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(Pakistan) Regional Seminar on Mass Media,
Tradition and Change : Islamabad, Mar 28-30,
1983 : [concluding remarks]

Mujib Ur Rahman Khan.

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Concluding Remarks

By

Mujib Ur Rahman Khan



tradition change
1929
"MASS MEDIA: TRADITION & CHANGE"

CONCLUDING REMARKS

BY
LT GEN MUJIB UR RAHMAN KHAN
CHAIRMAN

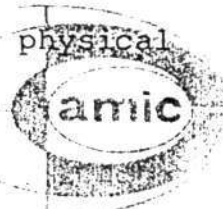
Islamabad 28-30th March, 1983

Ladies and gentlemen!

As we approach the end of our deliberations in this Seminar, I would like to say that for us in Pakistan, and to me in particular, it has been a very stimulating and enriching experience. I believe that for our honoured guests from the other countries, who have made many valuable contributions themselves to the discussion, the experience has been equally rewarding.

Our discussions have revealed the forbidding dimensions of the challenge we face today. But it is heartening that we not only share our perceptions but we are also alive to the need for formulating an adequate response to it. Because unless we do that, we may be in for a more unredeeming experience than the one most of us went through under colonial domination. Old style imperialism was something tangible and recognisable; it was physically present among us, we saw it, we felt its hold and its strangulation. We were therefore able to build up resistance against it, culturally and intellectually quite early, which preserved us for our physical

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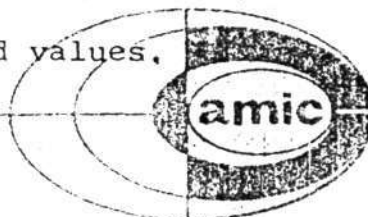
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struggle later on. Even so, it was able not only to impoverish us economically but also culturally, by distancing us from our own traditions and values. Imposition of foreign languages as the media of instruction weakened our links with our own heritage and culture. feeble. The correct response would be

What we face today however is a domination of a different sort - unsuspecting, intangible. It is not challenging us, it is bequiling us into its lair. It is too dazzling, too attractive to provoke us to resist and therefore it is the more menacing. In the name of progress and enlightenment, a new offensive is being mounted, an offensive which aims at vanquishing our ideologies, our culture, our traditions and our values. We risk being turned into soulless souls. We risk losing our national identities, not in geographical terms but in cultural terms.

But we realise that in this age of the electronic media, it is not possible to put up dykes against the flood of ideas surging across national boundaries and deluging local traditions and values.

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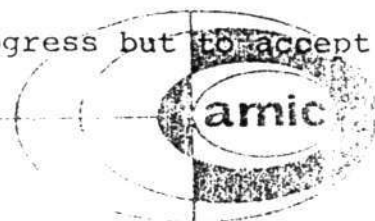
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It has been suggested here that there is no point in complaining against the invasion of alien ideas and influences because ideas and cultures which are strong and sturdy will overpower the weak and the feeble. The correct response would be for ourselves to use our own talent to produce appropriate and adequate feed for our own media.

This is however not to suggest that we should insulate ourselves totally from the world of ideas. It is neither possible nor desirable. But there has to be some kind of discrimination, some filtering of what supplements our own effort.

But the moot point is what is to serve both as the reservoir and the bedrock to feed and sustain our media so that we are able to absorb the change without rocking the boat. Tradition is not all necessarily a hinderance and change not all necessarily an aid to progress. We have in fact to define progress. Acquisition of modern technology which improves our physical environment and our living conditions is no doubt progress but to accept

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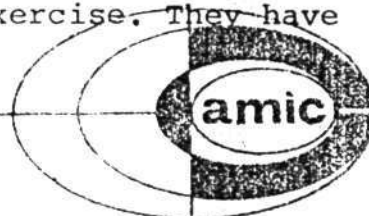
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blindly what goes in the name of modern culture is to my mind retrogression.

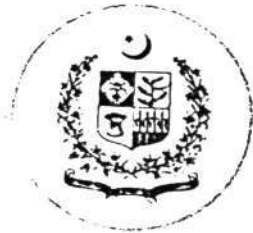
In Pakistan, we are lucky that we are inheritors of a tradition and heritage that presents to us limitless opportunities of progress and development without losing our souls. We believe in an ideology that brought us into being as a nation, that established our national identity. We look upon our period of stagnation as a period of eclipse, when our tradition faded into the background. We therefore look upon renewal of our commitment to that tradition as coming out of the shades of an eclipse into the bright sunshine of progress and advancement. It is a tradition which continuously impels man to improve himself, not merely in an otherwardly sense but very much in terms of his physical environment in this mundane world of ours, so long as life on this globe lasts.

Our media are responding to this challenging task, which is made easier by the options which our policy-makers have chosen to exercise. They have

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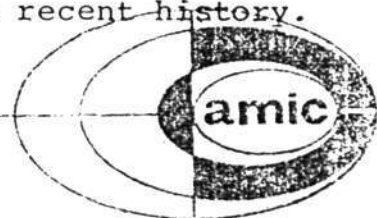
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very wisely opted for bringing about the change through discussion, through free exchange and airing of ideas and viewpoints. Our Islamisation process, which covers all aspects of our national life, is therefore proceeding smoothly, and with the willing cooperation and participation of the people.

To give you a recent instance. We have on the anvil the new Law of Evidence. Our Ulema, the learned in Islamic law and tradition, the modern practitioners of law, our 'chauvinistic' men, if you so wish to call them and our women libs, if that is how you would like to identify our present-day assertive better-half, are all engaged in a free discussion of the value and status which Islam assigns to a woman's evidence. The controversy has got linked up with the general question of women's rights and status in a Muslim society. I can assure you that there are no holds barred in this controversy, which is one of the liveliest that this country has seen on any issue in recent history.

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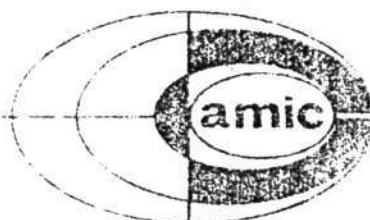
But the parameters are recognised and accepted
by all parties, it is the World of God-^{the}/Holy Quran.
Whose interpretation is really correct? That is
the point at issue.

The media have been deeply and fully involved
in it by providing opportunities for full
ventilation of all points of view. There has been
no attempt whatsoever at harangue or preaching, in this
simple discussion. And the results have been
singularly rewarding. We are reaching a consensus --
the two swords are about to slip into one scabbard,
not cutting each other but together cutting the
knots and chains of ignorance and backwardness.

The media in Pakistan therefore are playing
a pivotal role in literally changing the face of our
society, in re-ordering it in the original image
of its illustrious tradition, a tradition which is
a perennial catalyst of change for the advancement
of mankind. It is a tradition which brings man
nearer to his Creator as well as to his fellow men.

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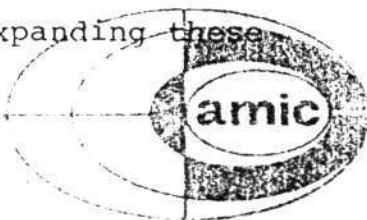
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Drawing on the vast reservoirs of our healthy traditions, our media should therefore promote a culture of progress without turning man into an instrument of exploitation of his fellow men. We reject the philosophy which teaches man to elevate his standards of living at the cost of living at the happiness of others. This is no progress; this is retrogression.

Allow me to say once again that this seminar has been a very rewarding experience for us. It has not only increased our mutual understanding of the problems of our media but also of the challenges that the countries of the region face today. I hope that this understanding will lead us to co-ordinate our efforts in equipping our media to act as agents of a healthy and meaningful change.

This brings me to the important question of training facilities, which are gravely inadequate in most of our countries compared to the ever-increasing demand of our media. Efforts should therefore be directed towards expanding these

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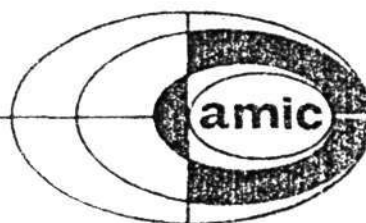
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facilities quickly. We could share our knowledge and experience we could pool our resources, may - be we could supplement these with assistance from appropriate regional and U.N. bodies. But the problem deserves priority attention.

I am grateful to the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, to Mr. Vijay Menon in particular, for helping us organise this seminar, to Mr. Masmoudi and all our honoured guests for their valuable contributions. My personal thanks are due to Mr. Masood-ur-Rauf who initiated the idea of holding this Seminar in Pakistan. His coming from Geneva to participate in this Seminar has touched our hearts. I am very grateful to Prof. Abdul Qayyum and his band of dedicated workers who have made all the arrangements not only for conducting the seminar but also for looking after the comfort of our guests. Our resources are limited and we suffer from many inadequacies. I hope our guests will overlook them and remember us for whatever

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little service we have been to render to make their stay with us pleasant and fruitful. I would like to assure them that we shall always cherish the memory of their visit and will look forward to expanding cooperation with them for mutual benefit.

Good-bye then and Godspeed

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