[Dr A Q Khan](https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/dr-a-q-khan)

**Random thoughts**

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**Books and tragedy**

The first book I would like to introduce is an excellent translation of the Holy Quran into simple, beautiful English by Hafiz Dr. Musharraf Hussain. It is titled ‘The Majestic Quran’ and published by Invitation Publishers, Nottingham.

Dr Musharraf Hussain grew up in Halifax, West Yorkshire, UK and memorised the Quran in his teenage years. He graduated from Aston University and has a PhD in biochemistry. He worked as a research scientist before changing careers. He then studied Arabic and Islamic studies in a traditional seminary in Pakistan and graduated from Al-Azhar University. He has published numerous books, including the popular series 'Let’s learn Islam' textbooks for Quran schools. In 2009, he was awarded the OBE for his services to community relations in the UK.

The book has received some excellent reviews. Prof Abdur Raheem Kidwai, Aligarh University, India writes: “This translation is commendable for successfully conveying the meaning and message. The lucid translation…. will advance readers’ understanding.” Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens) writes: “It’s a beautiful and rich English language work with new aspects and comments (especially in the side margins), which are tremendously insightful and inspired.”

Imam Qari Asim, MBE, chairman MINAB writes: “The [book] is an excellent translation into contemporary English; it is faithful to the original text and presents the meaning and the message thematically.” Syed Hasrab Daud Shah, special programmes manager, Muslim Hands writes: “Dr. Hussain’s translation is a beautiful rendering of the Divine message … a wonderful addition to the field of Qur’an translation.” I met Dr Hussain almost 30 years ago at a school function, and remember him for his pleasant personality.

The second excellent book is written by well-known former civil servant, Masood H Qizilbash. The title is ‘Human Conflict with Nature’ and has been published by the Pakistan Scientific and Technological Development Centre, Islamabad (92-51-9248102).

Mr Qizilbash, now retired, held key positions in the federal government in the fields of public finance, planning and development, local governance and social and human development. He represented the government of Pakistan at various international forums as an expert. These include the Commission for Social Development of the UN in 1997; World Bank in 1998; the International Conference on Upscaling and Mainstreaming Participation of Primary Stakeholders and World Urban Forum III of UN-Habitat, Vancouver in 2006. He presented research-oriented papers at these forums.

After his retirement, he served as a consultant/adviser in the UNDP, Swiss International Development Agency, USAID and International Parliamentary Assisted Projects. He has produced a number of monographs. He also remained associated as a faculty member with Preston University and the Saarc Human Development Centre, Islamabad, producing a number of research papers. He has been a regular contributor of articles to various newspapers and is the author of four books. His current book deals with all aspects of the universe.

The third book, ‘Samandar Beeti’ (Life spent at sea) is written by my friend, Zaheer Qureshi, and published by Ferozsons. He spent decades at sea as Radio Officer, during which time he visited many ports, cities and countries. One can imagine what an interesting life that must have been, seeing so many different people and cultures. It is a very interesting book, full of anecdotes, jokes, etc but avoiding the more sordid aspects of port life. Currently he and his family live in Canada. I have also visited many cities in Europe, Africa, Asia, China, etc and many of the things he has written are reminders of those good old days.

The Covid-19 virus has claimed so many lives. So too that of a gallant, upright, fearless person, Justice Waqar Ahmad Sethi, chief justice of the Peshawar High Court. Justice Sethi was never afraid of calling a spade a spade, as he did in the judgement against Musharraf. He will be remembered for never allowing meetings in chambers for any tweaking in judgments. Unfortunately, there are not many judges who can refuse and withstand this pressure. There are very clear divine edicts about dispensing justice without fear or favour or delay.

The second sad demise is that of Mrs Dr Azmat Rashid, wife of Gen. Azmat Rashid who is the son of Mian Rashid, an upright and resourceful person. Mian Rashid first served in GHQ as a civilian and then became manager of Jaffer Brothers, a company handling agencies of useful foreign firms. Main Sahib often came to see me and his friend, Col Qazi Rashid Ali, and we also became good friends.

Email: dr.a.quadeer.khan@gmail.com