Islam: Pakistan’s Future:

This is the straight path of Allah that Islam guides us to follow. Those who follow this path willingly and wholeheartedly are the true Believers. Islam is just Islam. It has no particular version, neither that of the Mullah, nor that of Musharraf or Bush. It cannot be tailored to fit in the whims of a whimsical, or the trend of a tyrant. It is the path to which the humanity has been guided by the Prophet of Islam Syyidna Muhammad (PBUH) and has to be followed in letters and spirit till eternity. It is a universal and everlasting truth that accepts no adulteration or arbitrary admixture. A Muslim is he who is firm in his words and deeds according to the demands of the Quran and the Sunnah and deviates not an inch from the right track, whether somebody calls him an extremist, or a fundamentalist. The Muslims are ‘Ummat-e-Wasat’, or a ‘Nation Justly Balanced’ and Islam is the path of Justice and Moderation. But this is the moderation that has been pre-determined and well-defined by Allah Subhanahu wa Taala and the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Any attempt to mutilate its teachings by any Tom, Dick, or Herry of this world is not ‘Moderation’— it is Distortion and Deviation.

In the backdrop of these established principles and historically determined facts, it is unfortunate to see how audaciously General Pervez Musharraf refers to the divine injunctions and the Islamic principles while propagating in favour of his borrowed philosophy of ‘Enlightened Moderation’:

“He said that ‘Pakistan was a country of moderates, including Muslims and others.
.... We don’t need extremist Mullahs: Neither does Islam. The government would not

allow anyone to impose self styled Islamic values such as wearing veils, or beards, but nobody would be restrained from veils and beard either'. President Musharraf vowed that extremism would not be tolerated in Pakistan at all costs."

(Daily Times, December 18, 2004)

In the garb of their verbiage against Mullas, those who try to belittle the Islamic teachings and symbols perhaps believe that their venomous outbursts would be taken as 'enlightened moderation'. If someone thinks that under the smoke screen of the dust raised against extremism he can make such outbursts against the well-established social norms, moral values and religious injunctions publicly acceptable, he should be well advised to recall what the Former US Senator Berry Goldwater had said:

"I would remind you that extremism in the defence of liberty is no vice, and let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."

To conclude, we may add that Islam is just one and only one, the Islam of Syidna Muhammad (PBUH). The Muslim community of Pakistan, as also the entire Muslim Ummah, regards this Islam as the Religion of Truth. It would never permit anybody — Mullah, Musharraf or Bush— to distort the glorious image of Islam to suit his own whims. All such attempts made in the past remained utter failure and any such attempt today, or in future, is also destined to fall flat. This is what has been promised by Allah Subhanahu wa Taala, for it is He Who has sent down His glorious message for the guidance of His subjects and it is He Who has taken upon Himself to safeguard it till eternity:

"We have, without doubt sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)."
(S. XV: Al-Hijr, 9)

"Their intention is to extinguish God's Light (by blowing) with their mouths: But God will complete (the revelation of) His Light, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it)."
(S. LXI: Al-Saff, 8)
