

Book Reviews

***Freedom of the Press: The War on Words (1977-1978)*, by Ahfaz ur Rehman, published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2017, pages: 226, price: Pak rupees 995/-**

Journalism in Pakistan has passed through successive phases of trials and tribulations. The crises journalism had to undergo since independence had their origin both in the state policies as well as the authoritarianism embedded in the society. The book under review does not claim to divulge into the societal challenges which have emerged more visibly in the last three or four decades, especially, in the context of the spread of religious extremism and ethnic and other types of militancy in the society. Studies need to be done on these aspects as well as the external factors that have had impact on the growth and the content of media. The latter has come in the garb of globalization that has greatly affected the local environment and has come to strongly affect, if not directly dictate, what the media should encompass and present.

Leaving the societal and global aspects aside, the role of the state and the successive governments has a lot to offer to be written about by way of what the media has endured in the last seventy plus years. It doesn't need too much of pondering to conclude that the major pressures over media have come from the governments who, by and large, had been quite at unease with independent flow of information, and criticism of their policies. And, unfortunately, this process had begun right after Independence when newspapers' and periodicals' independent voice was tried to be silenced, and they were pressurized to toe the official line with respect to domestic and foreign policies. Pakistan's independent journey, unfortunately, began with the imposition of black laws which prohibited dissent and curtailed freedom of expression in the strongest possible manner. However, the long history of repression also came to become a history of defiance and struggle for the freedom of expression. This struggle owed itself to mainly those journalists and the working class

belonging to the newspaper industry, who in fact had to launch a two-way struggle. On the one hand, they fought for freedom of journalism, while on the other, they quite often had to fight for their rights against their owners who amassed wealth without committing to pay the working journalists and the other staff fair wages. This struggle became all the more difficult in cases when the government and the newspaper owners were found to have built their nexus, the brunt of which made things overly difficult for the journalist community. The struggle entailed both successes and failures.

Coming to focus the struggle against the government policies, the successes the journalists and their various organizations achieved became reality in times when they had been able to court support from other segments of the society and launched a more united front against the repression of a given government. In the last over seven decades the more forceful movements for the restoration of the right of expression were launched during the four military regimes of General Ayub Khan, General Yahya Khan, General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervaiz Musharraf. Of them, Zia-ul-Haq's Martial Law was undoubtedly the most repressive of all regimes in the history of the country. During this regime not only journalists but all segments of political and civil society were subjected to the harshest of repressive measures, some of which had never been experienced in the past. Thus, imprisonments under the severest of conditions and flogging of political workers became quite common with the effect that a large number of people accepted to become silent, an objective for which such punishments were adopted as policy. Zia-ul-Haq ruled with the claim that he had been there with a divine mission to fulfil and that alone was the source of his legitimacy. So all policies introduced by him were prefixed with the sacred nomenclature of Islam, which did help him in as far as he succeeded in creating a constituency for himself in the country, bringing the reactionary and the politico-religious segments under the regime's umbrella. Though General Zia got removed from the political scene of Pakistan when he died in a plane crash on 17 August 1988, the seed sown by him in the body politic of Pakistan could never die down.

It was during Zia's time that a number of resentment movements emerged in different parts of the country. Some of the movements had a national character as well. An example of the former was the movement launched by the peasants in the Nasirabad district of Balochistan, soon after the imposition of Martial Law in July 1977, when under the protection of the regime in power, the local landlords grabbed from the local peasants, the lands which had been given to them after being nationalized under the land reforms introduced by the previous civilian

regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The movement, popularly known as the Patfeeder Kisan Movement resulted in the deaths and imprisonment of hundreds of peasants. An example of a wider and nationwide movement was the one launched by women under the banner of Woman Action Forum (WAF). When strict laws were passed against women in the name of religion, including laws such as the one which proclaimed that a woman's testimony would be counted as half of that of a man, or the law which made it necessary for a victim of rape to produce four witnesses in order to get justice from the court of law. These and such other inhuman and harsh laws which also represented the nexus between state power and patriarchy forced the women to come out on the streets and proclaim their unacceptance of such inhuman edicts.

One major area where the nationwide resentment took the shape of a movement was journalism. A number of newspapers and periodicals were banned by the military regime. The editors, journalists and reporters belonging to different newspaper organizations, were put under bar within a few months of the imposition of Martial Law. The accumulative resentment translated into organized movement in 1977-1978 when Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) and All Pakistan Newspapers Employees Confederation (APNEC), and their provincial and city wings took to organize struggle which soon succeeded in courting the support of peasants from across the country, industrial workers, political workers, lawyers and students. The author mentions that there were three phases of the movement. The first phase began when the Karachi edition of *Musawat* was shut down on 3 December 1977. The second phase started in Lahore on 30 April 1978 soon after the banning of the Lahore edition of *Musawat*. The third phase began on the closure of *Musawat* (Karachi), on 18 July 1978. The book under review provides an in-depth study of the movement by the author who not only was a member of the journalist community galvanized by the movement, but was also one of the major leaders who played pivotal role its organization.

The author also quotes from the PFUJ's Code of Conduct to demonstrate what a journalist belonging to it stood for. Accordingly, the first commitment, a member had to make to himself, whereby he/she 'should do nothing that will bring disgrace to himself, his union, the newspaper, or his profession'. Moreover, 'whether for publication or suppression, the acceptance of a bribe by a journalist is one of the gravest professional offences' (p. 17). This shows that professional integrity was at the centre of the journalists' conduct.

Ahfaz ur Rehman has taken pains to dig out the minute details of the movement with the help of contemporary newspapers and periodicals

clippings as well as through personal interviews. The book is characteristically different from those written by the journalists about their experiences in the field of journalism which often took them to experience harsh times such as imprisonments. Ahfaz ur Rehman does not bring in his own personal sufferings into the picture and also avoids building his own image while writing about the events in the portrayal of which he could have very easily painted an exaggerated role of himself. He mentions himself only rarely and only where he finds it unavoidable for the purpose of completing a picture being presented by him. This modesty makes his book more valuable for a student of history.

The book has been divided in two parts. In the first part the author, first, writes about the pre-1977-1978 policies of the successive governments curtailing the freedom of press. Later, he brings the focus on General Zia-ul-Haq's anti-press policies. Within months of taking over, the military regime acted against dailies *Musawat*, *Hilal-e Pakistan*, and weeklies *Nusrat*, *Al-Fatah*, and *Meyar*, and a number of other publications. He shows how after the banning of daily *Musawat* the journalists, reporters and the other staff decided to protest and how, gradually, the wider community of journalists came to support them. The Martial Law regime didn't take time to extend its curtailment of expression policy to other newspapers and periodicals with the result that the number of the journalists and other workers of the publications, getting unemployed grew extensively.

Once the movement spread all over the country with the major cities as its focal points, political workers belonging to the lower and middle strata of society and different segments of the civil society started joining it. The Karachi Press Club became the hub of their activities. The journalists and their supporters courted arrest at different places in the city with a view to mobilizing further support.

The arrested journalists met with harsh treatment in jails. Four journalists—Nasir Zaidi, Iqbal Jafri, Masoodullah Khan and Khawar Naeem Hashmi—were sentenced by a military court in Lahore for nine-month rigorous imprisonment plus five lashes each. The sentence was carried out immediately. Only Masoodullah Khan was spared due to poor health. Others were flogged in the jail compound. This all went for months and then under pressure from international media and rights organizations, the draconian hold of the government began to ease. The arrested journalists and their supporters were released, some of the periodicals got restored, and the censorship was relaxed if not fully removed. In 1985, Martial Law was removed but Zia-ul-Haq continued as the chief of army staff and the president of the country. A civilian regime under Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo was installed but

with a limited role. Junejo removed most of the strict and harsh curbs on the independence of expression as enforced by the Martial Law regime. It is a different story that Junejo himself did not last longer and was thrown out by the military dictator, in May 1988. Zia himself died a few months later.

In the second part of the book the author has given space to the writings and impressions of other journalists who had been a part of the struggle and the movement of 1977-1978. These provide good documentation on the historic event which the 1977-1978 movement was. Here, Masood Qamar, Farhad Zaidi, Aslam Shaikh, Ali Ahmed Khan, Zafar Qureshi and Shabbar Azmi, all very senior journalists of the time, write in detail their experience of how they were arrested and what trials they underwent during their imprisonment. Their prison narratives form an invaluable part of our history of democratic struggles. One very heroic person that emerges out of the pages of this book is none else but Minhaj Barna, the president of the PFUJ and APNEC. It was commitment to the profession and its highest values, the qualities of leadership, and the exemplary personal traits that helped carve out an icon Minhaj Barna was.

Read in the background of the overall nature and history of the authoritarian practices at the official level, the book under review provides insights into the malaise of Pakistani governments which unfortunately have not reconciled with the idea that only the democratic right of expression, and freedom of journalism can ensure the stability of the country and would also provide the security the governments have so desperately sought. The book depicting a historical movement will remain a reference work for the students of history, Pakistan studies and mass media for times to come.

Institute of Historical and Social Research
Karachi

Syed Jaffar Ahmed

Kuldip Nayar, *Beyond the Lines: An Autobiography* published by Roli Books, New Delhi, 2013, pp.420, price not printed.

Kuldip Nayar has had a long and distinguished career as the chief English journalist of India in a long and eventful career spanning over eight decades. In addition, he has been India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and a confidant of several of its prime ministers. He has been privy to privileged and confidential information of key importance. Furthermore, his many interviews of important personalities give him a

unique insight into their mindset and public approach. Among the many Pakistanis he has interviewed are Ayub Khan, Z.A. Bhutto, Zia-ul-Haq, Benazir Bhutto and General Musharraf. He also interviewed Dr A.Q. Khan, in which the latter inadvertently revealed the level of Pakistan's nuclear preparedness. He has also been involved in politics in India, being a member of the central government and advisor to its prime ministers. Most of all, he has been a brave fighter for press freedom; he served a jail sentence during Mrs. Gandhi's emergency.

Born in Sialkot, educated there in Murray College, and at Lahore's Forman Christian College, Kuldip Nayar had his career tailor-made for him. He spent his formative years in what is now Pakistan and is familiar with the manners and mores of the people of this region. He does not share the pathological horror of Pakistanis that most ignorant Indians have. Indeed, he is committed to improving the soured relations between the two countries, and he has done much in educating public opinion during his years in the Rajya Sabha, when his pro-Pakistan statements were attacked by Hindu fanatics and he was dubbed as the agent of 'a foreign power'. In India, his advice was sought by Jawaharlal Nehru, Mrs. Gandhi, V.P.

Singh, Morarji Desai and others. The range of the book is vast and the autobiographical element in it is small. Thus, he writes in his Preface: 'I wish I could have said more about myself and less about the events that were engulfing me'.

But it is his interaction with the notable and the great that will be of interest to the common reader. Nayar writes: 'I have seen the great, the despotic nonentities among politicians, bureaucrats, industrialists, media magnates, and journalists. The performance of a majority has disappointed me, and my experience has been that most who occupied high office were unworthy of them'. The book is a mine of information—not commonly accessible, and interesting to an extreme degree. It gives the perspective of an intelligent and open-minded individual from across the border whose views merit consideration and respect.

The book opens with a Preface followed by nineteen chapters, an Epilogue and three appendices. The personal and the political intertwine seamlessly to form an organic whole, despite variations of time and place. The first five chapters deal with childhood, partition, the Nehru years, early pangs of governance and the author's apprenticeship to English journalism. In the first chapter, the author presents a vista of the meeting held to pass the 23 March 1940 Pakistan Resolution in Lahore. His family wished to remain in Pakistan where his father was a doctor practising in Sialkot. Regarding the Pakistan movement of those days, he

writes: 'The Pakistan Resolution became widely popular among the Muslims...It was like an avalanche that swept away all other ideas'.

The next chapters are a speeded-up description of life in the early years after independence. The author worked under Shastri when he was Home Minister and the P.M, fast-forwarding to the Bangladesh War and the Simla Agreement. After this, the Emergency, the Janata government, the anti-Sikh riots following the attack on the Golden Temple. This is followed by an account of the incompetent government of Rajiv Gandhi, then V.P. Singh and Narasimha Rao whom he blames for the destruction of the Babri masjid. All these chapters give personal observations and insights and unique information into the modus operandi of the Indian government, and its mindset. The account concludes with the Manmohan Singh government. The Epilogue gives the wise reflections and mellow wisdom of a nonagenarian. He is opposed to the parliamentary system of government and favours the presidential form for India as it avoids political favouritism as well as give and take machinations, that cause the fall of coalition governments. His picture for the future is not hopeful. He writes: 'Corruption has darkened the skies and exposed a system reeking of graft. An utter want of governance adds to the woes of the nation'. The despair of an honest and patriotic citizen is seen in the heart-breaking words: 'The Manmohan Singh government will go down in history as the most corrupt period faced by the nation'. Such strong words are not an attack on nationhood but on the unjust and corrupt system of governance. May the efforts of Kuldeep Nayar to promote honesty and devotion bear fruit!

Department of English,
University of Karachi.

Syed Munir Wasti

***The State during the British Raj*, by Ilhan Niaz, Oxford University Press, Karachi, pages: 312, price: Pak Rupees 1550/-**

Any debate on the impact of colonialism in Indian subcontinent may start with the binaries of 'banes or blessings', and end up with inconclusively. The book under review is a treatise with a definite logical forceful conclusion. It is derived after thorough research on a huge volume of primary and secondary sources, by a renowned emerging historian, who have won accolades for his previous researches from national and international fora. Ilhan Niaz, the author, analyzes the impact of British Raj on a much larger scale with a deep historical insight. Arguing that any empire must be remembered by what is its legacy, Niaz evaluates the

British Empire in India as to be worthy of remembrance owing to its institutional development, rather than its physical continuity or any other aspect.

As the book opens its debate, the author unfolds his viewpoint by stating that the nature of the state changed altogether during colonial regime. Earlier it was an 'amalgam of servile instruments wielded together arbitrarily by an autocrat for his or her own benefit, to a composite of autonomous institutions governed by law and conditioned to act in the state's interest' (pp. xii-xiii). As he finds that Pakistan is in a state of 'epistemological regression, institutional decay, and administrative exhaustion', thus immersed in a state of 'postcolonial medievalism', he alludes to the need for learning from the glorious example of colonial blessing given in the form of institutional structure of a secular state at the close of colonial era.

In the beginning the author explains how the autocratic Timurid Empire (popularly known as Moghul Empire) was consolidated, gathered its resources, and a strong central government worked under a strong sovereign aided by a military-bureaucratic system. It sustained multiple rebellions till 1707. Furthermore there are mentioned the kingdoms of Sikhs, Tipu Sultan, and powerful local factions like Marhatas, and outsider Afghans and Persians.

The consolidation of British Indian State happened in four phases of development of its military: (a) emergence of armed force under the East India Company (late 1600s till early 1700s); b) from conquest of Bengal till the 'war of independence (1757 – 1857)'; c) British global ascendancy till the World War-I (1858 – 1919); and d) from World War II till 1947 when the British Indian military was divided into India and Pakistan. (p. 56). The military was kept apolitical and it was under the control of the civilians—the parliamentarians from the Great Britain. This fact facilitated development of the civil service in India. Besides, the merit-based bureaucracy in an un-divided India was what Jinnah had declared 'backbone of the state'. The growth of representative institutions was ensured by the colonial regimes which allowed a space for showing anger at the government, put forward political demands. The rule of law was ensured and the growth of westernized Indians, a section of population who demanded their share in decision-making, along with introduction of representative institutions, led to a combination of factors that promoted constitutionalism, a norm that led to division of India on the basis of self-rule and self-determination. Hence the Raj provided a great shift from monarchy and military states to constitutional democratic polity, supported by democratic people. Continuity of the same constitutionalism was

expected from both India and Pakistan after 1947. India fared far better than Pakistan, as the latter's democratic process was interrupted by military interventions, yet the author asserts that even the military rulers also showed some characteristics of being 'constitutionalists' as Ayub Khan gave his own constitution and both Zia and Musharraf amended the existing constitution. Though it seems strange, yet the norms of respect of constitution remained intact, and in post-Musharraf era, the continuity of democratic governments is a testimony to this assertion of the author.

The consolidation of democratic norms and practice of constitutionalism was ensured by actualizing active participation of the Indian subjects in their multiple projects, with ultimate result being: 'setting in motion an autocatalytic process that generated pressure for more Indian involvement in the running of the British Indian state' (p.221). This was also an onset of democratic process, slow and steady, germinating along with their 'civilising project', which was no way possible overnight. The author states that any other physically or socially permanent feature of the Raj is not that significant.

The ultimate result was to enhance civilian supremacy, putting down the barrels and upholding the peoples' wisdom. The military state thus enfolding in its own debris, ensured more dignified and modern form of state. The secret behind this transformation was the mindset of the British elite who were used to live under a regime of civilian supremacy, i.e., they believed in the rationality of the common citizens, and if they conceived the same for the British Indian people, submerged in monarchical, feudal and aristocratic rule, of course deserves recognition as a 'great leap'.

The process was not so easy, as the author has explained it in the particular case of India, not matching in other British colonies. He mentions the challenges faced by Raj administrators as including arbitrariness of ruling patterns, praetorian intervention in their domain, and the threat from the Afghan borders. So the British had to establish an institution of permanent army, and introduce certain policies and other necessary measures. To that end, they brought some army troops and officers from home, whom they could trust and who were definitely seeped in the spirit of civilian supremacy. They ensured respect for local ethnicities and their cultural practices, also not to disturb any religious matter of the subjects. They set up cantonment areas to separate the military from the civilians, and established police system. They recruited civil service officers who were far superior intellectually to the military men. However, military was independent of any civilian government's interference in its recruitment. Discussing religion or politics was strictly

prohibited in the military. However, after 1921, the inclusion of the Indian officers in military, led way to the violation of this norm.

The foundations of modern state were also consolidated by the Raj officers when they replaced the notion of divine sanction behind the rulers' taking supreme powers, having active support of the clergy to legitimize them, but now a secular authority was introduced after 1861. A uniform, secular and utilitarian penal law was introduced, though the civil law was flexible and personal law derived its guidance from the communities' own religious teachings. Raj also ensured representation of competing identities, on pan-Indian scale by defusing the local connections. Thus a policy of non-discrimination remained in force till 1947. Both India and Pakistan thus inherited in the words of Niaz: 'a secular state with a modern legal system and a framework of constitutional development based on reasoned judgment and debate' (p.223).

Another important innovation introduced in the Indian subcontinent was of meritocracy, squarely opposite to the aristocratic traditions of governance so far in place. It demanded loyalty in return of the patronage leading to granting employment by nobility's judging the candidates subjectively. Masters were to be pleased to continue in service, thus loyalty superseded competence, a realization of which was made by Lord Wellesley. The criteria ensuring successful working of the (colonial) Empire has to be objective, thus it led to recruitment through open merit recruitment system, with some quota for disadvantaged regions.

What happened in post-1947 phase in India and Pakistan reveals confusing trends. Meritocracy went ahead in India and quotas were minimized, yet both postcolonial states degraded on the count of meritocracy (p. 224). The grand project of introduction of democratic institutions in the subcontinent was implemented step by step. A representative democracy was planned to be introduced to culminate in one-person, one-vote situation, in the hope of creating communal harmony. The two states in India and Pakistan, when compared by the author, led him to conclude that the question of representation of the minorities and the *dalit* groups has not been settled judiciously. The needs of such groups are still largely unaddressed and in Pakistan, usually the onus of such faults is put on military interventions in democratic process. Pakistan's case, when compared with India shows that: '... political stability in Pakistan will not necessarily improve the socio-economic performance or make the government less responsive to the needs of its people. The reason for this is that the criminalization of politics leads to a situation where the choice of candidates is more or less

equal in terms of integrity and competence, while voters can be motivated to vote for their caste, clans, or sects during elections.' (p. 226). The implications of caste affiliation for voters' choice, though seminally different from the Indian case, are obvious in irrational voting decisions throughout the country- Pakistan.

The greatest gift of the Raj for the subcontinent was its legacy of constitutionalism, as the author holds. Beginning from 1773 till the dawn of Independence the Raj legislations consolidated a totally different pattern of constitutional governance as compared with the past ruling practices. The colonial regime had a system of accountability for its leaders, even the Governor General as the executive head, could not appoint his council members. He had to give due respect to the presidencies of Madras and Bombay. He headed a system of governance comprising multiple autonomous institutions. India and Pakistan had inherited a 'rich history of constitutional development' so they could have relied upon it while framing their constitutions in the postcolonial phase. The model served as a sound base for the both states on which their constitutional democracies could stand thereafter.

The author concludes with the assertions that a secular constitutional state is run by civilian politicians, meritocracy, and autonomous institutions of civil service, military and judiciary. The two states in postcolonial phase could not strengthen the core of this legacy and it still lies as a duty to their elite to understand how these modern institutions evolved and how these could be further modernized to fulfil the aspirations of the people. He suggests it in two ways. First the intelligentsia in both countries should understand the past evolutionary process of governance structure. Second the administrative and political elite must realize that the British ended the centuries old era of arbitrary rule, and reverting back to it would amount to condemnation of South Asia to repeat the past mistakes. This, Niaz warns, 'willful ignorance of history' would be disastrous; the South Asian elites must be wary of this fateful end.

Pakistan Study Centre
University of Karachi

Anwar Shaheen

***Faith and Feminism in Pakistan Religious Agency or Secular Autonomy?*, by Afia S. Zia, published by Folio Books, Lahore, 2018. Pages: 225, price: Pak Rs. 1195/-**

Pakistan at present seems struggling hard to get breathing space for its being caught up in conflicting sets of binaries. The main question

addressed in this book deals with the binary of 'religious' and 'secular', as to how this connects with feminist question in the context of Pakistan. In other words it debates two concepts—feminism and religious fundamentalism. Feminism can simply be defined as an ideology declaring that 'women are disadvantaged because of their sex' so this disadvantage should be dismissed and get away with. Fundamentalism refers to 'any chauvinistic reaction of an alternate form of thinking'. It is usually taken as the religious forces' operation, hence it is religious fundamentalism, which means more specifically a movement reiterating the significance of 'obedience to the scripture(s) or tradition'. Secularization on the other hand is minimization of the role of religion in the economic and social activities. In fact, co-existence of multiple religious beliefs became a hallmark of modern nation states, as Pakistan aspired to be, and this was resisted by fundamentalists from the very moment they realized it.

Pakistan presents a perfect example of the conflict between the secular and fundamentalist forces, since its inception in general, but on the issue of women's rights this conflict has been so glaringly obvious. The fundamentalists have been aggressively seeking to put women and the notion of their rights to the 'standards' of the medieval ages and they have been resisting vehemently any idea or action suggesting breaking away from continuity of the past. In this context, the interface of feminism with the binary of secular and religious poses an uphill task for any critical investigation.

The author, Afia Zia, has tried to critically judge the evolution of feminist ideas, their popularity, translation into feminist movement, and various genres of feminism identifiable in Pakistan. The two most easily identifiable ones correspond to religious and secular stand-posts. The author of the book has endeavored to contrast, compare and explain the similarities between faith-based and secular feminist trends in Pakistan. Her methodology includes experiencing, participating, discussing, observing, and analyzing apart from studying the feminist activism through scholarly literature. This methodology itself is very much comprehensive and leaves very little chance of misjudging the reality of the process under investigation. She has remained associated with the feminist circles for about a quarter of a century, and this is a fairly long time to get genuine understanding of a process which is more open to its inmates, vis-à-vis the onlookers and perceived the external actors as 'others'. A subjective understanding thus developed needs cross-verification but the author has ensured that by academic skills and through her exposure and education from the international institutions. Hence as an activist-scholar she has tried to explicate what becomes

shocking at times, whereas she has discussed subtle shades of difference as well. A critical but sympathetic outlook is reflected in her approach and she has presented an objective analysis.

Feminism in Pakistan emerged as a liberal phenomenon, holding the argument projected by Mary Wollstonecraft as 'women should be entitled to the same rights and privileges as men on the ground that they are human beings'. It was a strange experience of the Pakistani society that all liberties and norms ensuring dignity of man and woman went under severe constriction with the 'Islamization' project of General Zia. The highly acclaimed liberty given to women by Islam in particular was thus vilified rather women were victimized to the extent that they could have left believing in any promises made by Islam. Afia Zia forcefully describes that nothing positive could be awarded to women of Pakistan under Islamization, such as any 'legal or structural autonomy or independence'. The Islamist women just became a symbol of religious nationalism having a masculine ethos. Women could not enjoy a status of citizenship equal to that of men, as many discriminatory laws were introduced; women's mobility was restrained; and women's testimony and blood-money were reduced to half, as if they were having worth equal to half a man. All that put the country very low on gender equality index. Islamist paradigm was presented as it only supports male discourse, and under its influence women's agency was totally denied.

The author has explained the drawbacks of liberal resistance to religious militancy and faith-based conservatism. As such the liberal feminists had to face three major opponents: 'state enforcement agencies, political male resistance and/or customary practices'. Moreover, the docility cultivated under this overarching patriarchy, as a preferred state for the Islamist women for they do not demand rights as the liberals do. However, the author points out, the same Islamist women when bend upon action involving 'patriarchal, conservative, censorious and anti-women, anti-minority policies', their agency is really felt but not objected by the Islamist sections, who have serious objection to the liberal feminists' actions. Both groups are fond of modernity as exhibited in their use of its products, but they reduce their political struggle to mere actions, consumption patterns or inner-empowerment. The liberal analysis does not deal with the subject in all its political dimensions, whereas the Islamist analysis is restricted only to the patriarchal framework, so both analyses have limitations and handicaps (p. 151). The author explicates that since religion and patriarchy join hands at the state and societal level, the secular resistance movements by women workers and peasants remain limited in their scope. The feminist autonomy remains far away in their agenda or achievements.

Amidst discouraging situation, the author has expressed a lot of praise for the secular spirit of the constitution of Pakistan, which, in her view has given more rights to Pakistani women, than all the modern feminists or even Islamists activism or beliefs. This shows that the energetic thrust of activism and the force of religious conviction, when compared in Pakistan regarding their impact on women's rights, find the socio-political and normative ground more amenable for changes which are truly secular in nature. This shows that secularism is the only hope for the Pakistani society which has a strong religious posture. However, in the same context the author testifies that rational, administrative, bureaucratic methods bring more effective changes, among the people who openly manifest Islam as their religion and do not see it endangered by secular laws governing their life. One can understand the confusion and conflict by looking at the system of inheritance for females, where rational and practical means are applied for depriving women of their share, while transferring property in woman's name and then expecting her to manage it, is considered cumbersome. Practically, when she is unable to manage her ownership, as is the case with majority of women, she prefers giving it away to brothers and tries to maintain the trust and blood-relation more sacred than putting her name in papers which cannot be managed by her independently and by her free will.

The author has also seen the process in question in temporal framework. She finds that post 9/11 literature, which out-rightly declares wide schism in the Islamist and secular feminist groups, proves misleading as far as Pakistan is concerned. She draws interesting conclusions, such as the two prominent groups—Islamist women and secular feminists—know they are different, but are not disturbed by their distinct co-existence, nor they fight vehemently, or blame each other. While deconstructing the liberal feminism marked by the regime of Gen. Musharraf enveloped in his slogans of 'Enlightened Moderation', the author declares it 'more symbolic than transformative,' as she finds the women being targeted by the conservative forces, especially outside the urban centres, as these forces were given space through a political compromise. Hence the struggle for women's equal right still had an uphill task ahead in that era of a 'liberal dictator'.

She argues that both the nationalism and religion are exploited well by the male politics. She exposes the hypocritical response of the mainstream Islamists in Pakistan to attack on Malala Yousufzai, as 'they acknowledged the criminal act but at the same time, defended the perpetrator by blaming the externalities and abstractions. By deflecting the responsibility of a crime, from the individual and placing it on the breadth of society, government, the state, global powers or imperialism,

this emptied the perpetrator of criminal motivation and refilled him with a higher, larger than life-mission'. The author holds that the justification was provided to spare the criminal of his attempt to murder because of his own victimization by imperialists, so his act was condemned but punishment was resisted. Hence women's being passive victims was accepted. Afia Zia's analysis of the event and its reaction explains how critically she has dealt with the issues splitting the nation into irreconcilable factions for long time to come.

She has tried to explain the conflict between the secular/liberal voices that are un-influential and unheeded, with the government. When the government upholds the condemnation of militant Muslims, done by non-elected, non-constitutional, all-male *ulema* as the 'official version', then only one prominent human rights NGO and some feminist groups had called for human rights of the terrorists/militants, because they hold state a guarantor of human rights of all and sundry. For this very much constitutional stand of the liberals, these groups are again held accountable by their opponents. This is one such example of the author's permanent line of argument that in Pakistan, the constitution is the foremost guarantor and authentic document, thus inferring that its protection can be sought by all those who are victimized due to compromised verdicts. And crimes committed in the name of Islam cannot be handled by the existing legal system when the point of divine motivation is added to them. Such abstractions give space to the criminals and they become 'obscure' (p. 144)

Feminists for the same reason have been labelled as foreign agents. Some other heinous labels applied to Pakistani feminists were of: 'native informants' and 'Imperial collaborators', when they worked in NGOs. She has forcefully explained that all 'liberals' and 'seculars' are not tightly knit, rather these are two separate positions which may overlap in certain individuals.

She has successfully tried to elucidate the interplay of various factors operating to bring about happenings considered important for our national existence and especially for women's rights. She treats these issues in thread-baring manner with the conviction that be it issue of terrorism, of legislation or of dealing with violence against women cases, the complexity of politico- economic factors has to be taken into account. Though the mindset, approaches, policies, implementation of laws and the response of the society to incidents happening with women are largely patriarchal and aggressively projected, yet the urge for equal rights of women have been demanded persistently, and this point has been proven by the author throughout the book. Identifying the factors separately and then seeing them intermingling has been her job, which

has been duly appreciated by other reviewers of the book as well. In the very complex and violent conflict scenario going on among the state actors, extremist fundamentalists, and liberal feminists, the only voice which would be heard and valid would be 'rational', true to the spirit of a 'secular' constitution, and implemented with daring sincerity by the state authorities. This is what come out of the in-depth analysis of the author, for which she deserves much accolade.

Pakistan Study Centre
University of Karachi

Anwar Shaheen

Dr Sadiq Durvesh, *I'jaz al-Quran al-Karim*, published by Damascus, 2009, pp. 944.

This massive work is a valuable addition to the ever-increasing material on the subject of I'jaz al-Quran [miraculous inimitability of the Quran]. The original was a doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Omdurman, Sudan. This study represents an exhaustive study into the whole concept of the Quran's miraculous nature with all attached associations. In this connection, the Quranic tahaddi [challenge] as given in Surah 2.v.23] has remained unanswered through the centuries and all such efforts are foredoomed to failure. , This cardinal principle was made part of the Islamic belief-system as soon as the Quran was revealed.

The Quran is properly seen as a single unit rather than an agglomeration of parts. In fact, it is the only miracle in Islam, The false arguments advanced by misguided Orientalists [Noldeke/ Goldziher] are rapidly disposed of. The miraculous nature of the Quran is seen not only in its vocabulary and choice and placement of words but also in the literary equivalence of long and short surahs, The Quran denies being a work of poetry and, as such, is free of the strictures attached to poetry [rhyme, metre, prosodic elements], Its lexis and semantics assumes a miraculous nature for its intention is to guide mankind to the Divine. The multi-purpose levels at which the Quran functions assumes naturally a miraculous nature and character, No human document can function at peak level on so many different levels with effect. In my opinion, the author has spent unnecessarily more space at refuting the dead imitations of frustrated imitators. In fact, literary controversy and verbal argumentation never formed part of the exalted discourse of Arabic . As time passed and Arabic assumed the role of a world language, the Quran remained for its users the literary sublime that remained ever-new at all times.

After this, the author reproduces in brief the arguments in favour of the I'jaz al-Quran that have been made by earlier specialists in this discipline such as al Rummani, al Khattabi, al Baqillani, al Ghazzali and Ibn Kathir. The nazm or coordinated arrangement of the Quran has also been given due place as a miraculous aspect, Study of neologisms and occurrence of repetition have also been examined and given due credit. Even the punctuation of the Quran is so perfect s as to be treated as a miracle.

The growth of such material on the I'jaz al-Quran is proof that each age will reveal to us new wonders by the Quran whose wonders are inexhaustible. T he 21st century and the new works produced on the I'jaz al=Quran are proof that the Quran is the greatest book in the world.

The defects that we may note in this erudite work if defects they be are an absence to modern scientific knowledge and proof of the Quranic pre-knowldege on scientific affairs; absence on reference to attempts at making tahrif in the Quran and the vast anti-Islamic propaganda barrage directed against the Quran.

Department of English,
University of Karachi.

Syed Munir Wasti