Islam Teaches Tolerance Not Hate

I begin in the name of God, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful Pakistani Brothers and Sisters! As you would remember, ever since I assumed office, I launched a campaign to rid the society of extremism, violence and terrorism and strived to project Islam in its true perspective. In my first speech on October 17, 1999, I had said and I quote; "Islam teaches tolerance, not hatred; universal brotherhood, not enmity; peace, and not violence. I have a great respect for the Ulema and expect them to come forward and present Islam in its true light. I urge them to curb elements which are exploiting religion for vested interests and bringing a bad name to our faith." After this, I initiated a number of steps in this regard. First, in the year 2000, I started interacting with the Taliban and counseled them to inculcate tolerance and bring moderation in their ways. I also told them that those terrorists who were involved in terrorist acts in Pakistan and seeking refuge in Afghanistan should be returned to us. Unfortunately, we did not succeed. In the year 2001, I think it was January, we sealed the Pak-Afghan borders and I gave directions that no students of any Madarissah (religious seminaries) should be allowed to cross into Afghanistan without relevant documents. After this, I dispatched a number of delegations to meet Mullah Omar. I continued to advise them tolerance and balance. Later, on February 15,2001, we promulgated the Anti-Weaponisation Ordinance. Through this law, we launched a de-weaponisation campaign in Pakistan.

On 5th of June, on the occasion of the Seerat Conference, I addressed Ulema belonging to all schools of thought and spoke firmly to them against religious extremism. On the 14th of August 2001, we finally took a very important decision to ban Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Muhammad and placed Sipah-e-Sahaba and TJP (Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan) under observation. In addition, on a number of occasions, I called Ulema and Mashaikh and held extensive consultations with them. The objective was to take them on board in our campaign against terrorism and extremism. These measures have been continuing since our government assumed office in 1999. I am explaining all this to you in great detail only because of the fact that the campaign against extremism undertaken by us from the very beginning is in our own national interest. We are not doing this under advice or pressure from anyone. Rather, we are conscious that it is in our national interest. We are conscious that we need to rid society of extremism and this is being done right from the beginning.

This domestic reforms process was underway when a terrorist attack took place against the United States on the 11th of September. This terrorist act led to momentous changes all over

the world. We decided to join the international coalition against terrorism and in this regard I have already spoken to you on a number of occasions. We took this decision on principles and in our national interest.

By the grace of God Almighty our decision was absolutely correct. Our intentions were noble and God Almighty helped us. I am happy to say that the vast majority of Pakistanis stood by this decision and supported our decision. ! am proud of the realistic decision of our nation. What really pains me is that some religious extremist parties and groups opposed this decision. What hurts more was that their opposition was not based on principles. At a critical juncture in our history, they preferred their personal and party interests over national interests. They tried their utmost to mislead the nation, took out processions and resorted to agitation. But their entire efforts failed. The people of Pakistan frustrated their designs. As I have said, I am proud of the people of Pakistan who support correct decisions and do not pay heed to those who try to mislead them.

I have interacted with the religious scholars on a number of occasions and exchanged views with them. I am happy to say that our discussions have been very fruitful. A majority of them are blessed with wisdom and vision and they do not mix religion with politics. Some extremists, who were engaged in protests, are people who try to monopolise and attempt to propagate their own brand of religion. They think as if others are not Muslims. These are the people who considered the Taliban to be a symbol of Islam and that the Taliban were bringing Islamic renaissance or were practising the purest form of Islam.

They behaved as if the Northern Alliance, against whom the Taliban were fighting, were non-Muslims! Whereas, in fact, both were Muslims and believers. These extremists were those people who do not talk of "Haqooqul Ibad" (obligations towards fellow human beings). They do not talk of these obligations because practicing them demands self-sacrifice. How will they justify their Pajeros and expensive vehicles? I want to ask these extremists as to who was responsible for misleading thousands of Pakistanis to their massacre in Afghanistan? These misled people were let down by the very people in whose support they had gone. All of us should learn a lesson from this. We must remember that we are Pakistanis. Pakistan is our identity, our motherland. We will be aliens outside Pakistan and be treated as aliens.

Pakistan is our land. It is our soil. If we forsake it, we will face difficulties. This lesson we must learn. Sectarian terrorism has been going on for years. Everyone of us is fed up of it. It is becoming unbearable. Our peace loving people are keen to get rid of the Klashinkov and weapon culture. Every one is sick of it. It was because of this that we banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-eMuhammad.

Yet little improvement occurred. The day of reckoning has come. Do we want Pakistan to become a theocratic state? Do we believe that religious education alone is enough for governance or do we want Pakistan to emerge as a progressive and dynamic Islamic welfare state? The verdict of the masses is in favour of a progressive Islamic state. This decision, based on the teaching of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and in line with the teachings of Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal will put Pakistan on the path of progress and prosperity. Let us honestly analyze what the few religious extremists have attempted to do with Pakistan and Islam. First, with regard to Afghanistan, they indulged in agitational activities. Look at the damage it has caused! Pakistan's international image was tarnished and we were projected by the international media as ignorant and backward. Our economy suffered. A number of export orders already placed with Pakistani industry were cancelled and no new orders materialized. This led to closure of some factories and unemployment. The poor daily wage earners lost their livelihood. Extremists also formed a Pakistan-Afghanistan Defence Council! Apart from damaging Pakistan, they had negative thinking and had no idea of anything good for Afghanistan. Did they ever think of bringing about peace to Afghanistan through reconciliation among the Taliban and Northern Alliance? Did they counsel tolerance to them? Did they ever think of collecting funds for the welfare, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the war-ravaged Afghanistan, or to mitigate sufferings of the poor Afghan people? Did they think of a solution to the hunger, poverty and destruction in Afghanistan? To my knowledge, only Maulana Abdul Sattar Edhi, God bless him, and some foreign NGOs and the U.N. organizations were providing the Afghans with food and medicines. These extremists did nothing except contributing to bloodshed in Afghanistan. I ask of them, whether they know any thing other then disruption and sowing seeds of hatred? Does Islam preach this? Now, let us see their activity outside Afghanistan. They initiated sectarian feuds. Sects and different schools of thought in Islam have existed since long. There is nothing wrong with intellectual differences flowing from freedom of thought as long as such differences remain confined to intellectual debates. Look at what this extremist minority is doing? They are indulging in fratricidal killings. There is no tolerance among them. Quaid-e-Azam declared that Pakistan belonged to followers of all religions; that every one would be treated equally. However, what to speak of other religions, Muslims have started killing each other. I think, these people have declared more Muslims as Kafirs (infidels) than motivating the non-Muslims to embrace Islam. Look at the damage they have caused? They have murdered a number of our highly qualified doctors, engineers, civil servants and teachers who were pillars

of our society. Who has suffered? The families of the dead, no doubt. But a greater loss was inflicted on Pakistan because, as I said, we lost the pillars of our society. These extremists did not stop here. They started killing other innocent people in mosques and places of worship. Today, people are scared of entering these sacred places of worship. It is a matter of shame that police have to be posted outside for their protection. We claim Islam as Deen or a complete way of life. Is this the way of life that Islam teaches us? That we fight amongst ourselves and feel scared of fellow Muslims, scared of visiting our places of worship where police have to be deputed outside for protection? Mosques are being misused for propagating and inciting hatred against each other's sect and beliefs and against the government, too. I would like to inform you that a number of terrorist rings have been apprehended. In Karachi, the Inspector General of Police, while briefing me, informed that the leader of one of these groups is the Pesh Imam (Prayer Leader) of a Mosque in Malir. The Imam has confessed to murdering many people himself. This is the state of affairs. To what purpose are we using our mosques for? These people have made a state within a state and have challenged the writ of the government.

Now, I would like to dwell upon the subject of Madaris or Religious Schools in some detail. These schools are excellent welfare set-ups where the poor get free board and lodge. In my opinion, no NGO can match their welfare aspects. Many of the madaris are imparting excellent education. In addition to religious teachings, other subjects such as science, education and computer training are also being imparted there.

I am thankful to them for undertaking excellent welfare measures without State funding. I would also like to say that I have projected madaris internationally and with various heads of states time and again. I think no one else in Pakistan has done so much for their cause. However, there are some negative aspects of some madrassahs. These few impart only religious education and such education which produces semi-literate religious scholars. This is a weakness. Very few madaris, I repeat very few of them, are under the influence of politico-religious parties or have been established by them. I know that some of these promote negative thinking and propagate hatred and violence instead of inculcating tolerance, patience and fraternity. We must remember that historically, the madarasa was a prestigious seat of learning. They were citadels of knowledge and a beacon of light for the world. When Islam was at its zenith, every discipline of learning e.g.: mathematics, science, medicine, astronomy and jurisprudence were taught at these institutions. Great muslims luminaries such as A1-Beruni, Ibn-e-Sina (Avesina) and Ibn Khuldoon, were the products of these same madaris. And if we study history, we see that from the 7th to 15th century AD, transfer of

technology took place from the Muslims to the rest of the world. Look at Muslims' condition today. Islam teaches us to seek knowledge, even if it involved travel to China. I am sure you are aware that the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) had told prisoners of war in the Battle of Badar that they would be set free if each of them imparted education to ten Muslims. Quite obviously, this education could not have been religious education as the prisoners were non Muslims. So the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) was actually referring to worldly education. If we do not believe in education, are we following the teachings of Islam or violating them? We must ask what direction are we being led into by these extremists? The writ of the government is being challenged. Pakistan has been made a soft state where the supremacy of law is questioned. This situation can not be tolerated any more. The question is what is the correct path? First of all, we must rid the society of sectarian hatred and terrorism, promote mutual harmony. Remember that mindsets can not be changed through force and coercion. No idea can ever be forcibly thrust upon any one. May be the person changes outwardly but minds and hearts can never be converted by force. Real change can be brought about through personal example, exemplary character and superior intellect. It can be brought about by Haqooq-ul-ibad (Obligation towards fellow beings).

Have we forgotten the example of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) where Islam was spread by virtue of his personal conduct, true leadership and that is how changes in the world took place at that time. We have forgotten the teaching of revered personalities of Islam like Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh, Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Fareed Ganj Shakar, Baha-uddin Zakria etc.

Was Islam spread by them through force and coercion? No. They preached Islam by personal example. I give these examples because it hurts me to see where we have relegated ourselves now. We must restore that status of Madaris to what it originally was. We have to change the state of affairs and take them on the path of improvement.

The second thing I want to talk about is the concept of Jehad in its totality. I want to dilate upon it because it is a contentious issue, requiring complete comprehension and understanding. In Islam, Jehad is not confined to armed struggles only. Have we ever thought of waging Jehad against illiteracy, poverty, backwardness and hunger? This is the larger Jehad. Pakistan, in my opinion, needs to wage Jehad against these evils. After the battle of Khyber, the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) stated that Jehad-e-Asghar (Smaller Jehad) is over but Jehad-e-Akbar (Greater Jehad) has begun. This meant that armed Jehad i.e. the smaller Jehad was now over and the greater Jehad against backwardness and illiteracy had started. Pakistan needs Jehad-e-Akbar at this juncture. By the way, we must remember that only the

government of the day and not every individual can proclaim armed Jehad. The extremist minority must realize that Pakistan is not responsible of waging armed Jehad in the world. I feel that in addition to Haqooq Allah (Obligations to God), we should also focus on Haqooq-Al-ebad (Obligations towards fellow human beings). At Schools, Colleges and Madaris, Obligations towards fellow beings should be preached. We know that we have totally ignored the importance of correct dealings with fellow humans beings. There is no room for feuds in Islamic teachings. It is imperative that we teach true Islam i.e. tolerance, forgiveness, compassion, justice, fair play, amity and harmony, which is the true spirit of Islam. We must adopt this. We must shun negative thinking.

We have formulated a new strategy for Madaris and there is need to implement it so as to galvanize their good aspects and remove their drawbacks. We have developed a new syllabi for them providing for teaching of Pakistan studies, Mathematics, Science and English along with religious subjects. Even if we want these Madaris to produce religious leaders they should be educated along these lines. Such people will command more respect in the society because they will be better qualified. To me, students of religious schools should be brought in to the mainstream of society. If any one of them opts to join college or university, he would have the option of being equipped with the modern education. If a child studying at a madrasa does not wish to be a prayer leader and he wants to be a bank official or seek employment elsewhere, he should be facilitated. It would mean that the students of Madaris should be brought to the mainstream through a better system of education. This is the crux of the Madrasa strategy. This by no means is an attempt to bring religious educational institutions under government control nor do we want to spoil the excellent attributes of these institutions. My only aim is to help these institutions in over coming their weaknesses and providing them with better facilities and more avenues to the poor children at these institutions.

We must check abuse of mosques and madaris and they must not be used for spreading political and sectarian prejudices. We want to ensure that mosques enjoy freedom and we are here to maintain it. At the same time we expect a display of responsibility along with freedom. If the Imam of mosques fail to display responsibility, curbs would have to be placed on them. After this analysis, now, I come to some conclusions and decisions: -- First, we have to establish the writ of the government. All organizations in Pakistan will function in a regulated manner. No individual, organization or party will be allowed to break law of the land. The internal environment has to be improved. Maturity and equilibrium have to be established in the society. We have to promote an environment of tolerance, maturity, responsibility, patience and understanding. We have to check extremism, militancy, violence and fundamentalism. We will

have to forsake the atmosphere of hatred and anger.

We have to stop exploitation of simple poor people of the country and not to incite them to feuds and violence. We must concern ourselves with our own country. Pakistan comes first. We do not need to interfere and concern ourselves with others. There is no need to interfere in other countries.

Now I turn to other important issues. In my view there are three problems causing conflict and agitation in our minds. They include; first the Kashmir Cause, secondly all political disputes at the international level concerning Muslims and thirdly internal sectarian disputes and differences.

These are the three problems which create confusion in our minds. I want to lay down rules of behaviour concerning all the three. Let us take the Kashmir Cause first. Kashmir runs in our blood. No Pakistani can afford to sever links with Kashmir. The entire Pakistan and the world knows this. We will continue to extend our moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmiris. We will never budge an inch from our principle stand on Kashmir. The Kashmir problem needs to be resolved by dialogue and peaceful means in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people and the United Nations resolutions. We have to find the solution of this dispute. No organization will be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir. We condemn the terrorist acts of September 11, October 1 and December 13. Anyone found involved in any terrorist act would be dealt with sternly.

Strict action will be taken against any Pakistani individual, group or organization found involved in terrorism within or outside the country. Our behaviour must always be in accordance with international norms. On this occasion, as President of Pakistan, I want to convey a message to Prime Minister Vajpaee: If we want to normalize relations between Pakistan and India and bring harmony to the region, the Kashmir dispute will have to be resolved peacefully through a dialogue on the basis of the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Solving the Kashmir Issue is the joint responsibility of our two countries. Let me repeat some of the observations made by you, Mr. Vajpayee, some time back, and I quote: "Mind-sets will have to be altered and historical baggage will have to be jettisoned." I take you on this offer. Let us start talking in this very spirit.

Now as commander of the Armed Forces of Pakistan, I wish to convey another message. The Armed Forces of Pakistan are fully prepared and deployed to meet any challenge. They will spill the last drop of their blood in the defence of their country. Let there be no attempt of crossing the border in any sector as it will be met with full force. Do not entertain any illusions on this count.

I would also like to address the international community, particularly the United States on this occasion. As I said before on a number of occasions, Pakistan rejects and condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestation.

Pakistan will not allow its territory to be used for any terrorist activity anywhere in the world. Now you must play an active role in solving the Kashmir dispute for the sake of lasting peace and harmony in the region. We should be under no illusion that the legitimate demand of the people of Kashmir can ever be suppressed without their just resolution. Kashmiris also expect that you ask India to bring an end to state terrorism and human rights violations. Let human rights organizations, Amnesty International, the international media and U.N. peacekeepers be allowed to monitor activities of the Indian occupation forces.

Now we come to the second problem, which causes confusion in our minds and is of our particular concern. It relates to conflicts involving Muslims. Our religious leaders involve themselves in such conflicts without giving serious thought to them. I don't want to talk at length on this.

It is for the government to take a position on international issues. Individuals, organizations and political parties should restrict their activities to expression of their views. I request them to express their views on international issues in an intellectual spirit and in a civilized manner through force of argument.

Views expressed with maturity and moderation have greater convincing power. Expressing views in a threatening manner does not create any positive effect and anyone who indulges in hollow threats is taken as an unbalanced person by the world at large.

I would request that we should stop interfering in the affairs of others. First, we should attain the strength and the importance where our views carry weight when we express them.

Now we come to internal decisions.

The third issue causing conflict in our minds relates to sectarian differences. As I have already pointed out that writ of the government will be established. No individual, organization or party will be allowed to break the law of the land. All functioning will be in a regulated manner and within rules.

Now I come to the extremist organizations. Terrorism, and sectarianism must come to an end. I had announced a ban on Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Mohammad on 14 August last year. On that occasion, I had pointed out that Sipah-e-Sahaba and TJP would be kept under observation. I am sorry to say that there is not much improvement in the situation. Sectarian violence continues unabated. We have busted several gangs involved in sectarian killings. You would be astonished to know that in year 2001 about 400 innocent people fell victim to

sectarian and other killings.

Many of the gangs apprehended include people mostly belonging to Sipah-e-Sahaba and some to TJP. This situation cannot be tolerated any more.

I, therefore, announce banning of both Sipah-e-Sahaba and TJP. In addition to these, TNSM (Tehrik-e-Nifaz-eShariat Mohammadi) being responsible for misleading thousands of simple poor people into Afghanistan also stands banned.

This organization is responsible for their massacre in Afghanistan. The government has also decided to put the Sunni Tehreek under observation. No organization is allowed to form Lashkar, Sipah or Jaish. The government has banned Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Any organization or individual would face strict punitive measures if found inciting the people to violence in internal or external contexts. Our mosques are sacred places where we seek the blessings of God Almighty.

Let them remain sacred. We will not allow the misuse of mosques. All mosques will be registered and no new mosques will be built without permission. The use of loudspeakers will be limited only to call for prayers, and Friday Sermon and Vaaz. However, I would like to emphasise that special permission is being given for "Vaaz" (Sermon). If this is misused the permission will be cancelled.

If there is any political activity, inciting of sectarian hatred or propagation of extremism in any mosque, the management would be held responsible and proceeded against according to law.

I appeal to all Pesh Imams to project the qualities of Islam in the mosques and invite the people to piety. Talk of obligations towards fellow beings, exhort them to abstain from negative thoughts and promote positive thinking. I hope that all Nazims, Distt. Police officers and Auqaf Department officials will take quick action against violators of these measures. On Madaris, a detailed policy will be issued through a new Madressa Ordinance. The Ordinance will be issued in a few days. I feel happy that the Madressa policy has been finalized in consultation with religious scholars and Mashaikh. I have touched on the merits and shortcomings prevailing in the Madaris. Merits have to be reinforced while shortcomings have to be rooted out. Under the Madressa policy, their functioning will be regulated.

These Madaris will be governed by same rules and regulations applicable to other schools, colleges and universities. All Madaris will be registered by 23rd March 2002 and no new Madressa will be opened without permission of the government.

If any Madressa (religious school) is found indulging in extremism, subversion, militant activity or possessing any types of weapons, it will be closed. All Madaaris will have to adopt the new syllabi by the end of this year. Those Madaris which are already following such syllabi are

welcome to continue. The government has decided to provide financial assistance to such Madaris. The government will also help the Madaris in the training of their teachers. The Ministry of Education has been instructed to review courses of Islamic education in all schools and colleges also with a view to improving them. So far as foreign students attending Madaris are concerned, we have set rules for them. Foreign students who do not have proper documents would be required to comply with the formalities by 23rd March 2002 otherwise they can face deportation. Any foreigner wanting to attend Madaris in Pakistan will have to obtain required documents from his/her native country and NOC from the government. Only then, he or she will get admission. The same rules will apply to foreign teachers.

Some Ulema were of the view that some poor people who come to Pakistan for religious education should not be deported to the countries of their origin.

I agree that this is a genuine demand but such people should regularize their stay in Pakistan through their respective embassies. As I have said, all such activity has to be regulated and the writ of the Government must be established.

With a view to ending conflict, I have explained to you at great length the three areas causing confusion in our minds. Making rules, regulations and issuing ordinances is easy but their implementation is difficult. However, I feel all the measures I have announced are of utmost importance. We have to implement them. In this regard, the law enforcement agencies including police must perform their duty.

We are introducing reforms in the police with a view to improving their efficiency. A great responsibility lies on their shoulders. I have directed the police to ensure implementation of the steps announced by the government and I have no doubt they will be motivated to perform their duty. After reforms we expect they will be better trained and equipped to discharge their duty. Rangers and civil armed forces will be in their support.

We are also taking steps in consultation with the judiciary for speedy trial of cases relating to terrorism and extremism. Anti-terrorist courts are being strengthened and necessary orders will be issued in a few days. Apart from these issues, I would also like to inform you, my brothers and sisters, that we have been sent a list of 20 people by India.

I want to clear our position on this. There is no question of handing over any Pakistani. This will never be done. If we are given evidence against those people, we will take action against them in Pakistan under our own laws. As far as non-Pakistanis are concerned, we have not given asylum to any one. Any one falling under this category will be proceeded against whenever one is found.

My brothers and sisters, Pakistan is an Islamnic Republic. There are 98 percent Muslims living

in this country. We should live like brothers and form an example for the rest of the Islamic countries. We should strive to emerge as a responsible and progressive member of the comity of nations.

We have to make Pakistan into a powerful and strong country. We have resources and potential. We are capable of meeting external danger. We have to safeguard ourselves against internal dangers. I have always been saying that internal strife is eating us like termites. Don't forget that Pakistan is the citadel of Islam and if we want to serve Islam well we will first have to make Pakistan strong and powerful. There is a race for progress among all nations.

We cannot achieve progress through a policy of confrontation and feuds.

We can achieve progress through human resource development, mental enlightenment, high moral character and technological development. I appeal to all my countrymen to rise to the occasion. We should get rid of intolerance and hatred and instead promote tolerance and harmony. May God guide us to act upon the true teachings of Islam. May He help us to follow the Quaid-e-Azam's motto: "Unity, Faith and Discipline." This should always be remembered.

We will be a non-entity without unity.

.And I would again like to recite a couplet from Allama Iqbal

Fard Qaim Rabte Millat Say Hai Tanha Kuch Naheen.

Mauj Hai Darya Main Aur Baroon-e-Darya Kuch Naheen.

Amongst the community

Do individuals survive; not alone;

.Like waves that exist in rivers and out of waters are not known