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The Killing Fields of Swat and the Cricket Fields of Imran Khan¹

When Imran Khan was sworn in as the 22nd prime minister of Pakistan on 18 August 2018 a decade of intermittent war had passed since the summer of 2008 when the Pakistan Army was fighting the *jihadist* Terikh-i-Nafaz-i-Shari'at-i-Mohammadi (TNSM) in Swat and two months had passed since the death of the TNSM's radical Islamist leader Fazal Hayat alias "Maulana Fazlullah" alias "Mullah Radio" (1974 – 14 June 2018).

No two men and their opposing messages can better characterize the dreadful crossroads at which the people of Pakistan then stood: constituent but corrupt democracy and the imperfect rule of law or radical Islam and the rule of the *fatwa*, the flogger, the executioner, and the suicide bomber.

At the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies of the Quaid-i Azam University in Islamabad on 28 November 2007 I read my first paper on the inescapable dilemma of this crossroads. It is tragic that one month later to the day Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in Rawalpindi. There can be little doubt that her opposition to the Taliban played a decisive role in the decision to target her for assassination.

After the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in Liaquat Bagh on 27 December 2007 I revised my paper as an article for publication in the Journal of Asian Civilizations². Though certain details had to be changed owing to events that followed Benazir Bhutto's assassination, I still held fast to my idea of the life or death struggle of two Pakistans recognizably characterized in the persons of Imran Khan and the late Maulana Fazlullah:

... failing to observe the five times of daily prayer is an offence punishable by 15 lashes of the whip under the regime of the Taliban in Swat. The outright rejection of a modern way of life defined to a large extent by the West could hardly be more vehement.

¹ This paper was read at the international conference on "Deradicalization on Campus" held at the Air University in Islamabad on 25-26 September 2018.

² Journal of Asian Civilizations, Vol. XXX, No. 2 (December 2007), Islamabad [Quaid-i-Azam University], 2008, pp. 166-178.

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The reign of terror in Swat may well have been the doing of foreign militants and/or secret agents using or abusing the name of the local Muslim cleric, Maulana Fazlullah, nicknamed "Mullah Radio" because of his use of an FM radio transmitter to broadcast his message of *jihad*, and his organization, the Terikh-i-Nafaz-i-Shari'at-i-Mohammadi (TNSM). But there can be no doubt that such agents or foreign militants would not be effective in an environment that is not receptive to their particular perception of Islam.

Certainly, a similar 'Talibanisation' with public executions by beheading and stoning for capital offences, the chopping off of hands for theft, and whippings for lesser delicts, would be unimaginable in a place such as Pir jo Kot, the hereditary home of the Pir Pagaro, one of the revered Sufi *pirs* of rural Sindh, nor would it be possible in Karachi where the late Benazir Bhutto's (1953-2007) Pakistan People's Party still sets the tone and the agents of militant Islam must resort to suicide bomb attacks against fellow Muslims to pursue their 'holy war', their *jihad*, against the enemies of Islam. *Though only separated by some five hundred kilometers, the Pakistan of cricket matches and youthful idealism that Imran Khan best represents (or would like to represent) itself seems decapitated from the killing fields of Karachi and Swat.*

At the end of a decade of killing and suffering the people of Pakistan have finally chosen the former captain of their national cricket team to lead them out of darkness to a better life for all.

Having served as professor of comparative religions at the Quaid-i Azam University in Islamabad in the years from April 2007 to April 2013, having witnessed again and again up to the present day the aftermaths of attacks by terrorists whose misdeeds can never be justified by the teachings of Muhammad (S.), the Holy Prophet of Islam, I know very well that the strongest weapons of all against terror are not drone bombers, sarin gas, secret agents or secret payoffs, hit men or torture chambers but courage plain and simple and the readiness to stand up for humanity against inhuman crimes, to carry the load for one's brother or sister, to take the bullet so that others may live.

I have always been aware not only of the horrendous suffering of victims of terror but of the awe inspiring deeds of the martyrs of humanity, the defenders of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Pakistan.

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Some were first responders cut down in the prime of life by bullets and bombs, some were politicians true to their oaths of office and their duties, some were men and women of God who were called home to their Almighty Lord (s.w.t.), some were professors and teachers whose last lessons were to save their students by throwing themselves as human shields between them and their attackers, some were dedicated electrical engineers bravely trying to give light to villages that lived in darkness at night. The list is long, the roll call of the departed heroes would last for hours.

This social contract containing the ideals of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Pakistan has been underwritten again and again in the blood of martyrs such as Mufti Dr. Sarfraz Naeemi (1948– 2009), the steadfast Principal of the Jamia Naeemia in Lahore. When the late Mufti Naeemi publicly condemned the Taliban as „enemies of Islam“ in Lahore on 11.6.2009, one could hear Jinnah's words before the Constituent Assembly:

The Nation will never allow these so-called Muslims to impose their version of Islam upon us... We are fighting a war with those who want to *impose their version of Islam*... They do everything in the name of *Islam*, but they do not have anything to do with *Islam*...³

When the well-loved *mufti* was murdered in Lahore on 12.6.2009 four *Qur'ān-i ḥuffāz*, Muhammad Abdul Rashid, Muhammad Akmal, Muhammad Rashid and Muhammad Ismael, sacrificed their lives with him so that Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision of Pakistan as an Islamic democracy and not an Islamic caliphate not be forgotten.

On the subject of corruption the words of Mr. Jinnah as Chairman of the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1948 have lost none of their relevance with time:

One of the biggest curses from which India is suffering – I do not say that other countries are free from it, but, I think our condition is much worse – is bribery and corruption. That really is a poison. We must put that down with an iron hand...⁴

Nisar Baloch (1965–2009), educator of the homeless and downtrodden, died fighting to defend Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision of a Pakistan any man or woman could be proud of. Already at the age of twenty, in the mid-1980s, Nisar Baloch established a school on

³ Retrieved from www.huffingtonpost.com/.../sarfraz-naeemi-prominent-_n_214685.html.

⁴ *Dawn, Independence Day Supplement*, 14. August 1999.

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the streets of Karachi for the homeless, *Ap ka Madrasah*, in which the poor could learn to read and write. Later in the 1980s, far ahead of the times in Pakistan, Nisar Baloch established the first school of computer sciences for training the destitute and homeless in new job skills. On November 7, 2009 he gave his life fighting to the end against the land-grabbing Mafia for the right of the poor to enjoy the public park Guttar Bagicha in the Lyari area of Karachi.⁵

Let us remember Dr. Muhammad Farooq Khan Šahīd (1956–2010), the late Vice Chancellor of the Islamic Swat University⁶, who explained his vision and mission in the following words:

I am a humanist, Muslim, Pakistani and a Pakhtun. To strive for the well being of the whole of humanity, to uphold the cause of the Muslim Ummah, and to exalt the dignity of Pakistan and Pukhtoons is my mission. There is no contradiction between their interests, provided every issue is seen with justice and fair play. In my opinion there are ten basic values which should be honoured by every individual, community, country and the whole of mankind. These essential fundamental values are:

Human equality and democratic culture

Justice

Honesty

Merit

Hard work and thorough struggle

Law-abiding mentality

Wisdom and patience

Education

Health

Strong and well-coordinated welfare institutions for the downtrodden classes.

The development and dignity of Pakistan and the Ummah are based on the efforts to achieve these ideals and standards. It is very clear that a thorough

⁵ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/268640-nisar-baloch-remembered>. Retrieved on 7 July 2018.

⁶ Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/09/world/asia/09pstan.html>.

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struggle is needed. This struggle should be totally free from violence, sentimentalism and provocative rhetoric.

I always strictly follow the teachings of *Quran*, the Sunnah, and my conscience in pondering over the collective issues and problems facing us. In my opinion, the Muslim Ummah needs a comprehensive discussion and consensus on the following issues:

The Status of Women in Islamic Society;

The real instructions of Islam regarding *jihad* and *qital*;

The true perspective of Islamic teaching in crime and punishment;

Islamic teaching regarding relations between Muslims and Non-Muslims.⁷

On that woeful day in Mardan (2 October 2010) Dr. Farooq's young assistant, Saleem Khan, also sacrificed his life in an attempt to shield his teacher. Though criminals did kill the man, they could not silence his voice. I often wonder if the men who fired those bullets really believed in the *qiyāmah* whose chastisement will be severe and whose hour will be most grievous and bitter:

Or do they say, "We are an assembly supporting [each other]"?

[Their] assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs [in retreat].

But the Hour is their appointment [for due punishment],

and the Hour is more disastrous and more bitter.

Indeed, the criminals are in error and madness.

The Day they are dragged into the Fire on their faces [it will be said],

"Taste the touch of Saqar."

*(al-Qur'ān, sūrah 54, Qamar, 'the Moon', āyāh 44-48)*⁸

To know the heart of a people one must probe more deeply than is possible in surfing the internet or flying over the headlines of a newspaper.

Al-Qur-ān:

⁷ Retrieved on 5.2.2011 from www.pakhtun.com/index.php/about.../dr-mohammad-farooq.

⁸ <https://quran.com/54>.

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Remember Our Servant Ayub... (We said to him):

'Take in your hand a bundle of (100) palm leaves and strike (your wife) with it.

Do not break your oath (but take care not to cause her pain)."

Indeed we found Ayub steadfast. What an excellent servant he was.

---al Qur'an, sūra 38, āyats 41 and 44

Videos of the public whipping of a seventeen year-old girl in Swat in April 2009 unleashed outrage throughout Pakistan, silencing the self-confident voices of Taliban press spokesmen for weeks afterward.⁹ Media images of the heinous slayings of Mir Bakhtiar Domki's wife and daughter in Karachi on 31 January 2012, vile deeds which no words can condemn strongly enough, again united the nation in their rejection of inhuman acts that violate limits that no man who fears God's Awful Justice on the Day of Judgment should ever cross. The unanimous walk-out of the members of the Senate of Pakistan on 8 February 2012 in protest against the killings was only the institutional expression of the nation-wide demand for justice and shared human values felt by the silent and not so silent millions from Baluchistan to the Khunjerab Pass.¹⁰

The near fatal attack on Malala Yousafzai in Mingora, Swat, on 9 October 2012, the attack on a school bus for women students of the Government College for Girls at Quetta on 15 June 2013, in which 29 women students and their teachers were killed, the attack on the Pakistan Army school in Peshawar on 16 December 2014, in which 150 students and teachers died trying bravely to give and get education and, more recently, the attack on the Bacha Khan University at Charsadda on 20 January 2016 in which 29 students and professors died – some in vain attempts to save their fellow classmates and students! -- are now well known to the world through the media as another dark chapter in the catalog of human crimes.

And then the Shaitan turned again to target the Sufis. Throughout the history of Islam the relationship of the Sufis to the *mullahs* of the *ulemā* has seldom been a relaxed relationship. But in recent months the Sufis, together with the Shia and the Ahamdiyya, again became preferred soft targets of the Taliban, the al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State (IS) in Pakistan.

⁹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/02/taliban-pakistan-justice-women-flogging>.

¹⁰ <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=139429>.

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On 22nd June 2016 in Karachi the famed *qawwāl* and Chishti Sufi, Amjad Fareed Sabri (23 December 1976 – 22 June 2016), son of the legendary Ghulam Farid Sabri (1930-1994) was shot down by target killers in a drive-by assassination. Thousands followed his funeral cortege through the streets of Karachi singing hymns to his *namaz-i jinaza*, where his young son choked and sobbed while singing his funeral prayer. The nation heard that sobbing and recoiled in revulsion.

Five months later followed the attack on the shrine of Shah Noorani in Khuzdar on 13th November 2016 in which 52 died and 100 were injured and on 17th February 2017 the bombing of the *dargah* of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar at Sehwan Sharif in which 88 Sufi pilgrims were killed and 250 seriously injured. But the *dargah mutawalli* bravely beat the gong to end the *dhamāl* in time for Morning Prayer standing barefoot in the blood and gore of the aftermath of the terrorist suicide bombing.

But, at that point in time, the cup of suffering was finally full. Voices began to be heard in the media and on the internet and social networks in Pakistan condemning the assassinations, the shrine attacks, and the bombings of the Taliban, the al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State (IS), some calling them the evil deeds of foreigners intended to destroy the culture of Pakistan. On 15th November 2017 an official spokesman of the Pakistan Army declared that the future policy of the army would include the protection of Pakistani cultural traditions including the peace-loving traditions of the Sufis.¹¹

The longing of the people of Pakistan for the rule of law without corruption and equal justice tempered with mercy for every man and woman was the real power that brought back the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Iftikar Muhammad Chaudhary, for a second time in March 2009, after that same longing for impartial justice had given rise to a national movement that brought down the government of General Pervez Musharraf in August 2008, who had been widely perceived as having attempted to place himself above the law. A similar belief in justice tempered with mercy was at the heart of the nation-wide outrage that erupted when images emerged in early June 2011 showing Pakistan Rangers in Karachi killing an unarmed teenage boy who begged for mercy.¹²

A thousand years of Sufi traditions in the Indian subcontinent may have not resulted in significant contributions to the metaphysics of *tassawuf*. But the Sufis of the subcontinent have, without doubt, helped to shape the largest multi-religious culture in

¹¹ Address by Brig. Gen. Abdul Aziz to the participants of the conference on the occasion of the birthday anniversary of Allamah Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938).organized by the Muslim Institute, Islamabad.

¹² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/12/pakistan-ranger-death-penalty-killing>.

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the world. Not by hashish smoking or ecstatic dancing but by the fusion of Divine Love to words and feelings that can be understood by all have the Sufis of the subcontinent become the teachers of all, whether man or woman, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsi, or tribals. The indomitable strength of Sufism lies in its readiness for dialogue with and unconditional esteem for the other.

Considering the deeper cultural layers of Pakistan set against the background of terrible events, of the appalling bloodshed of thousands of innocent persons, the senseless loss of life and wasting of human resources that has scourged Pakistan again and again, I cannot avoid the conclusion that the nine centuries of compassion for one's fellow man or woman that are immediately associated with the names of Mu'in ud-Dīn Čištī (d. 1236/633), Farīd ud-Dīn Ganġ-i-Šakar (d. 1265), Nizām ud Dīn Awliya (d. 1325/725), Nasīr ud-Dīn Čirāġ-i-Dihlī (1276-1356/757), Hazrat Banda Nawāz Gīsūdirāz (1321/721-1422/825), Shah Abdul Laṭīf of Bhiṭ (d. 1754), Bulhe Shah (d. 1752), and countless other noble men who had the courage to reach out to their fellow man, regardless of his religion, caste, or ethnic origin, this common bedrock of universal ethics in the culture of Pakistan, cannot be destroyed by the bombs and bullets of the misguided faithful, nor by the cynicism of target killers, nor by drone bomber imperialism, nor by the machinations of corrupt political leaders.

Already in the *wasīyat-nāmā*, the Last Will and Testament of Bābur (1483-1531) to his son and heir, Humāyūn (1508-1556), the Sufi influence of Šaix Muḥammad Ġaus is reflected in the six major points Bābur lays down as the foundation of good governance for the people of Hindustan:

O my son: People of diverse religions inhabit India; and it is a matter of thanksgiving to 'Allah that the King of kings has entrusted the government of this country to you. It therefore behooves you that:

1. You should not allow religious prejudices to influence your mind, and administer impartial justice, having due regard to the religious susceptibilities and religious customs of all sections of the people.
2. In particular, refrain from the slaughter of cows, which will help you to obtain a hold on the hearts of the people of Hindustān. Thus, you will bind the people of the land to yourself by ties of gratitude.
3. You should never destroy the places of worship of any community and always be justice-loving, so that the relations between the king and his subjects may remain cordial and there be peace and contentment in the land.

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4. The propagation of Islam will be better carried on by the sword of love and obligation than with the sword of oppression.
5. Always ignore the mutual dissensions of the Shī'ahs and Sunnis, otherwise they will lead to the weakness of Islam.
6. Treat the different peculiarities of your subjects as the different seasons of the year, so that the body politic may remain free from disease.¹³

Especially in times of crisis Sufis defend the *amanat* ('trust') that Allāh (s.w.t.) has given them: the Word of God as a word of love and reconciliation. In this context we would do well to remember Derwish Ḥusain Bābā Qādirī (1901-1979) of Ahmadnagar who, in January 1948, placed himself between the battle lines of the Hindus and Muslims and appealed to a higher moral authority than mere allegiance to his own religious community. Armed only with his *ṣaix al-baraka*, the spiritual authority that derives from the chain of succession beginning with the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Ḥusain Bābā warned the people to think of the *qiyāmah*, the Day of Judgment, that dreadful day on which every human being will bear responsibility for his or her deeds:

In the name of God, the Almighty, who is the most kind and compassionate, I, Durvesh Husein Baba Kadri of Ahmednagar, invite all my human brethren, irrespective of caste and creed, to understand and act on the following message of Love, Truth, and Loyalty, so that the present and future generations may attain peace and happiness on His earth and seek His grace and blessings to help each other in order to build a peaceful and healthy nation. (...)

Let there be no destructive people in the working of the democratic Government. Become constructive as this is the democratic age. Let true justice make its appearance in thy minds, so that it may act like a scepter of God, the All Powerful, to guide thy brethren human beings with equal shares in the happiness of the land. (...) Every human being has a right to live safely and share in the service of the democratic age. [The sooner] such deeds and actions come into force the better, and I with confidence in my most beloved master, the Lord Almighty, say that He will shower His untold blessings upon the land on which ye

¹³ Translation of Syed Mahmud: "Babur's Will and Testament" from: *The Indian Review* (August 1923), p. 499; quoted by Murray Thurston Titus: *Indian Islam. A Religious History of Islam in India*, Oxford 1930 (The Religious Quest of India, 4); reprinted in Delhi [Oriental Reprint] 1979, p. 157.

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all exist and will be honoured and loved by every other nation in His Kingdom of the world. Pray to His holy name. Amin.¹⁴

In her memorable address in the Church of St. Paul in Frankfurt on 15 October 1995 the late Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003) warned us that today we are confronted with the cold-blooded power politics of warlords who have little in common with Islam as a living religion, who use the fair name of Islam as a lure or an advertising slogan to attract young Muslim men who are without work and without hope for recruitment in their terrorist organizations.¹⁵

In Sir Allama Muhammad Iqbal's (1877-1938) *Javidname* Annemarie Schimmel found an important further development of the Sufi tradition in the Indian Subcontinent: the apotheosis of the Martyr of Divine Love Ḥusain ibn Mansūr al-Ḥallāğ (d. 922 a.D./309 a.H.). But in one of his late poems, which Iqbal read as part of his last New Year's radio address in 1938, he gives voice to his forebodings of a world about to be destroyed in the flames of a war between brothers.

In the invocation of well-known images of Sufi poetry such as the wine-cup of love one hears Iqbal, the poet of Islamic dynamism, speak in tender nuances that have characterized Sufi poetry in the Indian Subcontinent for more than a millennium.

Today, in the midst of terrifying signals of the breakdown in human relations inside and outside Pakistan, we would be hard pressed to find a more fitting prayer of inspiration for Imran Khan's longed-for government of "*Naya Pakistan*":

O Lord! Give us again the wine-cup of love!
Bring days of peace into the world again!
Send the message of peace to those
Eager to do battle!
For, humanity is the cornfield
And You, o Lord, are the Reaper!¹⁶

¹⁴ The letter of Husein Baba Qadiri also appears in: van Skyhawk, Hugh, "Islamic Tradition and Universal Brotherhood in the Writings of Two Contemporary Deccani Sufis", in: Wink, André (ed.), *Islam, Politics and Society in South Asia*, Delhi [Manohar] 1991, pp. 119ff.

¹⁵ Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels 1995, p. 43.

¹⁶ Sultana, Rafia, *Bhakti-Cult and Urdu Poets*, Hyderabad [Cooperative Press] (1955?), p. 12.