

The Business

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Endless conflict

Israel carried out air strikes in Hamas-controlled Gaza for the second time in a week after a rocket fired from there landed in southern Israel. Luckily, this time no one was killed on either side. Last year, 11 days of Israeli assault on Gaza had claimed more than 250 lives in the besieged Palestinian enclave and 13 in Israel. Tensions have been soaring since the start of the holy month of Ramadan on April 2 over the situation in Al Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam and known to Jews as the Temple Mount, as the occupation forces allowed Jewish worshippers to enter the sacred compound and say prayers in celebration of Passover. Israeli police also stormed the mosque compound wounding at least 158 Muslim congregants. Then, again, Israeli soldiers raided the compound, targeting Muslims with tear gas and rubber bullets, to which Palestinian youth responded with petrol bombs. And Hamas gave a call for general mobilisation to defend against Israeli incursions into the occupied West Bank and intrusions in the Al Aqsa Mosque. Meanwhile, the Arab League held an emergency meeting where its chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit urged Israel to end Jewish prayers inside the mosque compound.

Israel was violating centuries-old policy according to which non-Muslims may visit the Al Aqsa compound, but not pray there. Unfortunately, these words carry little weight since several members of the League have normalised relations with Israel, in utter disregard of the 2002 Saudi peace initiative, endorsed by the Arab League, that offered normalisation in exchange for Israeli full withdrawal from Arab lands occupied during the 1967 war, a just settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem based on UN Resolution 194, and the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Arab states have maintained a deafening silence when the previous US president Donald Trump, going against international law and various UN Security Council resolutions, 'recognised' Israeli sovereignty over occupied Arab lands. Joe Biden has quietly been following his predecessor's unabashed pro-Israeli stance. The US-led Palestinian-Israeli peace plan, even though a charade, has long been dead in the water. After the latest eruption of violence, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres expressed his concern over the "deteriorating situation in Jerusalem", saying he was in contact with the parties to press them to do all they can to lower tensions, avoid inflammatory actions and rhetoric. That is a wane expectation. Violence may subside for the time being but will not end unless occupation ends. Israel cannot commit unspeakable atrocities with impunity to usurp another people's land and have peace, too.

Anywhere, anywhere

GHAZI SALAHUDDIN

In a mock podcast, my eight-year-old grandson quizzed me about my childhood. What was it like when I was his age? And that called for memories of more than seventy years ago.

I paused for a moment because I had been cautioned by my daughter that I should not speak to him about the horrors of Partition and the traumatic dislocations our family had then suffered. I needed to strike a cheerful note. The setting itself was cheerful, indeed. We were seated outside in the afternoon sun at a cafe in Monza, near Milan, a few days ago. That it could be so pleasant, rather cold, in central Europe when a heatwave was raging across Pakistan was at the back of my mind. There are other reasons why I am grateful for this escape from my regular journalistic engagements.

Anyway, it readily struck me that, yes, there is something about my childhood that I fondly remember, something that inspires magical images in my mind. It was the railway. We would make long journeys in a train to visit our hometown in northern India from the then Bombay, where my father worked – and he worked for the railways, to earn a lot of free travel.

This romance I am sure I share with a large number of people. So, I tried to recapture those feelings for my grandson. It became an opportunity to relive that ex-

citement and remember that it stayed with me until my youth. In the early decades of Pakistan, the train was the main option for inter-city travel, and it had its magic.

After that little game we played, recording our conversation on a cell phone, I was left with the regret of how the railways have lost their supremacy and charm in Pakistan. No longer would poets like Nasir Kazmi and Munir Niazi tug at your heartstrings with passionate images of the esoteric realm of the railways.

There is, of course, an entire body of literature about the railways in every language. Some journeys have acquired mythical significance. Scenes have been immortalized in great fiction and the cinema. Just the mention of, say, the Trans-Siberian Railway or Agatha Christie's Oriental Express would tickle your imagination.

In the present context, the point I am making is that we have allowed the railways to go down the drain in our country. In a sense, this amounts to denying our young people a particular experience of adventure and exploration. Travel in itself is a metaphor for life and its uncertainties. I would say that it is difficult to see a train leaving a station without wishing to be on it. However, when I thought about my childhood memories of railway journeys, I realized that my grandson, living in Europe, has this opportunity of replicating the memories.

Remembering Allama and his influence on Pak Movement-II

DR SIKANDAR HAYAT

He insisted that 'the Indian Muslim is entitled to full and free development on the lines of his own culture and traditions in his own Indian homelands...' Indeed, he went on to assert that, 'since seventy millions of Muslims in a single country constitute a far more valuable asset to Islam than all the countries of Muslim Asia put together, we must [sic] look at the Indian problem, not only from the Muslim point of view, but also from the standpoint of the Indian Muslims as such'. In fact, they were a 'nation' already, 'the only Indian people who can fitly be described as a nation in the modern sense of the word'.

He, therefore, demanded 'a Muslim India within India', comprising the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Sind (Sindh) and Baluchistan (Balochistan), as 'the final destiny of Muslims, at least of North-West India'. He assured his audience that this 'Muslim demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India is perfectly justified'. Bengal, of course, was added later to this Muslim demand, as we shall see in his letters to Jinnah. But before we examine the letters, value their importance, and indeed as guidance for Jinnah – the ultimate and undisputed leader of the Indian Muslims after 1937 – let us look at Iqbal, in an additional role, as a man of action as suggested earlier, and as a political leader in Punjab.

Iqbal stepped into active politics in 1926, after he left teaching at the Punjab University. But, for a man of words that he essentially was, this transition was not easy. However, he realized that he owed it to the Muslims, who were demoralized after the Khilafat fiasco, to help 'translate his own ideals into political practice'. Hailing from Punjab, he stood for elections to the Punjab Legislative Council and indeed managed to defeat his opponent convincingly. In 1927, thus, he entered the assembly and got involved in the legislative politics of the province. He joined the Punjab Nationalist Unionist Party of Mian Fazl-i-Hussain, the League being virtually non-existent. Unionists made sense to him for two reasons, primarily. One, it was a fierce champion of separate electorates for the Muslims which Iqbal valued the

most. Indeed, he saw separate electorates as a fundamental 'principle of Muslim national identity'.

Two, it was supportive of the Land Alienation Act which Iqbal saw was in the best interest of the Muslim landowning classes. However, Iqbal 'maintained a nominal membership' among the party. Later, of course, he joined the Muslim League, Mian Muhammad Shafi faction of the Muslim League after its split with Jinnah over the Simon Commission. While Jinnah was opposed to the all-white commission, Iqbal was still hopeful. He felt that nothing would be lost if the Muslims stood united and pressed their demands from the British. However, the commission failed to secure Muslim interests as a whole, though it did reaffirm the Muslim right to separate electorates. Iqbal was disappointed and indeed 'aggrieved' for leaving the Muslim situation 'where it was'. The Muslims were not recognized 'as a distinct political entity', with their own special, separate interests. Disappointment with the British authorities, however, brought Iqbal close to Jinnah and his stance in politics like never before. The two of them participated in the Round Table Conference, Jinnah in the first and second session, Iqbal in the second and third session. In the end, both were disappointed with its outcome, the Communal Award of 1932 and the Act of 1935.

By then, Iqbal was not in good health and indeed was left with no choice but to abandon active politics. He did not seek re-election to the assembly. However, upon Jinnah's insistence, he agreed to serve the Muslim League as its President in the Punjab and head its Parliamentary Board to organize the party for the upcoming elections in 1936-37. He vowed to make the League 'a mass party of the Muslims'. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons beyond his control, the party failed miserably. It was able to elect only two representatives out of 175 Muslim seats available in the province, one of them leaving the party soon. While this failure was a setback no doubt, it helped the cause of Muslim separatism and, eventually the Pakistan Movement, in two very important ways. One, it established a personal bond between the two leaders, indeed Iqbal endorsing Jinnah as 'the only Muslim in India today to

whom the community has a right to look up for safe guidance through the storm which is coming to North-West India and perhaps to the whole of India'. Two, and perhaps more importantly, it marked the return of Iqbal to his original and more significant role of the man of words. It was in this role that Iqbal finally was in a position to influence the Muslim destiny in India, leading towards the Pakistan Movement, to good effect, through his letters to Jinnah, to which we must now turn for some discussion.

One thing, striking and clearly distinct and different from his earlier Muslim demand in the Allahabad address, in these letters, written years after, in 1936-37, was demanding a separate homeland for the Muslims, not as an integral part of the Indian federation. He demanded 'a free Muslim state or states', constituting a 'separate federation of Muslim Provinces'. As he put it in his letter of May 28, 1937, 'the enforcement and development of the Sharia of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim state or states'. Again, on June 21, 1937, he wrote, 'why should not the Muslims of North-West India [sic] and Bengal be considered entitled to self-determination just as other nations in India and outside India are? Rejecting the idea of 'a single federation', he continued, 'A separate federation of Muslim provinces... is the only course by which we can... save Muslims from the domination of non-Muslims'. Thus, one can clearly see a fundamental change in the demand. Indeed, the Muslims had 'no other option except either to demand full autonomy in Muslim majority provinces within a very loose federal structure or to carve out a separate sovereign Muslim state'. Iqbal proposed a separate sovereign Muslim state. This should end the unnecessary debate and controversy about the intent and purpose of Iqbal's demand for the Muslims. Iqbal appealed fervently to Jinnah to declare 'as clearly and as strongly as possible the political objective of the Indian Muslims as a [sic] distinct political unit in the country'.

Jinnah, of course, influenced by Iqbal and his thought and given his own long and frustrating experience of pursuing the so-called 'Indian nationalism' ideal, could not agree more. In his presidential address at the Muslim League

session on March 22, 1940 in Lahore, he publicly declared that 'the only course open to all is to allow the major nations separate homelands by dividing India into 'autonomous national states'. Muslims, he stressed, 'cannot accept any constitution which must necessarily result in a Hindu majority government... Hindu raj'. The League resolution presented on March 23 and adopted on March 24, 1940, resolved 'that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute Independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign'. This was the making of the Lahore Resolution, eventually the Pakistan Resolution. The rest is history, well known and documented.

Jinnah, of course, remained indebted to Iqbal for his guidance and advice on the political destiny of the Muslims, which he readily accepted. In fact, Jinnah's secretary and first biographer, M. H. Saiyid, in his biography of Jinnah, first published in 1945, published during Jinnah's lifetime, claimed that, 'It was in fact the spirit of Iqbal that showed itself through Mohammad Ali Jinnah'. Indeed, he went on to record, for posterity, that Jinnah told him once, after the Pakistan Resolution, 'Iqbal is no more amongst us, but had he been alive, he would have been happy to know that we did exactly what he wanted us to do'. There could be no better or stronger proof of Iqbal's influence on the Pakistan Movement, an acknowledgement and indebtedness coming from the creator of Pakistan himself. The more the scholars, the researchers, the students, and indeed the general readers will read and understand Iqbal, the man of words, the more they will be convinced of his influence on the man of action and, of course, his act, the Pakistan Movement and its pursuit. Indeed, the two men are inseparable, integral parts of a momentous historical process and its final outcome, Pakistan.

(Concluded)

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Mad, bad and dangerous to know

DR NAAZIR MAHMOOD

When Lady Caroline Lamb described Lord Byron – one of the greatest English poets – as 'mad, bad, and dangerous to know', she was of course sharing her personal impressions of Byron. This expression comes to mind when you look at today's Pakistan and find an entire breed of people who seem to be 'mad, bad, and dangerous to know'. For ease of conversation, let's call them MBD here. There are multiple factors that have contributed to the emergence of this phenomenon among some Pakistanis living at home or abroad. They have made plenty of observers seem clueless about what shape this anomaly would take next. They let rip at the slightest provocation – or even without it. Mostly they are instigated by their leaders who are equally clueless and ready to let rip. What they did in Medina on April 28 is just one example of their uncontrollable behaviour that they have become prone to display.

MBD is not a new phenomenon; we have seen such cases both nationally and internationally. The trick of their leaders is to make such behaviour appear perfectly normal. Some commentators have made comparisons with fascist and Nazi tendencies in Italy and Germany in the first half of the 20th century. We may also recall the Altaf-Hussain times in Karachi, when he unleashed a reign of terror on all who disagreed with him or dared to raise a voice of dissent.

The prime span of fascism and Nazism was nearly 25 years, after which their steam was snuffed out. Nearly all followers of these ideologies were mad, bad, and dangerous to know. They wreaked havoc within their homelands and on their own people, and they would have continued with their destructive behaviour for decades to come. Even after an end to their violent extremism, their remnants are still around and

reemerge here and there with their fossilized thinking patterns and a potential to erupt any moment.

Specific to Pakistan, this intolerance was pioneered by the state itself. A curious and dispassionate reading of history makes facts clear, which Pakistan Studies textbooks tend to hide. Though it will be a slight exaggeration to blame everything on the state, there is ample evidence that state policies and practices cultivate – to a great extent – ideas of self-righteousness and narcissism among common citizens, through education and propaganda. The state loves to nurture birds that fly blind, and this flight leads them to mostly wrong destinations. Authoritarianism or pluralism, democracy or dictatorship, humility or hubris, prejudice or tolerance – all are there to crush or groom. The state makes most decisions about where to lead the nation. There are bursts of affection for certain personalities that develop personality cults.

Does this have anything to do with dogmas, religiosity and sectarianism? Of course. The more dogmas are propagated, the more intolerant people tend to become. Dogma means a blind faith in unquestionable ideologies and personalities. If there is one ideology you can't question, there will soon be more of the same ilk. When you revere a personality at the cost of a more balanced assessment of personal traits, there are greater chances of more leaders emerging with the same claims of infallibility. It becomes a kind of a crusade for their followers to defend their leader at all costs, no matter how destructive or dumb that person may be. The question is: why does a state nurture or tolerate such mad, bad, and dangerous behaviour? Perhaps the answer lies in understanding the nature of the state itself. In countries such as Pakistan there is always a cosseted elite embedded in the state itself. This elite comes from diverse sections of society: bureaucrats, capitalists, feudal lords, generals, in-

dustrialists, judges, and many more. If they are not from the existing elite, the state co-opts them for its own and their benefit. They are mostly complacent in their own attitudes and want to keep the people engaged in one preoccupation or the other.

These elites are safe in their own guarded compounds and their well-defended capital – or they think so. The country carries on its downward spiral from which it always struggles to emerge. When people are exposed to excessive chauvinism, ideological and narcissistic overdoses, religiosity, sectarianism, and xenophobia, they seldom think about their real problems such as illiteracy, unemployment, lack of public healthcare, and shortage of power and water. The elite that composes the state itself, is unaffected by these problems and sits comfortably while the people are fed with personality cults and chant slogans against purported enemies. Gradually, malign forces in society take a deep hold of the people who fail to understand the real conspiracies within – while believing in imaginary conspiracies from outer lands. It may be Afghanistan, America, India, or even Iran, hatching sinister plans against Pakistan while our own elite is safe and sound; binging up nearly all sectors of society from education to health to power to security and water and sanitation, and what not. That's how the mad, bad, and dangerous behaviour thrives. There are segments of society that pose a lingering threat to the constitution, democracy, financial stability, and overall health of society but the elite in power does not consider them a threat to itself.

Amid this chaos emerge authoritarian personalities who may be from civilian or military backgrounds. They offer precise solutions to imprecise challenges. Such leaders master the art of grabbing people's attention without disabusing them of their false notions.