

## **End Piece**

### **Quoted “out of context”**

#### **Shafqat Munir**

The two quotes described as ‘out of context’ have literally stirred the power corridors and a series of clarifications seem failed to clear the mist. The first quote claimed to be quoted out of context is regarding shedding of uniform of President Musharraf from State Law Minister and the other quote is regarding curricula and textbooks from Education Minister.

The first quote what claimed to be ‘quoted out of context’ targets as usual the media and the other one targets a research think tank. Both the media and the research think tank are being grilled for nothing just to hide faults and mishandling of the situations by the relevant ministers.

The newspapers on Sunday and television channels on Saturday covered State Law Minister Reza Hayat Hiraj categorically saying “the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the constitution of Pakistan necessitates that after the deadline of December 31, 2004, President Musharraf has to leave one of offices he is currently holding.” Obviously, this means that he is not going to step down as the President, thus leading towards the possibility of leaving the office of the Chief of the Army Staff. When the young Law Minister was emphasizing on this issue, he knew that his senior leader in the PPPP (Patriot) Faisal Saleh Hyat has already spoken in favour of the President remaining in the uniform. The moment he was making this statement, it was for sure that the next day the government would come up with a vague clarification.

The clarification of what Hiraj said the other day has again been projected on the media but with both his first version and the other one sent as clarification by his ministry. At least, there are no two opinions that the young Law Minister got fame by making his first categorical statement suggesting that the President has no other choice but to put off uniform. The parliamentarians and the ministers from the People Party Patriot along with their leaders Defence Minister Rao Sikandar Iqbal and Interior Minister Faisal Saleh Hayat have come up with a contrary stand saying President Musharraf should not put off uniform as according to them it would harm the transition to democracy in Pakistan. The Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali fueled this controversy by saying President Musharraf will fulfill his promise of shedding his uniform by December 31, 2004. The cabinet will take up this issue for further decision. The contradictory statements from within the ruling coalition speak of a divided house at the moment.

The debate on the uniform was settled when the government and MMA reached a deal on the Legal Framework Order and it became part of the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the constitution according to which the exemption from retaining two posts at a time would cease to exist after December 31, 2004. No matter, even if the MMA backs out from its commitment to support the government on National Security Council bill, it has now more of a constitutional obligation for the President to shed the uniform and those who are requesting the President not to shed uniform are forcing the President to violate this constitutional obligation.

One fails to understand why President is being forced to remain in uniform in violation of even his own crafted 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the Constitution. Are not the supporters of the President in uniform telling him that he could remain only in power if he sticks on to the uniform? Should they want to give this message to the Armed forces that any general succeeding Musharraf as the Chief of Army Staff will not be a ‘competent’ or trust worthy such as Musharraf himself?

Similarly, the other quote quoted out of context is also an issue to be briefly discussed here. The critique is that the government has changed curricula and textbooks on the recommendations of an independent research think tank ‘Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)’. It has been charged that the concept of Jihad and certain Sura from the Holy Qura’an have been removed from the syllabus of Islamic studies. There has been a hue and cry in and outside of the parliament on this issue and the issue has continuously been quoted out of context. First of if we see the SDPI report, it does not discuss any syllabus of Islamic studies or Islamiyat of any class.

The SDPI’s draft report ‘The Subtle Subversion- the state of curricula and textbooks in Pakistan covers only Urdu, English, Social Studies and Civics and it has nothing do with the change of curricula of Islamiyat in terms of removal of any Sura or concept of Jihad. However, the chapter-2 of the report discusses ‘Insensitivity to the religious diversity of the nation’. The diversity of nation means that in Pakistan, Muslims are not the only citizens and other religious minorities are also equally good citizens of Pakistan. This report in this chapter talked about insensitivities towards religious identities of the religious minorities of Pakistan in terms of their exclusion. Again the insensitivities regarding religious identities (in the context of books on Urdu, English, Social Studies and Civics and not Islamiyat) have nothing to do with change of curriculum by the government as the Education Minister is on record in the parliament saying the government has rejected the SDPI’s report and nothing has been changed on the recommendation of SDPI.

Moreover, the U.S. President’s National Security Advisor Ms Rice has claimed of influencing Education Minister Zobiaida Jalal to bring about change in the curricula which the Minister has denied. This could be another kind of the quote quoted out of context. Amid such kinds of quotes out of context, we should not forget our mistakes and should stop shifting blames on others. How long could the ministers hide their mishandling of situations by shifting blames on media and SDPI on the pretext of being quoted out of context?

*(The writer is Islamabad based development journalist. Email: shafmunir2@gmail.com)*