

Thursday Oct 22, 2009

Sir, to be noble and magnanimous is not to be realistic and right



I have received a letter from Air Marshal (Retd) M. Asghar Khan which I am reproducing hereunder, and which is self-explanatory.

My association with Air Marshal Sahib is now about 37 years old. For more than half of that period I remained associated with him and his causes as a faithful admirer. That period ended with the defeat of the PDA in the general elections of 1990-91. A White Paper on those elections was prepared and published under the title of "How An Election Was Stolen". The committee that finalised that project was headed by Air Marshal Sahib. The other prominent members were the late Omar Asghar Khan, Mr. Iqbal Haider (PPP) Mr. Khurshed Mahmood Qasuri (then Tehrik-I-Istiqalal) and the

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writer of this column. The White Paper was launched by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto late in 1991.

I am mentioning all this to emphasise upon the level of my association with this remarkable man who even at the age of well over 88, and after having gone through the soul-numbing agony of his elder son's untimely death, remains actively involved in the affairs of this great country which he loves (deeply and passionately) and about which he harbours very noble longings (of becoming a genuine modern welfare state).

I admit that since 1992 my association with Air Marshal Sahib has largely been spiritual. We have not met frequently; though it was 'him' whom I invited to launch this newspaper in 2007. I continue to hold him in the highest esteem

for his honesty integrity, his commitment to a better and brighter Pakistan, and his enormous personal goodness.

But men, even while they respect each other as deeply as we do (Me & Air Marshal Sahib) are unlikely not to differ on some key issues.

Before I go on to explain this statement, let my readers read his letter.

**My dear Ghulam Akbar
Asslam-o-Alikam.**

As one who you very kindly asked to the launching of the 'Herald Tribune', I was distressed to read your column in your daily of 21 October, 2009 about Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy. Not only because I hold similar views on the acquisition of Nuclear weapons by Pakistan, but also because Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy is an eminent scientist and a

very good Pakistani. We have a very little talent of such eminence in the country and should not repeat what has happened throughout Muslim history when people of great talent and eminence have been hounded out or silenced because they held views which were not tolerated by those in power or by the majority of public opinion.

**With kindest regards.
(M. Asghar Khan)**

Let me admit here that I have never met Dr Pervez Hoodbhoy, and I simply don't know how good a Pakistani he is. I know him only through his views, which have been of almost 'militant' nature against our Nuclear Programme. I don't understand what Air Marshal Sahib means when he says that he holds similar views on the acquisition of



Nuclear Weapons by Pakistan. Of course there is a strong case in favour of the view that a state in order to be strong need not be nuclear. But this is only a theoretical case. The case against this view being pragmatic is much stronger.

This is a subject that requires a detailed debate. In this space there is no room for details. However I am raising two fundamental questions here. These questions may please be answered with

Air Marshal M. Asghar Khan P.A.F Retd.

House # 40, Street # 1,
Sector F-6/3,
Islamabad
☎ 051-2872718

MAK/141

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Mr. Ghulam Akbar
Editor-in-Chief
Daily Herald Tribune
House 434, Street # 1
F-11/3
Islamabad
Email: aghulam95@yahoo.com

Thy dear Mr. Akbar Sahib.
Assalam-o-Alaikum,

As one who you very kindly asked to the launching of the 'Herald Tribune', I was distressed to read your column in your daily of 21 October, 2009 about Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy. Not only because I hold similar views on the acquisition of Nuclear weapons by Pakistan, but also because Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy is an eminent scientist and a very good Pakistani. We have a very little talent of such eminence in the country and should not repeat what has happened throughout Muslim history when people of great talent and eminence have been hounded out or silenced because they held views which were not tolerated by those in power or by the majority of public opinion.

With kindest regards.

Very Respected.
M. Asghar Khan

'realistic' honesty by the objectors to Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

(a) Had Iraq been a nuclear power with a 'capability' to hit Israel or American Navy, would Washington have dared to attack and occupy the heart of the Middle East?

(b) Would India have backed down (and off) from its threat of attacking Pakistan, first in 2002-3 and then in 2008 if

Islamabad hadn't reminded New Delhi that our Nuclear Weapons were not for show-rooms?

History's greatest irony is that it has been the fate of 'civilized' and 'peace-loving' nations to be overrun by the likes of Chengis Khan, Halaku Khan, Temoor Lang and George W. Bush.

As for the matter of 'hounding out and silencing' the holders of the views not in agreement

with a state's philosophy and not in consonance with the general public's beliefs, let us look at China, Singapore, Malaysia and other Asian luminaries rather than the imperial West where there is so much talk of freedom of thought and views, yet Muslims are hounded for being vocal and vehement about their Islam.

Sir, to be noble and magnanimous is not to be realistic and right.