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<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Raja M Zafarul Haq.</td>
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Inaugural Address

By

Raja M Zafarul Haq
INaugural Address

By

Raja M. Zafarul Haq

Minister for Information and Broadcasting

28 March, 1983

0925 - 0945 Hrs

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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I deem it a great honour and am delighted to be present amongst you at this inaugural session of the seminar on "Mass Media: Tradition and Change". My warmest felicitations to our distinguished participants from abroad, the participants from Pakistan, the observers, the officials who have organised this seminar and all our guests whose gracious presence adorns this inaugural session.

Such international gatherings provide an excellent opportunity for that mutual exchange of ideas, without which our individual perception of problems and issues run the grave risk of being narrow and lop-sided. There is much that each one of us can learn from the experience of others, in terms both of what to emulate and what to guard against. We talk...
IN TERMS OF NORTH AND SOUTH, WEST AND EAST, THE DEVELOPED AND
AND THE TRADITIONAL, AND A WHOLE HOST OF OTHER DICHOTOMIES
IN A FAST-MOVING, FAST-CHANGING WORLD. OUR BEST HOPE OF
RESOLVING THESE CONFLICTS AS WE GROPE OUR WAY TOWARDS A NEW
WORLD ECONOMIC ORDER, OR INFORMATION ORDER, OR WHATEVER, IS
THROUGH MUTUAL CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORT. THE
PROBLEM, HOWEVER, IS NOT RESTRICTED TO THE CONFLICT BETWEEN
THESE POLES BUT ALSO WITHIN EACH. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IN
MANY WAYS THIS LATTER ASPECT DEMANDS OUR MORE IMMEDIATE
ATTENTION AS A NECESSARY PRELUDE TO, OR AT LEAST SIMULTANEOUS
WITH, SUCH EFFORTS AS WE MAKE TO NARROW DOWN THE MANY WIDER
DIFFERENCES IN OUR DIVIDED WORLD. IT IS IN THIS LATTER CONTEXT
THAT THIS PRESENT SEMINAR HAS A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE.

THE PROBLEM OF TRADITION AND CHANGE IS NOT PECULIAR
TO THE COUNTRIES OF THE THIRD WORLD, ALTHOUGH IT DOES POSE A
SPECIAL CHALLENGE TO US BECAUSE OF THE PATTERN, PROCESS AND
PACE OF PROGRESS SET BY THE DOMINANT CIVILISATION OF OUR TIMES,
WHICH IS ADMITTEDLY THAT OF THE WEST. WHAT EXACTLY THE

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TRADITION OF THE WEST IS, WE MAY SAFELY LEAVE TO THE WEST TO DEFINE BUT ONE GENERAL OBSERVATION ONE MAY VENTURE TO MAKE: CHANGE, WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN INTRINSIC TO THAT TRADITION, IS NOW ITS OVER-RIDING THEME. FOR US ALSO, IN THE TRADITION GENERALLY CALLED ORIENTAL, CHANGE IS NOT AN ALIEN PHENOMENON. EVEN THOSE FEW PERENNIAL WORDS QUOTED IN YOUR SEMINAR-BROCHURE BEAR AMPLE TESTIMONY TO THIS. WHAT IS PARTICULAR, HOWEVER, ABOUT OUR VIEW OF CHANGE - AND WHILE SAYING THIS I HAVE PAKISTAN, IN PARTICULAR, IN MIND - IS OUR REFUSAL TO RAISE THIS TO THE STATUS OF A FIRST PRINCIPLE, CHANGE FOR THE SAKE OF CHANGE AS A GOAL AND AN END IN ITSELF. IN OUR LIFE-VIEW, THERE IS NO ROOM FOR THAT KIND OF CONSTANT TINKERING, THAT RECKLESS AND UNRESTRAINED PASSION FOR CHANGE WHICH CREATES MORE PROBLEMS THAN IT RESOLVES. CHANGE, IF IT IS TO BE PRODUCTIVE, MUST STRENGTHEN AND NOT ERODE THOSE FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH BY WHICH WE LIVE AND SEEK TO GROW. FOR US, THE PROBLEM MUST NOT DESCEND TO THE DISCOVERY OF COMFORTABLE RATIONALISATIONS ON HOW TO ADJUST OUR RELIGIOUS VALUES TO THE PRESSURES OF MODERNIZATION. IT OUGHT TO PRESENT A MORE EDIFYING CHALLENGE: AN ENQUIRY INTO THE SELECTIVE AND PURPOSEFUL USE OF THE TOOLS...
OF MODERNISATION IN OUR MARCH TOWARDS AN EVERCLOSER APPROXIMATION TO THOSE PERENNIAL IDEALS AND NORMS WHICH GUIDE THE CONDUCT OF OUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE LIVES. INHERENT IN THE FIRST APPROACH IS A HEAD-LONG CLASH BETWEEN TRADITION AND CHANGE, WITH CHANGE EVENTUALLY ACQUIRING THE STATUS OF A TRADITION IN ITSELF. INTRINSIC TO THE SECOND APPROACH, HOWEVER, IS A PROCESS OF CONTINUOUS REFINEMENT IN WHICH CHANGE IS COMPLEMENTARY TO TRADITION, A DELIBERATE ACT OF ADAPTATION AND NOT RANDOM INNOVATION. IT IS PRECISELY THIS SECOND KIND OF CHANGE THAT WE IN PAKISTAN ARE NOW STRUGGLING TO INTRODUCE. I WOULD URGE THE PARTICIPANTS OF THIS SEMINAR TO EXAMINE THE VALIDITY OR OTHERWISE OF THESE TWO DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM OF TRADITION AND CHANGE, BECAUSE THE ENTIRE CONCEPT AND COURSE OF MEDIA OPERATIONS WILL HINGE UPON THE BASIC PHILOSOPHIC PREMISE CHOSEN.

LEST WHAT I HAVE SAID SO FAR BE MISUNDERSTOOD AS A VEILED PLEA IN FAVOUR OF TRADITION AND OPPOSED TO CHANGE, PERMIT ME TO SAY A FEW WORDS ON THE DISTINCTION THAT WE MUST MAKE BETWEEN TRADITION -IN-FORCE AND TRADITION-IN-THE-IDEAL. I SPEAK ONCE AGAIN WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO PAKISTAN.
I believe we would be worse than dishonest, if we were to assert that Pakistan is anywhere near the concept of a model Islamic State. What we can assert, however, is that we have made a beginning in that direction and burdening us is a big back-log of social, economic, political and cultural practices which proceed not from the commandments of God but from the traditions of men. How much of this is a legacy of our history in our particular geographic habitat and how much of it a product of our own pet misconceptions, we need not go into here. One fact remains: We are under obligation to critically examine this tradition-in-force; and to the extent that it clashes with the commandments of God, we are under obligation to change, to remould this sorry scheme of things entire nearer to the Qur'anic ideal and the prophetic model on earth. In this struggle for change, there are two major obstacles that we run into. The first is the absence of a clear and adequate understanding of doctrinal Islam over the entire range of our population and the isolation of this understanding from what has come to be erroneously understood as the secular sciences: a staggering problem of integrated...
MASS EDUCATION. THE SECOND IS THE ABSENCE OF A CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM MODEL FOR THE EVOLUTION OF OUR OWN POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS. THIS LATTER DEPRIVATION, HOWEVER, HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF RESTRAINING THE IMPULSE TO IMMEDIATE ImitATION AND THE ABERRATIONS INHERENT IN SUCH A PROCESS OF CHANGE. THROWN BACK TO OUR ROOTS, BACK TO THE PROPHETIC MODEL, WE ARE UNDER THE HAPPY COMPULSION TO DISCOVER FOR OURSELVES THE OPERATIONAL STRATEGY WHICH TRANSLATED A SET OF PRINCIPLES INTO CONCRETE REALITY WITH SUCH STUNNING SUCCESS. THOSE PRINCIPLES ARE SACROSANCT, THAT STRATEGY A LUMINOUS GUIDE TO THE EVOLUTION OF OUR OWN BUT THERE IS NOTHING BINDING IN THE SPECIFIC STRUCTURES OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF THOSE TIMES. WE ARE NOT ONLY FREE BUT ALSO UNDER OBLIGATION TO DEVISE NEW STRUCTURES RESPONSIVE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF OUR TIMES. THE QUR'ANIC LAW AND THE PROPHETIC TRADITION LAY DOWN THE PERIMETERS AND THE BOUNDARIES WITHIN WHICH WHAT WE CALL MODERNIZATION MUST TAKE PLACE. TO THE MUSLIM MIND, MODERNIZATION AND PROGRESS ARE IMPERATIVES OF THE MUSLIM WAY OF LIFE BUT NEITHER IS CONCEIVABLE OR VALID EXCEPT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ISLAM. THE MUSLIM ATTITUDE TO CHANGE AND TRADITION IN A SINGLE PHRASE IS: CONTINUOUS INNOVATION IN EXECUTION IN UNWAVERING PURSUIT.
OF UNALTERABLE PRINCIPLES.


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DELIBERATE, PLANNED CHANGE. ONCE A PARTICULAR CHANGE HAS BEEN INITIATED, IT IS THE TASK OF THE MEDIA TO SUSTAIN THE POPULAR PERCEPTION OF ITS VALIDITY AND TO MOBILISE PUBLIC ACTIVITY IN ITS SUPPORT TILL IT CEASES TO BE A NOVELTY AND IS SECURELY ASSIMILATED INTO THE ACCEPTED TRADITIONS OF THE COMMUNITY. THERE IS A NEED ALSO TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE PROBLEMS THAT ARE BOUND TO SURFACE IN THE WAKE OF CHANGE AND THROUGH SUCH ANTICIPATORY DISCOURSE TO REDUCE THE PAIN OR DISCOMFORT INHERENT IN ALL CHANGE, NOT ONLY DURING THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION BUT ALSO FOR A WHILE AFTER, DURING THE PHASE OF CONSOLIDATION. WHILE THE MEDIA THUS SERVE THE PEOPLE IN INITIATING AND COPING WITH CHANGE, THEY HAVE AN EQUALY IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN AROUSING AND REINFORCING THE VIGILANCE OF THE PEOPLE AGAINST SUCH CHANGES WHICH, WHETHER BY ERROR OR ACCIDENT, CREEP IN TO ERODE THE CORE VALUES OF THE COMMUNITY. THROUGH THEIR INTER-ACTION, BOTH MEDIA AND THE PEOPLE NEED TO CONSTANTLY REMIND THEMSELVES THAT WHILE CHANGE IS NECESSARY FOR PROGRESS, NOT ALL CHANGE IS NECESSARILY PROGRESS. THE SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF TRADITION AND CHANGE LIES PRECISELY IN THIS THAT WHILE A COMMUNITY HOLDS ITSELF IN READINESS TO PARTICIPATE IN UNIVERSAL
PROGRESS, IT Chooses TO DO SO WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THAT VALUE - SYSTEM TO WHICH IT OWES ITS ALLEGIANCE, BY AND FOR WHICH IT LIVES, AND IN WHICH ALONE IT CAN FIND ITS PEACE.

I THANK YOU - YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN - FOR THE PATIENT HEARING THAT YOU HAVE GIVEN TO THESE FEW RANDOM REFLECTIONS ON TRADITION AND CHANGE, AND THE ROLE THAT MASS MEDIA HAVE TO PLAY IN RESOLVING THE APPARENT CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO. THE MANY EMINENT MINDS PARTICIPATING IN THE SEMINAR TODAY AND OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS WILL, I KNOW, COVER MANY MORE ISSUES IN FAR GREATER DEPTH. I WISH THEM ALL MANY HAPPY HOURS OF FRUITFUL DISCUSSION AND MUCH PROFIT FROM THAT MUTUAL EXCHANGE OF IDEAS FOR WHICH THEY HAVE GATHERED IN ISLAMABAD FROM SO MANY DISTANT LANDS. MAY YOUR BRIEF STAY IN PAKISTAN BE A HAPPY AND MEMORABLE ONE! THANK YOU.

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