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The Rainbow^{*}

I

THIS IS THE STORY OF A NIGHT during the late twentieth century. On the top floor, the seventy-first, known as The Hanging Garden of Hotel Mohenjo Daro, an elaborate dinner party hosted by state executives is going on. The guests include ambassadors, scientists, thinkers, and journalists from all over the world.

On the rooftop of the hotel a silk marquee decorated with frills of pearls has been erected with the help of jewel-studded poles. The floor has been carpeted with colorful jute rugs famous for their craftsmanship, quality, and intricate patterns. The honored guests are sitting with their wives on velvet-covered luxury sofas.

These guests, representing different cultures from five continents, are wearing their traditional garb. Their distinctive features, their particular mannerisms, their different languages, the uniquely beautiful women from various countries, their styles and fashions, and their blandishments have cast a spell on the spectators.

The hall is brightly lit even though no bulb, gas or tube-light is visible anywhere. There are several fountains with colored lights in the hall. "The Hanging Garden" has a vast variety of flowers the aroma of which creates a pleasant sensation.

At the center of the hall, there is a large round table covered with an expensive, embroidered tablecloth. On the table sits a fancy radio set. The speakers have been arranged so that the sound of the radio is audible to everyone in the hall.

Right now, the radio is playing a symphony composed especially for the occasion. And what is the occasion? The occasion is that between 1:45 and 2:00 AM Pakistan's first astronaut will land on the moon and his observations on this monumental achievement will be broadcast live.

^{*} Ghulam Abbas, *Dhānak* (Karachi: Sajjād Kamrāñ, 1969).

Many other countries have also tried to land a man on the moon during the last few years. However, only Pakistan has been able to accomplish this unprecedented feat. At first, when Pakistan announced its plans to conquer the moon many heads of state didn't even believe that Pakistan was such a technologically advanced country. And when their ambassadors in Pakistan corroborated the claim, they were surprised. That's why they sent their scientists and experts to attend the ceremony in person.

It is now 1:00 AM but none of the guests who've come from various parts of the world is feeling tired or sleepy. Instead, they're getting more excited by the minute.

Waiters wearing uniforms adorned with goldwork are serving drinks and snacks. Some people are conversing with each other while others are listening to the music, which is sometimes interrupted by different announcements regarding the ceremony and sometimes by a speaker who briefs the audience on initial successes of the project. When people get bored they go for a stroll in The Hanging Garden. There are several buildings in the city which are even taller than Hotel Mohenjo Daro, but the kind of ocean view The Hanging Garden offers is matchless, especially at night when the lights of ships and of houses on the nearby islands twinkle.

The full moon of February is pouring its cool light down onto the earth. The view itself is very captivating and, given the nature of the occasion, the guests are constantly looking up at the moon.

At 1:30 AM a radio announcement requests that the guests take their seats. Right now, the guests are extremely anxious. Some of the women have even clenched their fists to overcome their agitation. The guests, scattered everywhere, come and occupy seats on the sofas. Everyone is attentive to the radio. They're waiting. Shortly, the voice of the announcer comes on: "Now, we're taking you to the moon where a new chapter of human triumphs in space is about to be written. The astronaut on the mission will now address you."

The announcement was followed by a stretch of crackling sounds, the kind heard while trying to locate a distant station. But it didn't last more than a few seconds. A human voice emerged from the noise and gradually became clear.

"This is Captain Adam Khan, a resident of district Jhang, aged 35, addressing you. My spacecraft is just 5000 feet from the surface of the moon. The speed of the craft has been reduced to 75 miles per hour. I can clearly see the moon's surface. This is the area dubbed "the ocean of hurricanes" by scientists. It's a strange scene, frightening and breathtaking at the same time. Now the distance is only 2000 feet. The speed of the craft is down to 40 miles per hour. I haven't, by the grace of Allah, faced any

problems so far. God willing, my craft will slowly land on the surface of the moon as expected. Now it is less than 1000 feet. The speed of the craft is decreasing. Now only 750 feet ... 500 feet ... speed 10 miles per hour ... 250 feet ... 100 feet ... *Alhamdulillah*, my spacecraft has landed successfully on the surface of the moon. It is 1:48 and 4 seconds according to Pakistan Standard Time. Long live Pakistan!"

The audience, sitting with bated breath and racing hearts, heave a deep sigh of relief. The astronaut's voice is no longer coming from the radio, which has now started playing the national anthem. The guests rise in its honor. The anthem ends amid the sound of applause and cheers reverberating in the hall. Ambassadors, scientists, and intellectuals are rising from their seats to shake hands with state executives and congratulate them. This lasts for a few minutes. Once again the radio starts to spew another bout of the same crackling noise. Everybody instantaneously sits down. The voice of Captain Adam Khan is clearer now.

"I've planted our national flag on 'the ocean of hurricanes'." The surface of the moon is like frozen ash, hard in some places and soft in others, but not soft enough for my feet to sink into it. There are fissures and craters everywhere. Some craters are as big as the mouths of volcanoes. The first thing I did after the sacred duty of planting the flag was offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God Almighty, Whose blessings have enabled our country to reach its rightful place and become one of the most powerful and technologically advanced countries in the world. Long live Pakistan!"

The sound of cheers and applause reverberate once again in the hall. After the noise subsides, the voice of the astronaut is heard again, "As you all know, a lunar day and night is as long as a fortnight on Earth. Right now, it's daytime here, which, according to our calculations, started approximately thirty-six hours ago. I have enough oxygen for a complete lunar day and my craft has enough fuel to take me back, with God's help, to my country ... Now, I will share my observations with you ..."

II

Fajr before the break of dawn, in a small mosque in a town hundreds of miles from Karachi, a mullah was addressing the worshippers after the dawn prayer: "I just heard on my transistor radio that an accursed Pakistani has landed on the moon. May God destroy him. Brothers in Islam, to unveil in the name of science and technological progress the secrets which it is God's will to keep from us is manifest *kufir*. Brothers, we have angered the Almighty with this shameful act of ours. My heart tells me God is going to punish us very soon."

The news created quite a stir not only among the mullahs of villages and small towns but also among those of the big cities. In an urban seminary, a mullah, who was also a closet poet, held forth thus: “God appointed man His *khalifa* on Earth and allowed him to do whatever he wished. But look at man’s ingratitude and greed to acquire more and more land. He regards the expansive earth to be insufficient for his needs and is now determined to colonize the heavenly abode of his Maker, which comprises the moon, the sun, and the stars. Allah, Allah! Man is so full of hubris. He left the angels behind, considering them lesser beings, and attempted to ensnare the Almighty Himself. We all seek refuge in Allah from this ...”

And the following Friday, in the main congregational mosque of the capital, where thousands of Muslims had gathered for prayers, a fiery *khatib* had this to say in his sermon: “O Muslims! Do you have any idea about the essence of the satanic sciences being taught in your educational institutions today? The essence of these sciences is that Matter is eternal like God, or worse yet, that God Himself (in Whom alone we seek refuge) is Matter. You’ve seen the kind of depravity these sciences have gradually led us into. I’m alluding to the conquest of the moon, which you must have heard about on the radio or read about in the papers. In following in the footsteps of the West, our government has fallen prey to atheism and struts around in pride over its achievement. But this is an extremely irreligious and atheistic act, and according to the Sharia its perpetrator ought to be put to death ...

“O Muslims! Adultery and sinfulness are rampant today. Violence and terror prevail on Earth. Irreligiousness, shamelessness, obscenity, vulgarity, debauchery and atheism have become commonplace. God’s word is being violated while atheism prospers. Fornication, alcohol consumption, and gambling are carried on openly. Musical instruments, music, and dancing have become popular. Among women, modesty and the decency to properly cover their bodies have vanished. All these are signs of the approaching Doomsday ...

“O Muslims! Before long God’s word will completely disappear from the hearts and tongues of men. The earth will be rent asunder. The oceans will boil. The mountains will shatter and their pieces will be strewn like grains of sand. Dust storms and hurricanes will engulf the world. The sky will burst and the stars will scatter ...

“O Muslims! You should go to every village, town, and city to warn the people that they must collectively repent and seek Allah’s forgiveness because the Doomsday is near at hand ...”

And so the mullahs with their inflammatory oration convinced the masses that Doomsday was about to overtake them. As a result, everyone was terrified. Distrust of the government began spreading. The Movement

of the mullahs gathered momentum with every passing day. Initially, people staged small demonstrations but these quickly grew into bigger ones. A resolution was adopted during a huge political rally stating:

“The people of Pakistan consider the current system of government to be based on heretical and perverse principles which are likely to engender catastrophic consequences. They, therefore, demand that it be replaced immediately with Allah’s divine law.”

The resolution immediately jolted the state authorities. As long as the Movement of the mullahs was confined to opposition to the conquest of the moon, they didn’t even consider it worth paying attention. And, frankly, they didn’t even have the time to pay attention. They were focused solely on receiving applause from the world on this extraordinary achievement. Then again, they also wanted to see what impact it had on world politics, especially in neighboring countries. What was their official stance and what went on behind closed doors.

At first, the government squarely dismissed the Movement of the mullahs. They thought the mullahs were the type who always opposed new discoveries and inventions at first, but with the passage of time not only accepted them, they made use of them. There wouldn’t be a single mullah today who didn’t have a telephone, a radio, and a television in his home, and hardly any who didn’t want a sizeable time slot on a religious broadcast. No mullah would prefer some other means of transportation besides airplanes for an official visit. And these days loudspeakers, which they call *‘ala’-e mukabbiru’s-saut* (instrument for amplifying sound) for ease of pronunciation, are used freely to deliver the *azan* and *khutba*, and to conduct various other religious events. It would only be a matter of days before the mullahs embraced the conquest of the moon. And when the time came to inaugurate the first mosque on the moon, every mullah would present himself as worthier of the honor than his fellows.

However, the minute the Movement took on a different color, it became a serious cause of concern. The government tried to clarify its own stance through the radio and newspapers. It even commissioned an intellectual to give a powerful speech on the radio titled “Science and Islam” in which he said:

“Our venerable mullahs equate science with heresy and consider its teaching and learning to be a sin. However, in the Holy Qur’an Allah has asked humans variously to conquer the universe, to command the winds, to control the rays of the sun and the moon, to extract treasures from the core of the earth, and to subdue violent ocean waves.... The conquest of the moon is one instance of the fulfillment of these obligations.”

In a pamphlet titled, “From Spear to Atom Bomb,” the author under-

scored the demands of modern times as:

“During the Holy Prophet’s time gaining expertise in the fields of archery, swordsmanship, and horse riding was considered a sacred duty among Muslims because these skills were needed to safeguard the religion. Were the Holy Prophet present in this day and age, he would have, keeping in mind how evil forces are trying to overpower Islam, made the use of tanks, airplanes, rockets, missiles, and even the atomic bomb a sacred duty.”

But the Movement of the mullahs had gained so much momentum that mere speeches failed to stifle it.

After the conquest of the moon, when Captain Adam Khan and his spaceship returned safely to Earth, he was received very warmly. He was declared a national hero. He was welcomed like a conqueror and quickly promoted first to the rank of Major and then Colonel. Both the national and international press published countless photos and interviews. One photo that became particularly famous showed the moment when the wife of a foreign ambassador, swept away by emotion, kissed the face of the Pakistani astronaut. Although it was an entirely innocent gesture, the mullahs, who considered Adam Khan to be a godless person liable to be put to death, interpreted it in a different light and raised hell. They conspired with some members of the opposition party and had them present a motion against such publicity in the National Assembly.

This only increased the unrest in the country. The mullahs were encouraged more than ever and called a national convention in which it was unanimously demanded that the rulers immediately resign because they were infidels and irreligious and hence not competent to rule the God-gifted country of Pakistan.

Many speeches, full of overpowering emotion and verve, were made during this memorable convention. One mullah sahib addressed the audiences in these words:

“It is indeed a pity that the government did not heed our warning. But the time for warnings is long past; it is time to snatch the reins of government from the hands of atheists and apostates and entrust them to the hands of the pious and the virtuous. So, O Muslims! Rise up and seize all power and authority from the standard-bearers of this heretical civilization and proclaim to all corners of the world that the religion of God has come...

“Do you want to know the kind of governance we want? Let me show you a glimpse. No one will be poor or homeless because the government itself will take care of everyone. Allah, and only Allah, will be the king on Earth. There will be no serfs and no feudal lords. If you want such a king-

dom then raise the cry 'God is great!' so loud that it will shake the house of infidelity down to its very foundation."

And so the audience shouted, "God is great!" so loudly that even far-off passersby stood still and craned their necks to discover what the noise was about.

After that a diminutive mullah delivered his "Jihad in the way of Allah" speech with such emotion that he kept jumping with uncontrollable fervor throughout. He said,

"We're Allah's soldiers. What does the government take us for? They don't know about our power. If it weren't for us no marriage or funeral would take place. The government can make a million announcements, peer through their telescopes all they want, fly above the clouds in airplanes, and even obtain evidence from other cities by telephone, but unless we sight the moon with our sinful eyes, there will neither be the joy of Eid nor the grief of Muharram. The government has clashed with us on several occasions and is aware of our power ..."

No government can take such an open call for rebellion lightly. Therefore, all the individuals who delivered speeches during the convention were arrested the following night, lest they disturb law and order. Section 144 was enforced throughout the country according to which carrying batons, swords, and spears; collecting bricks, rocks, and bottles of soft drinks and acid; and assembling in groups of more than five persons were all prohibited.

The arrests aggravated the situation even more. The government's action was regarded as an instance of interference with religion. No matter how indifferent people may be to their religion, once their religious sentiments are aroused they turn into fanatics ready to sacrifice even their lives for the sake of their faith. This is what happened with the mullahs' Movement. Disillusionment spread among the masses, but since the staging of protests and demonstrations was banned they couldn't properly express their anger and grief. So they started going quietly to the mosques in ones and twos and enlisted in the mullahs' Movement. Hardly a mosque was left that hadn't turned into a center for political activities. Day and night the Movement's leaders discussed their future course of action. Worshipers were incited to rebellion openly. When the mullahs were convinced that they had the support of the masses solidly behind them, they announced a date to protest the arrests. A countrywide strike was also planned. It was decided that groups of no less than five individuals would leave after the *Fajr* prayers in order to openly violate Section 144.

On the day of the protest, well before dawn, the government deployed contingents of police in front of every mosque in the country. As planned,

groups of worshippers poured out of mosques after the *Fajr* prayers. Every individual had been garlanded with flowers and his clothes sprinkled with rosewater. The police started arresting them. More than ten thousand arrests were made within an hour. Still, the groups kept coming. There were no signs of the groups subsiding. People spilled forth from cities, towns, and villages, eager to submit themselves to voluntary arrest. Some of them had wrapped themselves in shrouds; others marched along reciting invocations of blessings for the Prophet. It seemed as if a volcano had erupted and human lava was flowing out of it.

So much for the people who violated Section 144. Now let's turn to the strikers. Criminal elements joined them and started roaming the streets and bazaars with the first light of dawn. Since during the previous night volunteers had already announced on loudspeakers in every part of the city that the strike was to take place, businesspeople did not leave their homes for fear of violence. If some of them did open their shops following assurances of safety from the police, groups of enraged protestors quickly appeared on the scene with threats of looting and plunder and had them close up promptly. If the police got in the way, they were pelted with rocks and stones. At first the police did not use force. When persuasion fell on deaf ears, they used a mild baton assault. But this only managed to disperse the protestors for a while. Gradually, both sides grew more vehement and the situation became quite serious.

The strikers not only forced shopkeepers to close, they also stopped buses, cabs, and rickshaws. Two buses and eight rickshaws were torched and the windowpanes of countless buses were shattered during the commotion.

Some protestors headed towards government offices and foreign embassies and tried to set them on fire. This was an extremely delicate time for the government. When batons and tear gas could not stem the tide, the police were ordered to shoot. And when the police could not control the situation the army was called in. The same scenario was repeated in several cities. A curfew was imposed throughout the country but the violence and rioting did not stop. Approximately fifty thousand volunteers had been arrested by evening and hundreds of lives were lost ...

III

The Kingdom of God on Earth, as envisioned by the mullahs, has now become a reality.

Shortly after the government resigned, an amir was elected with a vote by the adult population and was declared God's vicegerent on Earth. The process of election proved very difficult and threw the whole country

into crisis. Thankfully, the situation was resolved. What actually happened was that the mullahs remained united as long as their agitation against the government persisted, but as soon as the general election was announced everyone rushed to grab power.

Many political parties jumped in to contest the elections, each with its own strategy, code of conduct, and uniform for its supporters. Small groups of supporters were dispatched to every neighborhood to root for their respective amir, hold rallies, and put up posters. It was quite a turbulent period. Among the major contesting parties those that stood out were the Green, the Red, the Blue, the Yellow, the Black, and the White Party—each named after the color of its uniform. The White Party was comprised mainly of villagers.

The lucky mullah who won was the leader of the Green Party. A competent writer with a comfortable command of the language and a fiery orator, he had created quite a stir throughout the country with his *khutbas* and pamphlets. His propaganda was so successful that he obtained the most votes and left the candidates of the Red, Blue, Yellow, Black and White Parties biting their nails.

After assuming power, the leader of the Green Party thought it prudent to include representatives of these rival parties in the Consultative Council. This would not only raise their spirits but would also keep them from creating trouble.

He reasoned, “Separately these colors mean nothing, but together they can create a breathtaking rainbow.”

The tactic proved very useful. The Consultative Council, meant to advise the amir on the affairs of the state, became the representative of the whole nation and started discharging its duties with utmost dedication. The amir picked the city’s main mosque to convene the sessions of the Consultative Council and to run administrative affairs, while he took up residence in one of the chambers adjacent to the mosque. The sessions of the Consultative Council started and the project of the reform and reconstruction of the society kicked off in earnest.

First off, the Consultative Council focused all of its attention on neutralizing the effects of the poison which Western civilization and culture had been allowed to inject during the last government’s tenure. English mannerisms, dress, and social etiquette were immediately done away with and, in order to address the root cause of the rot, the English language was excluded from all educational curricula.

The amir took the reins of government in his hands and abolished the administrative procedures of the previous government. He also disbanded the Secretariat and all its subsidiary departments, setting fire to the balance

of its files and records. The police and tax departments were retained however.

All schools, colleges, and universities were shut down and the prevalent educational system was discarded in favor of religious seminaries. The latter were mostly affiliated with mosques and taught Islamic jurisprudence, hadith, Qur'anic exegesis, Sharia studies, and the art of the recitation of the Qur'an. The Arabic script was chosen for the official script and a plan was put in place to switch over completely to Arabic as the country's language within a specified period.

Great regard was shown to calligraphers. The services of those specializing in the Naskh, Kufic, and Tughra styles of calligraphy were sought out. Additionally, an entire school of war was set up to teach the skills of wielding different weapons such as swords and spears.

Women's civil liberties and their right to appear in public without purdah, ensured by the previous government, were abolished in one fell swoop. Women were also prohibited from leaving their homes without the hijab. And since, according to the mullahs, they were not suited to run the affairs of the country nor could they be deployed in higher posts, they didn't need any higher education. Some basic knowledge of religion, the ability to run household affairs, and an elementary understanding of arithmetic—to keep track of the laundry given to the washerman—were considered sufficient for them.

The Consultative Council's second step of reform focused on the judiciary. The legal profession was abolished because lawyers deliberately concealed facts and misled judges with their cunning arguments. This went absolutely against Islamic traditions. The court fee was waived because it put unnecessary strain on complainants who could not pay the fee and, therefore, their concerns remained unaddressed. The posts of Judge and Magistrate were also abolished. Instead, Muftis and Qazis were appointed in every city. This eliminated the need for a large legal staff to a great extent.

It was decided that all present owners of land would continue to retain their rights to it. However, land tax would be levied according to the amount of land owned and the kind of crops produced, the amount of land to be determined by the measuring stick. If a piece of land were left uncultivated or without construction for three years, it would be deemed abandoned. If someone else put it to use, he would be immune from litigation.

It was announced that anyone who cultivated or inhabited an abandoned piece of land anywhere in the country would own that land, and the crop revenue would be divided equally between the cultivator and the owner after deducting the amount of the land tax.

The Consultative Council made it obligatory for every Muslim to offer

namaz, to fast, to pay the zakat, to sacrifice animals, and to perform Haj if they could afford it. In the event of noncompliance, punishment with lashes was prescribed. The rate of zakat was fixed at 2.5 percent or one-fortieth per annum of property that included land, cash, jewelry, cattle, horses, and camels.

Muslims were allowed to accumulate wealth and to invest it in businesses. But the wealth of a deceased individual would be distributed among his relatives and if there were no relatives it would be credited to the national treasury.

Non-Muslim subjects were declared *dhimmis*. They were exempted from paying the zakat but were asked to pay the *jizya* instead at a rate of Rs. 13.50 per head per annum.

However, those *dhimmis* who chose to join the armed forces of Islam would be exempted from the obligation of *jizya*. Some non-Muslim communities opposed the *jizya* but their wise folk argued with the unwilling of their community that if they didn't pay *jizya* they would be required to pay the zakat which had a higher rate, and the latter saw the point.

The punishments for various crimes included: chopping off hands for stealing, one hundred lashes for fornication between unmarried male and female offenders, and death by stoning in the case of adultery.

All city and town theaters and cinema houses were converted into religious seminaries or orphanages, and hotels and clubs into lodgings for travelers. Western sports such as cricket, football, hockey, tennis, golf, badminton, etc. were banned. Instead, horse riding, spearmanship, polo, and archery were promoted. Furthermore, the arts of wrestling and using a mace were also encouraged.

Arms foundries were set up throughout the country on a large scale, and iron and steel began to be fashioned into shields, swords, spears, and maces. Every Muslim man was deemed worthy of carrying a sword and every Muslim woman, a dagger. So, with the birth of every child, government officials would rush to the house of the baby with a sword or a dagger. Swords became part of the dress. Even water carriers started wearing them as they went around supplying water from their skins to the houses; the same was true for carders and charpoy-makers.

When the volume of production could not keep pace with the rising demand for swords, iron was obtained by dismantling the gates and grill-work of residential homes to meet the national requirement.

A firearm manufacturing factory was also established which produced guns, rifles, pistols, and ammunition. The Consultative Council, however, did not allow anyone to bear firearms except armed forces personnel.

The production of literature and poetry was also strictly regulated.

Ghazals celebrating love, *nazms*, and geets were not considered literature anymore because of their potential corruptive influence on the thoughts of the nation's daughters, but poems extolling Allah and the Holy Prophet, war songs, elegies, salaams, and national lullabies were considered the highest forms of poetry. Since novels, short stories, and dramas were fabrications and promoted lying, society could ill afford them. Newspapers were forbidden to print any photos, not even cartoons, and painting, sculpture, music, etc., were declared useless vocations and were banned.

All professions that resorted to societally harmful means, whether material or moral, had to go. So the making and selling of alcohol and drugs, prostitution, dancing, gambling, horse racing, the lottery, and puzzle-solving had to be banned. Since religious law proscribed interest in any form, banks, insurance companies, and prize bonds were abolished. As a result it became impossible to make transactions with foreign countries and to trade in international markets.

Medical professions involving medicine and surgery were also abolished because a percentage of alcohol was unavoidably present in the medicines used; instead, it was decided to give state support to Greek medicine and include it in the medical curricula. The profession of nursing was also scrapped.

As a result of the abolition of these professions, millions lost their jobs. The Consultative Council recommended that all those who were jobless should be allotted land so they could cultivate it and earn their livelihoods. But the problem was that all fertile land was already in the possession of other people. The available land was either barren or suffered from water logging or salinity. These people had to work extremely hard to cultivate the allotted lands. They had to dig long canals to obtain water from far-off rivers.

Citizens were required to dress simply, lead a simple life, wear beards and trim their moustache, and avoid any kind of showiness, extravagant spending and laziness. To ensure this simplicity, items such as refrigerators, air conditioners, washing machines, electric fans, stoves, irons, and china-ware—all deemed luxury items—were removed from shops. Even tooth-paste and toothbrushes had to go. Instead, the use of *miswak* was promoted because, according to the mullahs, it made one eloquent.

Moreover, buying and selling the latest inventions and innovations—such as radio, television, tape recorder, record changer, and cameras—were prohibited. The wasteful use of electricity was declared a crime. Coca Cola, Pakola, and all other Western-style soft drinks were also banned.

All floors of skyscrapers that were above the height of the minaret and the dome of a city's main congregational mosque were demolished.

Foreign ambassadors, especially those from Western countries, were asked to leave the country as it was feared their presence and their form of social etiquette might easily corrupt the minds of the population. They were asked to visit the country only when a national or international dispute was serious enough to merit a meeting in person.

The Consultative Council gave the Muslim population a month to adopt the Islamic way of life, beyond which, if someone was found to be in violation of the order, he would be declared a non-Muslim. He would then be free to embrace any religion other than Islam. But if he still insisted on calling himself a Muslim, he would be declared an apostate and stoned to death.

For a while people wore the national dress—kurta, pajama, sherwani, cap or turban. Only quacks selling sex pills at railway stations were seen wearing Arabian-style dress. But one day a tailor decided to wear a long, loose kurta with a big robe over it. He placed a big handkerchief on his head, tied around his forehead with a golden string, and started walking through the bazaar.

He was a tall, handsome man. The outfit suited him really well. Some individuals started following him. He roamed around different bazaars and squares for three or four hours. Then he returned to his shop, took the dress off, hung it outside the shop, and wrote the following caption under it, “Arabian dress. Available for just Rs. 25.” People immediately started placing orders and the Arabian-style dress quickly caught on.

The first year of the mullah government proved extremely difficult for every Pakistani. The government ran into a huge economic crisis. But Pakistanis offered every sacrifice the mullahs asked for in the name of God and His Prophet. They all faced difficulties but never complained. They became so punctual in their fasting and offering salat that they did not need to be monitored anymore. Groups of young boys in black robes, carrying small, short swords around their waists, chanting “Crescent-shaped dagger is our national emblem” were seen everywhere.

At prayer times, mosques overflowed with worshippers and the boisterous atmosphere on Fridays resembled festivals.

People conversed with friends and relatives in their mother tongue, but resorted to broken Arabic when speaking with strangers. The Arabian-style dress was becoming a rage so quickly that it appeared as though a rehearsal was in progress to turn the country into The Second Arabistan.

IV

As far as the impact of Western civilization, adultery, consumption of al-

cohol, gambling, paying or charging interest, and the appearance of women in public were concerned, the mullah government faced no roadblocks in enforcing laws that banned or regulated these practices. This was because all mullah parties—whether Green, Red, Blue, Yellow, Black or White—were united regarding the eradication of these evils. Those among the citizenry who feared that these issues might prove divisive among mullahs belonging to different sects uttered a sigh of relief and thanked Allah for proving their fears unfounded.

Not so on questions concerning Islamic principles, beliefs, faith, and piety. When questions were raised about them, an atmosphere of tension and sectarian disagreement reared its head. While all sects believed in the oneness of Allah, in His Prophet, and in the Qur'an as His word, they each had radically different views regarding specific beliefs and ideologies, quite like a scene that looks different when viewed through a different colored lens. What was lawful to the Green Party was unlawful to the Red. And the way the Yellow Party defined belief according to its jurisprudence, the Blue Party considered downright infidelity. Although the head of the state allowed every party to adhere to its own set of beliefs and principles, each sect had its own mosques, its own way of worshipping, and its own religious schools. Followers of one sect were prohibited from enforcing their beliefs on a member of another sect. Still, when they got together in social or national events and a question about history or jurisprudence cropped up, the discussion invariably turned bitter.

Sectarian feelings suddenly surfaced when the government decided to set up an institute for the publication of scholarly work, most of all, to produce a comprehensive history of Islam and biographies of the Holy Prophet and the first four caliphs. It all started with the newspapers. In its opening article, the newspaper of a particular sect deliberated on the issue: "We would have had no objection at all if a commercial publisher were producing these books. The objectionable point is that books produced by the institute would carry the official seal of the government and, hence, would be considered to represent the beliefs of the whole nation. If the government wants to publish such books, it ought to initiate a separate series for each sect."

This started a lengthy debate in the print media. Some people supported the suggestion, others considered it a wasteful expense, and still others looked at the matter from an entirely different perspective. The Consultative Council deliberated on the matter for days and when it could not find a solution the amir postponed the project. But by now the atmosphere in the country had become quite unpleasant.

Unfortunately, around this time an incident occurred which weighed

heavily on the religious sensitivities of different sects. When supporters of the Red Party came to their mosque one morning to offer the dawn prayer, they spotted a bunch of insults directed at some of their great men scribbled on the walls. This angered and grieved the Red Party beyond all limits. A contingent from the party called on the amir. The amir listened to their concerns very sympathetically and asked the Consultative Council to investigate the matter thoroughly so that the perpetrators could be apprehended and brought to justice.

The perpetrators were not apprehended during the next two days and, on the third, a similar incident occurred, though this time at the mosque of the Green Party. The Green Party had no doubts that it was the retaliatory work of the Red Party, but the latter vociferously claimed its innocence.

That same day, young supporters of the Green Party thought it imperative to stage a demonstration following the noon prayer to express their grief and anger. As long as the demonstration stayed in the Green Party neighborhoods nobody objected to it, and even in the neighborhoods of the Blue, the Yellow, the Black, and the White parties it provoked no incident. However, the minute the demonstration stepped into Red Party territory it not only got bigger, its slogans also grew more vehement. Rumors of rock- and brick-throwing were also heard but, thankfully, proved baseless. Nevertheless, the emotions of the two parties had been aroused. Every now and then their youthful supporters unsheathed their swords, which forced the army to intervene and break them apart. A few troops were no doubt wounded in the effort but the situation was brought under control.

This incident was played up in highly sensational language and openly criticized by the newspapers of both parties.

The peace and quiet barely lasted a few days when another incident, even more serious than the one before, took place. One evening, after the sunset prayer, someone stole into a mosque of the Black Party and planted a bomb. Fortunately, there weren't any worshippers there when it went off, and only one shelf was destroyed.

This incident deflected everyone's attention away from the dispute between the Red and Green parties and focused it on the Black, whose newspapers protested the incident vehemently. They mourned the loss, or rather the martyrdom, of the shelf for days. Then another sad incident caught the attention of the people. On his way home from the mosque after the night prayer, someone stabbed a *mujtabid* of the Yellow Party in the back and fled. Hearing the *mujtabid*'s cries, many members of the party rushed to the scene, while others ran to overtake the assailant but failed to find him. The *mujtabid* was brought to the mosque in critical condition. He died as the azan was rising for the dawn prayer. The Yellow

Party hit the roof in disgust and anger. One of its newspapers published a very emotional piece regarding the death of their scholar, set off in a box with thick black borders, concluding with: "The fact that the murderer has not been caught smacks of conspiracy. Likely the murder was planned quite some time ago. This tragic incident also proves the government's inability to protect the lives and properties of followers of the Yellow Party because of their minority status."

The amir, greatly aggrieved by the incident, immediately called a session of the Consultative Council. It lasted for several days, yet none of the members could suggest steps that might appease the Yellow Party and restore its confidence in the government. On the other hand, one of the members remarked: "What evidence do we have that the murder and the preceding incidents were committed by a Pakistani? If he were a Pakistani he would have been located by now. I believe these terrorist activities, these efforts to sow seeds of dissension among us are the work of spies from a hostile, neighboring country that has a bone to pick with us and wants to destroy us. Today, when movement across borders is so easy, how can we ever know how many foreign spies have infiltrated the country posing as Pakistanis?"

Silence swept over the session. After a while, another member said, "This, of course, is possible. But then I would ask: are the newspapers that are creating so much unrest in the country also foreign agents?"

Another member replied, "We managed to get rid of many Western innovations but, sadly, we did not think of the newspapers."

The amir was lost in his thoughts and seemed to be indifferent to the proceedings. He heaved a long, deep sigh and said, "Oh, how I wish the murderer had been caught!"

With every passing day the situation in the country was taking a turn for the worse. Attacks on individual citizens had become quite common. All parties were forced to recruit volunteers to ensure their members' safety as they could no longer trust the armed forces. Groups of these vigilantes, clad in their party's colors, waving its flags, and carrying all sorts of weapons other than firearms, started conducting military exercises openly in the bazaars and squares. All shops closed promptly right after sundown. On reaching home safely, people uttered sighs of relief, and if forced by necessity to go out, they were sure to go in small groups, not alone.

One day the body of a man was found in the middle of a busy bazaar. The man was clad in Arabian-style dress and was lying facedown. He was bleeding from his mouth and nose. Members of the Green, Red, Blue, Yellow, Black, and White parties quickly materialized at the scene. The

Red Party said that it was one of theirs who'd been killed by the vicious Green Party. On the other hand, the Green Party claimed the victim as one of theirs and put the blame for his murder squarely on the Red Party. Since the dead man didn't wear the uniform of any particular party, the Blue, Yellow, Black, and White Parties also claimed him as one of their own. A dispute was about to erupt, but then an unveiled woman made her way through the crowd, reached the corpse, and hugged it. The dead man was her husband and both of them belonged to the Sikh religion. The man was middle-aged and very fond of wearing the Arabian-style dress. He was suffering from a heart condition for some years now; apparently he had died from cardiac arrest while he was walking. Thank God, the excited passions were cooled.

The situation was going so downhill that the amir ordered the armed forces to deploy bands of soldiers at all city exits, patrol the streets and bazaars at all hours, arrest criminal elements and troublemakers, and if any resisted arrest they should be shot, regardless of their sect or party.

The amir, too, made regular rounds of the city himself and brought members of the Consultative Council along. He would talk with people of every sect and urge them to stay united, and to exercise forbearance and patience. At the end of every day that ended peacefully he would remain bowed down at night in long prostrations before God in the congregational mosque, thanking Him with utmost humility.

One night he stayed in that position a little longer, indeed he remained in that position clear up to the dawn, and didn't raise his head even when worshippers started streaming in for the dawn prayer. This made the worshippers suspicious and when they looked at him closely they realized he had been martyred. A poison-soaked dagger was sunk into his side.

News of the amir's martyrdom quickly spread across the capital. His Green Party followers went mad with rage. They screamed "Revenge! Revenge!" and stormed the neighborhoods of the Red Party. There everyone rushed out of their homes armed with swords, spears, and lances. Swords began to clash everywhere amid painful cries for help. The earth began to turn red with the blood of innocent victims. Shouts went up of "Kill these evil Greens" and "Take the Red devils down." The Blues, Yellows, Blacks, and Whites also jumped into the fray, obliterating all distinctions of color. Some rioters raided the mosques and toppled their pulpits. Plaques on the wall bearing the names of distinguished religious figures were vandalized and pulled down. Some savages broke into homes and raped women. Women and children kept crying for help but there was no one to hear them. Within an hour all the bazaars and streets were filled with corpses.

The army, too, kept firing, and dispatched countless rioters to the other world. Piles of corpses could be seen everywhere on the street, without a shroud or any prospect of burial.

While all this was going on, sounds, like those of bomber aircraft and tanks, tore through the atmosphere.

But these aircraft and tanks did not belong to the Pakistani armed forces ...

V

A vast and desolate desert bathed in the soft cool light of the full moon. Wherever one looks, one sees only sand, every grain of which is shining like silver. The sand rises in some places, and tumbles back down. Some dunes are also visible, with deer roaming on them indifferent to the world, but the deer quickly take off when a caravan approaches.

There are no signs of habitation around anywhere, except for the ruins that dot the dreary landscape, giving the impression that some time long ago a populated city must surely have existed here. A deathly silence pervades the atmosphere and makes it seem melancholy.

Suddenly some dots appear on the horizon. Something resembling the string of dots that suddenly appears on the horizon with the approach of a caravan. Those dots slowly spread out and their serpentine course is reminiscent of an advancing snake. The sound of the bells tied to the camels' necks blends with the song of the cameleer and filters through the air faintly, growing louder as the caravan draws near. The spears of the guards shining in the moonlight come into view.

Not so with these spots that appeared on the horizon. They don't spread out, nor assume the form of a snake. But they do get bigger.

This is not a caravan, just a few travelers—two men and two women, each riding on a camel, and they're all wearing Western clothes. A man in Arabian dress is holding the rein of the camel in front and walking abreast of it.

They look like English or American tourists staying in some hotel in this port city and they've come here with their guide to sightsee on a moonlit night. They're middle-aged but look happy and fit. Their laughter mixing with the sound of camel bells seems to mock the sadness permeating the scene.

One of the women asks her companion in a shrill, scratchy voice, "Dick, look how beautiful it is. Ask the guide how far we still have to go."

He doesn't get a chance to ask because the guide has stopped, and so has the sound of bells. All four tourists start looking around. The guide

clears his throat to get their attention. Then he points toward some sand dunes and, in broken English, says,

“Sir, this is the place where Hotel Mohenjo Daro used to be before the invasion of the enemy. It had seventy-one floors and this is where a Pakistani astronaut spoke from the moon ...” □

—*Translated by Mushtaq-ur-Rasool Bilal*