Iranian Revolution is certainly one of the most astounding, most important and an epoch-making event of modern history. It has struck some of its opponents with consternation, aroused awe and horror in the hearts of autocrats, particularly those belonging to the Third World and has produced a fresh wave of inspiration and impetus to those devoted to Islamic revivalist movements in the Muslim world.

"A highly controversial subject" of our times, the Iranian revolution has had both favourable and unfavourable reaction in the scholarly, intellectual and political circles, hence a large number of books written in different languages of the world both by its antagonists and protagonists. Then there is group of writers who have tried to hide their sympathy or antipathy towards this important turning point in the history of modern Iran. Some of them have eulogised it as a new hope and inspiration for the down-trodden and oppressed people, others like Surush Irfani (Iran’s Islamic revolution) have condemned it as "the gravest blow to Islam in the name of Islam" (p. 268), and yet others have tried to analyse and assess the outcome of this highly significant event of contemporary history honestly and without prejudice.

Professor Zaman's book belongs to the last group, whereas claimed by the author himself, he has "tried to study the Revolution and subsequent developments honestly and without any bias". The author, an eye-witness to the great episode, stayed as the Executive Director of the RCD Cultural Institute (June 1979–June 1982) and developed a deep interest in the Revolution. He prepared the first draft of the book while still in Iran, which he later revised and improved with the help of a lot of material which was not available to him in Iran.

The book contains eight chapters. The First Chapter is a brief survey of various developments which were instrumental in bringing about the Iranian Revolution. Here the author has given a brief history of the rise and fall of the Pahlavi dynasty from the coup staged by Reza Khan (later called Reza Shah after assuming the title of Shahanshah) to his deposition and subsequent coronation of his son Mohammad Reza Shah until the later left Iran (in 1978) never to return. This chapter particularly deals, though briefly, with the "mission" of Westernizing Iran taken up by Reza-
Shah, later pursued more vehemently by his son who took some drastic steps to eliminate the influence of the Ulema from the society, because the old religious people were the root of our backwardness.

The Second chapter deals with the turbulent days of the Revolution, and the return of Imam Khomeini after living 14 years in exile, a turning point in the history of Iran, which the author has described beautifully in the following words:

"After circling the Tehran Airport for 25 minutes, the plane landed amidst the cheers of about 3 million Iranian men, women and children who had come to greet the person whom they regarded as their deliverer from the yoke and tyranny of Pahlavi rule". (p. 88)

At the conclusion of the Chapter, the author emphasizes that most of the dictators live in a fools' paradise under the false impression that they enjoy the confidence of the masses.

Third Chapter of the books is in fact, the most important, most original and most thought-provoking, as it deals with the forces which led to the success of the Revolution. Adumbrating the philosophy of revolution from his point of view, the author explains:

"A revolution is generally viewed as the destruction of the entire existing political, economic, cultural and social structure of a society and its replacement by a new system of ideas and values governed by a philosophy of life which is at complete variance with the supplanted one.... Economic disparity, political suppression, invidious distinctions and lack of opportunities for various classes of people no doubt constitute the raw material for political commotion. The presence of these factors, however, does not necessarily lead to confrontation. People may continue to languish in misery and suffer for generations and yet not rise to fight for what they themselves believe is their due. If, on the other hand, these factors are backed by an ideology and selfless leadership, or what people are convinced is selfless, the discontent begins to take shape, and in course of time may erupt volcanically". (p. 95)

Unlike the other revolutions, which were aimed at bringing some political or economic change, and, therefore, were backed by political or economic forces, the Iranian revolution was basically ideological. Explaining this peculiar nature of the Iranian revolution, the author says:

"In Iran, the Revolution was neither an armed uprising of a group seeking power nor a movement of peasants and workers aimed at the establishment of a classless society. It was a mass upsurge in which practically every section of society participated in order to overthrow the entire political, cultural, economic and social apparatus which, in one form
or another, had persisted for 2,500 years. In terms of physical dimensions, it was the biggest agitational movement ever launched; and in terms of sacrifices in human life, it was unprecedented. As Khomeini put it, the Iranian people had willingly offered sacrifices not for 'houses and jobs' but for God. (pp. 96-97).

According to the author the institution of mosque played a crucial role in the initiation and development of the Iranian revolution. "It was utilized as a free island in a sea of suppression and was much more difficult to penetrate than the university campus or even the Communist cell." (p. 112) In the words of Ayatollah Beheshti, "The Revolution began in the mosques, reached its peak from the mosques, and must continue to flourish in the mosques."

Now, while Khomeini and other religious leaders provided the religious force for the revolution, Dr. Shari'atí is considered to be the main intellectual force behind the revolution. As "A champion of freedom, a supporter of social justice and a spokesman of the poor within the framework of the principles of Islam", Shari'atí's message transcended regional boundaries. It was addressed "to (the) impoverished and deprived masses all over the world, as well as to the entire ummah of Islam". Its impact on the revolutionary movements of struggling masses in other parts of the world is proved by the fact that the Algerian freedom fighters called him 'father of socialism', and the al Ikhwán al-Muslimín of Egypt looked upon him as the 'true spirit of Islam'.

Like Khomeini, Shari'atí vehemently opposed hegemony and exploitation in whatever form and from whatever quarter. He attacked the big powers for their tactics of exploiting the weaker nations and keeping them under their iron heels.

"To any movement in captive countries, the following formula and interpretation is attributed now-a-days; if it threatens American interests, it is communism and if it attacks Communism, they say it is done by America. If it attacks.... America, Russia, England and France, they say it is a fascist and reactionary movement. (p. 116).

Concluding, Dr. Zaman summarizes Shari'atí's contribution in the Iranian Revolution in the following words:

"As a forerunner of the Iranian Revolution, his share in its successful culmination was not dissimilar to that of Voltaire in the French Revolution and of Iqbal in the creation of the Islamic State of Pakistan". (p. 124)

The Ulama who always wielded a great influence on the masses of Iran had a greater advantage over the Shah's supporters and his army. Their cause was further stimulated and strengthened by the widespread discontent among the people groaning under the inhuman torture employed by SAVAK, the corruption rampant throughout the society and the alarming disparity between the affluent
and the deprived. The Shah's regime was a symbol of tyranny, despotism, injustice and depravity.

"On the other hand, Khomeini's unquestioned integrity, his fearless and uncompromising determination to carry on the struggle, his courageous stand against the Shah, and his foreign supporters, made him a charismatic figure; and people followed him as they had not followed anyone in recent history". (p. 124)

The Fourth Chapter deals with the interim government of Bazargan, "a mullah without a turban" which lasted from February 5, 1979 to November 5, 1979, the day following the occupation of the American Embassy, during which he held the First Referendum for yes or no to Islamic system. He managed to keep the country intact, which in less competent hands might well have collapsed*. In spite of the spate of criticism which followed his removal or resignation, his sincere services to the new regime cannot be denied. He put the whole troubled house in order and laid the foundation for future democratic activity in the country.

The Fifth chapter recounts the Constitutional developments from June 4, 1979, when the draft Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran was released to the press, to May 9, 1980 when in the second round of elections to the Majlis (Parliament), the Islamic Republic Party emerged as the single largest party, a prelude to the struggle between moderates (or Islamic "secula-rists") represented by President Bani Sadr and the "fanatics" or extremists represented by IRP with Ayatullah Beheshti at its head.

The Sixth Chapter deals with the crucial 444 days during which the 52 American hostages were detained from November 4, 1979 to January 20, 1981.

The Seventh and Eighth Chapters deal with the ultimate success of the IRP with the ouster of President Bani Sadr and his succession by Sayyid Ali Khamenei as the new President of the Islamic Republic and the approval of the appointment of Mir Hossein Musavi as the new Prime Minister by the Majlis on October 29, 1981. The book ends with the final declaration of the success of the extremists over the liberals with the following words:

"Cleansing the Government of all liberal and Westernized elements, it (the Khomeini regime) believed, had been the third and most important phase of the Revolution - the first being the overthrow of the Shah and the second, the occupation of the American Embassy in November 1979". (p. 311)

This is followed by "Notes" (pp. 312-334), Bibliography (pp. 335-345) and index (pp. 346-356).

It is strange that the book published in 1985 does not mention under Bibliography among others, Michael M. J. Eischer's "Iran" (1980), N.E. Bonnie and Nikki R. Keddie's "Modern Iran" (1981), and "Religion and Politics in Iran" (1983) and Suroosh Irfani's "Iran's Islamic Revolution: Popular Liberation or
Religious Dictatorship" (1983), the last one particularly being most scathing criticism of the "Islamic Revolution of Iran" and its leader Ayatullah Khomeini, highlighting the services and eulogizing the sacrifices of Mujahidin-e-Khalq and at the same time commending the roles of Dr. Ali Shariati, "the revolutionary Islamic Ideologue" (p. 15) and Ayatollah Taleqani, "the unorthodox mulla" and the first teacher of the Mujahidin-e-Khalq (p. 15). It would have been more advisable for the author of the present book to take up some of the serious allegations levelled by Irfani relating to the "heinous atrocities perpetrated by the present regime of Iran" and try to give a solid and convincing reply to the vehement charges.

Nevertheless, this book is a relatively more objective, historical and ideological appraisal of the Islamic Revolution of Iran with a sympathetic tint towards the ruling clergy though without an open commitment or partiality in its favour. The book is certainly a welcome addition to the present literature on the subject and contains valuable information and a faithful and day-to-day account of the early and normative period of the Revolution and the rule of the clergy, as well as the tussle between the liberals and clerical extremists and the ultimate triumph of the latter.

Though published by one of the most responsible agencies of Pakistan, the book is not free from printing and other errors which could have been easily avoided with better proof-reading and more efficient editing, of which Jabehe-Nelli instead of Jabbe-ye-Nelli (pp. 278 & 284) and Qassas instead of Qisas (p. 285, repeated thrice) cannot be termed as errors of the printers.

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