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Value of The Prophet

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

An intense attachment of the Muslims to the Prophet of Islam is another distinguishing feature of their life. The Prophet is not simply a founder of the faith or a venerable personage but something more than that : a tender feeling of heart-felt love and respect for the Prophet is what a Musalman treasures more than anything else. A Persian poet expressed the same feeling in these words which cannot perhaps be surpassed :

"To cut short, most respected thou art after God."

At the same time, the Muslims have been expressly asked to desist from exaggerated adulation and deification of the holy Prophet as was done by the followers of certain earlier prophets. A tradition of the holy Prophet says: "Do not extol me beyond my limits nor entertain exaggerated notions about me like the Christians who unduly magnified their Prophet. Call me, if you have to, by the name of the slave and Apostle of God" ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

“They say: ‘If we were to follow this guidance with you, we should be snatched away from our land.’ Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary to which fruits of all kinds are brought as a provision from Us? But most of them do not know.”

(Al Qur'an – 28:57)

This is what the Qurayshite unbelievers used to say as an excuse for not accepting Islam. When we reflect on this, we realise that this was indeed the main reason for their denial. In order to appreciate it fully, we should bear in mind the position of Quraysh in those times, a position which they felt would be undermined if they were to accept Islam. “What initially lent eminence to the Quraysh in Arabia was their descent from Ishmael. When, thanks to the sagacity of Qusayy ibn Kilab, the Quraysh became the custodians of the Ka'bah and settled down in Makkah, their importance grew.” “Here is God's first answer to the excuse the Quraysh offered. This response amounted to saying: “Is it not because of God's special favour that it is looked upon with respect and veneration by all, and every year thousands of people come to it as pilgrims? It is thanks to this favour that you have become the leaders of Arabia and the major beneficiaries of the flourishing international trade of your time. Do you think that by rebelling against God Who, in the first place, bestowed this favour on you, you will prosper, and that you will be instantly destroyed if you follow God's Religion?” ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

“Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said: “A person who calls people towards doing good deeds will get the same reward as those who follow him and do good; and nothing will be diminished from the requital of the latter. Similarly, those who call the people towards vice will have the same punishment as those who follow him without any diminution in the punishment of the perpetrators.”

(Muslim)

Our deeds are either good or bad as no deed can be both good and evil. And people, in given circumstances, are tempted to do either good or bad deed. This hadith gives good tidings to a person who not only does good deeds but invites others to do so. It also warns a person against inviting his/her fellow beings to vice. Calling people towards doing good deeds is in itself a virtuous act. It wins the pleasure of the Lord Almighty as well as provides an opportunity for the invitee for doing good deeds. Contrary to it, the act of inviting people to commit some evil is in itself a vicious act. It earns the Divine wrath as well as puts the invitee in a position that earns the Divine wrath. “God is All-Powerful. He can give reward and award punishment to whom He wills. He knows perfectly well the deeds done by His servants as well as the intention lurking behind the commission of the deed. Hence His judgement is based on human actions. He however can forgive whomsoever He wills. ■

Editor's Note 

Houses of Learning

From time immemorial there exists institutions of learning. Initially they worked from the annexes of Temples and Mosques and were known as Pathshalas and Maktabas. In India with the advent of Mughals formal education centres were established. With the passage of time these centres grew up and now present Colleges and Universities are the outcome of these Pathshalas and Madrasas.

These ancient centres still exist and because of limited resources are confined in obscure places. Still they have their importance because free education is imparted there. Recently writing in times of India Masha Hassan has highlighted "Madrasas as Highways of Rich Learning." We reproduce below her illuminating write-up.

"Recently, media reports said that a decision was taken by the BJP government to close all state-run madrasas in Assam. When you hear the word 'madrasa' perhaps what flashes before your mind is the image of young skull capped boys reciting the Quran. The Arabic word 'madrasa' had a universal meaning; the name was given to any form of educational institution, secular or religious, and not just Islamic. It comes from the root 'darasa', meaning 'he read repeatedly' or 'he studied.' Madrasa literally translates to 'a place where learning and studying takes place'.

During the 10th and 12th centuries, madrasas instituted with libraries emerged in Khwarazm, Merv, Ghazna and Bukhara. In significant urban sites, classical spatial compositions were built where a somewhat unified architectural body was constructed with elements of mosque, madrasa and garmabs (public baths).

Even though the unsettling disturbance brought by the 13th century Mongol invasion extensively weakened these learning activities, madrasas managed to maintain their continuity in creativity and culture, expanding their reach to the eastern Caliphate. The Indian subcontinent too saw the formation of madrasas, one such example is a madrasa in Gwalior whose structure resembles that of a Buddhist vihara.

Major transitions occurred in these educational institutions, giving more importance to scientific as well as literary thought; they were soon regarded as

universal educational centers, promoting intercultural exchange between diverse populations. Madrasas were providing a wide range of courses from theology to science, philosophy and philology, to history and literature and also music and lessons of adab, polite culture.

Scholars acknowledged the importance of secular science for a dynamic society. These ideas were challenged during medieval times, enforcing stern Islamic theological teachings. At the same time, madrasas in Herat and Samarkand carried on diverse cultural centres for astronomy, science and mathematics. In Herat, madrasas taught and specialised in medicine; Al-Razu and Ibn Sina, medical scholars of Islam, were given high status at European medical schools.

Madrasas were not only places for education; they provided housing for mustshiqqs, students and the poor, to enable them to study. This remains true in contemporary times. There have been reports of girls outnumbering boys in some schools. The Moin-ul-Islam madrasa in Agra, an Islamic institute that believes co-education strengthens communal harmony is teaching Sanskrit and Arabic languages to students coming from both Hindu and Muslim communities.

Some tend to view madrasas as a highly rigid fanatic kind of Islamic institution, but let us not forget inclusive examples of personalities like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Munshi Premchand and India's first president Rajendra Prasad, who started their education in madrasas.

The interpretation of madrasas indeed remains universal; a place where learning takes place irrespective of the walls built and demolished. Madrasas have the potential to transcend concrete institutionalised spaces of education and the dichotomy of beliefs. All these educational initiatives take place on this very soil under one galactic roof, in the everyday life where we cultivate a continuous form of learning, creativity, imagination as well as education." ■

S.A.

We solicit articles for publication in The Fragrance of East. Suitable remuneration will be paid to writers. We prefer receipt of articles on:
e-mail: shariq_alavi@yahoo.com
along with a hard copy, duly signed, by post.

Social Life

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

An Admixture of Islamic and Indian Cultures

The social life of the Indian Muslims, the pattern of their family life in particular, does not present any marked divergence from the surrounding culture of the people among whom they happen to reside. In a country so vast as India is, with varying climatic conditions, economic and social differences, the culture of the Indian Muslims too is marked by distinctive features, customs and manners, like that of their local compatriots, in different parts of the country. This is a natural development, yet the Indian Muslim culture in almost every part of the country is also permeated to an extent with the spirit of Islam. The varying cultures of different regions have always been, and still are, enlivened by certain distinctive characteristics, ceremonies, rites and practices, which are common to all of them. These typical features also lend them a colour of their own within the local or regional social pattern. The origin of the common traits of Indian Muslim culture can be traced to the influences left by the Turko-Iranian culture, imported from Iran, Turkistan and Afghanistan and represented for quite a long period in India by the Turk, Afghan and Moghul rulers as well as the landed and military aristocracy of the time, Another streak of this culture is drawn from the post-Islam Arab culture which has

always been valued by the Muslims as the ideal way of life. These two elements have blended with the Indian customs and manners, rites and traditions to produce an entirely new and typical social pattern standing apart from all yet resembling in certain aspects to each one of these. It is, in fact, a composite culture which is neither Islamic in its true sense nor Iranian, Turkish or Indian. It can only be called the Indo-Islamic culture.

The Purdah System

Among well-to-do Muslims who also regard themselves as belonging to the higher strata or ashraf, the purdah system is still observed to a great extent. Without entering into the controversy whether it is Islamic or un-Islamic or how far it is necessary or practicable, it can be asserted that the purdah so punctiliously observed a few decades earlier, has now lost its rigor owing, chiefly, to the modern education and economic and social changes overtaking the country. It has been completely given up by certain 'modernised' Muslim families. The Muslim ladies who earlier moved out in covered planquins, dolis and muhafas or completely veiled coaches and victorias are now obliged to go about in tongas, rikshaws and buses leaving aside the earlier scruples. Also, the spread of education among the girls, specially in the urban centres, has further curtailed the

purdah system.

Even the purdah that used to be observed earlier in the Muslim families could hardly be regarded as complying with the Islamic injunction, if only because the prevalent custom never required seclusion from certain relatives expressly directed to be kept aloof from the kindred women. The social custom adopted by the Indian Muslims, however, took what may be called a broader view in regard to these kinships, following their compatriots, although the practice often proved to be fraught with dangerous consequences.

Purdah Observed from Women

The purdah observed by the would-be bride from her female in-laws is a purely Indian custom. In certain families it is so rigidly followed that the prospective brides begin to observe purdah from their own kindred's such as aunts from the time they are betrothed to their cousins. No such custom is, however, to be found among the Muslims in other countries.

Hospitality and Generosity

In the well-to-do Muslim families, particularly those which are socially well-connected, there are almost always a few guests. If such families are residing in a city, they usually have a few relative students coming from the rural or suburban areas for higher studies. Such families more often have several dependents sharing the earning of one person. Abolition of Zamindaris and jagirs as well as the rising spiral of prices have

seriously curtailed the practice but it is still in vogue among the Muslims to an appreciable extent. The merits of hospitality and generosity to be shown to the guests and the obligations of neighbourliness expounded in the teachings of Islam, the example set by the pious and religious precursors of the old and the Arab and Afghan traditions of gracious hospitality have assigned it a place of religious and moral duty in the Muslim society. The Muslims still consider it propitious to entertain and receive their guests with open arms. They also consider it a duty enjoined by religion to maintain cordial relations with their neighbours and present gifts to them on special occasions.

Table Manners

All the members of a family generally take their meals together, unless there is some difficulty in it. In the cities, nowadays, pre-occupations of profession, educational needs and similar other difficulties do not allow all the members of a family to assemble for meals at the appointed time. Nevertheless, as far as possible all the members of the family prefer the practice of dining together while, in certain families, men and women partake their food jointly in separate shifts. Since the institution of untouchability is altogether alien to the tenets of Islam, the utensils used by one man while taking food or drinking water are freely used by the other. Not only that the bowls, saucers and tumblers used by one member are not avoided by others, often

two or more persons partake the food from the same bowl or saucer or take whatever is left by the other. Now the modern western table manners and medical culinary directives have begun to make inroads in the equalitarian and fraternal traditions of the Muslim society.

The utensils of common use in the Muslim houses are generally spacious and bigger. The edibles left over by the guests in feasts are not thrown away but given to the servants or the poor and the needy. In Arabia, however, there being absolutely no inhibition in this regard the host and his family members eat up what is left of the meal by the guests.

Caste System among Indian Muslims

The social life of Indian Muslims shows a striking contrast between the Islamic belief in equality and universal brotherhood, on the one hand, and the superstructure of social discrimination adopted by them, on the other. The Muslims of India have, undoubtedly, developed a social hierarchy based on the birth of the individual but unlike the caste system of the Hindus, their's does not insist on a complete social segregation or untouchability nor does it stand in the way of anyone achieving social eminence or respect of the society. However, the sections of Indian Muslims who were gradually converted to Islam from the indigenous population retained some of their social customs including the caste structure and occupations, and thus introduced the counterpart castes of the

Hindus into the social structure of Indian Islam. The descendants of the Muslim immigrants to the country, on the other hand, fitted themselves in the then social structure by claiming the highest ranks by virtue of their being related to the ruling races such as the Moghuls and Pathans, or because they belonged to the lineage of early Muslim nobility as Saiyids and Sheikhs. These sections being closer to the ruling elite of the Muslim era, naturally, came to regard themselves as ashraf or shurfa, i.e. belonging to a higher rank than others. The Saiyids claim their descent from the Prophet while Sheikhs (meaning pious religious teachers) regard themselves as descendants of the nobility of early Islam. These two constitute the top-grade of Muslim caste hierarchy ; and the remaining, as their name indicates, are ethnic groups who take their place after the first two. It seems that the converts from the high caste Hindus were gradually assimilated by one or the other ashraf castes as, for example, the Rajput converts to Islam generally use the appellation of khan with their names and the Kashmiri Brahmans are all known as sheikhs. The other sections of Indian Muslims i. e. the converts from the low ranking castes of Hindus generally retained their caste occupations such as those of the Dhobi (laundryman) Julaha (weaver), Gaddi (grazier or milkman), Nai or Hajjam (barber), etc. Some of these appear to have converted en masse: Gaddis, Julahas, Bhishtis (water-carriers) and a few other castes are now entirely

Muslim while others have their corresponding castes among the Hindus. However, it is difficult to maintain that all these castes among the Muslims are converts from the corresponding Hindu castes for some of them such as Darzi (tailors), Qassab (butchers), Mirasi (musicians) and a few similar castes seem to have derived their names from the occupations taken up after their conversion to Islam. Some of the lower castes have strictly maintained their endogamous social circle or biradri system like their Hindu counterparts which prohibits, on the one hand marriage outside those castes and also serves, on the other, as a social constraint for the erring members overstepping caste taboos or other moral limits under the compulsion of excommunication from the biradri. Disappearance of the feudal system which had kept most of the lower castes pegged to their occupations in the rural areas, the recent trend of urbanisation with the industrial expansion and the resultant changes in the socio-economic structure of the society, have combined to accelerate the breaking-up process of certain occupational castes, no longer useful to the society. Some of these castes particularly those having smaller numbers or engaged in a defunct occupation, are gradually getting merged in other occupational units of equal rank by adopting new professions or by establishing matrimonial relations with other castes. A few of such castes are

Bhatyaras, Dhaphalis, etc.

Caste Attitudes

In general the Muslims belonging to the higher castes maintain an attitude of superiority as against the lower ranks. Among themselves, they have a free social inter course, although with varying endogamic customs which differ from place to place and from family to family. Certain families giving undue importance to the purity of blood are far more strict in contracting marriages outside their own caste, or, for that matter, even outside their own family circle. Others among the ashraf ranks, however, take wives of the castes regarded next below to their own, but do not, as a rule, give their own daughters in marriage to them. It would be of interest to mention here the Muslim view of kuf which has the sanction of religious canons also. The Muslim legists recognise the necessity of social-equality of the matches for a happy and successful marriage but it has nothing to do with racial superiority or social discrimination as sometimes exhibited by the higher rank Indian Muslims. The concept of kuf only purports to ensure that the husband should not come from such a lower social stratum that the wife or her relations should feel disgraced by the marriage. The rule places no restraint on marriages between the mates belonging even to two different races if they are otherwise socially, economically and culturally equal.

The air of superiority exhibited by the ashraf classes has been limited, for all

practical purposes, to the rule of endogamy and a few other social customs without any appreciable effect on the free social intercourse between the lower and the higher castes of the Indian Muslims. An interesting feature of the custom followed in this regard is the exclusion of lower caste Muslims from the ceremonial feasts of higher caste Muslims. The former, if invited, are not allowed to partake their meals with the latter; likewise, servants in the Muslim households of position and rank are made to take their meals separately after other members of the family or relatives belonging to the higher castes have taken their food. On the other hand, the persons belonging to the higher castes, howsoever poor or engaged in whatever occupation they may be, can claim equality of status in such social functions with their well-to-do relatives. These customs are to a large extent, the product of feudal system under which the higher castes were generally landowners and the lower castes tillers of the soil or engaged in occupations of a socially lower order. Despite these customs, however, there has never been any social segregation or untouchability as the higher caste Muslims freely take food with the lower castes on informal occasions or when invited to the social functions of the lower caste Muslims.

Attitude in regard to Callings and Professions

As already stated most of the lower castes of Indian Muslims have been

associated and identified with the specific trades or callings in which they have been engaged but there has never been any restriction on changing one's occupation. An occupation generally regarded as belonging to a lower caste, as, for example, the profession of a Darzi (tailor) or a Dhobi (laundryman) is often adopted by a person belonging to a higher caste without any effect on his caste status. In fact, the Muslims have never accepted the occupations as permanent and unchangeable professions of the particular castes, nor, the division of labour depending on 'caste' in the form of social classes, as recognised by the Indo-Iranian people. Nor has the caste system among Indian Muslims ever discouraged the people belonging to a lower social unit or engaged in any one of the lower caste trades or callings to adopt a respectable profession like the teaching of religious sciences or acting as Imams and preachers (khatibs). In fact, Islam does not look down upon any lawful profession with disrespect. In other predominantly Muslim countries, particularly in Arab lands, Mecca and Madina, several respected doctors of religion have surnames indicating the occupation of their forefathers. These occupational surnames are neither held in contempt by anybody nor the persons using them feel ashamed of because of those appellations.

There is no denying the fact that the Indian Muslims have gradually absorbed numerous traits from their Hindu

neighbours including their caste system but the rigour of social discrimination implied in the system was softened to a large extent by the egalitarian principles of Islam. The reason for this apparent complexity of social attitude of the Indian Muslims can be traced to the segregating influence of the institution of Indian caste system and the air of superiority produced by the feudal system, on the one hand, and the uncompromising teachings of Islam declaring that the whole mankind is the progeny of Adam, that honour in the sight of God depends on the awe of God and that no Arab has a preference over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab.

Dress of the Indian Muslims

The gradual process of Indianisation of the Muslims did not manifest itself only in the assimilation of the cultural and social traits of their neighbours and its flowering in new forms of social relationships, but it also evolved new raiment's and costumes in unison with their taste and suitable to the local climatic conditions. By and large, their dress is the legacy of Indo-Islamic Culture which was developed and refined by the end of the Moghul rule in India and reached its apex in the cultural centres of Delhi, Lucknow and Hyderabad where the Hindu nobility had also adopted the Muslim dress. There is no appreciable difference in the dress of Muslim nobility whether living in the northern regions or in the southern states of the country, nor the dress of the Muslims of the upper crust and middle classes shows any marked

variation, It consists of the trousers of different shapes like pyjamas, shalwars and ghararas with a shirt (including kurta) and a long coat called sherwani, which is an improved form of the ackhans and angarkhas worn earlier. The caps donned are of different shapes. Those more prevalent in Oudh and Bihar are do-pallis. Other popular head-dresses among Muslims include a cap made of velvet and known as Rampuri cap, and another boatshaped cap called Gandhi or Ajmal cap. The latter is commonly worn by the Hindus too. Turbans or pagrees are now falling into disuse even among the Ulema, religious teachers, but these can still be seen at certain places worn by the bridegrooms during marriage ceremonies. Lungi is also commonly worn in certain places for the convenience of working at home or in the fields, but its size and shape as well as the way it is put on differs from dhoti generally worn by the Hindus. In certain rural areas, however, dhoti is the common dress of the Hindus as well as the Muslims.

The Muslim Dwellings

The increasing impact of the western mode of living as well as emphasis on town planning in recent years is tending to obliterate the differences in the design of Muslim dwellings and the style of houses built by other communities. The houses now built with the approval of town planning and municipal authorities are, by and large, of the same type meant for renting them out to the tenants who

abound in cities. However, the residential structures built earlier by the Muslims were almost always well-ventilated and spacious with a wide court but the inside view was secluded from the outside. Two other features of these houses were that the lavatories were always constructed in a way that one did not have to face the qibla while excreting or urinating. The Muslims are forbidden to sit facing the Ka'aba while answering the call of natures and hence this precaution had to be taken in every Muslim country in the construction of houses. The Indian Muslim houses also had bath-rooms secluded from the public view and had a raised floor with buckets in order to comply with the rules of ritual purification.

Decoration of Houses

If you enter the house of an average Indian Muslim, you would invariably find copies of the Holy Qur'an in different sizes kept in a niche wrapped in cloth coverings. In certain families every member, young or old, daily recites the sacred scripture early in the morning. Decoration of the houses with pictures of animate objects having been prohibited by Islam, wall-texts having Quranic verses or a few lines by some well-known poet written in a flowery pattern can be seen overhanging the walls in almost every middleclass house. In certain modernised households, nowadays, who have shaken off the grip of religion, pictures have found their way as decorative pieces.

Arrangements for Offering Prayers

In almost every house one would find prayer-mats or a sheet of cloth set apart for offering prayers. Women, who are normally more religious-minded everywhere, perform the prayers regularly in the privacy of their houses. The male members of the family usually perform their prayers in the mosque but some of them have to offer it up in the house owing to illness or some other inability. For such occasions as well as for the guests who might prefer to perform the service alone, a small wooden prayer-bench is also available in every house along with the prayer-mat. Everyone in the house, young or old, is fully aware of the direction of qibla and also abides by the precautionary measures meant for showing due deference to the Ka'aba, the Holy of the Holies. In certain sophisticated families a separate Lota or Jug is set apart for performing ablutions. It would not be out of place to mention here that the Lota or the Jug with a beak shaped pipe attached to it is in common use among the Muslims for a long time. It ensures economical use of water and, being of a bit bigger size, is very convenient for performing ablutions.

Position of Women in Muslim Society

The position of women in Muslim society has always been a far more respected and happier one, than their sisters elsewhere. Upon her falls the duty of managing the household, of cooking choice and making purchases of

provisions; she holds the honour and good name of her husband in the hallow of her hand and enjoys many legal rights conferred on her by the Shariah or religious law of Islam. As mistress of the house, she has also to look after the upbringing of the children and their education and manners. In most of the well-to-do houses normally an old lady is engaged for religious education, specially the teaching of the Qur'an, to the children of tender age. Children from the neighbouring houses are also encouraged to receive free education from such tutors. At certain places educated middle-class house-wives teach the Qur'an to the girls of their neighbours without charging any fee for it. These informal schools are also a means of imparting training in sewing and embroidery and cooking to the neighbouring girls.

Respect for Age

Old age among the Muslims is not something to be despised or denigrated. On the contrary, it claims highest esteem and reverence, as a mark of respect for maturity in wisdom, and makes one entitled to greater love and care by the younger members of the family. Anybody visiting a Muslim house would not unoften come across an old man—and he may be a distant relative or the Imam of the local mosque—sitting on a prayer-mat engaged in the recollection of God. He would see the members of the family making obeisance to him, saluting him in the morning and desirous of his blessings. No servant or

child or an elder member of the family can show disrespect to him. Everybody deems it an honour to serve him, bring the food for him and do whatever he is bidden.

The same regard is paid if there is any old lady in the family. These grandmas usually pass their time in prayers and recollection of God, invoking Divine blessings for the women and children of the family and the neighbourhood who regularly pay a visit to them for that purpose. The blessings by such old ladies are considered efficacious for warding off evil. Whether such a lady is a blood relation or not, she is affectionately called grandma or aunty.

Re-marriage of Widows

The re-marriage of the widows is neither looked down upon by Islam nor has it ever been held in contempt by any custom or usage of the Muslim peoples. The Prophet of Islam himself contracted marriages with the widows and so did the pious and learned doctors of faith, kings and grandees in the bygone ages. There being no inhibition, whatsoever, in this regard, the widows of respectable and noble families were given in marriage for the second time by their own guardians, fathers and brothers. Several such examples of Moghul princes can be cited who had been re-married after widowhood and who continued to receive the same respect by the kings and relatives as well as by the then society. It seems (as related by Khafi Khan) that during the reign of

Muhammad Shah (1719-48) the then nobility began to treat the remarriage of the widows with contemptuous disrespect. They began to view the second marriage as an affront to the family honour and as an act against the fidelity of the widows towards their late husbands. Anyone who dared to get his widowed sister or daughter re-married was not only sneered at but had also to face a social boycott by his friends and relatives. The re-married widow and her husband had sometimes even to migrate from the place. This custom had so deeply rooted itself in the Indian Muslim society that Sayed Ahmad Shaheed Bareilvi, the renowned reformer and religious leader of the nineteenth century, had to launch a movement against the custom. He and his followers had to fight this innovation relentlessly. For the purpose they had even to set personal examples before the practice of re-marrying the widows was revived. It was owing to his indefatigable efforts that the widow re-marriage is no longer held in contempt among Indian Muslims as it was a century or two earlier. Although some of the widows still do not marry for various reasons quite a large percentage of them is now re-married.

The Muslim Greetings

Among the Muslims all over the world the customary, greeting, as also required by their religion too, is assalam-o-a-laikum (peace be upon you) with the reply wa-laikumussalam (on you too be peace). In certain towns, particularly those

of Oudh, one is greeted by adabarz (I pay my respects to you). This is also accompanied by the youngsters bowing down before their elders as a mark of respect for them. In some places like Hyderabad, this particular way of salutation is repeated three or four times. This oversophisticated way of salutation, known as farshi salaam, is replied by tasleem, or an expression of the wish to live long. The greetings are also followed by a handshake sometimes with both hands. On the occasion of 'Ids or when a close friend or relation has come back from a journey the congratulatory greeting is normally a prelude to a warm embrace.

Remembrance of God

Throughout his life the name of God is constantly on the lips of a Muslim, whether learned or illiterate, young or old. Words and phrases praising God have so become part and parcel of his daily conversation that one is constantly reminded of the omnipotence, over lordship, bounty and munificence of God Almighty at every turn and pass. Some of these recurrent phrases commonly repeated on different occasions are:

Alhamdu lillah (Praise be to God) to express gratitude or return thanks for kindness.

Masha Allah (with the will and mercy of God) on the occasion of happiness or to congratulate others.

Insha Allah (Except if Allah Wills) while making a promise or expressing the

intention to do something in future.

Inna lillah wa inna ilaih-i-raje'oon (We all belong to Allah and unto Him shall we return) to express resignation when one has sustained a loss.

Lahaula Wala Quwata illa billah (There is no might nor majesty except in God) to express resentment or indignation.

Subhan Allah (Glory be to God) to express astonishment at some strange sight.

Bism Illah (In the name of God) is said before one begins to take food, and then finishes it with Alhamdu lillah. Similarly, in order to excuse oneself from accepting an invitation one says: Barak Allah (God may bless you).

Anybody who sneezes says: Alhamdu lillah (Praise be to God) and gets the reply: Yarhamuka Allah (God may have mercy on you). He has then to return the invocation by the phrase: Yahdikum ullah wa yusleh lakum (May God guide you on the right path and help you).

Rules of Common Courtesy

Whenever, someone pays a visit to a middle class Muslim household he is usually felicitated with betel-leaves. Offering of a betel to the guests is an old Indian custom which had been adopted by the Indian Muslims as early as they fourteenth century. The custom, prevalent in the monasteries of the Muslim saints and Sufis, finds a mention in the records

of their discourses and biographies. Although the custom of offering betels to guests is followed almost all over India, it is more widespread in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Daccen. Oudh, in Uttar Pradesh, being more sophisticated has developed different ways of preparing the betel-leaves, as, for instance, their flowery display in a saucer, before these are presented to the guests. Small betel-boxes with fine metalwork on them and cloth pouches with exquisite embroidery demonstrate the interest as well as the refined taste of the people. Tobacco is also taken with the betels. It is prepared in numerous ways to give it varying flavours, taste and agreeable fragrance. Lucknow has been the centre of manufacturing betel and chewing tobacco, known as zarda and surti also, which is relished all over the country. The old habit of smoking waterpipes or hukka is giving place to the more convenient smoking of cigarettes and cigars. However, the people can still be seen enjoying the luxury of smoking the hukka which was once the symbol of old culture and an inalienable part of all social gatherings.

Attar and Perfumes

The Indian Muslims have always had a taste for the perfumes which has also been encouraged by the rules of Shari'ah and the practice of the holy Prophet. The development of perfumes industry owes much to the efforts of Indian Muslims who invented numerous varieties of attar, which are renowned all over the world. ■

Faith In ALLAH

- Syed Sulaiman Nadwi

Let us look at the Islamic conception of God, the first of Islam's fundamental articles of Faith. The word Allah is the proper name for Creator and Sustainer of the universe Whose will reigns supreme and who alone is worthy of the highest respect, honour and admiration and there is no deity except Him. He has no parallel, partner or associate. The word Allah is, in fact, incapable of translation and the other words, God, Deity, are poor substitutes for it. It is not a common noun meaning god or a divine being. It is a proper noun par excellence. No plural can be derived from it and it has according to the best authorities, no root and derivation.

Islam emphatically claims that Allah, the Exalted, is far above possessing any of the creaturely attributes, nor is He bound by any of the limitations of human beings or of anything else He has created. He has no body or form, no physical attributes or characteristics. Rather His Attributes are those of One who is above any sort of limitations, such as having a beginning or an end, begetting or being begotten or physical dimensions or needs such as requiring food, rest or procreating as He is One who gives such dimensions and attributes to His creatures and Himself does not share them in the least degree. The Holy

Qur'an says:

Allah is He than Whom there is no other deity. He knows the Unseen (al-Ghaib) and the Evident (ash-Shahadah). He is the Merciful, the Mercy-Giving. Allah is He than Whom there is no other deity the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of peace, the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of safety, the Mighty, the Irresistable, the Supreme Glory be to Allah (high is He) above the partners they attribute to Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Evolver, the Bestower of Forms. To Him belongs the most beautiful names. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

(59 : 22-24)

He is the Originator and Fashioner of the universe with all its vast and perfect systems, the One Who sustains and keeps it functioning according to His infinitely wise plans and laws. And thus it is clear and certain—as Islam emphatically proclaims—that He is infinitely beyond anything which the mind or senses of man grasp or comprehend or imagine or explain, and that He is far, far above having any similarity to any of His creation for He alone is the Creator and

everything else is created. Allah, the Exalted, has not the least resemblance to the petty gods which the minds of men, due to their imperfect knowledge and understanding, have invented to supply the deficiencies in their comprehension. They think that Allah cannot be approached except through some minor deity. But “devotion” says Allah, “is exclusively due to Him,” (39:3). It is the plurality of deities that is called Shirk in the Holy Qur’an which is an unpardonable sin:

Lo! Allah pardoneth not that partners should be ascribed unto Him. He pardoneth all save that to whom He will. Whose ascribeth partners unto Allah hath wandered far astray.

(4:1 16)

When we accept Allah as our sovereign, it becomes our bounden duty to follow His Will and Commands in all spheres of our life, that is, in law and ethics, in economics and politics, in dogma and ritual. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) must be obeyed because it is through him that Allah revealed to us His Will which is fountainhead of all laws, and as bearer of the Revelation, he is best fitted and, for that reason, authorised by the Almighty to interpret the Revelation and to show us how it is to be applied to practical life.

Allah must be recognised as One

to Whom we must submit our will. This recognition alone is described as Tauhid (monotheism) the most fundamental and the most important teaching of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This is expressed in the primary Kalimah of Islam: There is no deity but Allah. This beautiful phrase is the bed-rock of Islam, its foundation and its essence. It is the expression of this belief which differentiates a true Muslim from a Kafir (unbeliever) and a Mushrik (polytheist, one who associates others with Allah). We have already discussed in the previous pages of this book the different forms of Shirk (polytheistic acts and practices) in vogue among the Arabs and other nations of the world. It has been said in the Surah Zumar of the Holy Qur’an:

The revelation of the Scripture is from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise.

Lo! We have revealed the Scripture unto thee (Muhammad) with truth: so worship Allah, making religion pure for Him (only).

Surely pure religion is for Allah only. And those who choose protecting friends besides Him (say): We worship them only that they may bring us near unto Allah: Lo Allah will judge between them concerning that wherein they differ. Lo! Allah guideth not him who is a liar, an ingrate.

If Allah had willed to choose a son, he would have chosen what he would of that which He hath created. Be He glorified! He is Allah, the One, the Absolute.

He hath created the heavens and the earth with truth. He maketh the night to succeed day, and he maketh day to succeed night, and He constraineth the sun and the moon to give service, each running on for an appointed term. Is not He the Mighty, the Forgiver?

(39: 1-5)

And those who put away false gods lest they should worship them and turn to Allah in repentance, for them there are glad tidings.

(39 : 17)

Or choose they intercessors other than Allah? Say: What! Even though they have power over nothing and have no intelligence?

Unto Allah belongeth the intercession. His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. And afterward unto Him ye will be brought back.

And when Allah alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter are repelled, and when those (whom they worship) besides Him are mentioned, behold! they are glad.

(39 : 43-45)

Now when hurt toucheth a man he crieth unto Us and afterwards when We have granted him a boon from Us, he saith: Only by force of knowledge I obtained it. Nay, but it is a test. But most men know not.

(39: 49)

And they esteem not Allah as He hath the right to be esteemed, when the whole earth is His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens are rolled in His right hand. Glorified is He and High Exalted from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him).

(39: 67)

Islam proclaims that Allah is the Reality and thus His existence has absolute relevance and meaning for every single human being since it is solely in relation to Allah that we exist and move through the journey of life on our way back to Him. Islam then asserts that Allah is always active and is concerned and creatively involved with every single part of His creation, from the vastest of stars down to the very atoms which comprise them, with every part of its macro systems, and that it exists, continues and fulfills its functions by His command and will. For His concern is not merely in creating but also in sustaining, directing and guiding; in providing for His creation, maintaining, ordering and regulating them, and, in respect of human beings,

in giving the direction necessary for living their lives in this world in such a manner as will ensure their everlasting good in the life Hereafter.

Allah has endowed man with a thinking mind, a feeling heart, the ability to store and transmit knowledge and given him freedom of choice. At the same time Allah asks man to use this freedom of choice to voluntarily and deliberately choose what He wants for him rather than follow his own whims and desires, that is, to submit his will to Allah's higher will whereby to carry out the responsibilities both personal and collective which Allah has entrusted to him. For not only does the Creator possess the absolute right to make whatever rules or laws He sees fit for His creature, but He also has the absolute right to their obedience. At the same time He alone possesses the all-embracing, absolute knowledge and wisdom to provide His creature with such guidance as will lead to their assured well-being, both in this world and in the Hereafter.

The concept of Tauhid in Islam produces in man the highest degree of self-respect and self-esteem. The believer knows that Allah alone is the possessor of all power, and that none besides Him can benefit or harm a person, or provide for his needs, or give or take away life, or wield any authority or influence. This conviction makes him

indifferent to, and independent and fearless of, all powers other than those of Allah. He never bows his head in homage to any of Allah's creatures nor does he stretch his hand before anyone else. He is not overawed by any one's greatness. Islam's unique task is thus to liberate man from enslavement and servitude to anything other than Allah and to free him to worship and serve Him alone.

When a Muslim accepts Allah as his rightful Sovereign and Law-Giver, he is bound to follow His Will and Command in all phases of life. He must not, therefore, transgress the limits imposed by Allah on him and lead a balanced and disciplined life according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Muslims have, therefore, been called a moderate Ummah (community). They have been ordered not to commit aggression. The lesson given to them is that of peace and harmony whereby they add to the beauty and sweetness of this world. A true believer can never become proud, haughty or arrogant and the pride of power, wealth and worth can have no room in his heart because he knows that whatever he possesses has been given to him by Allah.

The faith in Allah makes man virtuous and upright. He has the conviction that there is no other means of success for him besides purity of soul and righteousness of behaviour. He

knows that Allah is above all need, is related to none, is absolutely just and none has any hand in the exercise of His Divine powers. As against this, the unbelievers and polytheists always live on false hopes. Some of them believe that God's son has atoned for their sins; some think that they are God's favourites, and will not be punished; others believe that their saints will intercede with God on their behalf while others make offerings to their deities and believe that by bribing the deities they have accrued a license for doing whatever sin they like. Thus they never cared to purify their souls and live pure and good lives. As regards atheists, they do not believe that there is any Being having power over them, to whom they would be responsible for their good or bad action; therefore, they consider themselves altogether independent to act in this world. Their own fancies become their gods, they live like slaves of their wishes and desires.

He who believes in Tauhid does not become disheartened under any circumstances. He has firm faith in Allah, the Master of all the treasures in the heavens and the earth, Whose grace and bounty have no limit and Whose powers are infinite. This faith imparts to his heart extraordinary satisfaction and keeps it filled with hope. In this world he might meet with rejection from every door and all means might one after another, desert him; but faith in, and

dependence on Allah do not leave him, and upon their strength he goes on struggling.

This belief produces in man a very strong determination, patience, perseverance and trust in Allah. When he makes up his mind and devotes his resources to fulfil Allah's commands to secure His pleasures, he is sure that he has the help and support of the Lord of the world. This makes him firm and strong like a mountain, and no difficulties, impediments and oppositions can make him give up his resolution.

The most important effect of man's faith in Allah on his life is that it makes him obey Allah and observe His law. One is sure that He knows everything hidden or open and is nearer to him than his own jugular vein. If he commits a sin in a secluded corner and in the darkness of night He knows it He even knows our thoughts and intentions, bad or good. We can hide from everyone, but we cannot hide anything from Allah; we can evade everyone but it is impossible to evade Him. The firmer a man's belief in this respect, the more obedient will he be to follow Allah's commands; he will shun what Allah has forbidden and he will carry out His orders wherever he may be even in solitude and darkness of night, because He is Sami' (All-Hearing) and Bas'ir (All-Seeing) and nothing is hidden from Him. ■

What The Liberhan Commission Had Said

- ◆ The finances required were channeled from the coffers of the various Sangh Parivar organisations.
- ◆ The RSS, VHP, BJP and other members of the Sangh Pativar raised funds for conducting the movement from time to time.
- ◆ It was well orchestrated and planned. In conformity with the army-like discipline of the organisations like the RSS, the manner in which the arrangements and mobilisation was carried out does not corroborate the theory that the convergence or the mobilisation of such a large number of karsevaks was for symbolic karseva alone.
- ◆ The theory or the claim made by the leaders of the movement or the icons, from political or social organisations, does not carry conviction to conclude that the demolition was carried out by the karsevaks spontaneously, out of sheer anger or emotions.
- ◆ Former prime minister AB Vajpayee, Ashok Singhal, Kalyan Singh, LK Advani, MM Joshi among others were individually culpable for the incident and for leading the country to the brink of communal discord
- ◆ These were pre-planned attacks and had been assigned to a specialized teams of RSS cadre and guided by the effective leadership at the spot
- ◆ Kalyan Singh government was the essential component needed by the Sangh Parivar for its purpose. Kalyan Singh lived up to their expectation.

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World Forum of Islamic Literature

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi*

By the time Sheikh Syed Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi finished his formal education, he had fully understood that the current decline of Muslims started only about five or six centuries ago and it was nearly the same time when Europe started coming out of darkness and its bright minds started getting inspiration for knowledge from the Muslim institutions of learning. Europe took advantage of the negligence of Muslims and raced ahead of them. About 300 years ago, the West, by virtue of its superior resources and power, started dominating the East which included many Muslim countries. The Eastern countries were too weak to stop the onslaught and suffered defeat, mainly on two fronts education and governance (i.e. public administration). The East remained engulfed in turmoil during that period and gave ample opportunity to Western educators and administrators to exert their influence on the East.

That was also the period during which a tussle between religion and politics, and between religious and worldly pursuits erupted in the minds of Western intellectuals and they completely separated these two (religion and politics) from each other. According to this separation,

individuals had complete freedom in their private lives while government regulated their social and public lives. As a result, thinking and morality of people became quite unregulated and godlessness thrived freely in the society.

This kind of separation may be acceptable to others, but there is absolutely no place for it in Islam. Islam does not differentiate between religion and worldly pursuits; politics and morality cannot be separated. Islam does not leave human beings to live a life that is driven solely by lust and desires. It gives a code of conduct that encompasses all aspects of human life.

Literature that was produced in the West during that period was also heavily influenced by this separation. So wherever the Western powers went, their literature also followed which in turn incited local population to become free from all religious constraints.

Muslims intellectuals became very concerned that it would be catastrophic if the new generation of Muslims, under the influence of Western education and culture, shunned their Islamic beliefs and values. But the question was: how to combat that danger? Sheikh Nadwi believed that the solution laid in providing right kind of literature which could replace Western literature and

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counterbalance its negative influence, and it could be done only if the material produced for that purpose was of high quality and appealed to the psyche and taste of the new generation.

Many of our elders, because of the brutal and oppressive treatment that they had received at the hands of the colonial powers, had developed such a bitterness and distaste towards the West that they did not even bother to look at what made the Western nations advance so much in knowledge and power. Instead, they fully concentrated on preserving their old heritage and spent all of their resources in defending it against the onslaught of modern thinking and literature. As a result, they remained confined to their own age-old methodology and thinking.

Contrary to that approach, the founders of Nadwatul 'Ulama felt that the aforementioned danger could be countered more effectively by providing a competing curriculum and education that could stand face-to-face with the opposing forces. So they focused on developing an educational system which could become a viable alternative to the one promoted by the West, Sheikh Nadwi had fully subscribed to this approach.

Instead of being apologetic and defensive about the allegation that Islamic teachings have become outdated, the objective of this approach

is to prove that they (Islamic teachings) are the most versatile and comprehensive, both logically and theoretically. In fact, it is needed to show through intelligent reasoning and historical facts that emancipation and survival of mankind lie only in Islamic teachings. It is also needed to show that the Western philosophy and system are fraught with great dangers of destroying humanity.

Institutions of secular education proved to be a fertile ground for nurturing Western thinking and attitude in the new generation which was exposed to books and literature which were prepared according to the Western doctrine and philosophy. As a result, many graduates of those institutions developed aversion to Islam and affinity for Western values and thinking.

On the other hand, the traditional 'ulama and religious institutions remained tied to their age-old methodology and curriculum in languages, literature and other subjects which did not appeal to the mindset of new generation. However, Sheikh Nadwi, under the purview of Nadwatul 'Ulama, adopted and advocated strategies which were more effective, both academically and psychologically. He put special emphasis on the Arabic language and literature and involved his students and associates also in developing curricular material in these areas.

The Arabic language and literature are the real treasures of Islamic knowledge and cultural heritage, and thus a good acquaintance with them is essential for any religious undertaking. Yet, the religious institutions lacked a suitable curriculum in these areas. That is why Nadwatul 'Ulama, mostly on the pattern of what was done in Arab countries, especially Egypt, took initiative to develop a curriculum with the goal of preparing students with high proficiency in Arabic — both modern and classical. Special attention was given to ensure that a strong connection remained with the language and dialect of the early periods of Islam. With these objectives in mind, a concerted effort was launched to develop educational material and books in these areas.

The first book that resulted from that effort was an elementary book *Durusul Loghatul Arabia* (Arabic) on language by Sheikh Syed Sulaiman Nadwi. Then came his (Sheikh Syed Sulaiman Nadwi's) thesaurus *Loghat Jadidah* (Arabic) which comprised of Arabic words commonly used in modern dialect. Thereafter, Sheikh Syed Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi prepared books which were substituted for the Egyptian books. These books were of high quality in both style and content and were also aimed at fostering proper Islamic attitude and character among students. This series included two books on Arabic language and a book

on Arabic literature. The first book *Qasasal-Nabiyyin* (published in English as *Stories of the Prophets*) on language had five volumes and the second one *Al-Qara at-urRashidah* (Arabic) had three volumes. The book *Mukhtarat Min Adab-al-Arab* (Arabic) on Arabic literature consisted of two volumes.

These books proved very effective in fulfilling the curricular needs of the Arabic language and literature at Nadwatul 'Ulama and earned high recognition from reputed scholars of Egypt and Syria for their style and content.

Sheikh Nadwi also guided his students in preparing several books on Arabic language, grammar, composition, and literature such as *M'oal-li-mul Inshaa* (in three volumes), *Tamrinus Sarf*, *'Ilmul Tasrif*, *Tamrihun Nahw*, *Mansurat min Adabul Arab*, and *Al Adab Al Arabi Bain Ardh wa Naqad*.

Sheikh Nadwi believed that our literature must conform to Islamic teachings and temperament in both style and content and it should serve as a better alternative to the Western literature which conflicts with Islamic thought and spirit. With this goal in mind, he and others under his supervision developed substantial amount of literature in which he highlighted differences between the Islamic and Western ideologies and objectives.

He lamented that though

concerned Muslim educators and intellectuals have opened their own educational institutions for the purpose of combating challenges of the Western thinking and culture, they have adopted the same Western curriculum which espouses non-Islamic principles and values. Furthermore, Muslim educators, despite being well qualified and plenty in number, have not yet paid attention to this problem. In his articles and books, Sheikh Nadwi often urged Muslim scholars and educators to develop literature that may foster Islamic spirit and attitude among students.

Sheikh Nadwi presented his vision and concern [of using literature to foster correct Islamic attitude and thinking] to Arabs also. He did so in the form of a paper that he presented to experts of the Arabic language and literature at the time of his nomination in 1985 to the international literary academy known as al-Majm'a al-'Ilmi al-'Arabi (Academy of Arabic Learning) of Damascus, Syria. He found many who concurred with his vision and were eager to work for it.

Encouraged by favorable response which he received for his idea in Damascus, Sheikh Nadwi convened a conference at Nadwatul 'Ulama on the topic of Islamic literature. It was the first such conference on this subject and was very successful. To follow up what had transpired in that conference, two more conferences were held, first at the

Islamic University of Madinah, and second at the Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University, Riyadh. The proposals, which were drafted at the Nadwatul 'Ulama conference, were ratified at the Madinah and Riyadh conferences.

Gradually, the above-mentioned idea about Islamic literature gained momentum and took shape of a strong movement. Several professors of Arabic literature from Arab universities met Sheikh Nadwi during his stay in Makkah and proposed to establish a central organization to carry out efforts in an organized manner. They also proposed to convene a conference in which such an organization could be formed.

Consequently, a conference was convened in the beginning of 1986 and an international organization known as the Rabita al-Adab al-Islami al-'Alami (World Forum of Islamic Literature) was founded. The conference was attended by experts of literature from all over the Islamic world and the organization's constitution was ratified. Sheikh Nadwi was unanimously appointed its president and Nadwatul 'Ulama was established as its head office.

Prof. J Abdur Rahman Rafat al-Basha of the Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, was very instrumental in the establishment and progress of the

World Forum of Islamic Literature. After Prof. al-Basha passed away, Dr. 'Abdul Quddus Abu Saleh took extraordinary interest in continuing the work. After Sheikh Nadwi passed away, Dr. Abu Saleh was appointed as the president of the World Forum of Islamic Literature and the head office was moved to Riyadh.

The World Forum of Islamic Literature has grown considerably over the years. In the beginning, there was some skepticism about its worthiness, but gradually its importance and need became widely recognized. Its branches have opened in several countries. Now it has branches in about a dozen countries. These branches arrange meetings and seminars, work to promote Islamic literature and prepare literary material as needed. In order to co-ordinate efforts in various countries, two regional offices have been opened, one in each in Riyadh. Each regional office guides activities countries and has a vice-president.

The officers of the organization are appointed or their term is renewed every third year in a conference. There is a central board of trustees which has one or two representatives from each participating country. The president and the vice-presidents are members of this board. The board of trustees serves as the advisory council. The board meets every year to review and discuss policies and incomplete/unattended

issues. The organization publishes literary material. It has so far published several valuable books. The central as well as the regional offices publish monthly and quarterly magazines and newsletters which contain news and articles pertaining to Islamic literature.

In his writings, Sheikh Nadwi argued that the thinking and attitude of Muslims should be endowed with the spirit and motive of Islam, and Islamic literature should be geared towards that goal. He clearly articulated this role of Islamic literature and satisfied many skeptics. As the work of the World Forum of Islamic Literature progressed and gained recognition, his pioneering contribution was widely acknowledged.

Sheikh Nadwi emphasized in his writings that literature has a profound connection with the feelings and convictions of a person and affects all aspects of the human life. It is very shortsighted to limit literature to entertainment purposes only. Islamic spirit makes literature sublime and beneficial and does not curtail its scope. His views on this subject are represented in the books *Nazrat fil Adab* (by Shekh Nadwi), *Rawaye min Adabud D'awah* (by Sheikh Nadwi), and *Deen aur Adab* (by Rabey Hasani) and in the preface of the book *Mukhtaarat Min Adab-al-Arab* (mentioned earlier).

The following is an excerpt from the speech that Sheikh Nadwi delivered

at the end of the inaugural seminar of the World Forum of Islamic Literature that was held at Nadwatul 'Ulama in 1985:

This is a gathering of literary people. All of you have been students of literature and now you are its spokesmen and interpreters. You know that if something is abbreviated, it reduces to a dot and if it is enlarged, it becomes a line, a page, a book, and a huge depository of books. This is exactly what literature is and this is exactly why this seminar has been convened. Since I am in a literary gathering at this moment, I will take a cue from the following couplet of the renowned Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib:

*faryad ki koi lai nahi
naalah pabande naiy nahi hai*

A lament has no format

A cry knows no tune

Crying and laughing know no boundary — national or tribal. Nor do the joy becomes overpowering. These are expressions of emotions. Thus they (crying and laughing) require inner feelings. A cry is not real if it is not triggered by an internal feeling, pain, or distress. A laugh is not real if it requires an external inducement.

The same applies to literature also. It does not belong to any nation or country. It has no gender. It does not have

any specific terminology. It is not bound by any protocol. Yet, strangely enough, many of those who have dedicated their lives to literature and given their best to it view the vast ocean of literature only as a small vessel. A piece of literature is valuable whether it comes from a religious person, a prophet, or a divine scripture. The criteria is that it must be articulated in such a way that it affects the heart, its composer feels that he has fully conveyed the message, and the audience enjoys and accepts it.

Yesterday, in the Arabic seminar, "I had mentioned that the appreciation of beauty was that it (beauty) must be admired regardless of which form it came in. You cannot restrict a nightingale to perch on this flower and not on the other. What kind of appreciation and justice is this if a flower is recognized and enjoyed as a rose if it blooms under the shade of a tavern and is considered unattractive if it blooms in the courtyard of a masjid. Is it a crime for the rose to grow in a masjid? I could not recite Dr. Iqbal's couplet there [because it was in Urdu], but I am reciting it here:

*husn-e-beparwa ko apni be-naqabi
ke liye*

*hun agar shehron se bann payare
to shehar achche ke bann*

To the reckless beauty, for her unveiling

If woodland is lovelier than town, is

town better or woodland?

Are we concerned about the reckless beauty, city or desert? We have dealt literature the same treatment. If you permit, let me recite the following Persian couplet:

*dile 'abs lab pe shikwah dana kunad
shisha taa na shikand sadaa na
kunad*

A heart does not complain until it gets hurt

A glass does not make noise until it breaks

If you hear the rattling noise of glass, you know that it has broken. Thus it is the cry and protest of a broken heart and broken goblet about the restrictions which have been imposed on literature that it must wear certain attire. Literature is most independent of formalities. Restrictions of coming in a certain outfit and speaking a certain language are totally unacceptable to it. If it is literature, it deserves to be seated on throne and given recognition even though it may come in torn and old clothes. If it comes in the robe of a king, but does not know how to express itself properly, it is not literature. Something does not become literature simply because it has come from a person who speaks English, is so-called progressive, is a professor or chairman of the department of literature or is a president. A genuine piece of literature may be heard in the call of a

beggar, lullaby of a mother who is lulling her baby to sleep or the midnight supplication of a godly person who wants only his Lord to listen to him. Thus real literature may come from any person, in any form or in any language.

Unfortunately, it has happened, especially in the recent past, that certain frivolous conditions have been imposed on literature, such as it must make fun of religion or it must include some joke and humor. But let me ask you what these things (joke and humor) have to do with literature. It is possible that the joker may be a literary person, but literature does not require him to joke. It all depends upon his taste, attitude, and upbringing. A man of literature, like any other human being, may say something which may be right or wrong. It is his individual act and has nothing to do with literature.

Nowadays, it is argued that a piece of literature is not genuine unless it talks about progressiveness, makes fun of old traditions, and criticizes religious scriptures. As a humble student of literature, let me tell you quite frankly that literature did in fact originate from divine scriptures. Literature was non-existent. When God sent His messengers to guide people, He gave them language and words with their meaning. This is where literature came from. History has no trace of literature prior to the coming of divine scriptures.

If someone claims contrary to this, I challenge him to come forward to tell us when did literature begin and when did the world come to know about it?

Literature began with divine scriptures and the holy Quran inscribed the everlasting seal of perfection on it. Allah has revealed in Quran:

Which the trusted spirit descended with. To (communicate) to your heart that you may be a warner, in eloquent Arabic.

-Ash-Shu'ara, 26: 193-95

How high Allah has elevated literature by praising it together with His scripture! Quran is a miracle and is in clear Arabic tongue. No one is more self-sufficing (as-samad) than Allah. Yet, He has the best possible form of expression to explain His message to humans.

Not only did Sheikh Nadwi verbally advocate these ideas and invite others to them, but he fully embodied them in his writings and speeches in both Urdu and Arabic. He was an accomplished writer with extraordinary literary skills. His unique accomplishment was that he excelled simultaneously in three areas of literature — pure academic, literature for children, and perceptive writing (dealing with intellectual and ideological issues). He was widely acclaimed for his diversity and was recognized as a thinker, a da'i and a man of literature at

the same time.

Sheikh Nadwi's contributions to Islamic literature in clarifying its role and purpose and in advancing its cause were highly appreciated all over the Islamic world. Several major conferences have been held on Islamic literature in various parts of- the world and prominent writers and experts of language and literature have participated in them representing their countries and regions. International seminars on Islamic literature have been held in Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Europe, and USA. In India alone, more than 20 such seminars have been held on the national level.

Sheikh Nadwi was very particular about attending these seminars and conferences. In addition to presiding over these events, he often presented his own papers. Under his supervision, the Riyadh and Lucknow branches of the World Forum of Islamic Literature started publishing Majal-latul Adab al-Islami (Arabic) and Karwan-e-Adab (Urdu) respectively. These two journals are published every three months. The journal Qaflaye, Adab Islami (Urdu) is published from Lahore, Pakistan. These branches regularly publish articles and books on important topics due to which a good collection of material has come into existence. ■

Fundamental Doctrines of Islam

- S. Athar Husain

Till now we have been discussing the achievements of the Prophet in the temporal field, his encounters with the enemies of Islam who vainly tried to throttle the new movement. Their machinations, conspiracies and assaults having come to nought, the new religion went on prospering and claiming an ever increasing number of adherents. The defeat of the enemies of Islam having given some respite to the Prophet and the Muslims, let us see what the Prophet did over the years in the spiritual field to eradicate evils, to reform society and to guide humanity to the path of righteousness.

The foremost article of faith preached by the Prophet was the Unity of God but before coming to this, we might examine some other important beliefs stressed by him which would facilitate understanding of this basic doctrine of Islam.

1. DIGNITY OF MAN

Before the advent of Islam, a large section of mankind gave a very low place to itself in the Scheme of Creation. The age of science and understanding of the forces of nature and their application to man's service had not till then dawned. Born in superstition and to practices of hedonic cults and having yet to know the vastness of his own potentialities, man held almost everything in nature in

fearsome awe. To protect his own frail being he thought he must propitiate these mysterious and frightening elements of nature. To those which did not frighten him but gave him some measure of comfort or benefit he was so immensely grateful that he revered them out of sheer gratitude. The discoveries of science, the harnessing of the forces of nature to his own service, his inventions and mastery of space and the seas, his ingenuity and skill have made man more confident of himself, and made him realise that he is far superior to all other creatures, and though this fear and reverence of the mighty forces of nature may now seem unbelievable yet even today quite a big section of mankind has not rationally examined its beliefs. The Prophet of Islam raised humanity to the dignity which was its due and proclaimed in a resounding voice:

“Oh people; these things are not your masters but you are their masters. They have been created for you and you have not been created for them. They have bowed down to you, why do you bow to them. Oh mankind, you are the vicegerent of God on earth and therefore the universe and all its creatures have been made subservient to you and you have not been made subservient to them. They are for you and you are not for them. “

The Quran stated that everything else was created for the service of man:

“And He hath subjected to you all that there is in the Heavens and all that there is on the Earth; all is from Him. Verily, herein are signs for those who reflect.” (Q. 45: i3) “He hath constrained the night and the day, the moon and the sun to be of service unto you and the stars are made subservient by His Command. Lo; herein indeed are portents for people who have sense.” (Q. 16: 12)

“And He it is who hath constrained the sea to be of service that ye eat fresh meat from thence and bring forth thence ornaments which ye wear, and thou seest the ships ploughing it that ye [mankind] may seek of His bounty, and that haply ye may give thanks.” (Q. 16 : 14)

“He hath made everything on the earth for you.” (Q. 2: 3)

In these and numerous other verses the Quran revealed to man his true position and status in the scheme of Creation and exhorted him not to fear and not to worship anyone save God nor to expect any gains from them. The Quran states, “Verily we have bestowed esteem and honour upon the progeny of Adam.” Man should ponder whether it was befitting for him, the most exalted of creatures, to bow down to anyone save his Creator.

But men raised their fellow beings, presenting themselves either in the shape of apostles or powerful kings

like the Pharaohs and Nimrood or in the garb of holy saints, to the status of God. The Quran stated that all other deities which man has set up besides God, cannot create anything and are utterly powerless:

“O Mankind; A similitude is coined, so pay ye heed to it: Lo; those on whom ye call beside Allah can never create a fly though they combine together for the purpose. And if the fly took something from them, they could not rescue it from it. So weak are [both] the seeker and the sought!” (Q. 22 : 73)

The Prophet warned mankind against such beliefs. Even the prophets cannot say: “ ‘Be slaves of me instead of Allah’ “ (Q. 3 : 79)

“And He commanded you not that ye should take the angels and the Prophets for lords.” (Q. 3: 80)

2. SINLESSNESS AT BIRTH

The second fundamental message the Prophet gave to mankind was that man is born sinless and uninhibited by any past sins or blemish upon his conscience. It is the deeds of his life time that either tarnish his conscience and make him the very embodiment of evil or lead him to angelic purity and goodness. He is not to be haunted by shadows of any sins committed in any past life, nor is he the inheritor of a sin committed by any remote ancestor requiring the sacrifice of anyone else for his salvation. Both the

conceptions are according to Islam, incongruent with the idea of God's justice, for no one can be held responsible for any factual or legendary sin committed by his original ancestor or in a past he neither remembers nor can do anything to atone. Prophet proclaimed that redemption and damnation are individual and everyone is his own redeemer for he bears within his heart all possibilities of spiritual success or failure. Islam gave a clean slate to man and it was for him to fashion his life in the way he chose and to make or mar his destiny:

"In its favour is that which it has earned and against it is that which it has become guilty of." (Q. 2 : 286)

"We have created man in the best of moulds but allowed him to fall to the lowest of the low save those who believe and do righteous deeds." (Q. 95)

Again it is stated:

"Abandon what is false and turn steadfastly to the _path of devotion— the path of Allah for which man by nature is fitted. There is no altering of the ways of Allah. That is the right religion, but most people know it not." (Q. 30 : 29)

"We have created man from a drop. We developed it and made it into a man with faculties to hear and see. We gave him discretion to follow the guided path, it is for him to follow the Truth or be ungrateful."

"Man shall have nothing but what he strives for." (Q. 53 40)

"And whatever suffering ye suffer, it is what your hands have wrought." (Q. 42 : 29)

3. UNITY OF MANKIND

The third fundamental doctrine enunciated by the Prophet was the unity of Mankind. Having shown man his rightful place in the scheme of Creation and given him glad tidings about his inherent purity and goodness, he wanted to bridge the gulf man had created between man and man. To unite men in one fraternity, he wiped away distinctions and inequalities based on colour, caste, race, sex and creed. Some of the cleavages were the result of man's pride and arrogance and his superiority over others in the matter of prowess and skill; but deep down these distinctions had been fostered by the religions he followed. He was led to believe that his was the chosen race and he refused to acknowledge that God could have provided for the spiritual welfare and guidance of other peoples living on the Earth and to have sent prophets to them. It is the distinction of Islam alone that it preached effectively that all mankind is a brotherhood and that there is no race on earth which did not have its prophets. Islam alone enjoins upon its followers to believe in all the prophets without any reservation. Centuries of education and advancement and contact with Islam have led other peoples also to regard

man as man, but even today to many it is only an ideology to which lip service is occasionally paid. The feeling of fraternity is yet to be imbibed by the majority of men and the prophets of other peoples are yet to be respected. But through the Prophet of Islam was revealed 1,400 years back the Divine verse:

“Verily we have sent thee with the Truth, a comforter and Warner; and there is not a people but a Warner hath not passed among them.” (Q. 35 : 22)

“Verily we sent Messengers before thee, of some of whom we have told thee, and of some whom we have not told thee.” (Q. 40: 78)

A Muslim cannot be a muslim unless he believes in all the prophets and in all the Divine books. Muslims are those:

“who believe in what has been bestowed upon thee [Muhammad], and what was bestowed aforetime.” (Q. 2 : 4)

Lest the Muslims may feel that the Arabic language which the Quran was revealed was alone sacrosanct, they were told that God expresses himself in all tongues:

“And we never sent a Messenger save with the language of his fold, that he might make the message clear for them.” (Q. 17: 74)

The Quran calls upon man to remember that “all mankind was at first but one community that subsequently it

“stood divided” and that it should be man’s endeavour to restore its unity. (Q. 10 : 19, 2 : 208) It observes:

“Whosoever killeth a human being for other than manslaughter or mischief in the earth, it shall be as if he hath killed all mankind, and whosoever saveth the life of one, it shall be as if he hath saved the life of all mankind.” (Q. 5 : 35)

Collecting the Quraish, the Prophet said:

“Oh men; God has taken away from you the arrogance and pride of ancestry of heathen days. An Arab has no excellence or superiority over a non-Arab than that which is secured to him by his God-fearing and righteousness. You are all progeny of Adam and Adam himself was of clay.”

In the sight of God he alone is superior who is more righteous, no other distinctions are recognised, no man-made or geographical frontiers stand in the way. Men should not only eschew racial hatred and notions of superiority but should also develop goodwill and love for all mankind, for the Prophet treated mankind as the family of God:

“All Creatures of God are His family, and he is the most beloved of God who loveth best His Creatures.”

“Respect the ways of Allah [or the laws inherent in Nature and be affectionate to the family of Allah. “

The Prophet cast a moral obligation upon every man to be mindful

of the interest and welfare of others:

“Every one of you is a keeper unto every other, and will be accountable for the welfare of his fold.”

To eliminate friction and to promote unity and abiding fraternal relationship between man and man, the Quran calls upon man to develop the sense of catholicity in life and to care for each other.

“O ye Mankind! Surely we have created you a male and female, and made you tribes and families that you may identify and care for each other; surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the one among you most mindful of his duty. Allah is knowing, Fully Awake.” (Q. 42 : 24)

4. PROPHETHOOD DEFINED

As the ages rolled on, fables and legendary stories gathered round the personalities of the founders of many a religion. Enthralled by stories of their miraculous powers and with no historical data to check them up, their followers raised them to the status of God.

According to Islam, prophets are neither God, nor His images or incarnation, nor His sons. They were merely men like any other men, but specially gifted and innocent persons chosen by God to guide erring humanity and to convey to it His Message. By themselves they had no control over anything in God’s creation nor did they possess, by themselves, any

supernatural powers. For himself, the Prophet of Islam declared in the Quranic verse:

“Say [Oh Prophet] that I am a man like you; I am nothing but a Man and a Messenger.”

“O Prophets! ye are but of one order.” (Q. 23 : 54)

Men as they were, prophets were superior to other people by virtue of their righteousness and piety. They could hold communion with God and Divine messages were revealed to them. They were innocent and through them God rehearsed His Signs. They exhorted mankind to lead a virtuous life and were true, obedient and distinguished servants of God who deserve all respect and obedience.

5. DIRECT APPROACH TO GOD

Another distinctive feature of the preachings of the Prophet was that it established a direct relationship between man and his God. It abolished the ecclesiastical and priestly class who, in the name of religion and as guardians of the faith, pretending to possess spiritual powers and often threatening to invoke divine wrath and displeasure, were exploiting and persecuting its frightened following who were terrorised into believing that mere confession to priests or receipt of chits of good conduct from them would serve as passports to Heaven while their displeasure would entail everlasting perdition. As Lord Headley puts it in his

book, *A Western Awakening to Islam*:

‘The advent of Muhammad, some six hundred years after Christ, exposed the unreality of all such ideas as atonements, priestly interventions, supplication to the saints, and those other cumbersome and involved methods of approaching the Almighty. However grand the Mosaic laws, however beautiful and forgiving the precepts of the Holy Prophet of Nazareth, it must be admitted that Muhammad’s teachings contained the most sublime message, over-riding by its simplicity all obstacles in the way of the believer on his path to God. . . . Indeed, it is surprising that human beings with brains and intelligence should have been so foolish as to allow dogmas and the tricks of sacerdotalism to obscure their view of Heaven, and their Almighty Father, who is always approachable by each one of His Creatures, whether human or saintly. The key to heaven is always there and can be&xrned by the humblest or most miserable human being. It is like the blessed air we breathe, free to all God’s Creatures, and those who try to make mankind think otherwise are probably guided by interested motives, e.g. salaries and stipends, which keep professions going or some other worldly advantages.’

‘The Quran sums up:

‘They take their priests and monks for their lords, besides God, and Christ the Son of Mary, although they are

commanded to worship one God only; there is no God but He: far be that from Him which they associate with him”.

“O believers! of a truth, many of the priests and monks devour the substance of men in vanity, and turn them away from the way of God.” (Q. 9 : 34)

So effective was the preaching that this class never emerged in Islam.

6. CONCEPT OF GOD

Having set out the premises, we may now come to the most important and foremost belief of Islam, viz: the Oneness of God.

From time immemorial, belief in a Supreme Being has existed in almost all religions. It is only in the conception of that Being, His oneness or plurality, His manifestations and Attributes that man has frequently stumbled. The main reasons for this were three: the use of symbols, material or imaginary aids to typify or represent God or His Attributes; the separation of attributes from the Entity and treating them as entities by themselves; and thirdly the attempt to reconcile the duality of good and bad actions. The use of symbols and similitudes might have originated in an attempt to form a more tangible conception of the Supreme Being but in course of time the symbols themselves became gods and God was pushed to the background. The separation of attributes from the Entity and their symbolic representation led to

a multiplicity of gods. It was further argued that as all actions ultimately emanate from the Supreme Being, there should be separate Beings for good and bad actions.

These philosophical riddles, conflicting notions and myths were solved by the Prophet when he announced that “There is no God but God.”

To instil belief and conviction in man, he appealed, in Quranic verses, to his inner consciousness and exhorted him to observe the forces or laws of Nature, “for the individual consciousness of man and the Nature that surrounds him are coordinate manifestations of the one and the same Creative Will.” The purpose behind repeated exhortations in the Quran to observe and study the Laws of Universe might not have been so evident in the medieval age but the scientific pursuits of man have firmly established the existence of Law. Everything in the Universe, every atom of nature and its various combinations owes its existence and development to implicit obedience to this law. The Quran uses several synonyms for this Law: Ways of God, His limits and His bounds, His government, His pre-measurement of good and evil, the Throne He sits on, etc.—all conveying different aspects and functions of Law. Man can never form, in his mortal life, a complete idea of Ultimate Reality but he can know something of it through His ways of work

in His Creation. The plan, the harmony and the balance in the Law loudly announce to everyone willing to hear that there is a Supreme Creative Power, the Lord of the Universe, the God Almighty who governs the universe according to a pre-conceived plan. It is for this reason that the Quran states:

“In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that sail in the sea with that which profit men, and the water that Allah sends down from the clouds, then gives life with it to the earth after its death, and spreads in it all kinds of animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, these are signs for a people who understand.” (Q. 2 : 164)

“[Blessed be He] who hath created seven heavens one above another. No defect canst thou see in the handiwork of God of Mercy. Repeat thy gaze—Seest thou a single flaw? Then twice more repeat thy gaze: Thy gaze will return to thee dulled and weary.” (Q. 67 ; 3-6)

“Allah it is who raised up the heavens without visible supports, then mounted the Throne and compelled the sun and the moon to be of service, each runneth unto an appointed term; He ordeth the course.” (Q. 13 : 2)

The Quran does not base its arguments on intellectual postulates. On the contrary, it appeals to man’s very nature and instincts. It is against his

nature that he should reflect over the working of the Universe and yet deny the existence of an all-embracing Providence. His very nature will proclaim that what he beholds cannot exist without a Providence. The sense of God is ingrained in his nature. He can deny everything but he cannot deny his own nature. If he ever denies it, it is through indifference or arrogance and he is to be brought round not so much by intellectual arguments as by a direct appeal to his heart and conscience. Man's own nature is an argument against himself.

“Nay, man is a telling witness against himself, although he tenders excuses.”
(Q. 75 : 14-15)

The Quran addresses human nature and invites an answer from its very depths:

“Say: who supplieth you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? Who hath power over hearing and sight? And who bringeth forth the living from the dead, and bringeth forth the dead from living. And who ruleth over all things? They will surely say: ‘God’ will ye not therefore mind Him?” (Q. 10 : 32-33)

It asks:

“Is not God the more worthy of the gods they join with him? Is not He [the more worthy] who hath made the heavens and the earth, and hath sent down rains to you from the sky by which We cause luxuriant groves to spring up.

It is not in your power to cause the trees to grow. What! a god with God, Yea! ‘They are people who ascribe equals [unto Him]?’

“Is not He (the more worthy) who hath set the Earth so firm and placed rivers in its fold and hath placed mountains upon it and set a barrier between the two seas? What! a god with God. Nay, most of them know not.

“Is not He [the more worthy] who answereth the oppressed when they cry to Him, and taketh off their ills and make you to succeed your sires on the earth? What! a god with God? Little do they reflect!

“Is not He [the more worthy] who guideth you in the darkness of the land and of the sea, and who sendeth forth the winds as heralds of His mercy? What! a god with God? Far from God be, the Exalted High, what ye join with Him!

“Is not He [the more worthy] who projects creation, then reneweth it, and who supplieth you out of the heaven and the earth? What! a god with God. Say: Bring forth your proofs, if ye speak the truth!” (Q. 27 : 60-65)

In his arrogance, pedantry or indifference, man may deny the existence of the Almighty Providence but when any calamity overtakes him and his hopes in his own ingenuity, and material and other worldly aids begin to sink, he calls, with all earnestness and humility, only upon the Supreme Being,

the Benevolent God. Observes the Quran:

“And when affliction strikes a man, he calls on us whether lying on his side or sitting or standing, but when We remove his affliction from him, he passes on as though he had never called on Us.” (Q. 10 : 12)

“When harm afflicts a man, he calls upon us, and when We give him a favour from Us, he forgets that for which he cried unto Us and sets up rivals to Allah that he may beguile (men) from His way.” (Q. 39 : 8)

As Maulana Azad put it, “The innumerable references made in the Quran to the diverse aspects of the system of providence, to the means of life provided to every object in the universe, to the immutability of the Laws of Universe, to the plan, harmony, proportion and perfection in nature, form the basis of the Quranic argument in support of the unity of God.”

Everything in the Universe submits to His laws except arrogant and misguided man.

“The seven heavens raise their voice of praise and all who are therein; neither is there aught which doth not celebrate his praise; but their notes of praise ye understand not.” (Q. 17 : 47)

“Such then is God, your true Lord: and when truth is gone, what remaineth but error? How then are you so perverted?” (Q .10 : 33)

“O man! who hath misled thee against thy generous Lord, Who hath

created thee, and moulded thee and shaped thee aright?” (Q. 82: 6-7)

Basing its concept of God on the inherent universal urges of human nature, the Quran calls upon man to reflect and ponder:

“On Earth are signs for men of firm belief, and also in their own selves; Will ye not then behold them?” (Q. 51: 20-21)

And when man does so, God’s guidance is there to lead him aright:

“And whoso maketh efforts for Us, in our ways will we guide them.” (Q. 29: 69)

The Quran not only stresses in the most effective manner the oneness of God, it also enables us to have a glimpse of the splendour of Divine attributes. Possessing a finite intellect and limited perception, man cannot comprehend the absolute. In trying to visualise Reality, he had conjured up human qualities for it. “The peculiarity of the Quran is that it lifts the veils of anthropomorphic similitudes from across the vision of God and allows us to take a transcendental view of Him in His attributes.”

“No vision taketh Him in,

But he taketh in all vision and He is the Subtle the all- aware.” (Q. 6 : 103)

The shortest sura of the Quran describes in the most lucid manner not only His unity but also his transcendental attributes, shedding away all accretions and superimposed veils:

“Say: is God, The One
on Whom all depend!

He begetteth not, and He is not
begotten,

And there is none like him.” (Q. 112:
1-4)

“So strike not any similitudes for God.”
(Q. 16: 74)

“Nought is there like unto Him.” (Q. 42:
11)

“God is the light of the heavens and
the earth; the likeness of His light is
as a niche wherein is a lamp, the lamp
in a glass, the glass as it were a
glittering star kindled from a blessed
tree, an olive that is neither of the East
nor of the West whose oil well-nigh
would shine, even if no fire touched it,
light upon light, God guides to His light
whom He will!” (Q. 24: 35)

The Quran stresses the
“Uniqueness in essence” and
“Uniqueness in attributes” of God but its
transcendentalism is not of the nature
of nullification or a mere philosophic
outlook. God is not only transcendental
but is also immanent and omnipresent.
He can be approached by the humblest
of his servants for the fulfilment of his
wishes and aspirations, for the
contentment of his mind and the peace
of his soul, for his protection and safety
and for God’s mercy, grace, bounty,
forgiveness and guidance:

“And when my servants ask thee
[O Prophet] concerning Me, then surely
I am nigh unto them and answer the call

of the suppliant that crieth unto Me.” (Q.
2: 186)

“And your Lord saith: ‘Call Me and
I will respond to your call?’ (Q. 40: 60)

“O ye who believe! Obey Allah and
the messenger when He calleth you to
that which quickeneth you, and know
that Allah cometh in between the man
and his own heart and that He it is unto
whom ye will be gathered.” (Q. 8: 24)
However transcendent, God is yet
“nearer man than his jugular vein.” (Q.
50: 15)

Man is taught to rely on God in all
circumstances so that he should not lose
heart in failures and difficulties:

“And whoever trusts in Allah, He is
sufficient for him; surely Allah attains
His purpose and indeed Allah has
appointed a measure for everything.”
(Q. 65: 3)

“With none but Allah is the direction of
my affairs to a right issue; on Him do I
rely and to Him do I turn.”

In God contentment of mind is to
be sought—Says the Quran:

“Now surely in the remembrance
of Allah do hearts find rest.” (Q. 13: 28)

God is the creator and Supreme
Ruler but he is also the friend of man:

“Allah is the friend of those who
believe; He brings them out of darkness
into the light.”

“And Allah is sufficient as a Friend
and Allah is sufficient as Helper and
Allah is the Friend of those who have
regard for their duty. He is the Guardian,

Friend or have they taken guardians besides Him. But Allah is the Guardian Friend, and He gives life to the dead and He has power over all things.”

His kindness and mercy are boundless beyond the conception of man. He is merciful to the believers and to the unbelievers, to the righteous and sinners alike:

“O My servants who have acted extravagantly against your own souls, do not despair of the Mercy of Allah, for Allah forgiveth all Sins, Gracious, Merciful is He.” (Q 39: 54).

“Despair not of Allah’s mercy, for none despairs of Allah’s mercy except the unbelievers.”

“God has ordained mercy on Himself; He is the Lord of all encompassing mercy, His Mercy encompassing all things.” “And if you count Allah’s favours, you will not be able to number them.” and “surely thy Lord is full of goodness towards men, though most of them are ungrateful.” (Q. 16: 18)

The Quran teaches man not only to fear God for his sins and disobedience of His Laws, as some less informed persons have supposed, but also to love God:

“Those who believe love God more than anything else”

And

“Remember God as ye remember your own fathers, or with a yet more intense remembrance” (Q. 2: 196) — for God of Islam is “Wadood” meaning

full of love: ‘“Rauf” meaning that He has greater love for his Creatures than a father has for his son; and “Hannan” denoting intensity of love greater than that of a mother for her offspring, but similitudes of father and mother are not applicable to Him.

In Islam the conception of God and faith in Him is thus made a living, vibrating and cherished force pulsating in every sphere of man’s activity and submission to His orders the rule of life.

7. LIFE HEREAFTER

Another fundamental belief of Islam, as preached by the Quran and the Prophet, is the belief in the life after death. To those who doubted Resurrection the Quran addressed in the following, amongst a host of others:

“O mankind! if ye are in doubt concerning the Resurrection, then lo! We have created you from dust, then from a drop of seed, then from a clot, then from a little lump of flesh shapely and shapeless, that We may make [it] clear for you. And We cause what We will to remain in the wombs for an appointed time, and afterwards We bring you forth as infants, then (give you growth] that ye attain your full strength. And among you there is he who dieth [young] and among you there is he who is brought to the most abject time of life, so that, after knowledge he knoweth naught, And thou [Muhammad] seest the earth barren, but when We send down water thereon, it doth thrill and swell and put

forth every lovely kind [or every lovely pair]. That is because Allah, He is the Truth and because He quickeneth the dead, and because He is able to do all things; and because the Hour will come, there is no doubt thereof; and because Allah will raise those who are in the graves.” (Q. 22: 5)

The Quran says that the earthly life is an organic stage of the eternal life and disappears only to assume a higher form:

“Your creation and resurrection are but as [the creation and raising of] a single soul.” (Q. 31: 28)

“And surely from state to state, shall ye be carried forward.” (Q. 84: 19)

The life in this world is not an end in itself but is a transitory stage to a higher, fuller and abiding existence. It is ephemeral no doubt but Islam holds it, in contrast to some other religions, as nevertheless extremely important. It has a tremendous instrumental value. In fact, it is the key to the Life hereafter. This earth is a testing ground and upon the achievements of this life will depend whether a man will enjoy eternal bliss- “what no eye hath seen and no ear hath heard and no mind of man hath conceived”- or terrible agony, anguish and damnation in Hell. The earthly life is neither to be despised nor to be given exaggerated value, nor is it to be frittered away in idle pursuits and gay abandon. It is to be led in an orderly manner in conformity with the Divine Laws, for the Universe has not been

created for pastime nor is the life of this world a mere accident. Says the Quran:

“What! Do you think we have created you for pastime and that ye should not be brought back to Us?” (Q. 23: 117)

With all the planning, circumspection and meticulous care that have gone into the making of the Universe with its innumerable objects and forces for the use and service of man, and with all the faculties and potentialities that man has been endowed, as the most exalted of all creatures, he has not been created just to live for a few moments and then get completely annihilated:

“Thinketh man that he is to be left to drift?” (Q. 75: 36)

On the contrary, the earthly life has a definite purpose to serve and a goal towards which it has to move. And the goal is the “Life Hereafter”. Its purpose is to provide the key to the life after death:

“In all truth God created the heaven and the earth that he may reward every one as he shall have wrought; and they shall not be wronged.” (Q. 45: 21)

The basic principle of this life is its accountability in the Life beyond. That alone gives it meaning and significance. The reactions of man’s deeds are indelibly impressed upon his soul and carried to the other world:

“And every man’s deeds have we fastened about his neck. And on the Day of Resurrection, will We bring

forthwith to him a book which shall be professed to him wide open; 'Read thy book:' there needeth none but thyself to make an account against thee this day." (Q. 17: 14-15) and "every man will be brought individually before his Lord."

"By the soul and Him who perfected it, And inspired it [with discernment of] what is

Wrong for it and what is right for

He is indeed successful who causeth it to grow,

And he is indeed a failure who stunteth it." (Q. 91: 7-10)

A great majority of men believe in the life hereafter but how few of us are mindful of it. It should have been the top-most concern of man, but how few are guided in their deeds by any fear of it. If we were really mindful of it, all the injustice and cruelty, wickedness and vice, falsehood and treachery, exploitation and oppression, greed and avarice, corruption and foul play, licentiousness and debauchery, hatred and jealousy that we see in the world today, in spite of its advancement and enlightenment, would have been greatly reduced if not altogether eliminated. This is why the Prophet in hundreds of his sayings and the Quran in hundreds of its verses have so repeatedly drawn the attention of man to the life hereafter, have given such vivid descriptions of Heaven and Hell, and have exhorted man to do righteous deeds. Whether we take the descriptions in the literal sense

or give them symbolic import. Heaven will be a place of supreme and eternal bliss and Hell a terrible affair. The Day of Resurrection and Reckoning will be either an extremely happy event or, in the words of Quran, "a calamity".

"The Calamity?

What is the calamity.

Ah, what will convey unto thee what the calamity is!

A day wherein mankind will be as thickly scattered moths

And the mountains will become as carded wool.

Then, as for him whose scales are heavy [with good works].

He will live a pleasant life.

But as for him whose scales are light, A Bereft and Hungry one will be his mother.

Ah, what will convey unto thee what she is—

Raging Fire," (Sura 91)

"When Earth is shaken with her quake, And Earth yieldeth up her burdens, And man saith: what aileth her?

That day she will relate her chronicles, Because thy Lord inspireth her, That day mankind will issue forth in scattered

groups to be shown their deeds.

And whoso doeth good an atom's weight will see it then,

And whoso doeth ill an atom's weight will see it then. (Sura 89) ■

History of Conflict

- >1528: Babri Masjid built
- >1853: First recorded incident of violent conflict between 'Hindus and Muslims
- >1885: A Hindu priest files a plea to build a temple next to the mosque but is denied permission
- >1949: An idol of Ram Lalla appears inside the mosque. Hindus offer prayers. City magistrate attaches the property
- >1959: Religious sect Nirmohi Akhara files a case claiming rights to the land
- >1961: Sunni Waqf Board puts in its claim for restoration of the mosque
- >1990: Then BJP president L K Advani goes on a rath yatra. Thousands of karsevaks gather in Ayodhya. Mosque is partially damaged and 30 are killed in police firing
- >Dec. 6, 1992: The Babri Masjid is demolished by frenzied karsevaks. Rioting breaks out all over India, leaving 1,200 dead
- >July 8, 1993: Special CBI court in Rae Bareilly constituted
- >April 2002: Three high court judges begin hearings on determining who owns the Ayodhya site
- >June 2009: The Liberhan Commission submits report to PM Manmohan Singh
- >Aug. 17, 2010: Charges framed in special CBI court against 28 people
- >Sept 30, 2010: Allahabad HC rules that the site be divided between the Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara
- >May 2011: SC suspends the HC ruling after Hindu and Muslim groups appeal.
- >May 30, 2017: Supreme Court transfers Rae Bareilly case to Lucknow.
- >July 19, 2019: Supreme Court extends timeframe of criminal trial by six months.
- >August 2019: SC extends deadline of criminal trial till September 30.
- >Nov 9, 2019: In the title dispute case, SC rules in favour of Ram Lalla, the child deity.
- >Sept 30, 2020: All accused in the Babri Masjid demolition case acquitted.

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Islamic Media in Theory And Practice

- Nazrul Hafeez Nadwi

Conceptual Aspect

Allah (S WT) is the Lord, the Creator and the Cherisher of the whole universe and Islam, being His final revelation unto the world, is the religion of the whole mankind. Those who accept this Ultimate Reality are called the Muslims and it is their divine duty to propagate this message to others who have not embraced it yet. This had been the duty of the all the Messengers (AS) of Allah (SWT). The Holy Quran says:

“Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching”.
(16:25)

“The Messenger’s duty is to proclaim
(The Message) (50:99)

And the Messenger (SAW). says:

“Propagate from me even if it be a single
verse”.

The Sahabah (RA) (Companions of the Messenger of Allah) and then the dai’s (profunder) of Islam preached the Islamic message to the people of the world and even today, it is obligatory on the Muslims to present Islam to the whole mankind. If they shirk from this responsibility, it will be a great sin.

Thus media and daw’ah (Islamic preaching) are indissolubly linked.

In fact the Holy Quran has used the word Daw’ah (nearly) as a synondm for media and it is hard to find any alternative

to this interpretation. Media acts as a means of daw’ah to glorify Islam.

On the basis of the Quranic use of the term daw’ah, the various connotations of this term can be:

Communicating message to all and/ or to a particular personality with the intention of love and good wishing for him.

Daw’ah demands that a da’i must know the psyche of the mad’u (whom the message is conveyed to or in simple terms who is invited to Islam) so that he can succeed in his mission (without annoying the mad’u).

It also means that a da’i must have a firm faith in what he preaches. The more he believes in his own message, the more he will feel restless to propagate it to others and the more people will get motivated by him.

Daw’ah also conveys the meaning that a da’i should watch and ward his target people to know whether his propagation has held the ground. Briefly speaking, daw’ah refers to dynamism, which may include in its meaning the terms like repetition, modernity and reminding which, in turn, are three branches of media.

Repetition and revision

Repeating and revising the same thing so many times as demanded by the changing circumstances so that every time people may consider it as a new

thing. For example, there are so many things, which cannot be altered. Their meaning and essence remains same every time everywhere. Be it the vaccination for the control of polio or other diseases or the Islamic teachings regarding Sawm (Fasting), Hajj, Sacrifice (slaughtering of animals on the occasion of 'Id al-Adhha), the respective messages are always the same but there will always remain need to present them in a unique manner so that people of every age can find them up to date.

In the Holy Quran and the Hadith there are given clear guidance's regarding the method of repetition and revision as being a mode of daw'ah.

Modernity and innovation

Deriving a new thought from an old one while keeping the essence of the original intact is the purpose of this. For example, strong feeling of hatred against attributing partners to Allah (SWT) and idol worship can be derived while talking about the concept of Tawhid (Oneness of Allah); throwing light on the sacred lives of Allah's Messengers implies that we should make these perfect personalities our role models and should ourselves pious lives; inviting people to live a civilized life in other words means that ignorance and illiteracy should be ended and it may also convey the idea of an organized life, a pollution free atmosphere and an invitation to keeping law and order in the society.

Reminding or Admonishing

Human nature is to forget. Therefore, there always remains the need to remind man of his duties he has to perform and realities he has to take care of. The Holy Quran testifies thus:

“Therefore do thou remind for thou art one to remind”. (88:21)

“O you who believed, believe

But it is strange enough and very unfortunate too that when we remind people of the beauties and virtues of Islam, some of them reject it as mere propaganda. How can it be so? Using media for a positive purpose should not be termed as propaganda which according to a European writer is nothing but prevarication. Yet another writer relates his experiences thus: (Propagandist) individuals or groups have, metaphorically and allusively, made organized efforts to achieve their ends so that they could dominate others' viewpoints.

An American scholar says that propaganda is basically an offensive weapon rather than defensive. Through it other's view can easily be changed. And a psychologist writes that propaganda is synonymous to cheating and deception.

While launching propaganda the experts always take into consideration the expediencies and interests on whom it depends, its ways and means and the particular thoughts intended to air through it.

The above given explanations of propaganda lead us to the conclusion that

propaganda is a negative process aiming at poisoning people's brains with dubious concepts and false ideas having nothing to do with rationality, reality and respect for humanity.

History bears witness to the fact that falsehood has no legs to stand upon. False propaganda always leads to its fate. What happened to Communism in Russia? How was its talismanic edifice razed to the ground by the waves of truth? What happened to Mussolini, Napoleon and Hitler?

The pro-Hitlerism propagandists used to hypnotise people by exciting songs and used to use all kinds of inciting tools when Hitler used to appear to address them.

Keeping in view the differences between Islamic Da'wah and the modern day propaganda one can reasonably say that there is no least comparison in these two. While the former aims at presenting the divine Message of Islam in its pure and pristine form before the whole mankind without entering into any tussle with the people of other faiths, the latter relies on falsehood and fabrication of truth, a strategy that always has a bad end.

Islamic Media and Its Distinguishing Features Truthfulness and Integrity

Islamic media bases its endeavors on the truthful character of the prophetic mission. The Messenger of Islam has commanded his followers to speak truth, come what may. The Holy Quran speaks:

And whosoever bringeth the truth

and believeth therein - such are the dutiful. (39:33)

Again Allah says:

And who doth greater wrong than he who telleth a lie against Allah, and denieth the truth when it reacheth him? Will not the home of disbelievers be in hell? (39:32)

The Messenger (SAW) started his mission of Da'wah when he had already been accepted by his country-people as truthful and trustworthy.

Pure and High Objectives

The sole objectives of the world media in present circumstances are: instigating hatred and enmity among different sections of human society and nations, provoking the poor against wealthy, inciting clashes among minorities and majorities, airing slogans based upon national and regional prejudice and creating an atmosphere of war between two neighbouring countries in order to sell their weapons. Concealing its own national blunders even if they be as huge as mountains and highlighting others' mistakes even if they be very slight, patting on the back of atheistic and hypocritic people and defending them, tearing human society into pieces, compromising on the principles of faith and belief against a very petty sum of money and distorting and trampling the truth is the hallmark of the modern international media. Contrary to this all destructive attitude, Islamic media, on the other hand, works in the broader interests of mankind with peace and justice and consolidation of human social

fabric as its sole agenda. It guides humanity towards the divine guidance enshrined in Allah's immutable Word, the Holy Quran. And thus, it is based upon construction rather than on destruction. Safeguarding the society from evil and uncertainty and inviting to piety and good is the fundamental principle of the Islamic media. It does not Insult peoples' self respect nor does it betray their secrets.

The Islamic media bases its efforts on these Quranic injunctions:

Verily! The hearing and the sight, and the heart, of each of those one will be questioned (by Allah) (17: 36)

Islamic media does not present non-sense stuff just to create sensational headlines thereby attracting people's attention towards it nor does it present news merely on the basis of rumours. It rather scrutinizes the sources of information and thoroughly concentrates on its after effects on the society before publicizing it.

Reformation of the Individual and building and organization of society is the basic purpose for which the Islamic media strives. Hence it does not present immoral programmes and does not have columns for the sake of wasteful entertainment nor does it spread useless news, publish bootless articles, and exaggerate whatever it publishes and publish nude pictures provoking animal instincts and inciting sexuality in society.

Constant alertness and supervision

It is the foremost duty of the Islamic media to keep constant vigil over the evil and wrong that prevails in the society and it always tries its level best to find out the actual cause of evil, analyses its pros and cons to play a constructive role for the establishment of a healthy society. It does not keep its eyes closed towards happenings like an ostrich, nor does it console the public by giving them vain hopes and keep them entertaining through different programmes of fun and sports and games.

Unlike the media agencies of most of the third world countries, particularly the Muslim countries, that very sadly overlook real issues and ignore vices to woeful extent, the Islamic media takes notice of every kind of incident and acts in earnest, to find out solutions based upon practical wisdom and sagacity. This is all enshrined in the Sunnah of the revered Messenger of Allah (SAW). No sooner did any kind of incident happen in the Islamic society than he ordered his companions to assemble in the mosque. He would then explain the situation until people would have no confusion left in their minds regarding the matter. Once in Madinah a strange shrill voice terrified the people and left them perturbed and confused. Allah's Messenger (SAW) [being the leader of the people and as such the most responsible] rode a horse to know about the fact. He came back and the assured the people that nothing wrong had taken place. This is totally contrary to what the media of the third world countries does. They let the

rumours spread freely until at last falsehood takes hold in the absence of truth.

The Islamic media is always impartial in dispelling the truth. It always focuses its attention in the broader interests of the Ummah. Its behaviour is based upon social justice and is always free from all kinds of extremism.

The Islamic media does not mislead the general masses by exploiting their simplemindedness. The Islamic media stands for spreading awareness about real problems and issues and does not engage in trade by presenting them in ambiguous ways.

Responsibilities of the Islamic Media Towards the Youth

Ironically even the Arab media and also that of the other Muslim countries don't have special religious programmes for their youth, let alone the non-Muslim nations. Due to non — availability of such religious programmes in the media that could guide our youth about the physical and psychological developments that take place in them at the beginning of adolescence and also due to latter's inborn shyness and family atmosphere, our youth lack a proper understanding of sex related problems confronting them and thus go astray. As a result they get ruined by turning towards wrong and defective knowledge. Neither even the educational institutions nor the mosques come forward to rescue the youth from this dilemma. It therefore; lays

extraordinary burden on the Islamic media to make well —planned programmes for solving the problems of the youth.

The Islamic media is responsible for proper guidance of the youth so that they can guide their society towards the right direction when they are at the helm and will not become a burden on it.

Media (especially daily newspapers and journals) should fully inform the youth about the day—to-day problems of people and the real issues in the society so that, by dint of their inborn and natural faculty to think over these issues and problems, they can come forward for the welfare of people and the betterment of the society. They gradually adopt pragmatic approach in thought and action as long as their age goes on increasing and become more realistic than idealistic in solving the matters of life.

It is thus the duty of the media to guide the youth towards this end.

Similarly, the Islamic media cannot shirk its responsibility to work for the moral and religious development of women. Various problems confronting our women, at domestic and societal levels, and their solutions, is a challenge before the Islamic media. And since women generally remain often busy with their home tasks, radio can play as vital role in educating them than TV, as they do not need any formal way to watch it. They can listen to it while doing their job.

Women, especially young girls, get more influenced than men. They are

extraordinarily interested in family matters and issues in the society. The Islamic media is therefore, highly responsible for molding women's minds so that they in turn, could successfully grow religious and moral values in their children. It must highlight the natural qualities of women instead of destroying and wasting them (as does the modern media do by exploiting the physical and psychological traits of women in so many ways). It should also help them find real answers to the problems that often become cause for family disorder.

The Islamic media should educate women about physical, mental, emotional and psychological changes taking place in growing children. It should also strive for making them content by highlighting to them meaninglessness of the ever changing and unstable fashionable goods so that they can live an economically stable life without spending money in wasteful ways.

Senior citizens have also been very vital in the formation of a righteous society. It is the duty of the Islamic media to utilize their experiences in bringing about harmonious relations between the younger and the older generations. They can play a commendable role in the guidance and instructions of the younger generation, Media should also take care of this section of society and should present such things that suit the demands of old age like news not so adventure making, interesting and entertaining programmes and stories. Senior citizens also like ads on modern

manufactures and medicines for dealing with the weaknesses of old age.

Some Peculiarities of a Successful Media

The success of media depends upon how much clear it is about its goal to have an already schemed impact on the target people. For this purpose it is necessary for the media men to have a clear vision of people's likes and dislikes, their collective psyche and then have to see clearly what role their programmes (written or spoken) play in the society.

For making an estimate and evaluation of their success in building up public opinion and peoples' mindset, journalists have their specific ways and means to evaluate the impact of news, pictures, analyses, interviews and discussions on peoples' minds. Media programmes should necessarily represent general public's, or for that matter, feelings and emotions majority of people and they should always have a good effect on the atmosphere and the place where it operates and on the persons or groups targeted.

It is proved through experience that a reader or a listener or a viewer accepts only those things that suit his own taste and interest. He rejects what does not fit to his fervour and liking. In other words media cannot thrust its programmes on people. It however, by highlighting the merits and/or demerits of a particular thing, can change his perception about the same thing. That is, people act on a particular

message after they understand it clearly. Thus understanding acts as a prelude to action, which always follows after willingness to act:

Understanding + Willingness = Action.

This indicates that whatever the media presents should be understandable to each and everyone addressed. This in turn necessitates for a journalist to have know-how of the addressed person or groups' psyche; mental tendencies and cultural standard.

A successful media wins trust of its people by not exaggerating what it presents and by not going to extremes, but by presenting facts as they are. Moreover, a journalist should know that people will not get influenced by what he presents to them unless he himself accepts the effect of it. That is to say: unless a journalist first himself gets influenced by the news and articles, he cannot communicate enthusiasm and influence to others; when he himself is ignorant of the real message the news what he wants them to know, no matter how powerful the means of communication at his disposal are.

A question arises here. Why is it necessary for media to gain public confidence? The answer to this question is: When you gain peoples trust, they except whatever you communicate to them without questioning you. Therefore, whatever a journalist presents he is demanded to present it with love and

sincerity and it should be reasonable and balanced. It should not carry any kind of harassment, promise or challenge nor should it create any egotism or arrogance.

One more quality of a successful media, that every newspaper editor and producer of radio news and TV programmes needs to take into consideration, is that its essays should be concordant with people's psyche and not (necessarily) with logic.

The excellence of a newsreader does not depend on presenting the news as he receives it but it depends upon presenting it to the viewers and the listeners in a way they like most. In other words the newsreader should proceed along with the heartbeats, feelings, understanding, acceptance, enthusiasm and emotions. He must respect emotions before giving food to their intellect. His tone and pronunciation should be in complete harmony with the spirit of what he communicates and should experience it himself from within. We can put it in other way: All material of media has two wings to fly with reason and emotions. Both should be balanced.

An important thing for a media source to consider is that it should not contradict other sources of information for in that case a common man will get confused and will reject them all, nor should it repeat the same stuff as already aired by others as people always want to get fresh and unique information. They cannot waste their time in reading, listening

or watching the same thing more than once. Today so many books, journals and newspaper are written on a particular topic that it is difficult to find even 2% of the required material out of dozens of such books and journals.

Media programmes should be always comprehensive and well grounded leading to logical conclusion so that one could not contradict them, because such programmes are tested on the grounds of both emotions and logic. It is a fact that unlike individual and personal views and ideas, facts and informations found in practical life are more effective, and attractive. Furthermore, message of the media should be clear and its goal well oriented. It must also be taken into consideration that what type of information is communicated and what should be the proper method, time and place when it is presented. People's views and counter-views play important role as a feed back in media.

Islam has made no difference between means and goal. It is not Islamically lawful to utilise bad means for good end.

In the modern times capitalists and politicians use media to fulfill their commercial interests. Media has now acquired the status of a permanent Industry Shah Waliyyullah of Delhi (a great Islamic Scholar and Spiritual mentor) in his (monumental work Hujjatullah al — Baligah, writes that economics should be subservient to ethics. But today the

commercialized mind, in order to popularize intoxicants, nightclubs, dance clubs, and cinema, has exploited media by giving big advertisements through it. Contrarily to this, the Islamic media consider such ads as against the Islamic principles and morals.

The Islamic media gives, in any case, first priority to moral values and principles. All other things are subservient to them. In contradiction with this, spiritual and moral values carry no weight before material interests in the Western media. Whatever is communicated, first priority is given to material gain. It is because the Western media does not have any noble goal to realize or any well-defined purpose to fulfill nor does it intend to play sincere and selfless role in conflict resolution. The Western media prefers material gain at all costs even if it may have to depend on black money, wine, inciting sexuality in youth, popularizing animal instincts or descending down deep into the pit of disgrace for it.

Therefore, when good means are necessary for achieving good ends, then the essays and articles should also be pure and sane. They must be based on wisdom, sincere guidance, good will. They should be based on seriousness and gravity and not on sentimentalism and provocation. Above all media should be based on the pure belief of Tawhid (Oneness of Allah) and free of myths and voluptuousness for the Islamic media is strongly connected with the Islamic da'wah. ■

Muhammad The Messenger of Allah

- K.K. Usman

Verily, the Prophet constitutes the model and his conduct the standard for you, if your hope is in God. (33:21)

We have sent you (Muhammad), but a mercy unto all creatures. (21:107)

As is well known, the Quran was revealed through the Prophet Muhammad, who was born around the year 570 C.E. Muhammad was of the noble Quraish clan, the custodians of the sacred shrine of Mecca, believed to have been (re)built by Abraham in the remote past.

Orphaned at an early age, Muhammad developed into a sober responsible young man, known for his trustworthiness. When he was twenty-five years old, he married his employer, a successful business- woman most impressed by Muhammad's goodness.

The irrational polytheism of Mecca and the despicable social customs, superstitions and social injustices such as female infanticide, bloodshed among different tribes on trivial matters and maltreatment of slaves, women, oppressed and others of lower strata of society always made Muhammad anxious and greatly disturbed. In search of peace and tranquility it became his practice to retire for several days from the hustle and bustle of Mecca to the solitude of Hira, a cave in a mountain nearby Mecca.

It was during one of his periodic meditation retreats that Muhammad received the first revelation of the Quran through the angel Gabriel (Jibril). This first revelation came when Muhammad was forty years old, a mature man of impeccable character. Those first verses were:

“Recite, in the name of your Lord, who created: who created humankind from a clot of blood. Recite, for your Lord is most generous, who taught by the pen, taught humankind what it did not know...” (96:1-5)

Thus the first revelation extolled the power of the pen and knowledge. It shook the unlettered man to whom they were addressed. Far from inflated by the experience, Muhammad was fearful and dazzled. Trembling, he went home and told his wife Khadija what had happened to him. Reminding him of his well-known virtues, she assured him that he was not mad. Then she took him to a cousin, a Christian, who listened to the beginning of the Recital and declared it to be of the same Truth as that brought by Moses and Jesus.

The first Muslims were members of Muhammad's house. Besides his wife Khadija, there were the freed slave Zaid and Muhammad's young cousin and future son-in-law Ali. Shortly thereafter Abu Bakr, a longtime friend of Muhammad, also joined the fledgling

community of Islam.

After a brief pause, revelations continued, and word of the new Muslim movement soon began to get around. This annoyed the leaders of the Quraish because they felt Islam undermined their authority. Teaching that there can by nature only be one real God, Islam undermined the religious authority of the Quraish as leaders of the old tribal polytheism. Attracting many converts from among slaves and other disenfranchised people, Islam was also seen to undermine the political authority of the dominant clan fathers. Preaching a level of humaneness and social responsibility well above that realized by existing practices, Islam was also seen to diminish the moral stature of the tribal patriarchs.

For ten years Muhammad and the Muslims of Mecca were subjected to abuse and torture. A group of Muslims emigrated to Abyssinia, assured by the Prophet that the king of that land was Christian and would protect them. Eventually the leaders of the Quraish tried to assassinate Muhammad, and so the Prophet was finally forced to flee from Mecca in 622 C.E. This became known as the Year of the Emigration (Hijra), the year from which all dates in Islamic history are counted.

The persecuted Muslims migrated en masse to Yathrib, later known as Medina al Nabiy, "The City of the Prophet," or simply al Medina, "The City.

"Hostilities and intrigues against them expanded, however, as the evident moral force of the movement aroused the hopes and fears of increasing numbers of individuals and groups. As a result, during nearly a decade of residence in Medina, Muhammad was repeatedly obliged to lead the Muslims in defensive battles.

At length Muhammad and the Muslims emerged triumphant, not by virtue of a crushing military victory but by constant devotion to Islam and indefatigable resistance to oppression. Poorly armed Muslims would face, and sometimes even defeat, battalions of trained warriors outnumbering them ten to one. And the movement continued to grow, in spite of opposition and hardships.

In the seventh year of the Emigration (Hijra), Muhammad made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and in the next year the Prophet entered Mecca with a large party of Muslims, unopposed. He cleared the sacred shrine Ka'aba of idols and established worship of the one real God, including the practices of prayer, charity, and fasting. Through the promulgation of the Quran and his own example as an inspired Prophet, Muhammad also reformed many aspects of family, social, and economic life.

Quoting authoritative historians and biographers, Bosworth Smith in his classic book Mohammed and

Mohammedanism presents the personal features of Prophet Muhammad as follows:

“Mohammed was of middle height and of a strongly built frame; his head was large, and across his ample forehead, and above finely arching eyebrows, ran a strongly marked vein. His eyes were coal black, and piercing in their brightness; his hair curled slightly. The light which kindled his eye, like that which flashed from the precious stones in the breast plate of the High Priest, called the light of Prophecy.

In his intercourse with others, he would sit silent among his companions for a long time together, but truly his silence was more eloquent than other men’s speech, for the moment speech was called for, as forthcoming in the shape of some weighty apothegm or proverb such as the Arabs love to hear. When he laughed, he laughed heartily, shaking his sides, and showing his teeth, which ‘looked as if they were hail stones’. He was easy of approach for all who wished to see him. He was fond of animals, and they, as is often the case, were fond of him. He seldom passed a group of children playing together without a few kind words to them and he was never the first to withdraw his hand from the grasp of one who offered him his. If the warmth of his attachment may be measured, as in fact it may, the depth of his friends’ devotion to him, no truer friend than Mohammed ever lived. He wept like a child over the

death of his faithful servant Zeid. He was naturally shy and retiring; ‘as bashful’, said Ayesha (his wife), as a veiled virgin’. He was kind and forgiving to all. ‘I served him from the time I was eight years old’, said his servant Anas. ‘and he never scolded me for anything, though I spoiled much’. The most noteworthy of his external characteristics was a sweet gravity and a quiet dignity, which drew involuntary respect and which was the best, and often the only protection he enjoyed from insult. Muhammad preserved to the end of his career that modesty and simplicity of life which is the crowning beauty of his character.” (Mohammed and Mohammedanism, Bosworth Smith)

The Quran was revealed to Muhammad in the seventh century, a time of instability all around. Judaism and Christianity were in decline and plagued by internal conflicts. The great empires of Persia and Byzantine were interlocked in bloody wars. In Asia paganism was rampant in many parts, though Buddhism and Confucianism had made some inroads here and there. In such troubled times, in the desert lands of Central Arabia, far away from centres of civilisation, Muhammad proclaimed the Oneness of God and brought the Quran to his people and to the whole humankind. His country-men at that time lived by primitive practices which glorified superstitions and witchcraft and spent their energies in endless tribal warfare.

To use an expression of Voltaire, 'The turn of Arabia' came; when the hour had already struck for the most complete, the most sudden and the most extra ordinary revolution that has ever come over any nation upon earth.

What were those teachings of Muhammad that resulted in such great revolution? We will quote the eloquent words of Jafar Ibn Abu talib and referred to in 'Preaching of Islam' by T. W. Arnold.

As Muhammad was unable to relieve his persecuted followers, he advised them to take refuge in Abyssinia and in the fifth year of his mission (A.D 615) eleven men and four women crossed over to Abyssina where they received a kind welcome from the Christian King of the country. But the hatred of the enemies pursued the fugitives even to Abyssinia, and an embassy was sent to demand their extradition from the King of that country. In answer to his enquiries as to their religion, Jafar- their leader, said:

"O King, we were in a state of ignorance and immorality, worship ping idols and eating carrion; we practiced all sorts of abominations, severed the ties of kinship and maltreated our neighbours; the strong among us exploited the weak. So we remained until God sent us an apostle from among ourselves whose lineage, truthfulness, loyalty and purity are well known to us. He called upon us to worship the One God and to repudiate all the stones and

idols which we and our ancestors used to worship. He bade us to be truthful in speech, faithful to our promises and trust, compassionate and kind to our parents and neighbours and desist from crime and blood- shed. He forbade us to do evil, to lie, to rob or defame women. He commanded us to avoid perjury, false- witness and fornication. He enjoined on us the worship of God alone, with prayer, sharing of wealth and fasting. And we believed in him and followed the teachings that he brought us from God. But our country men rose up against us and persecuted us to renounce our faith and return to the worship of idols and the abominations of our former life. We took refuge in your country, putting our trust in your justice, we hope that you will deliver us from the oppression of our enemies."

Their prayer was heard and the embassy of Quraish returned discomfited.

The most outstanding characteristic of the Prophet's life is the amazing success which he achieved in bringing about a complete transformation in the life of his followers in all aspects. And all this came to pass in a short span of a little over 20 years. No other reformer found his people at such a depth of degradation as the Prophet found the Arabs, and no one raised them materially, morally and spiritually to the height to which he raised them. Not only was their deep-rooted love for idols and their

superstitions swept away and the nation awakened to a sense of true dignity of humankind based on a rational religion but also there was a complete metamorphosis in their character. The Arab was cleansed of deep-rooted vice and bare-faced immorality; he was inspired with a burning desire for the best and noblest deed in the service of, not a country or nation, but, what is far higher than that, humanity. Old customs which involved injustice to the weak were all swept away and just and reasonable laws their place. Drunkenness to which Arabia was addicted time immemorial disappeared completely, gambling became known and loose relations between sexes gave place to the highest regard for chastity and mutual respect. The Arab who prided himself on ignorance became the lover of knowledge, drinking deep at every fountain of learning to which he could get access. The whole character of the nation was changed. And thus from a discordant and disunited people full of vices and superstitions the religion and the Prophet of Islam welded together a united nation full of life, vigour and virtues before whose onward march the greatest kingdoms of the world crumbled. No man ever breathed such a new life into a people on such a wide scale, no other religion brought about such transformation in their lives affecting all branches of human activity a transformation of the individual, of the family, of the society, of the nation, of the country, an awakening material as

well as moral, intellectual as well as spiritual — as did the teachings of Islam and Prophet Muhammad.

It has been remarked by Gibbon that no incipient prophet ever passed through so severe an ordeal as Muhammad. Seeking refuge from the harassment, persecution, and oppressive conditions of Mecca, followed only by Zeid, his faithful freeman, Muhammad went to Tayif, the town after Mecca most wholly given to idolatry. But he boldly challenged the protection and obedience of the inhabitants. They stoned him out of the city. He returned to Mecca defeated, but not disheartened, cast down, but not destroyed; quietly saying himself, "If thou, O Lord, art not angry, I am safe; I seek refuge in the light of thy countenance alone. O my Lord! Forgive my people; they are an ignorant lot."

Muhammad had firm conviction, absolute faith in God's mercy and total commitment to his cause and vision: "Should they array against me the sun on my right hand, and the moon on my left" said Muhammad, 'yet while God should command me, I would not renounce my purpose.' At the time of his migration to Medina (Hijrah) he was accompanied only by his friend and an early convert, Abu Bakr. For three days they concealed in a cavern, a league from Mecca. The Quraish pursuers scoured the country thirsting for his blood. The enemies approached the cavern. 'We are only two', said his

trembling companion. There is a third', said Muhammad; 'it is God himself.'

On his successful return to Mecca as a 'Conqueror', Bosworth Smith writes:

"Now would have been the moment to gratify his ambition, to satiate his lust, to glut his revenge. Is there anything of the kind? Read the account of the entry of Mohammed into Mecca, side by side with that of Marius or Sulla into Rome. Compare all the attendant circumstances, the outrages that preceded, and the use made by each of his recovered power, and we shall then be in a position better to appreciate the magnanimity and moderation of the Prophet of Arabia. There were no proscription lists, no plunder, no wanton revenge."

Instead, a general amnesty was declared and a public guarantee of equality of treatment to friend and foe alike was announced. The Meccans who had migrated to Medina were not to take back their houses from those who occupied them. Not only Abu Sufiyan but even his wife Hind, who had openly abused and plotted against the Prophet, was forgiven. The day of Muhammad's greatest triumph over his enemies was also the day of his greatest victory over himself. He freely forgave the Quraish all the years of sorrow and cruel scorn in which they had affected him. For Muhammad, the higher interest of mission came first and last. Similarly, the Prophet would not

execute (as the prevailing custom dictated), 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, who had vilified and cheated him, committed treason against the Islamic state, and fought the movement on every occasion. When the son of ibn Ubayy, a fervently committed Muslim, heard that his father had been condemned by the Prophet, he asked that he be the executioner, lest somebody else's execution create in him a will to vengeance. Indeed, when ibn Ubayy died, the Prophet offered a shroud for his remains, led the funerary prayer for him, and walked in his funeral, thus convincing his son and all those who witnessed these events that propagation of the faith could and should vanquish all thoughts of retribution.

The Quranic injunction revealed at the time of victory over Mecca was clear:

When, with God's help, victory comes, and you see men in hordes accepting His way, then glorify the Lord; and ask for His forgiveness. And proclaim His grace and mercy.

(110:1-3)

For long there was the common belief that Muhammad gave to non-Muslims only two choices, the Quran or the sword, and further, that Islam spread through the sword. Sir Thomas Arnold, after a much painstaking research, collected facts and figures for his monumental work *The Preaching of Islam* and proved that Islam was spread, not by 'the exploits of that

mythical personage—the Muslim warrior with the sword in one hand and the Quran in the other,’ but by the force of the Word of God (Quran) and the character of the Prophet. In this connection Bosworth Smith writes:

“We must not judge of a religion by its perversions or corruptions... Islam was spread, not by the sword, but by the earnest and simple-minded Arab missionaries... The sword may silence, it cannot convince: It may enforce hypocrisy; it can never force belief.”

One may remember the well-known verses of injunctions in the Quran:

“No coercion in religion. Truth and right guidance are now clearly distinct from error and misguidance... Remind and warn, that is your commission. You have no imperial authority over any man.’ (2:256; 88:21,22)

“Had God willed it, all men on earth would have been believers, (But he did not). Would you then compel men to believe?... Say: O men, the truth has been revealed by your Lord. Whoever accepts it does so for his own good, and whoever rejects it does so at his own peril.” (10:99, 108)

While the result of the embassy to Abyssinia was being looked for in Mecca with the greatest expectancy, there occurred the conversion of a man, who before had been one of the most bitter enemies of Muhammad, and had opposed him with the utmost

persistence and fanaticism, a man whom the Muslims had every reason than to look on as their most terrible and virulent enemy, though afterwards he shines as one of the noblest figures in the early history of Islam, viz, Umar ibn al-Khattab. One day, in a fit of rage against the Prophet, he set out, sword in hand, to slay him. On the way, one of his relatives met him and asked him where he was going. “I am looking for Muhammad.” he answered, “to kill the renegade who has brought discord among the Quraish, called them fools, reviled their religion and defamed their gods.” “Why dost thou not rather punish those of thy own family, and set them right?” “And who are these of my own family?” answered Umar. “Thy brother-in-law Sa’id and thy sister Fatimah, who have become Muslims and followers of Muhammad.” Umar at once rushed off to the house of his sister, and found her with her husband and Kabbab, another of the followers of Muhammad, who was teaching them to recite a chapter of the Quran. Umar burst into the room: “What was that sound I heard?.” “It was nothing,” they replied. “Nay, but I heard you and I have learned that you have become followers of Muhammad. “ Whereupon he rushed upon Said and struck him. Fatimah threw herself between them, to protect her husband, crying, “Yes, we are Muslims, we believe in God and His Prophet: slay us if you will. “ In the struggle his sister was wounded and when ‘Umar saw the blood on her face, he was softened and

asked to see the scroll they had been reading: after some hesitation she handed it to him. It contained the 20th Surah of the Quran. When Umar read it, he exclaimed, "How beautiful, how sublime it is!" As he read on, conviction suddenly overpowered him and he cried: "Lead me to Muhammad that I may tell him of my conversion."

It was not the power of sword of Muhammad, but that of the Word of God which conquered the minds of men.

Muhammad did not claim Islam to be a new religion. Rather it is the 'Original' religion, that primordial faith which has had its roots deep in man's consciousness since the first true human being walked upon earth, because the Creator Himself implanted it there, the faith revealed to and preached by all the Prophets: the religion of submission and accountability to the One God. Islam teaches the Divine origin of this message, pointing to the similarity and continuity of the teachings brought by the various messengers of God throughout history. Each successive revelation (Scripture) has been higher than the preceding one, though each was complete in itself, as being adequate to the circumstances of the time.

Muslims revere other Prophets and accept their Scriptures they were originally revealed. But others falsified the Scriptures anthropomorphized God; developed a 'chosen people' complex. The Quran accepts these as Divine

revelations, though it disapproves of the later accretions in them which diluted the monotheistic creed and their original purity. To Muslims, Muhammad is the culmination of Prophetic order — he is God's last messenger 'the seal of prophets.' And the Quran is the complete, final and eternal Word of God. Muhammad's Prophethood was the last because- in as much as the essential principles of the law were revealed once and for all in the imperishable Quran, man is hence-forth mature enough to elaborate the law and find its various applications to the human situations without external aid.

Prophecy, however, does not create divinity. Prophets were not divine. They were only God's instruments sent by Him to transmit His message. That is why the Quran insists on making it clear that Muhammad was human and so were all other Prophets. They emphasize God's supremacy and make it clear that only to Him is man accountable for his deeds and misdeeds. God is the final arbiter of man's destiny and on the Day of Judgement He will reward the virtuous and punish the wrong doer.

Muhammad was told by his detractors to establish his claim of prophethood by performing some miracle; he told them unhesitatingly that his only miracle was the message revealed to him by God, Viz. the Quran. Muhammad could have easily given to himself the aura of divinity and many of

his followers would have been too happy to hail him for it. Instead he curbed them and warned them not to deify him. All through his life, Muhammad reasoned with the people and tried to convince and convert them. He did not resort to force, magic or any hypnotic methods to gather followers. He valued the intellect and emphasized the role of reason in human development. There are numerous verses in the Quran which admonish him to shun coercion and exercise persuasion and patience.

To his detractors who demanded him to perform miracle, the inspired reply of Muhammad was: God alone can work miracles, the other prophets had wrought miracles and had not been believed, God gave the power of working miracles to whom He pleased, that there were greater miracles in nature than any which could be wrought outside of it, he, at all events, treated the miraculous as subordinate to the moral evidence of his mission - and, the Quran itself was a miracle.

The Prophet is presented in the Quran as the best example of its teachings and a perfect model of human behaviour. His life was an open book; it had to be, if the Quranic teachings were to be properly understood and strictly followed by the faithful. Therefore, he kept his companions fully aware of every movement of his. Unlike other religious leaders, Muhammad was as much a preacher as an administrator; as much as a judge as a law - giver; as much as

a warrior as a peace- maker... To quote Bosworth Smith:

“Head of the State as well as of the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one but he was Pope without the Pope’s pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar. Without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue, if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by a right Divine, it was Mohammed; for he had all the power without its instruments and without its support. “

He was a simple man, who never ceased to be human and refused to be regarded as divine. When Prophet Muhammad died, and as the news spread, his followers gathered in the mosque. Some of his companions could not believe it. Umar, who later became the second Caliph, was greatly upset and agitated. Abu Bakr, a close companion of Muhammad and who was later nominated as the first Caliph, visited the house of the Prophet and ascertained his death. Returning to the mosque Abu Bakr said, “Softly Umar. “ But Umar kept on speaking and threatening. Abu Bakr then stood up and said:

“O people! Whoever of you has been worshipping Muhammad, let him know for certain that Muhammad is dead; but whoever of you has been worshipping God, then let him know that God never dies.” ■

The Ever-Continuous Stream of Life

- Mahar Abdul Haq

Every body knows that a big stone-slab is dead because it cannot move, whereas a tiny snail is alive because it moves. But all moving things like motor cars, trains and engines are not alive because they do not and cannot determine their own course of action. Living things are directed by 'something' that is within their own organism. This 'something' is called life. We can have a clear idea of life if we can know the exact meanings of death. But the question pops up: Does death come after life? If so, what name will be given to the state of living things before their entry into life? If "to die" means "to cease to live" then death is not nonexistence, because to exist means simply to have a place in the domain of Reality or to have 'being' under specified conditions.

This is again a complex problem, because if reality is all what we see around us, except the living beings, then of course, they are all dead and dead things cannot 'create' specific conditions by themselves, nor can they produce a 'state' which is definitely higher than their own. To lose life is one thing, to have existence is quite another; and, conversely, to have life is not simply to have existence but it is to have something more than mere existence. It is to have an urge, a purpose, a strong will and a powerful drive to persist in living.

From the point of view of our educational approach to Philosophy, we must remain content with the universally accepted fact that the creation of 'life' by-Allah is not without a Purpose. Our duty is to contemplate the manifestations of life, understand its purposiveness and regulate our lives according to the laws of order and proportion which govern all the Universe.

Life, is a psychic activity and has the structure of events which have a continuous flow in them directed towards a higher end. We, as a conscious human beings, have to 'see' and then 'be' what our true insight or our appreciative self tells us to be. The element of purpose discloses a forward look in consciousness and a push to life in anticipation of what we have yet to be. In the words of Iqbal:

"Consciousness may be imagined as a deflection from life. Its function is to provide a luminous point in order to enlighten the forward rush of life. It is a ease of tension, a state of self-concentration, by means of which life manages to shut out all memories and associations which have no bearing on a present action. It has no well-defined fringes; it shrinks and expands as the occasion demands. To describe it as a epiphenomenon of the processes of matter is to deny

it as an independent activity is to deny the validity of all knowledge which is only systematized expression of consciousness. Thus, consciousness is a variety of the purely spiritual principle of life which is not substance, but an organizing principle, a specific mode of behaviour essentially different from the behaviour of an externally worked machine. Since, however, we cannot conceive of a purely spiritual energy, except in association with a definite combination of sensible elements through which it reveals itself, we are apt to take this combination as the ultimate ground of spiritual energy—when we rise to the level of life and mind, the concept of cause fails us, and we stand in need of concepts of a different order of thought. The action of living organisms initiated and planned in view of an end is totally different to casual action. The subject-matter of our inquiry, therefore, demands the concepts of ‘end’ and ‘purpose’ which act from within unlike the concept of” cause which is external to the effect and acts from without”

Man is intellectual powers by which conclusions are draw from given premises cannot go beyond certain limits unless they are assisted by contemplation or spiritual power or authority which is the result of absolute submission to Allah’s will.

“O you assembly of Jinns and men! If it be you can pass beyond the zones

of the heavens and the earth, pass ye! not without authority shall ye be able to pass”. (55:30)

The analytic observations of the Biologists have come to the conclusion that all the living organisms are built up of the same common physical basis of life, yet each organism has a peculiar individuality for each definite kind.

The multitudinous variety of living creatures make every conscientious person believe unscrupulously His being transcendently artist and wise, loving life for its own sake. Is not the great studio of Animate Nature strewn with innumerable sketches of which each is a masterpiece? What endless resources are there in the creative evolution of countless individualities! The living hen lays a ‘dead’ egg and out of this ‘dead’ egg comes forth a living chick! What a miracle it is that a detached portion of the original adult (or a liberated germcell) proceeds to reproduce an entire organism! Out of the apparent simplicity develops the abvious complexity of a young creature. The latent becomes patent! The homogeneous becomes hetrogeneous; the invisible becomes visible—and then, in the continuous stream of life, ever present is the child of the past and the parent of the future!

Let us view ‘life’ yet from another angle. We notice that living beings are always in flux, always breaking down and always building up again. Their

essential constituents, the Proteins, carbon compounds etc. , burn out, oxidise and consume every moment, yet the unity of these parts that we call an organism, does not get consumed for many long years, A continuous stream of synthesis co-exists with a perfect state of analysis. Every moment the old life-cells disappear and new ones come up in their place. Even those specific cells that distinguish the dog from the cat, and the cat from an eagle, break, consume and disappear but the dog still remains the dog, the cat, cat and the eagle, eagle. This specificity, this individuality, in one of the marked differences between living organism and non-living things.

As a matter of fact, scientists do not concern themselves with the meaning and purpose of things. They are interested only in “generalisations” which begin with “What” and “How” and ask for a final solution. They do not seek the ultimate truth but only want to have an understanding of the mechanisms which underlie the phenomena of life. They have nothing to do with the purpose of creation as their interest lies only in finding out the methods by which this purpose has been achieved. Only the Qur’anic philosophy of Education can correct this erroneous attitude. Why does the passive, non-living matter interact to form the active living protoplasm? No biologist will give an answer to that question unless he is inspired by the Qur’anic wisdom. The scientist will get lost in wonder and

amazement on seeing that the air, water and mineral-salts of the soil turn into fruits and vegetables of which some are sweet, some are sour and some bitter. The apparently ‘dead’ food that we eat generates billions of our living body cells that do their specific jobs so efficiently for promoting our life. But only he, who can pass beyond wonders, can understand and appreciate the constructive purpose for which “life” has been evolved just out of ‘nothingness’. If the scientist tries to “be” what his inquisitive eye can ‘see’ then the deeper he will dig into the profundity of life the nearer he will get to the Qur’anic Truth. ‘Life’ is, no doubt, a wonderful thing in itself but if it is adorned with the goodness and beauty of its sacred aim it is sure to reach its highest perfection.

Allah’s creation is all for a true and just purpose fits aptly into a flawless Design.

“We have not created the heavens, the earth and all between them but for a just end”. (18:85)

“Not for idle sport did we create the heavens and earth and all that is between”.

Our body is built of trillions of cells or unit corpuscles of living matter as they are called. In the cerebral cortex of brain, which is the home of the highest intellectual activities, there are over nine thousand millions of nerve-cells connected to one another by branching-out processes. These branching-out processes make multitudinous inter-

linkages possible. The latest research tells us that 'man' has so far used only one-third of the total brain linkages during his highest thought-processes and the remaining two-third are yet to be used by him. And when a typical growing cell divides itself, there is a meticulous dividing into halves of all its constituents—all without exception. What a remarkable precision! What an accurate balance and a proper justice!

Yet another wonder of life is the adaptiveness of living creatures to the conditions, the surroundings, the circumstances, the dangers, the hopes, the aspirations and to all the factors that help perpetuate them. Can all this adaptiveness be without a conscious purpose? Without a correct decision? Without a deliberate thought? And with that may be added the amazing fact that there is very little trace of disease in the wild life; every complex organism is a bundle of fitnesses and there is exuberance of positive health through and through. Moreover, the harmonious orderliness of life makes for beauty. Some animals fail to please man's aesthetic sense but if the artist in them is awake and the true appreciative spirit is alive he can be delighted as much with the clumsy movements of a tortoise as with the tail of a peacock or the shining majestic hood, of a cobra. If beauty is right order and just proportion then no creature of Allah lacks it. We must love life as Allah likes it. So, it is of high educative value to look upon

beauty not as a stranger in the animate world nor as a casual visitor of a certain external phenomenon but as one to whom the principles permeating all reality are being revealed in a prophetic way. Just sink down into the beauteous reality and the beauteous reality will sink down into you. Don't 'see' but 'be'!

Animate Nature is a fabric with an ever-changing Pattern. Will man not share in its weaving? Mind is synonymous with life itself; the higher the plane of active, conscious, creative life the stronger and healthier is the mind capable of living and living constructively, aesthetically and truthfully. There is Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth around him. Glorify this Truth and the Truth will glorify you. That is the perfection and that will make you live even without a body!

“How can you reject the faith in Allah? Seeing that you were without life and He gave you life, then will He cause you to die and will again bring you to life and again to Him will you return”. (2:28)

Life, therefore, is the awakening of consciousness and death is the loss or absence of the conscious soul. Putting it in another way we can say that our first life on this earth is the birth of consciousness out of nothingness or death; our second death is the suspension of temporary loss of consciousness and then our second life is its revival at a higher plane. Now

consciousness is arrested temporarily or how its functioning is held in abeyance for some time is easily understandable from our daily experience of sleep:

“It is Allah who takes the souls (of men) at death; and those who die not, (He takes) during their sleep. Those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life) but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for an appointed. Verily in this are signs for those who reflect.” (39:42)

In death we surrender our physical life but our soul does not die. It goes on to a new plane of existence in which it is more conscious of the life-chapters of its past history. In what we call dreams it can observe, with a better vision, all the trails it has left behind on the sands of the serial time that it has spent on its earthly abode.

With reference to animal life, sleep may be defined as the cessation of the working of the nervous system though other bodily functions such as digestion, breathing, circulation of blood etc. continue. The mental processes including volition also remain suspended. In dreams we have a medley of recollections which present to our subconscious mind things which do not or cannot happen ordinarily. Whatever interpretations may be offered by Sigmund Freud or his followers the hard fact still remains unsolved by psychologists as to why have we some

rare dreams also in which gifted individuals see things as they actually happened backwards or are sure to happen forwards in time and in which truth, otherwise imperceptible, are revealed. Sleep is twin brother to death; our souls get released from the bondage of flesh during sleep (death's twin brother) but the soul carries with it all the reminiscences with it whether they be pleasant or painful. If we contemplate the similitude of death to sleep we can clearly see that:

1. Our physical life and death do not make the whole story of our existence.
2. Sleep gives us a foretaste of death.
3. Neither sleep nor death can end our personality or deprive us of our consciousness, memory, feelings of pain or pleasure etc.

What sleep and death actually do is that they just cut off our approach-road to the physical body which is the playfield of all the powers of the self. With this detachment from the field of action and display our •self* is rendered helpless to hold a show or stage a drama.

4. During our physical life here below, we may be dead to the higher spiritual truth but in our bodily death we are awakened to the celestial world of vivid consciousness.

During a few hours (or minutes) of deep sleep we have dreams of a duration of only a few seconds, and

during these few seconds we see before our eye's events happening if they happened in years of time. According to the Freudian theory of dreams repressed wishes and inhibitions take the form of dream-events and bring to consciousness all the desired but unfulfilled cravings. Now suppose for a minute that the duration span of a few seconds of a dream is extended to some minutes or some hours or some days without break or to an unlimited period of time, will not all the forgotten stories of man's entire past life appear in detail on the screen of vivid consciousness? What reason is there to negate this probability? If there is none and there cannot be any, then a belief in the Hereafter is a must; for, the Hereafter is nothing but the resurrection or the rising up of consciousness from its slumber.

Our death, then, is only a phenomenal event. What we become after death is a matter related to the process of evolution in the plan of Allah who is the source as well as the goal of all things. When we return to Him and are brought before His Presence, we will appear as conscious and responsible beings to receive the "earnings" of our toils and struggles during the brief sojourn of our earthly life.

"One day the earth will be changed to a different earth and so will be the heavens. And (men) will be marshalled forth before Allah, the One, the irresistible. And you will see

the sinners that day bound together in fetters". (14:48, 49)

These fetters, of course, will be the actions, thoughts, motives, desires etc. which it will be impossible for the memory and consciousness to shake off. The memory will have to carry its own burden on its own back as it does carry it in dreams.

Every conceivable thing in the Universe is evolving from a lower to a higher state of existence; all change is in earnest quest for permanence, all raw materials strive to become ripe, all unstable things seek firmness, all journeys hope to reach their destinations, all beginnings run on towards their end, all semi-complete things desire to reach completion and perfection. Lifeless matter evolves life, consciousness heads toward perpetuation. The Supreme Mind, who is the Creator, Sustainer and Nourisher of everything concrete or abstract, has set this plan of evolution to work efficiently in his Vast Realm.

Only perfect life can have perfect activity. Ours is an imperfect life of which all the poets, scientists and philosophers have been complaining through the ages. Allah's life—the most perfect Life—is the constant source and the surest support for all the derived forms of life of which we have an experience in this material world of ours and of which we have only some limited knowledge.

The process of building up and breaking down of cells in organic and inorganic matter is going on continuously in the whole of the Universe. Things that disintegrate may be said to become invisible by the coming in of things in their place in a new structure. Thus, it can be said that there are numerous things which cannot be seen. In other words, there are many invisible and many visible worlds in the Universe. In the invisible worlds we hear too often about the existence of Iblis (or Shaitan), the angels, the paradise, the hell, the revelation and man's resurrection after his physical death.

Things appear to us as things only when uncountable atoms get strongly bound together or consolidated in a way so as to make a form or shape with the well-known dimensions of length, breadth, thickness etc. Without dimensions there would have been no form or shape, and consequently, no 'thing' for the visibility of our eye. Things remain invisible to us as long as a collective grouping of atoms does not take place to give them a shape. The "bonds" that keep the atoms of a body inseparably joined together are indeed very strong. To this and its future breaking down and building up process the Holy Quran alludes thus:-

"It is We who create them (the human beings) and We have made their bonds strong; but when We will, We shall substitute the like of them by a complete change".(76:28)

The first part of this verse refers to the tying together of the atoms of the body and the second part refers to (a) the disintegration of the atomic bonds; (b) man's substitution, as a species, by one which will be "the like of them", and (c) a 'complete' change in the new creation. We are, however, not told what shape the new substitution will take place. This is because at this stage of our knowledge and consciousness in which we cannot break through the boundaries of cosmic laws of the universe surrounding us from all sides, we cannot understand, it. What we are required to believe is that "Mind", with all its powers and capabilities, will survive the transformation process called death because it is not 'matter'. Those who speculate that no psychological states are possible without some physiological cause should give thought to the words of the Holy Qur'an that "We shall substitute the like of them by a complete change". What the like of our present body will be and what 'shape' the complete change will take, we cannot understand; but to satisfy the speculators the allusion to the process is enough. This new world will thus be in continuation of the present one, just as our present world is in continuation of a previous one which has now gone out of our sight'.

Allah not only creates life, He loves and cherishes it. All His creation is marching forward and upward along a straight path (not cyclic) towards a fuller and more everlasting life. Death is the

gateway through which “Life” must pass to acquire still more rigour and strength.

One word about ‘the struggle for life’ of which we hear much, and very alarmingly, in the Western literature. In fact, all this is about a supposed not real struggle for living and not struggle for life. For this latter struggle the Qur’anic view is that life is continuous like a torrential stream or a rushing brook that has to strike against many rocks that try to block its way. If the life-stream has within it a real vital force it will uproot all the stumbling blocks and proceed further with even mightier force than before. Even with a clash with the greatest of all blocks called ‘death’ it will go on and on without any loss of vigorous force in it. But if it tries to seek beds of soft sands or turns to smooth paths of least resistance it shall lose its force and will be obstructed even by the smallest of pebbles. At this stage of its loss of the vital force even its own banks, that check its overflow, will begin to crumble away and then either the dry sands will swallow it up or it will itself calm down to a pool of stagnant water. Without coming into conflict with opposing forces, life cannot have the power (called Sultan by the Holy Qur’an) that can defy death.

Educational planners will be well-advised -to bring home to the learners all these real facts about the exuberance of life and the inevitability of death, in graded lessons, during very early age and before any severe shock of death

shakes them down mentally. Let the ‘fleeting’ nature of time be an incentive for our active participation in the toil and struggle of life. If there were no death or decay it would not have been possible for man to build up great cultures and civilizations, or to accumulate useful knowledge or to discover and endear universal values and march steadily on from the darkness of animality towards spiritual enlightenment.

True wisdom lies nowhere else except in full submission to Allah’s commands and perpetuation of the Qur’anic values through our persistent efforts and sincere devotion.

A true Muslim ardently believes that it is Allah alone who gives life and death to whomsoever He pleases according to His Own plan and design. Apparently, the inevitable law of cause and effect explains for us the phenomena of life and death but at the back of every individual event of life and death something transcendental works miraculously much above the ken of human reasoning. This something transcendental that surpasses all the far-extremes of human intellect may be scoffed at by the unbelievers, but it certainly gives additional strength to the Faith of the believers. There may be cited hundreds of example to prove that nobody can save the life of a person for whom death has been ordained by Allah and that no power in the world can take the life of one whom Allah wants to keep alive. ■

Freedom of Expression: In The Light of The Noble Qur'an

- Sumaiya Ahmed

Introduction:

Freedom of expression does not simply protect individual liberty from state interference. Rather, it protects the individual's freedom to communicate with others. The right of the individual is to participate in a deeply social activity that involves socially created languages and the use of community resources such as parks, streets, and broadcast stations.

Yet the structure of adjudication, reinforced by an individual rights culture, tends to suppress the social or relational character of freedom of expression and its distributive demands (concern about the individual's effective opportunity to communicate with others). Recognition of the social character of freedom of expression is critical to understanding both the value and potential harm of expression and to addressing questions about the freedom's scope and limits. Freedom of expression is valuable because of human agency and identity emerge in discourse.

According to the Noble Qur'an:

In many places in the Noble Qur'an, there are verses that can be interpreted as recognizing aspect of freedoms of religion and expression. Generally, the spirit of the Noble Qur'an is not inconsistent with freedom of thought and expression. In the view of Muslims, the Qur'an is the revelation (wahy) where the

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him,) of Islam was connected to Allah the Almighty. According to the Muslim belief, the Qur'an is the Book of guidance (Hidayah) from darkness to light and salvation. Such a Book, with its significant effect on the creation and development of one of the most significant human civilizations, would not block freedom of expression and fearless exchange of information and thoughts. One of the most important verses relating to freedom of expression in the Qur'an:

There is no compulsion in religion. Distinct is the way of guidance now from error. He who turns away from the forces of evil and believes in Allah will surely hold fast to a handle that is strong and unbreakable, for Allah hears all and knows everything (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 256)

Another important verse:

The Most Merciful. Taught the Qur'an. Created man. Taught him eloquence (Surat Ar-Rahman, verse 1-4)

Fundamental Human rights:

Freedom of expression is an important and fundamental human right in Islam. Qur'an discusses it briefly. There are many verses of Qur'an, which describe freedom of expression, its importance, and principles. The basic principle of Qur'anic conversation is good talking. As Allah says in the Noble Qur'an:

And (recall) when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, (enjoining upon them), "Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy. And speak to people good (words) and establish prayer and give Zakah." Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you were refusing. (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 83)

The important objectives of human rights to freedom of expression in the Qur'an; Allah gave the freedom expression to all human being.

**Kinds of Freedom of Expression:
Freedom of Religion:**

The Qur'an ensures the rights and freedoms of belief, thought, and worship of the members of all religions and forbids all sorts of behaviors restricting these rights and freedoms. Provided that the meaning of the concept of secularism, today manipulated to imply atheism, is to respect the freedoms of religion, belief and worship, it would be clear to anyone that this concept is a teaching prevalent in the Qur'an.

There are many relevant verses identified in the Qur'an that mandate the freedom of what to believe and worship. The first one, which clearly defines the concept of religious-freedom, is in Surat al-Kafirun:

I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of

what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion. (Surat al-Kafirun, verse 2-6)

The Qur'an excludes compulsion in choosing what to believe. If one accepts the truth, it is for his or her good, and if he or she sticks to error, it is to his or her detriment. In Qur'an:

There is no compulsion in religion. Distinct is the way of guidance now from error. He who turns away from the forces of evil and believes in Allah, will surely hold fast to a handle that is strong and unbreakable, for Allah hears all and knows everything (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 256)

Allah also says:

There has come to you enlightenment from your Lord. So whoever will see does so for [the benefit of] his soul, and whoever is blind (does harm) against it. And (say), "I am not a guardian over you. (Surat Al-An 'am, verse 104)

Freedom of Thought:

There are innumerable verses in the Noble Qur'an in which the principle of freedom of thought has been expounded and the use of reason emphasized.

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the

winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason. (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 164)

Then do they not look at the camels - how they are created? And at the sky - how it is raised? And at the mountains - how they are erected? And at the earth - how it is spread out? (Surat Al-Ghashiyah, verse 17-20).

It is He who has sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book; in it are verses [that are] precise - they are the foundation of the Book - and others unspecific. As for those in whose hearts is deviation [from truth], they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation [suitable to them]. And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allah. But those firm in knowledge say, "We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord." And no one will be reminded except those of understanding (Surat Al-Imran, verse 7)

Freedom of speech:

Qur'an gives the freedom of speech to any person with some conditions and limitations. Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided (Surat Al-Nahl, Verse 125)

Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you? They were touched

by poverty and hardship and were shaken until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said, "When is the help of Allah?" Unquestionably, the help of Allah is near. (Surat Al-Baqarah, Verse 2:214)

To unite humankind, Islam instructs us to only use speech to be truthful, do good to others, and be fair and respectful. It attempts to pre-empt frictions by prescribing rules of conduct that guarantee for all people not only freedom of speech but also, absolute and the right of disagreement. The Qur'an encourages the people for freedom of speech to explore and search the Truth.

Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant. (Surat Al-Ahzab, 33:71)

Your Lord is most knowing of you. If He wills, He will have mercy upon you; or if He wills, He will punish you. And We have not sent you. [O Muhammad], over them as a manager. (Surat Al-Isra, verse 54)

And [recall] when We took your covenant, [saying], "Do not shed each other's blood or evict one another from your homes. Then you acknowledged (this) while you were witnessing. (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 84) If [instead] you show (some) good or conceal it or pardon an offense – indeed, Allah is ever Pardoning and Competent, (Surat An-Nisa, verse 149)

With Islam's guidance to purify our intentions, it promotes free speech when intend to serve a good purpose, promote peace, bring people closer to Allah unite humankind.

Freedom of Consultation:

Freedom of consultation is an important right of a person in an Islamic society. No doubt, through consulting with others many personal and social problems can be resolved. The combination of two thought patterns acts like the coming together of two wires of different charges, which give light to the environment. Since consultation has a significant effect in resolving problems, the Noble Qur'an orders the Prophet (peace be upon him) to consult with others in finding solutions:

So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]. (Surat Al-Imran 159)

And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend. (Surat Ash-Shuraa, verse 38)

Thus, both wisdom and narrations combine to indicate the sensitive position and the significance of consultation.

Muslims should make use of this great Islamic command, which is the very basis of prosperity and social improvement.

Limitation:

Islam is a religion of rights and duties; where Islam declares human rights freely and voluntarily then it also bounds this freedom for public welfare. Because Islam and the Muslim Ummah are justly balanced. According to the Noble Qur'an:

And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. And We did not make the Qiblah which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger from who would turn back on his heels. And indeed, it is difficult except for those whom Allah has guided. And never would Allah have caused you to lose your faith. Indeed Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful. (Surat al-Baqarah, verse 143)

Some Form of limitation:

Do not be rude in Speech:

So by mercy from Allah, (O Muhammad), you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely (upon Him). (Surat Al-Imran, verse 159)

Restrain Anger:

Who spend (in the cause of Allah)

during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people — and Allah loves the doers of good. (Surat Al-Imran, verse 134)

Be good to Others:

Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful. (Surat An-Nisa, verse 36)

Do not be Arrogant:

(Allah) said, Descend from Paradise, for it is not for you to be arrogant therein. So get out: indeed, you are of the debased. (Surat Al-A'raf, verse 13)

Stand out firmly for Justice:

O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted. (Surat An-Nisa, verse 135)

Avoid Assumption

O you who have believed, avoid much (negative) assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. (Surat Al Hujurat, verse 12)

Stay away from Corruption

Eat and drink from the provision of Allah, and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption. (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 60)

There is no compulsion in Religion:

There is no compulsion in religion. Distinct is the way of guidance now from error. He who turns away from the forces of evil and believes in Allah will surely hold fast to a handle that is strong and unbreakable, for Allah hears all and knows everything (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 256)

Conclusion:

According to Islam, freedom of expression and information is a basic human right. Islam condemns spreading lies and false stories as well as passiveness and reluctance when the truth should be spoken and highlighted.

And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know (it) (Surat Al Baqarah, verse 42)

In this perspective, Qur'an appeals to society because Qur'an is closely related to the social issues of humankind and because Qur'an grants the freedom of expression due to human dignity and honor exploring truth. Qur'an considers the freedom of expression as a fundamental human right. This should also be kept in mind. Qur'an does not support the absolute freedom of expression but describes its limits and principles for social betterment. Therefore, we should adopt the Qur'anic principles of conversation for a peaceful and humble society. ■

Children's Day

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was the first Prime Minister of India. He was the architect of India's Foreign Policy. In 1950 under his leadership India's Five Year Plan was launched. The country made great strides in the field of science and technology under his guidance. He dedicated his entire life to the nation. His life is an open book. He was born rich but lived like an ordinary man. He loved children immensely from the core of his heart. World Children's Day was first observed in 1954. It is globally celebrated on November 20 each year. India started observing Children's Day in 1959 along with other countries of the world. After Nehru's death in 1964, it was unanimously decided to celebrate his birthday 14 November as Children's Day. Since then every year Children's Day is observed on 14th, November, the birthday of Jawaharlal Nehru in India. He loved children and is fondly remembered as chacha Nehru. To bring up children as useful citizens was his utmost desire. Their company was his solace and comfort. He knew their nature, feelings, psychology, mood and attitude well. He knew that the future of the country depended on them. His fondness for children increased with the years. No doubt, the story of his life is one of noble words and righteous deeds.

In the children's Special Number of Shankar's Weekly (3.12.1949), he expressed his affection for children thus: "I like to be with the children, to talk to them and all the more to play with them. In their company for a while forget that am so old and that was a child long, long ago."

"If you (the children) were with me, I would love to talk to you about this beautiful world of ours, about flowers, about birds and animals, about mountains and glaciers, and about all the other wonderful things our world is bestowed with. You know, so much beauty is perceptible all around us yet grown up people like me often remain unaware about it and, engrossed in the office routine, think they are doing some very important work. I hope you would be wiser and keep your eyes open and ears open towards the beautiful life around you."

Late President Dr. Zakir Husain has quoted:

"If you were with me," Jawaharlal Nehru writes in one of his letters to the children of India, "I would love to talk to you about this beautiful world of ours, about flowers and trees and birds and animals and stars and mountains and glaciers and all the other wonderful things that surround us..... You must have read many fairy tales and stories

of long ago. But the world itself is the greatest fairy tale and story of adventure that has been written. Only we must have eyes to see and ears to hear and a mind that opens out to the life and beauty of the world.”

Jawaharlal Nehru is no longer here to talk to children: his message has to be carried to them so that they open out their minds to life and beauty.

He further says:

“He loved children and flowers and birds, but his love of friendship and peace among men and nations was deeper still, because that was for him the most beautiful and desirable of all things. It was to this that he dedicated all his thought and energy, and he did it with a smile that has become a part of our history.”

His father Motilal Nehru, was a well known lawyer of Allahabad. He wanted Jawaharlal to be educated in England. So he got him admitted to the famous public school at Harrow. Then he joined Trinity College, Cambridge from where he took his degree with honours in the Natural Science.

Later on he joined the Bar in the Inner Temple, London, and got through the Bar examination easily. In the autumn of 1912 he returned to India after a stay of seven years in England.

After coming to India he devoted himself to the cause of his motherland.

He played a very significant role in the national struggle for freedom. He was arrested many times and spent many years of his life in prison. He was in various prisons - at Naini, Bareilly, Dehradun, Almora, Alipore in Calcutta and Ahmednagar. India attained freedom on August 15, 1947 and he became the first Prime Minister of free India. He was in office from 1947 to 1964.

He first met Mahatma Gandhi in 1916 during the Lucknow Congress session. Since then both worked together for the sake of the country.

Jawaharlal Nehru was a prolific writer. Some of his famous books are, the Discovery of India, An Autobiography, Glimpses of World History. Indira Gandhi says: “My father’s three books, Glimpses of World History, An Autobiography and The Discovery of India, have been my companions through life. It is difficult to be detached about them”. (Glimpses of World History)

The most striking aspects of his life is that he was very hardworking. He worked long hours. He told the people again and again that they were sentenced to hard labour. They had to work hard to build the country. “Aaram Haram Hai”.(Rest is not proper), he often said. Even when he was ill, he thought of nothing but working for his country.

He once said: 'There is one ambition left in me: that in the few years left to me, I should throw myself, with all the strength and energy left in me, into the work of building up India. I want to do it to the uttermost, till I am exhausted and thrown away as on the scrap-heap. I am not interested in what you or anybody thinks of me afterwards. It is enough for me that I have exhausted myself, my strength and energy, in India's task.'

He wrote on his writing pad the following lines from a poem by the American poet, Robert Frost :

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep.*

*And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*

He kept these lines in mind till the last hours of his life.

Nehru never wasted his time, Even

his life in prison was not wasted. He wrote his three famous books while he was in prison. Apart from it he lived to keep himself in good health, wherever he was. He did physical exercise daily. The habit remained with him throughout his life time.

In a nutshell, children may imbibe a lot from Nehru's life. His life is a role model for them. They should follow him in letter and spirit.

Eminent Journalist M. Chalapathi Rau has rightly said: "Jawaharlal needs no memorial. The whole of modern India is a memorial to him. The story of his life will be told and retold. It is the story of a brave, hard-working, and chivalrous man, who loved his people with all his mind and heart, who worked for them till the end of his life, and who built a hopeful future for them. They cannot forget him. And they know they must carry on his work." ■

Allah has endeared faith to you and has beautified it in your hearts, and has made disbelief, wickedness and disobedience hateful to you. Such are they who are rightly guided. This is grace from Allah and His favour. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

(al-Hujurät 49:7-8)

Human Rights

- Riffat Hassan

The Qur'anic View

To Muslims the Qur'an is the Divine Document of human rights and a large part of its concern is to free human beings from the bondage of traditionalism, authoritarianism (religious, political, economic, or any other), tribalism, racism, sexism, slavery or anything else that prohibits or inhibits human beings from actualizing the Qur'anic vision of human destiny embodied in the classic proclamation: "Towards Allah is thy limit".

In the section entitled "General Rights" which follows, an account is given of the Qur'an's affirmation of fundamental rights which all human beings ought to possess because they are so deeply rooted in our humanness that their denial or violation is tantamount to a negation or degradation of that which makes us human. From the perspective of the Qur'an, these rights came into existence when we did; they were created, as we were, by God in order that our human potential could be actualized. Rights created or given by God be abolished by any temporal ruler or human agency. Eternal and immutable, they ought to be exercised since everything that God does is for "a just purpose".

GENERAL RIGHTS

A. Right to Life

The Qur'an upholds the sanctity and absolute value of human life and points out that, in essence, the life of each individual is comparable to that of an entire community and, therefore, should be treated with the utmost care.

B. Right to Respect

The Qur'an deems all human beings to be worthy of respect because of all creation they alone chose to accept the "trust" of freedom of the will. Human beings can exercise freedom of the will because they possess the rational faculty, which is what distinguishes them from all other creatures. Though human beings can become "the lowest, of the lowest", the Qur'an declares that they have been made "in the best of moulds" having the ability to think to have knowledge of right and wrong, to do the good and to avoid the evil. Thus, on account of the promise which is contained in being human, namely, the potential to be God's vicegerent on earth, the humanness of all human beings is to be respected and considered to be an end in itself.

C. Right to Justice

The Qur'an puts great emphasis on the right to seek justice and the duty

to do justice. In the context of justice, the Qur'an uses two concepts: "adl" and "ihsan". Both are enjoined and both are related to the idea of "balance", but they are not identical in meaning.

"Adl" is defined by A.A.A. Fyzee, a well-known scholar of Islam, as "to be equal, neither more nor less." Explaining this concept, Fyzee wrote: "...in a Court of Justice the claims of the two parties must be considered evenly, without undue stress being laid upon one side or the other. Justice introduces the balance in the form of scales that are evenly balanced." "Adl" was described in similar terms by Abu'l Kalam Azad, a famous translator of the Qur'an and a noted writer, who stated: "What is justice but the avoiding of excess? There should be neither too much nor too little; hence the use of scales as the emblems of justice". Lest anyone try to do too much or too little, the Qur'an points out that no human being can carry another's burden or attain anything without striving for it.

Recognizing individual merit is a part of "adl". The Qur'an teaches that merit is not determined by lineage, sex, wealth, worldly success or religion, but by righteousness, which consists of both right "belief" ("iman") and just "action" ("amal"). Further, the Qur'an distinguishes between passive believers and those who strive in the cause of God pointing out that though

all believers are promised good by God, the latter will be exalted above the former.

Just as it is in the spirit of "adl" that special merit be considered in the matter of rewards, so also special circumstances are to be considered in the matter of punishments. For instance, for crimes of unchastity the Qur'an prescribes identical punishments for a man or a woman who is proved guilty, but it differentiates between classes of women: for the same crime, a slave woman would receive half, and the Prophet's consort double the punishment given to a "free" Muslim woman. In making such a distinction, the Qur'an while upholding high moral standards, particularly in the case of the Prophet's wives whose actions have a normative significance for the community, reflects God's compassion for women slave who were socially disadvantaged.

While constantly enjoining "adl" the Qur'an goes beyond this concept to "ihsan", which literally means, "restoring the balance by making up a loss or deficiency". In order to understand this concept, it is necessary to understand the nature of the ideal society or community ("ummah") envisaged by the Qur'an. The word "ummah" comes from 'the root "umm", or "mother". The symbols of a mother and motherly love and compassion are also linked with the

two attributes most characteristic of God, namely, "Rahim" and "Rahman" both of which are derived from the root "rahm", meaning "womb". The ideal "ummah" cares about all its members just as an ideal mother cares about all her children, knowing that all are not equal and that each has different needs. While showing undue favour to any child would be unjust, a mother who gives to a "handicapped" child more than she does to her other child or children, is not acting unjustly but exemplifying the spirit of "ihsan" by helping to make up the deficiency of a child who need special assistance in meeting the requirements of life. "Ihsan", thus, shows God's sympathy for the disadvantaged segments of human society (such as women, orphans, slaves, the poor, the infirm, and the minorities).

D. Right to Freedom

As stated earlier, the Qur'an is deeply concerned about liberating human beings from every kind of bondage. Recognizing the human tendency toward dictatorship and despotism, the Qur'an says with clarity and emphasis in Surah 3: Al-'Imran.

It is not (possible)- That a man, to whom - Is given the Book, - and Wisdom, - And the Prophetic Office, - Should say to people:- "Be ye my worshippers - Rather than Allah's" - On the contrary - (He would say): "Be ye worshippers – Of Him Who is truly - The

Cherisher of all".

The institution of human slavery is, of course, extremely important in the context of human freedom. Slavery was widely prevalent in Arabia at the time of the advent of Islam, and the Arab economy was based on it. Not only did the Qur'an insist that slaves be treated in a just and humane way, but it continually urged the freeing of slaves. By laying down, in Surah 47: Muhammad: 4, that prisoners of war were to be set free, "either by an act of grace or against ransom", the Qur'an virtually abolished slavery since "The major source of slaves - men and women was prisoners of war". Because the Qur'an does not state explicitly that slavery is abolished, it does not follow that it is to be continued, particularly in view of the numerous ways in which the Qur'an seeks to eliminate this absolute evil. A Book which does not give a king or a prophet the right to command absolute obedience from another human being could not possibly sanction slavery in any sense of the word.

The greatest guarantee of personal freedom for a Muslim lies in the Qur'anic decree that no one other than God can limit human freedom and in the statement that "Judgment (as to what is right and what is wrong) rests with God alone". As pointed out by Khalid M. Ishaque, an eminent Pakistani jurist:

The Qur'an gives to responsible dissent the status of a fundamental right. In exercise of their powers, therefore, neither the legislature nor the executive can demand unquestioning obedience...The Prophet, even though he was the recipient of Divine revelation, was required to consult the Muslims in public affairs. Allah addressing the Prophet says: "...and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs. And...when thou art resolved, then put thy trust in Allah".

Since the principle of mutual consultation ("shura") is mandatory, it is a Muslim's fundamental right, as well as responsibility, to participate in as many aspects of the community's life as possible. The Qur'anic proclamation in Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 256, "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith" guarantees freedom of religion and worship. This means that, according to Qur'anic teaching, non-Muslims living in Muslim territories should have the freedom to follow their own faith-traditions without fear or harassment. A number of Qur'anic passages state clearly that the responsibility of the Prophet Muhammad is to communicate the message of God and not to compel anyone to believe. The right to exercise free choice in matters of belief is unambiguously endorsed by the Qur'an which also states clearly that God will judge human beings not on the basis of what they profess but on the basis of

their belief and righteous conduct, as indicated by Surah 2: Al- Baqarah: 62 which says:

Those who believe (in the Qur'an) - And those follow the Jewish (scriptures), -And the Christians and the Sabians, - Any who believe in God And the Last Day, -And work righteousness, Shall have their reward- With the Lord: on them- Shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

The Qur'an recognizes the right to religious freedom not only in the case of other believers in God, but also in the case of not-believers in God (if they are not aggressing upon Muslims)

In the context of the human right to exercise religious freedom, it is important to mention that the Qur'anic dictum, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" applies not only to non-Muslims but also to Muslims. While those who renounced Islam after professing it and then engaged in "acts of war" against Muslims were to be treated as enemies and aggressors, the Qur'an does not prescribe any punishment for non-profession or renunciation of faith. The decision regarding a person's ultimate destiny in the hereafter rests with God.

The right to freedom includes the right to be free to tell the truth. The Qur'anic term for truth is "Haqq" which is also one of God's most important

attributes. Standing up for the truth is a right and a responsibility which a Muslim may not disclaim even in the face of the greatest danger or difficulty. While the Qur'an commands believers to testify to the truth, it also instructs society not to harm persons so testifying.

E. Right to Acquire Knowledge

The Qur'an puts the highest emphasis on the importance of acquiring knowledge. That knowledge has been at the core of the Islamic worldview from the very beginning is attested to by Surah 96: Al'Alaq: 1-5, which Muslims believe to be the first revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad.

Asking rhetorically if those without knowledge can be equal to those with knowledge, the Qur'an exhorts believers to pray for advancement in knowledge. The famous prayer of the Prophet Muhammad was "Allah grant me Knowledge of the ultimate nature of things" and one of the best known of all traditions ("ahadith") is "Seek knowledge even though it be in China.

According to Qur'anic perspective, knowledge is a prerequisite for the creation of a just world in which authentic peace can prevail. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of the pursuit of learning even at the time, and in the midst, of war.

F. Right to Sustenance

As pointed out by Surah 11: Hud:

6, every living creature depends for its sustenance upon God. A cardinal concept in the Qur'an- which underlies the socio-economic-political system of Islam- is that the ownership of everything belongs, not to any person, but to God. Since God is the universal creator, every creature has the right to partake of what belongs to God. This means that every human being has the right to a means of living and that those who hold economic or political power do not have the right to deprive others of the basic necessities of life by misappropriating or misusing resources which have been created by God for the benefit of humanity in general.

G. Right to Work

According to Qur'anic teaching every man and woman has the right to work, whether the work consists of gainful employment or voluntary service. The fruits of labour belong to the one who has worked for them - regardless of whether it is a man or a woman. As Surah 4: An-Nisa': 32 states:..to men - is allotted what they earn, - And to women what they earn.

H. Right to Privacy

The Qur'an recognizes the need for privacy as a human right and lays down rules for protecting an individual's life in the home from undue intrusion from within or without.

I. Right to Protection from Slander, Backbiting, and Ridicule

The Qur'an recognizes the right of human beings to be protected from defamation, sarcasm, offensive nicknames, and backbiting. It also states that no person is to be maligned on ground of assumed guilt and that those who engage in malicious scandal-mongering will be grievously punished both in this world and the next.

J. Right to Develop One's Aesthetic Sensibilities and Enjoy the Bounties Created by God

As pointed out Muhammad Asad, "By declaring that all good and beautiful things to the believers, the Qu'ran condemns, by implication, all forms of life-denying asceticism, world-renunciation and selfmortification. In fact, it can be stated that the right to develop one's aesthetic sensibilities so that one can appreciate beauty in all its forms, and the right to enjoy what God has provided for the nurture of humankind, are rooted in the life-affirming vision of the Qur'an.

K. Right to Leave One's Homeland Under Oppressive Conditions

According to Qur'anic teaching, a Muslim's ultimate loyalty must be to God and not to any territory. To fulfill his Prophetic mission, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) decided to leave his place of birth,

Mecca, and emigrated to Medina. This event ("Hijrah") has great historical and spiritual significance for Muslims who are called upon to move away from their place of origin if it becomes an abode of evil and oppression where they cannot fulfill their obligations to God or establish justice.

L. Right to "The Good Life"

The Qur'an upholds the right of the human being only to life but to "the good life". This good life, made up of many elements, becomes possible when a human being is living in a just environment. According to Qur'anic teaching, justice a prerequisite for peace, and peace is a prerequisite for human development. In a just society, all the earlier-mentioned human rights may be exercised without difficulty. In such a society other basic rights such as the right to a secure place of residence, the right to the protection of one's personal possessions, the right to protection of one's covenants, the right to move freely, the right to social and judicial autonomy or minorities, the right to the protection of one's holy places and the right to return to one's spiritual center, also exist. ■

Excerpted from a paper written by Dr. Riffat Hassan, "Are Human Rights Compatible with Islam?" Dr. Hassan is a Professor in Humanities (Religious Studies) at University of Louisville, Kentucky, USA.

Not Justice

-Faizan Mustafa & Aymen Mohammad

One is yet again reminded of the Hindi movie, No One Killed Jessica. Ordering the quick completion of the criminal trial in the demolition of Babri Masjid and curing the technical defect of “consultation” with the high court, invoking its extraordinary powers under Article 142, the Supreme Court had said in 2017 that “let justice be done though heavens fall”. It went on to observe that “in the present case, crimes which shake the secular fabric of the Constitution of India have allegedly been committed almost 25 years ago”. In the historic Babri judgment last year, the Supreme Court had held the demolition as an “egregious wrong”. On Wednesday, none of the 32 surviving accused out of 49 was found guilty of such a serious crime.

The accused were charged with various sections of the Indian Penal Code pertaining to incitement to violence (Sections 153A and 153B), conspiracy to commit a crime (Section 120B), and unlawful assembly (Section 149). The overarching import of these charges was that there was a joint agreement on the part of the accused to demolish the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992. For criminal conspiracy, mere agreement is punishable and for unlawful assembly, mere presence is enough to make one liable. There can be no two opinions on whether L K Advani and others were members of an unlawful assembly.

The CBI was required to demonstrate that the accused had acted together in furtherance of a common intention and a common object. For an assembly to be treated as unlawful under the IPC, the court infers whether there was a “common object” that was guiding the actions of the crowd. This inference is drawn using information such as the use of tools or weapons (in this case, the use of demolition tools, shovel, ropes was a well-recorded fact) and the behaviour of the accused prior to, during and after the incident (it was recorded that some of the accused were distributing sweets after the demolition while others were encouraging the kar sevaks). Similarly, statements by Murl Manohar Joshi and Advani in the run-up to the demolition were key pieces of evidence.

The chargesheet had also recorded a meeting on December 5, 1992, at Vinay Katiyar’s house where Advani was also present and the decision to allegedly demolish the mosque was taken. Kalyan Singh is alleged to have told a witness “rok construction par lagi hai, destruction par nahi”. For a conspiracy to be proven, all one requires to prove is that there was an agreement between two or more persons to commit a crime. There is no need to separately prove that the accused committed an overt act in furtherance of it. Conspiracies are always proved by circumstantial evidence.

True, one has to have faith in the judicial system of the country, yet at times, courts themselves are on trial when the stakes are high, as was noted by the apex court. True, the principle that the accused must be presumed to be innocent is the golden thread which runs through the fabric of the criminal justice system. True, no rule of criminal law is more important than that which requires the prosecution to prove the accused's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. True, the benefit of even a little doubt accrues to the accused in a criminal trial. Yet, the CBI could not present credible evidence in the case, particularly on the charges of criminal conspiracy. The judgment is controversial as the court has acquitted all the accused and held the demolition as spontaneous, for which no one except unknown anti-social elements must have been responsible. The court did not accept the over 100 videotapes of the incident as the audio was not clear, but then most criminal trial convictions are made on the basis of oral and documentary evidence. As many as 351 witnesses had testified and more than 800 documents were produced. Yet, the CBI failed to convince the judge.

The Babri litigation has been unique and unprecedented both in civil suits as well as criminal trials. The civil suit was strange in the sense that the high court acted as the court of first instance and the Supreme Court acted as court of first and last appeal, differing status quo orders, addition of parties, demands of differential burden of proof, ASI excavation etc. Just

like the civil dispute, the criminal case is also mired in procedural lapses, patent illegalities and political interference by different governments. In no other criminal case, were two FIRs filed, probably within 10 minutes, about the same incident with different offences — the second FIR did not mention the crime of conspiracy and the trial bifurcated to two courts, one at Rai Bareilly and another at Lucknow after the joint trial had originally started at Lucknow.

Admittedly, criminal law is an island of technicality in a sea of discretion and the accused got the benefit of its technicalities. The police have discretion in arrest and investigation, the government in giving sanctions of prosecution, the prosecution as to whether to prosecute and if so, for what crimes, the judge has discretion, discharge, conviction and sentence.

The acquittal of all the accused is a setback to the CBI's reputation. The Supreme Court itself has called it a "caged parrot". It is high time that it is liberated from political influence. India's criminal justice system cannot improve if prosecution and investigation functions are not bifurcated. The Criminal Law Reforms Committee must make a strong recommendation on this. ■

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Parlous State of Polarisation

- Zakia Soman*

The CBI court judgment acquitting 32 accused in the Babri Masjid demolition is extremely disappointing. It has come closely after the Supreme Court judgment on Ram temple at Ayodhya categorically stated that razing the mosque was a “criminal act”. These judgments are preceded by violence and lynchings in the name of gau raksha, and unrest owing to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. All of this has a huge bearing on the future direction of our secular democratic republic.

The Ayodhya dispute has been at the centre of Indian politics for over four decades. We are a religiously polarised nation today. But we never wanted to be a religion based nation in the first place. Ours is a land where people of diverse faiths and belief systems have coexisted for centuries.

We won independence from the British thanks to a democratic freedom struggle, in which women and men of all religious backgrounds participated equally. We, the people of India, gave ourselves the Constitution with its values of equality, justice, democracy, pluralism and equal opportunity to all. In our democracy all citizens are equal irrespective of faith, caste, gender, language.

Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar, Maulana Azad and many other visionaries from the freedom struggle painstakingly laid the

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foundation of a plural and democratic nation. So, what went wrong? How did we reduce ourselves to being mere Hindus and Muslims?

Even as our society has been diverse and eclectic, forces of religious division and hatred have always existed amongst both Hindus and Muslims. The two nation theory was actively pursued by these forces. Jinnah wanted Pakistan and there were those who wanted a Hindu rashtra.

The outcome was a bloody Partition with loss of innocent lives and mindless violence. The Father of the Nation was assassinated because of his insistence on sarva dharma samabhava and Hindu-Muslim unity.

Most ordinary Indians wanted peace and prosperity then and they want it now, as well. Some elite Muslims, mainly from north India, migrated to Pakistan. The majority of Indian Muslims rejected the theocratic nation of Pakistan and stayed back in their own country. But the Hindu right still holds Indian Muslims responsible for the creation of Pakistan.

After Independence, even as we embarked on nation building through various development initiatives, communal politics continued to form the backdrop. The Congress brand of secularism translated into pandering to conservative Muslim leaders such as the Shahi Imam, or other such religious figures. This kind of secularism did not

translate into better living conditions for Muslims who got marginalised politically, economically and socially.

On the other hand, this pandering to orthodox religious leaders gave rise to the “appeasement of Muslims” theory of BJP-RSS. On their part, even today they do not give tickets to Muslims in elections.

Congress appeasement of Muslim conservatives during the Shah Bano case helped RSS build up the Ram Janambhoomi movement. Thousands of lives were lost in the communal riots that followed countrywide. The Muslim masses paid a heavy price for this kind of politics and continued rigidity of the clergy. The women led movement against triple talaq was a refreshing change in recent years. It was supported by all except conservative clergy and so-called secular political parties.

Could the religious polarisation over Ayodhya have been avoided? It is no more relevant to talk about so-called archaeological evidence about a mosque or a temple originally existing at the disputed site. It is now only a matter of faith turned into majoritarian politics.

Back then in the 1980s, the Muslim leadership of Shahi Imam and Syed Shahabuddin should have conceded the birthplace of Lord Ram. They failed to do so. But that does not mean that those demanding a temple can freely raze the mosque. The courts have failed to provide justice in the matter.

Ordinary people have suffered for the follies of leaders. They have paid the price for divisive hate politics for too long.

Collectively, we have paid a heavy price for politics of religious division through civic unrest and disturbances. We have witnessed several communal riots since Independence – Moradabad, Meerut, Bhagalpur, Nellie, Ahmedabad, Bhiwandi, Surat, Bombay, Muzaffarnagar, Delhi, the list is unending.

All Indians, including Muslims, want education, jobs, affordable housing, health services and an opportunity to flourish. Everybody wants safety and security to live and move freely. Everybody wants to enjoy individual freedoms without worrying about politics over places of worship. Nobody wants public discourse to be dominated by religious issues at the cost of real issues affecting people.

Indians are an eclectic mix of casual religiosity, agnosticism, spiritualism or even secularism and deep religiosity. It does not mean that they hate those from other faith systems and want their subjugation. Our political parties need to understand this.

The PM talked about sabka saath, sabka vishwas. But we are yet to see any further movement on this count. Everybody is happy to see a Ram temple at Ayodhya. But it is not going to resolve the crisis faced by the nation on the economic front or the agrarian front.

We have seen a blatant attempt to falsely give a communal colour to the fight against Covid recently. Such politics is not going to lead India into the future. The CBI court verdict is a deeply ominous pointer for the future direction of our vibrant nation.■

(The Times of India, 05-10-2020)

Editorials From National Dalies on Babri Case

No One Felled It?

Twenty-eight years is a long time but in India that is how long it can take the wheels of justice to turn. In keeping with its many failures in high profile cases, CBI's prosecution of a criminal conspiracy in the Babri Masjid demolition fell flat. The trial court found no evidence of conspiracy while acquitting LK Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharti and other leaders of the Ram Mandir agitation. The court concluded that accused persons like Ashok Singhal actually tried to stop the "anti-social elements" who brought down the mosque. The Justice Liberhan Commission report had rejected the claim of a spontaneous riot.

Despite CBI filing its first chargesheet in 1993 and a supplementary chargesheet in 1996, the case drifted for two decades between trial courts, Allahabad high court and Supreme Court. In 2017, an SC bench led by Justice Rohinton Nariman revived the criminal conspiracy charges and kept making decisive interventions

to prevent further delays. SC must review unacceptably long procedural delays that plague important cases in the trial stage. Justice delayed is justice denied. The judicial process is still not over: Appeals before Allahabad HC and later SC could happen.

Last year, the five-judge SC bench adjudicating the mandir-masjid title dispute dubbed the Babri Masjid destruction a "serious violation of the rule of law". India's track record of prosecuting communal riots is abysmal, which is a key reason they recur with disturbing regularity. Rarely are riot leaders brought to justice. CBI must also examine its failure to prove documentary evidence like audio and video clips it brought to trial. Authorities are fond of saying the law will take its course. Such a lengthy course doesn't bode well for the rule of law. Failure to uncover the "serious violation" of 1992 will remain a black day for Indian democracy.■

(The Times of India, 01-10-2020)

Babri Case Closed For Now

But it is unlikely the last word has been heard on this chapter of India's history.

Twenty-eight years after a mob demolished the Babri Masjid in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya town and sparked off a cycle of violence and riots across India that left thousands dead, a judgment was delivered on Wednesday. The special Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court held that there was no prior conspiracy on December 6, 1992, and acquitted all 32 persons — including senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders LK Advani, MM Joshi, Uma Bharti, and Kalyan Singh — accused in the case. Judge SK Sharma pointed towards insufficient evidence and possible tampering of video and audio proof and blamed anti-social elements for the razing of the structure. Despite coming after nearly three decades, the judgment raises more questions than it answers.

The demolition of the mosque was preceded by months of political mobilisation across the country that whipped up sentiment. Multiple eyewitnesses and journalists have reported how mobs swelled around the disputed structure for days before the demolition, with the authorities doing little to disperse the crowd. Reports also underlined how the police stood by while groups of young men with pickaxes, shovels and ropes, scaled the domes of the fragile structure, with the intent of bringing it down. Even the Supreme Court, in its verdict last year that paved the way

for the construction of the Ram temple, called the demolition a criminal act and awarded the Muslim parties five acres of land at an alternative site.

The court verdict raises pertinent questions about the nature and quality of the probe. After years of investigation, CBI presented around 350 witnesses and 600 pieces of documents — but the verdict found that the tapes were tampered with and the documents could not be relied on. This is a further indictment of India's creaky criminal justice system. The verdict points to anti-social elements who demolished the mosque, but there is no clarity on who they were and whether the probe agencies have any plan to identify and punish them. The conclusions also appear to contradict the findings of the 1992 Liberhan commission that blamed senior political leaders for the event.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid was a sombre moment. In many ways, Ayodhya and India have moved on. An impressive Ram temple is being constructed in Ayodhya and a mosque complex is coming up at an alternative site. But doubts about the criminal investigation, the lack of criminal and political accountability for those who brought the structure down and the precedent set are worrying. The case may be closed for now — pending an appeal — but it does not signal closure in this painful chapter of India's history. ■

(Hindustan Times, 01-10-2020)

Expected Verdict

Once the Supreme Court made the Ram temple at Ayodhya a reality last year and allocated an alternative site for the razed mosque that stood there to be rebuilt, it was seen as a quid pro quo. So there wasn't much expectation from the ruling on the Babri Masjid demolition case. Primarily because in the prevailing national sentiment after the Ayodhya verdict and its acceptability, nobody wants to get into a debate on righteousness. Besides, there was an impassioned mob which was uncontrollable, making it amply difficult to locate faces and track evidence, sweeping reason under a heaving tide of emotion. A special court, therefore, acquitted all the accused, including BJP veterans LK Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti, of criminal conspiracy, citing lack of evidence and a runaway chain of events that even the leaders couldn't stop. So the guilty, by that logic, would be the thousands of faceless kar sevaks, who wanted to claim the birthplace of Lord Ram and had run amok. The problem with judging a mob fury is that the search for an instigator or motive becomes as pointless as finding a needle in a hay stack. It also becomes easy to then label crowds under the umbrella term of "anti-socials." Which is why the conspiracy charge had earlier been dropped by a trial court in 2001 with the Allahabad High Court upholding it but it was restored after the Supreme Court

order in 2017 as investigative agencies claimed they had audio clips of fiery speeches. Advani though has been consistent in describing the demolition as a "terrible mistake" and wondering if it was the consequence of a "mob going out of control or a small determined group which did not agree with the leadership of the movement." As for the hurt of Muslims, it has dulled in 28 years, with an entire generation growing up in between without visual memory of the event that changed the political landscape of India. They would rather focus on jobs and the temple town economy that would develop around Ayodhya than dwell on scars. Although the top court had called the demolition "unlawful destruction" and said Muslims had been wrongly deprived of a mosque that was constructed well over 400 years ago, nobody, except compulsive litigants, is interested in seeking redress on its basis. Besides, the original crusaders of the temple movement — Advani, Joshi, Bharti and former UP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh — are in the twilight of their political lives and do not matter enough in the changed dispensation within the BJP. So clean chit or not, the temple glory has anyway been appropriated by the new leadership. As for the larger question of the travesty of justice, even the Opposition is tired of sloganeering and in the prevalent majoritarian sentiment of the day, has little or no resonance.

Yet the temple is a reality because of Advani, who even crafted the BJP's national identity with a definitive alternative ideology. He began a rathayatra from Gujarat with the goal of reclaiming the temple site. Although he couldn't complete the yatra, it aroused passions across the country and paved the way for the party's ascendancy to political power. And in the process, religiosity overtook secularism as an electoral agenda. Only social justice forces in the shape of VP Singh, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Prasad Yadav held out. But that led to polarisation and Ram became less of a guiding visionary with his neo-disciples becoming more like avengers of historical insult. Hinduism became Hindutva. In fact, the Congress, too, was taken in by the Hindutva wave with Rajiv Gandhi himself allowing the opening of the Babri Masjid gates and 'shilanyas' prayers to be held inside for fear of losing the Hindu vote. This opened the floodgates for the right-wing fringe like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal to claim political centrestage. That's when the temple became more than a symbolism, a cause to correct historical denials because of the Congress' minority appeasement. Rajiv had grossly misjudged that the mosque, too, could co-exist. That was not to be. Advani had merely sought a balanced discourse where Hinduism could be defined not by exclusion, revisionism and minority appeasement but as an inclusive philosophy of national life. One that

translated into the reasoned prime ministership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Unfortunately, today he and many seniors have been benched, not even consulted or properly invited to temple affairs. Meanwhile, the hardline extremism and otherisation of non-Hindus have become the centrifugal force of the BJP, one that has been condoned by a tacit electorate, which returned the Narendra Modi Government with a brute majority. Ayodhya is done and settled and now that the foundation stone has been laid, the temple politics, too, seems to have run its course. Even the BJP's ideological fountainhead, the RSS, is non-committal about pressing for Kashi and Mathura. In fact, its chief Mohan Bhagwat has categorically said that the RSS does not get into agitations and that the Ram temple was an exception. But there is a bigger demolition at work, that of a community the BJP feels has been privileged by secularism and the liberal discourse so far. Hate crimes against Muslims, cow vigilantism, crackdown on protesters against the citizenship Law are all intended to make the minorities dependent on majoritarian consent. Let us not forget that the Supreme Court, while going with faith on the Ayodhya verdict, had also upheld the secular nature of polity by classifying the act of demolition itself as illegal. In a post-pandemic world full of challenges that matter, the BJP shouldn't create new faultlines or give ammunition to others to do so. ■

(The Pioneer, 01-10-2020)

SC Raps Centre

Once again it took the Supreme Court to draw attention to the fact that freedom of speech is the nation's most abused liberty in recent times. And Chief Justice of India SA Bobde censured the Government for it while hearing a slew of petitions, alleging how Muslims had been demonised by a section of the media through biased reportage on the Tablighi Jamaat congregation at Markaz Nizamuddin, which became a superspreader event for the Coronavirus. He objected to a junior-level officer for filing a flimsy affidavit on behalf of the Government in the matter, claiming that the petitioners were trying to muzzle the freedom of speech by targeting the media and that there was no "bad reporting" as such. "Like you are entitled to say a lot of things, they are too. We must also tell you that freedom of speech is the most abused freedom in recent times," Justice Bobde said while asking the Government to file another affidavit, this time by the Secretary of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, on the petition seeking action against some TV channels for colouring perceptions. He even warned the Government that it "should not make unnecessary nonsensical averments." It is true that the Tablighi meeting in March generated a huge controversy as many cases across the country were linked to those who had attended the gathering. No

doubt that was a costly human error, badly compounded by the procedural oversight of the police and authorities. The gathering, which featured sermons, was attended by Tablighi members from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan and Saudi Arabia. Members had also come from Afghanistan, Algeria, Djibouti, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, England, Fiji, France and Kuwait. Not only that, some of the top missionaries from Indonesia, with which we share easier visa rules, entered the country on a tourist visa, avoiding to disclose the purpose or nature of their visit. Many of those who attended then travelled to other parts of the country, making contact-tracing an almost impossible job as they bled into communities. But then there were other social and religious congregations during the pandemic that came with attendant risks and spreads though they didn't get played up to the extent that the Tablighi incident did. Down south, wholesale markets became even bigger super-spreader epicentres. But the majoritarian propaganda machinery was quick to use the unfortunate episode to stigmatise Muslim clusters in general as having a greater chance of a virus spread. So the otherisation and scapegoat politics, that has regrettably now even become a governance tool, should not have been used to cover up for the mis-

management of a public health disaster. It is to be noted that such was the guilt syndrome thrust upon by majority opinion that the recovered members of the Tablighi were among the first plasma donors in the city. Now with the top court seeking to assess bias in media coverage that could have unjustly tainted a community, the hurt may not be taken away but at least be acknowledged.

The top court also asked the Government to bring on record all relevant statutes with regard to regulating TV channels. Recently it restrained a channel from telecasting a controversial programme that sought to “expose” a “conspiracy and jihad to infiltrate Muslims” into the Indian civil services. The court was right to see through the agenda to vilify a certain community on the pretext of an investigation and perpetuate a narrative suited to the political climate of the day. But then how many broadcasts will it stop given the partisan nature of the hundreds of news channels in India today, some of them owned and funded by political parties themselves? How will it manage the whataboutery and a slew of counter-petitions of why a certain programme doesn’t deserve to be aired while others do? What is divisive and what is not? Given these observations, the court would then have to become a media watchdog, too, stretching its resources no end. The court mentioned setting up a committee of five citizens who can come up with standards for electronic media but what about existing frameworks, which are

toothless at the moment? There is no statutory regulatory mechanism but self-regulatory bodies like the News Broadcasters’ Association (NBA), Broadcast Editors’ Association and News Broadcasters’ Federation have failed to rise to the occasion and ensure a degree of professionalism. Besides, this multiplicity of authorities generates its own politics and lobbies. The NBA does take up broadcast complaints seriously and has a set of ethics but because it comes as just a guideline and is not mandatory, there is no bold punitive action. Usually, errants are let off with an apology or a minor rap on the knuckles. Besides, members of the NBA are from channels themselves and their hands are somewhat tied by the prevalent business model of journalism, the kind that links coverage and pitches to revenue and funding. Till we have a singular code that’s trustworthy or effective or till we have a legally empowered regulatory body, there will always be conflict of interest. Our Constitution has guaranteed the right to freedom but it implies we follow our duties and responsibilities. In a democracy, the media is as much accountable to citizens as are other institutions. Yet instead of showing a mirror to society and advocating rights and issues that politics ignores, the media is sadly being either corrected by institutions like the Supreme Court or weaponised as an official propaganda machinery. ■

(The Pioneer, 09-10-2020)

The Demolition

The Babri Masjid was demolished in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, but there was no demolition plan, nor any demolition men and women, just an on-the-spur outburst by unknown “anti-social elements.” That’s the essence of the verdict by the special court in Lucknow in the 28-year-old case on Wednesday, acquitting all the surviving 32 accused. It challenges facts and does not promise closure. The razing of the masjid, after all, was a public event. It was followed by communal riots in which lives were lost, and, significantly, it was preceded by a highly publicised and carefully crafted movement which had spelt out its goal: “Mandir wahin banayenge”, a temple will be constructed where the masjid stands. The BJP-VHP whipped up visible mobilisations, LK Advani’s rath yatra happened in full public view, and from Ayodhya on D Day, there were eyewitness accounts, photos and videos of the bringing down of the masjid amid exhortations of “ek dhakka aur do...”. More than 10 years ago, the Justice Liberhan Commission had concluded that the evidence underlined that the mobilisation of the kar sevaks was “neither spontaneous and voluntary... was orchestrated and planned”. Indeed, the gravity of the crime was acknowledged by the Supreme Court even as, in November last year, it laid the title suit to rest, handing over the disputed 2.77 acres to the Hindu side and paving the way for the construction of the Ram mandir that began this year on August 5, the Prime Minister laying the first brick. In the same verdict, the apex court had called the demolition an “egregious violation of the rule of law”.

Earlier, in April 2017, the SC had reversed the judgements of the lower courts to revive the conspiracy charges against LK Advani and others, while clubbing the cases so that the demolition and the speeches made by leaders could be seen as part of the same action. Now, at the end of a tortuous legal process that has stretched over nearly three decades, as the court holds no one accountable or punishable, as it shifts the entire blame to the faceless kar sevak, there is only one way forward: The CBI must appeal against the verdict so that the justice process can run its full course.

It’s not just procedure. The rule of law is at stake. The Babri masjid demolition on December 6 was a moment of shame for a constitutional democracy. It also set in motion large political changes. Many of those transformations — the consolidation of the “Hindu” vote, the rise of the BJP, the resetting of the centre of political discourse towards the religious right — have taken on a life of their own. But underlying these transitions and transformations, is a fundamental question of justice, of the rule of law, that is still unchanged, three decades later: Will the majority and the mob have the right of way? This is a question that the investigative machinery and the judiciary still need to answer in the demolition case, within the ambit of the Constitution. How this question is addressed — and answered — will define a democracy’s commitment to due process. ■

(The Indian Express, 01-10-2020)

Justice In Ruins

The ruins of the Babri Masjid were cleared in record time by the hordes of vandals mobilised for demolishing it. Some detritus was still left, though: a belief among many that justice would be done and the Constitution and the rule of law would be upheld if the criminal court punishes those who plotted the events of December 6, 1992. Even when the Supreme Court handed over the empty site to those who wanted the mosque brought down to build a Ram temple, its recognition of the demolition as an “egregious violation of the rule of law” gave rise to hope that the ends of justice would be served by the punishment of those who mobilised the vandals. A Special CBI Court in Lucknow has now cleared the remaining debris with an unconscionable judgment. Throwing to the winds the Supreme Court’s observations on the demolition, the trial court has in effect given judicial legitimisation to the ‘Ram Janmabhoomi movement’ by acquitting all those indicted for conspiracy to bring down the structure. Its conclusions are drastic and defy logic and fact. The court’s finding that the demolition was not planned in advance flies in the face of the entry of more than a hundred thousand volunteers into Ayodhya that day, armed with crowbars, spades, hoes and ropes and every implement needed to bring down a sturdy structure and clear the site. The proponents of the movement, headed by L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti among others, had positioned them-

selves in vantage points to witness the occasion and celebrate with pride what ought to have caused shame and disgust.

It is indeed true that it is not easy to prove a conspiracy, as it essentially takes place in secret. This is where courts must draw reasonable inferences from the circumstances. But in a conspiracy of this nature, it is easy to see that those involved were “marching under a banner”, an image the Supreme Court had once referred to while explaining the ingredients of a conspiracy. In this case, apart from the political mobilisation and the purported intent to assemble on a particular day, the court had with it sufficient evidence that there was studied inaction on the part of the State, whose Chief Minister was one of the accused, and the unambiguous and open threats to the structure voiced by many of the movement’s protagonists. The dissembling Kalyan Singh, as Chief Minister then, had given what, in hindsight, was an obviously false assurance to the highest court and the National Integration Council that nothing but a symbolic ‘kar seva’ would take place. Specific instructions appeared to have been given to the security forces not to stop the ‘kar sevaks’ or hinder their plans. How else would one explain the events? When the crowd went into a frenzy, goaded on by provocative speeches by the dignitaries, and vandals went up the dome, the accused would have the court believe that they were actually trying to restrain the mob and pre-

vent the demolition! The possibility of tampered audio and video evidence or even disavowals on record would not undo the cumulative effect of the logistical and financial preparation, besides the communal mobilisation. Mr. Advani, who had then claimed it was the saddest day of his life, now says the en masse acquittal is a vindication of the movement. This indicates that the objective of the mobilisation, exemplified by his rath yatra, was always to alter the status quo with violence.

The Manmohan Singh Liberhan Commission had laid bare the entire conspiracy in its damning report, but unfortunately, a probe under the Commission of Inquiry Act has no binding value, whereas the evidence adduced at the trial alone matters. It is, of course, the responsibility of the CBI to prove the element of conspiracy, the details of the advance mobilisation, the “meeting of minds” that is required to prove a plot and its broad contours. That the agency failed is no surprise. From the beginning, the police investigation has been marked by bungling. When the main events were covered by two FIRs, the U.P. government initially failed to notify both of them while designating courts for trial. The Allahabad High Court quashed the flawed notification, and the State government’s failure to rectify the irregularity resulted in separate proceedings in Lucknow and Rae Bareilly. The CBI, instead of challenging the State’s rejection of its request for curing a technical defect, filed a supplementary charge sheet after omitting the ‘conspiracy’ charge. The Su-

preme Court later said this derailed the joint trial and resulted in separate proceedings in two places. In 2017, the Supreme Court revived the conspiracy charge, directed the trial court to resume day-to-day trial and sternly reminded the agency that it was because of its failure and that of the State government that a crime that shook the secular fabric of the Constitution had not seen justice for 25 years. Whether a politically hamstrung agency could have successfully prosecuted such a sensitive case is a moot question. But the results are there for all to see.

Even allowing for the possibility that the judiciary is in close alignment with the executive, it is unacceptable to see a court going so far as to parrot the specious theory advanced by the demolition squad from the BJP-VHP-RSS family for years that the destruction was a “spontaneous act”. All those who went through that disgraceful phase in India’s political history know that the demolition was only the culmination of a revanchist movement. The period was marked by communal mobilisation, holding of processions to gather ‘bricks’ meant for constructing a temple, and an attempt to storm the site in 1990, which ended in bloodshed. Given this grisly background, and the grave implications that the exoneration of those who demolished a religious structure would have on public trust in the judicial system, it is imperative that the CBI goes on appeal. The cause of communal amity cannot afford successive judicial setbacks to both secular values and the rule of law. ■

Cleared

Indian jurisprudence demands that there should be conclusive evidence before conviction. Perhaps that is why the special court of the Central Bureau of Investigation yesterday acquitted all those charged in the Babri Masjid demolition case since the prosecution had failed to establish the case beyond all reasonable doubt. Since the list of accused included senior Bharatiya Janata Party leaders, such as the former deputy prime minister, L.K. Advani, or Murli Manohar Joshi, and the event left a deep impression on Indians, the verdict was anticipated with especial interest. The CBI had investigated the matter for years and had produced 351 witnesses and 600 documents. One of the points reportedly made by the court was that the demolition of the disputed structure on December 6, 1992 was not pre-planned. There was apparently no evidence of conspiracy, which nullified the charge under Section 120B of the Indian Penal Code. The prosecution's charge that a meeting was held in the house of Vinay Katiyar, a Bajrang Dal leader, on the previous day where a plan was made to raze the structure was not substantiated, the court reportedly said, as the video presented as evidence did not prove that a conspiracy was hatched.

The court reportedly said that the video cassettes could not be relied upon as they were not sealed and not clear; the CBI did not produce negatives of the photographs given in evidence either. Not only was there no proof of provocation through slogans and speeches violating IPC Section 153 that penalizes provocation with intent to cause riot, there was also no desecration of a religious place — an offence under IPC Section 295 — because, in the wisdom of the court, the minority community had not offered prayers there for years. Additionally, without the imposition of Section 144 there could have been no unlawful assembly, besides the fact that the Supreme Court had permitted symbolic kar seva on that day. The chief minister of Uttar Pradesh at the time, Kalyan Singh, one of the accused, had promised security and peaceability, and had, the court thought, done his best to maintain order. The demolition had been carried out by anti-social elements; the court reportedly ruled that there was nothing to connect the accused, directly or indirectly, with it. In other words, in the court's eye, no transgression had taken place on the fateful day. ■

(The Telegraph, 01-10-2020)

Babri Verdict ignores Breach of Rule of Law

The verdict of the CBI special court in Lucknow acquitting all the 32 accused in the conspiracy case that led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, has dealt a more grievous injury to the citizens' trust in the idea of rule of law than the razing of the very mosque.

The special judge has decided after assessing the evidence presented before him by the premier investigating agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), that the 16-century structure was brought down by a "group of hooligan kar sevaks" who "suddenly got agitated" and brought down the structure though the Justice Liberhan Commission had reported that they did the job with "pickaxes, hammers, iron rods and shovels".

The special judge also found that the leaders, including former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and former Union minister M.M. Joshi, also leaders of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, shared no common intent with the vandals. The judge points to the innocence of the leaders saying Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Ashok Singhal tried to stop the kar sevaks from assaulting the place of worship as it housed the Ram idol. Justice Liberhan, however, notes that "they (the kar sevaks) first entered the sanctum sanctorum and carefully took the idols and cash box, etc to a safe place."

The judgment will now cause the patriarchs of the Hindutva movement who worked tirelessly and toured extensively towards instigating people into shouting "mandir waheen banayenge (will construct

the temple on the spot where Babri Masjid once stood)" to walk free, but force those who watched the "egregious violation of the rule of law", as the highest court of the land called the criminal act, to look for reasons to believe that this nation remains a democracy bound by the rule of law. That some of the perpetrators had later taken credit for their role in the act makes their pain acute.

While the judiciary was a hapless onlooker when the Babri Masjid was bought down against an order of the Supreme Court to maintain the status quo, it was not so when the culprits were brought before it. It had the power to assess the chargesheet and see if it has verifiable proof in a case on which the highest court in the land had made a comment. That the court made no effort towards it adds to the disappointment.

It is now up to the CBI to salvage its image as well as the people's trust in the institutions of democracy by going in appeal and argue its case. That the court has trashed the pieces of evidence such as photographs, videos and voice samples as inadmissible tells on the professionalism of the agency, an aspect its controllers in the government must look into.

When the dust dies down in Ayodhya and the haze disappears, the picture becomes clear: the majoritarian thought has seeped into all the arms of the government. And rule of law, the primary offer of democracy, has become the first casualty. Constitution alone cannot protect it; rather, it will be next in the line, unless its believers rose to defend it. ■

Sad Reflection

The verdict by a special court in Lucknow acquitting leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party and of groups affiliated to it in the demolition of the Babari mosque in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992 is a sad reflection on the quality of the investigation by the prosecuting agency, but equally on the judiciary. For in concluding that the demolition was a spontaneous act by several thousand people gathered on the site that fateful date, the court refused to take cognisance of mountains of evidence that suggested the contrary. For refusing to place credence on newspaper reports, on the ground that originals were not submitted; video footage, on the ground that it had not been forensically validated and photographs, on the ground that negatives were not supplied, the judge may be accused of being overly technical. But how does this reflect on the Central Bureau of Investigation which even with its record of botching up sensitive cases ought to have anticipated these basic objections? This newspaper, for instance, had in the days just before the demolition, published despatches from a reporter who had disguised himself as a kar sevak, joined a contingent from Delhi to Ayodhya, and had participated in drills on how to use various tools to pull a structure down before returning on the eve of the demolition to file his reports. The fact that such training took place flies in the face of the conclusion that the demolition was a spontaneous act. At best, the judge might have raised questions on the proof offered to suggest that

some leaders either conspired to cause the demolition or exhorted those who carried it out. But to reach the conclusion that none of those accused was involved in bringing kar sevaks to the site, or in preparing them for the demolition, or both, the judge would appear to have erred grievously, an error that may have been exposed had television channels replayed footage from 1992 which the government forbade them to.

But beyond quibbles on the quality of this judgment, greater concern must be voiced about its consequences. For it will widen the schism in Indian society one that was created 28 years ago with the demolition and heighten fears that other mosques, principally those in Varanasi and Mathura, will be targeted next. Certainly if an egregious act of violence carried out in full public glare in 1992, when the BJP did not control the Union government, could result in the perpetrators getting away scot free, it will only embolden those Hindu groups that three weeks ago revived the demand for the Varanasi and Mathura mosques. This is a slippery slope, and it will require sagacity and skill to both defuse the tensions that the verdict will arouse and to ensure that hotheads on either side of the communal divide do not use it as an opportunity to inflame passions. We lived in troubled times even before the Lucknow verdict; now, our troubles may be growing. ■

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