



THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

Vol. XXIII No. 8

August 2021

Annual Subscription:

Rs. 250 (per copy Rs. 25) in India
\$ 75 (USA, UK, Asian, African and European Countries)

Cheques and Drafts may please be sent to:

The Fragrance of East

Nadwatul Ulama, P.O. Box 93,
Tagore Marg. Lucknow-226007, U.P. (India)

Out-station cheques will not be accepted.

A/C 10 863 759 664

IFSC Code No. SBIN 0000 125
State Bank of India, Main Branch, Lucknow

Phone. No. : 0522 - 2740406

E-mail: fragranceofeast1998@gmail.com

Rs. 25/-



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Islamic Morality

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Among the moral attributes which have particularly influenced the Islamic culture are hospitality, liberality and open-handedness. These qualities, again, are a heritage from Hazrat Ibrahim about whose generous reception of guests there has occurred the following verse in the Quran :

Has the story reached these of the honoured guest of Abraham ? (LI : 24)

Pilgrims and foreign chroniclers who had the occasion to live, for any length of time, among communities, tracing their descent 'from him either racially or spiritually, have recorded most pleasant memories of their stay in this respect. They have invariably been impressed by their warm hospitality and friendly feeling towards guests and strangers. One can still notice in the countries of the Middle East, which have not yet been swept off their feet by the mounting tide of Western Civilization, glimpses of the hospitality that had enabled globetrotters-like Ibn-e-Batuta and Ibn-e-Jubair to enjoy the comfort and warmth of home during travel. The Indian Muslims in spite of their being placed so far away from the natural seat of Islamic Civilisation and the fact that Islam had reached their, country long after it had passed the peak of its glory, also are conspicuous for their cordial treatment of the guests. Hospitality is a part of the tradition of Muslim homes, and although modern economic conditions have put a 'curb on it, Muslims still feel happy on the arrival of a guest and consider it a source of good fortune and an Islamic virtue to entertain him open-heartedly. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

"The believers are but brothers." (49: 10).

"The Believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another." (9:71)

"But they have broken their religion among them into sects, each group rejoicing in its belief." (23:53)

"And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute with one another lest you lose courage, and your strength depart, and be patient; surely, Allah is with those who are patient." (8:46)

"If Allah willed, He would have made you one nation (religion) but that He may test you in what He has given you. So strive (as in a race) in good deeds." (5:48)

"Truly, your nation is one united nation, and I am your Lord," (21 :92)

"Verily this (your nation) is one nation, and I am your Lord, so keep your duty to Me." (23:52)

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is the one who has piety." (49:13)

And hold fast, all together, by the rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude God's favor on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth God make His Signs clear to you: That ye may be guided (3: 103)

Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not quarrel among yourselves lest you lose heart and your momentum disappear. And be steadfast. Allah is with the steadfast.(8:46) As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least: their affair is with God: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did. (6: 159) ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

* Narrated Anas bin Malik: Allah's Apostle said, "Whoever prays like us and faces our Qibla and eats our slaughtered animals is a Muslim and is under Allah's and His Apostle's protection. So do not betray Allah by betraying those who are in His protection." (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 1, Book 8, Number 386) "

* Nu'man b. Bashir reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever. (Sahih Muslim, Book 032, Number 6258)

* Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, "Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the worst of false tales. And do not look for the others' faults, and do not do spying on one another, and do not practice Najsh, and do not be jealous of one another and do not hate one another, and do not desert (stop talking to) one another. And O, Allah's worshipers! Be brothers!" (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 73, Number 92)

* Narrated Ubaida: Ali said (to the people of 'Iraq), "Judge as you used to judge, for I hate differences (and I do my best) till the people unite as one group, or I die as my companions have died. "And narrated Sad that the Prophet said to 'Ali, "Will you not be pleased from this that you are to me like Aaron was to Moses?" (Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 57, Number 56)

* Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should serve his guest generously; and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should unite the bond of kinship (i.e. keep good relation with his kith and kin); and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should talk what is good or keep quiet. (Bukhari, Volume '8, Book 73, Number 160)

* "A Muslim is brother of another Muslim. He does not oppress him, nor does he leave him at the mercy of others." (Sahih Muslim Book 032, Number 6219)

* The Prophet said, "None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself." (Sahih Al-Bukhari Volume 1, Book 2, Number 12) ■

Editor's Note 

Friendship

Every year on July 30, International Friendship Day is observed all over the Globe. It is no doubt a good gesture to make people realise the importance of friendship. It is said that a “ Friend in need is a friend indeed.” It has been generally observed that often friends are proved more helpful than relatives. It is our daily observation that real brothers fight with each other on the property left by their parents. Even on pity issues uncles and nephews come to blows. It all shows lack of respect for each other but incidents of disputes do not occur amongst friends.

Marguerite Theophil in an article on friendship has described an interesting instance. She writes;

“As a storyteller, a tale I find so insightful comes to mind: A man went to see the Wise One , hoping for advice that would help him come out of what he saw as a bad time in his life. She listened patiently, and then directed him home through a particular path in the forest, saying, “The creatures you see will provide your future direction.” A short way ahead, he came upon a small red fox, and thinking perhaps this was one of the creatures the Wise One had spoken of, stopped to watch it from a distance. He noticed that the fox had lost two of its legs, perhaps in a cruel trap laid out by poachers in the forest. The man stopped and stared, wondering how it ate and survived; meanwhile, a tiger came along with fresh game he had killed. He ate his share, then dragged the rest towards the fox, who ate the rest.

Amazed by what he saw, the man exclaimed: “I have my answer!

All I need to do is to sit quietly in a corner, and God will see to it that I am provided with whatever I need.”

So, he sat still doing nothing for days on end. Nothing in his circumstances changed.

Angrily he approached the Wise One once more. She listened to his story and simply asked him one question.”Did you ever for a moment pause to think that your lesson perhaps was to stop imitating the disabled fox and to follow the example of the tiger?”

The friendship between two individuals, two communities, two families pave way for a peaceful life. Almost all religions have advocated for peace and tranquility. An eminent Islamic Scholar Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi realising the importance of friendship, amity and harmonious relationships formed a group known as “Payam-e-Insaniat” that is call for a humanist behavior. After a spell of communal riots in 1960’s he launched this mission to establish friendly relations between different communities. He no doubt helped to some extent in establishing cordial relation and helped in creating a peace loving society.

We need such missions to inculcate friendship between each other. ■

S. A.

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Intellectual Pursuit in Religious Matters

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Earlier Religions

We are not aware of any religion or scripture, claiming its origin to revelation or inspiration, which has urged its followers, in the way the Qur'an does, to make use of their faculties of knowing and reasoning, take lessons from past experiences, observe the multiplicity of phenomena in order to reflect over them, and called them to account for their mindlessness in ignoring harmony between the laws of nature and working of the universe or for paying little heed to episodes of the past.

Seeing and understanding

Among and senses possessed by man the Qur'an very often appeals to the sense of seeing so that he may observe carefully in order to understand the nature of things. Here are a few examples.

"Have they not seen how We drive the water to the dry land and bring-forth crops therewith, whereof their cattle and themselves eat? What, will they not see?"

"But blind they were, and deaf. Then God turned towards them; then again blind they were, many of them, and deaf; and Allah is beholder of they do."

"Say: Are the blind and the seeing

equal? Will you when not reflect?"

"The likeness of the two patties is as the blind the deaf, and the seeing and the hearing. Are the two equal in likeness? Are you not admonished then?"

"Say: Are these, the blind and the seeing alike, or are darkness and light alike?" "Not equal are the blind and the seeing, neither darkness and light."

The Qur'an warns man for being headless and unreflecting on the natural phenomena which are but signs of God.

"How many a sign there is in the heavens and in the earth that they pass by turning away from it.:

"Therefore take heed, you who have eyes!"

In order to emphasise the need for applying one's mind, the Qur'an very often uses such expressions 'happily you will reflect', 'Do you not understand' and 'if you will reflect'. Such phrases have been employed at as many as 23 places.

"So Allah makes clear His signs for you : happily you will understand."

"Verily We have expounded you the signs, if you will reflect"

"Abode of the hereafter is better for those who are God fearing. Do you not then understand?"

“And assuredly We have sent down to you a Book in which is a admonition for you ; Will you then not reflect,”

“And you pass by them in the morning and in the night; will you not understand?”

Those who are doomed to hell are particularly reproached for not using their intellect.

“They (also) say: If we had only listed or had understood, we would not have been of the dwellers of the Blaze.”

At more than twenty places the Qur’an speaks well of those who use their brains.

The Qur’an repeatedly calls attention to the need of giving thought; praises those who are thoughtful and condemns those who are unreflecting. On eleven occasions it points out the virtue of collecting one’s thoughts and contemplating on the signs of God.

“Who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of heavens and the earth;”

“So relate the story, haply they will reflect.”

“Surely in that are signs for the people who reflect.”

Raking one’s brain and contemplation are the means, according to the Qur’an, through which man can perceive the reality.

“Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain.”

Great influence on Human Race

The Quranic teachings gave birth to a rationalist trend in the widest sense of the term taken etymologically and historically. It made a deep impact on arts and literature and human civilization all over the world in such a way as if a new window had been opened to let in light and fresh air, Islam broke open the lock with which human intellect had been fastened for ages by the enemies of reason, masquerading as representatives of religion. It was then that the humanity woke up after its long sleep of several centuries, removed the hurdles placed in its way and set its foot on the road to enlightenment and progress.

A French scholar Jolivet Castelot has described this astounding achievement of Islam in his *La loi de l’histoire* (The Law of History). He writes:

“Arabs rapidly made strides after the death of the Prophet since the time was also very congenial for the spread of Islam. Simultaneously, the Islamic civilization saw a phenomenal advancement and spread in the wake of Arab victories. Sciences, arts, poetry and literature reflected its influence and thus the Arabs remained the torch-bearers of intellectualism in the succeeding centuries. They were the spokesmen of all the sciences like philosophy, astronomy, chemistry,

medicine and spiritual disciplines. They were not leaders of thought, discoverers and inventors only in name but truly deserve to be so called for they applied their mind with wisdom and intelligence. The span of Arab civilization was short, yet its influence was far-reaching. We can only regret its downfall.”

He also says:

“Although they were feudalistic by temperament yet, their accomplishments were far beyond their capacity. They gave birth to an admirable civilization. Europe is indebted to Arab civilization which held away from the tenth to the fourteenth century. Europe imbibed its philosophical and intellectual thought which imperceptibly influenced the Medieval Ages. Compared to Arab civilization, Arab sciences and Arab literature it (Europe) appears to us sunk in ignorance and darkness—it benefited from the health-giving thoughts propagated by the Arabs.

“No Civilization was there during these four centuries. Intellectuals of the West are today holding aloft the banner of this very civilization.”

Gustave Le Bon writes about Arab contribution to modern civilization.

“Observation, experimentation and inductive logic which form the fundamentals of modern knowledge are attributed to Roger Bacon but it

needs to be acknowledged that this process of reasoning was entirely an Arab discovery.”

Robert Briffault has also reached the same conclusion for he says:

“There is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic civilization is not traceable.”

He further writes:

“It was not science only which brought Europe back to life. Other and manifold influences from the civilization of Islam communicated its first glow to European life.”

It is sometimes claimed that the renaissance of Europe owes everything to the revival of Greek thought. The renowned historian H. G. Wells, however, asserts that the modern world received the gifts of light and power from Islam.

“.....From a new angle and with a fresh vigour it (the Arab mind) took up that systematic development of positive knowledge which the Greeks had begun and relinquished. If the Greek was the father, then the Arab was foster-father of the scientific method of dealing with reality, that is to say, by absolute frankness, the utmost simplicity of statement and explanation, exact record and exhaustive criticism. Through the Arab it was and not by the Latin route that the modern world received that gift of light and power.” ■

Courts, Protect Media

IT rules attack media's core freedom. Judges should see legal challenges to rules in that light.

IT rules that apply indiscriminately to all digital content are facing a slew of legal challenges. This is exactly how it should be, given that government rules didn't make some basic distinctions. Digital news and current affairs publishers are correctly questioning why the news media is treated on a par with social media and OTT platforms. Recently, in a petition brought by the National Broadcasters Association, the Kerala HC shielded broadcasters from coercive action. The Digital News Publishers Association, which includes the Times of India, has also challenged the constitutionality of these rules in the Madras HC. News agency PTI has moved the Delhi HC. Let's also note here that, strangely, there was no consultation with the news media before these rules were made, contrary to normal practice.

Unlike social media platforms, news is already regulated by the Press Council, the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act and the National Broadcasting Standards Authority. Therefore, additional rules were unnecessary in the first place. In fact, the IT Act, which deals with digital intermediaries, does not even apply to news publishers. Nor does it deal with any content regulation except in cases of cyberterrorism, sexually explicit and obscene material, child pornography. Note that these simply do not apply to news media.

Therefore, IT rules, as subordinate legislation, cannot roam widely beyond the scope of the parent act. These rules, with their three-tiered grievance redressal system, place heavy compliance burdens and ultimately empower the central government to hold the media to a 'code of ethics', with vague and subjective notions like 'half-truths', 'good taste' and 'decency'. They have been shoehorned in as rules, to obviate parliamentary scrutiny and debate. As they stand, these rules seem like an attempt to intimidate the news media into self-censorship, apart from vesting government with overreaching powers over news content. News publishers are right to fear arm-twisting and coercion.

India lacks an explicit First-Amendment style provision for press freedom. However, when other ill-considered media gagging legislation was proposed in the past, the SC has strongly protected media rights with its interpretation of Article 19(a) as part of the fundamental right to free speech and expression. It should not be just the SC, though. All courts must demonstrate robust commitment to media independence. As some of the challenging petitions say, these rules will bring in surveillance of news outlets and fear of government diktats. That's unacceptable and anti-democratic. ■

(Editorial, The Times of India 12-07-2021)

Why Was The Prophet Mohammad's (SAW) Manifestation in Makkah, the Heart of Arabian Peninsula?

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi*

In their normal life, Arabs were next to none in respect of intellect, gumption and experience. But, owing to lack of education they were ignorant of such things as are acquired through education and learning. They would, remaining confined, as they did, within their vast and generally barren terrains, make do with whatever knowledge they could gain from their experiences and observations. There was no stamp on them of any civilization or ideology. Anyway, it was destined by the Will and Wisdom of Allah Almighty that this sun for the guidance and emancipation of the humanity which made the entire universe illuminated should rise from the horizons of Arab Peninsula which was, from the viewpoint of civilization and education, the darkest region of the world and was, therefore, in need, most of all, of the salubrious and brightest message for life. And they, on having received the Guidance from Allah Almighty, got lifted, thanks to their simple and innate disposition, and unflinching determination and soundness, to the position of being the torch-bearers for the rest of the nations. The reason why Allah Almighty selected the Arabs for this gigantic task and invested them with the responsibility of predication and dissemination of Allah's message all over the world was that their

hearts' tablets were absolutely blank. There were no self-concocted and preconceived notions and ideologies, the various brain-children of respective individuals. Nor were there any inscriptions and impressions of civilisational ways of peoples adopted in accordance their own respective preferences on them. Had such impressions been there, it would have been very time-consuming and long-drawn process- and even then would not have been much effective- to have them erased first before instilling in them the neat, clean, lofty and sublime ideals and characters.

Against these simple-minded unsophisticated Arabs, there were the Romans, Iranians, and Indians who took great pride in, and gloated over, their advancements, arts and sciences, culture and civilization and philosophies. Owing to that, there had developed in them some such psychological knots and ideological and mental complexes which would not have been easy to be removed. But, the slates of Arabs' hearts and heads were blank. What they had were merely the impressions of clean and natural human perceptions and experiences which they had acquired, in their natural way, from the simple, untutored and nomadic way of life. It was, therefore, much easier to inscribe fresh impressions on them. In the jargon

* *Rector, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.*

of today's scientific terminology they were victims of simple or unpretentious ignorance which could be remedied. Contrary to that, other nations of their time were suffering from the gross ignorance due to multifarious influences and factitious and intricately complicated impacts of the civilization. Having such things remedied and cured and then inscribing fresh characters in their place after having them washed off is always an extremely difficult task.

Arabs had never come across any philosophy and civilization or any pedantic venture. They were just as their congenital nature had shaped them. They possessed strong, iron will. In case a truth was not comprehended by them they would have no compunctions in taking up arms against it. And if the truth got overtly revealed to them they would love and cherish it more than they did their own lives, would embrace it and would not hesitate in even laying down their lives for it. Arabs had been secure from all those maladies and vices that get generated by culture and civilization, hedonism and indolence which are extremely hard to be cured. It is these and maladies that always come in the way of zest and fervor of risking even one's life for the sake of conviction and creed. More often than not the people get their feet fettered by them.

They had honesty in them as well as probity and bravery. Hypocrisy and intrigue were not in conformity with their disposition. Being fighters with intrepidity,

spending most of their time on horseback, having strong power of resistance and fortitude, being accustomed to simple way of life, and having fondness for equitation and martial arts are the inevitable prerequisites for a nation which has to perform some great feat in the world, particularly in times when waging the wars and adventurism would persist on end and display of bravery and boldness were the order of the day.

Secondly, their mental and practical faculties as well as their congenital capabilities were preserved and protected and had not gone wasted and squandered in illusory and useless logical debates and minutiae, delicate and tenuous topics of scholasticism or local and regional civil wars. It was an adolescent, and from that perspective, a protected nation. It was bubbling with vivacity and warmth, gusto and alacrity, determination and iron will-power. This firmness and integrity of determination, solemnity of action and disposition and propensity of capitulating before the truth is also evident from that very sentence which is attributed to the renowned leader and commander of the Islamic troops, Aqba bin Nafe'. When the Atlantic Ocean posed an obstacle in achievement of his further victories and incursions, he uttered on that occasion: O my God! This tumultuous Ocean has come in our way; otherwise I wish I had kept marching on and on and had Thy name announced and proclaimed all over the Sea and the land. ■

Charity To Repair Society

- Tasnuva Jahan

Introduction:

Charitable acts are an essential spiritual practice for Muslims. Islamic legal system fleshes out the implications of Qur'anic and Prophetic texts on charitable distribution or humanitarian actions. They are either of an obligatory nature or a voluntary nature.

The religious dimension motivates and deepens the obligatory or voluntary aspects of charity. For the Muslims, charitable mechanisms were established and developed by religion. However, among the various fundamental problems, currently, the world is facing the effects of coronavirus. There is no doubt that this epidemic will impact the world economy in a myriad of ways. Mortalities and infections are rising. Cities and countries go into shutdown without a predictable timeframe. It is going to reason for total devastation in poorer regions of the world. This global crisis requires a global response. Nobody can solve all creation's problems. But it is our duty to strengthen cooperation by Islamic economic policies. Islamic principles especially encourage charitable acts or humanitarian contributions, which are mentioned in the Noble Qur'an. According to Surat Ar-Ra'd verse 29, 'Those who have believed and done righteous deeds - a good state is theirs and a good return.' It means a validating faith and love of Creators to purify the believer's heart. Nevertheless, here our concentration goes with the

highlight on Zakat. It is one of the main obligations in Islam. Zakat is a system to transfer money from the rich to the poor or needy. The Muslim religion provides a basis for humanitarian aid. Islamic charity can help to repair society as well as balance the societal challenges.

Zakat:

Islam is a complete approach of life. It has five fundamental pillars namely faith, Prayer, Zakat, Fasting during Ramadan month and Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah). Zakat is the third fundamental pillar of Islam. Literally, the Arabic terms zakat means 'to purify'. It states the purification of a believer's wealth and soul. Wealth purification signifies the utilization of assets for financial evolution and distribution. Soul purification suggests being free from hatred, greed, selfishness, and uneasiness. The Noble Qur'an does not define the items of zakat nor does it provide the required proportion of zakat. It is left to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) within the Qur'anic explanations and examples. Eight categories of zakat beneficiaries are clearly revealed in the Surat At-Tawbah verse 60: 'Zakah expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect [zakah] and for bringing hearts together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the [stranded] traveler - an obligation [imposed] by Allah. And Allah is Knowing

and Wise: This verse leaves considerable freedom for Muslims in zakat aid. People in crisis, as well as those in need of long-term support (the indebted and the poor), are allowed to benefit from zakat. In money terms, every Muslim should donate 2.5% of one's annual total wealth accumulated over the year. But it is higher than the Nisab limit, a minimum amount that is in excess of necessity to meet one's basic needs. Wealth contains all items of value, including cash, jewelry, precious metals, agricultural crops, property, savings and retirement funds, with other items.

Discussion in the Noble Qur'an:

The primary source of zakat is the Noble Qur'an. The Qur'anic texts refer to zakat more than a dozen times. The traditions of the Prophet also recognized zakat. Both Qur'anic and Prophetic texts have a variety of references to zakat and a broader sense, the concept of sadaqa or charity.

According to Islam, charity means purity. So giving zakat to the needy means purifying the wealth of the rich. Surata At-Tawbah verse 103 says that 'Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah 's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.' Surat Al-Mujadila verse 12 also says, 'O you who have believed, when you [wish to) privately consult the Messenger, present before your consultation a charity. That is better for you and purer. But if you find not [the means] then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and

Merciful.' Other Quranic implications also contain purification of sin.

In the Noble Qur'an, zakat is frequently paired with prayer or salah as a pious duty. According to Surat Al-Baqarah verse 43, 'And establish prayer and give zakah and bow with those who bow [in worship and obedience]'. Also verse 83 repeats that ' ... And speak to people good [words] and establish prayer and give zakah...' The imperative nature of zakat is noted in several verses. 'Who establish prayer and give zakah, and they, of the Hereafter, are certain [in faith]' Surat Luqman, verse 4.

In addition, zakat is not only a religious obligation but also a right of the poor in the wealth of rich. Surat Adh-Dhariyat verse 19 defines, 'And from their properties was [given] the right of the [needy] petitioner and the deprived.' This concept of right repeats in another verse, 'And those within whose wealth is a known right' Surat Al Ma'arij verse 24. It should be emphasized that the 'acknowledged right' indicates a particular sum calculated in an objective and Islamic way.

Muslim religion teaches to keep a check and balance in society. Consequently, it instructs the wealthy Muslims to share a particular portion of wealth with the underprivileged. This sharing is made mandatory for rich Muslims. Surat Al-Baqarah verse 110 also echoed the same while Surat An-Nisa verse 77 focused on performing prayer and giving zakat. Thus, zakat is an obligatory action in Islamic tradition.

Surat Al-Baqarah verse 277

declares, 'Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds and establish prayer and give zakah will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.' Therefore, zakat is not only made as an obligatory nature in Islam, but also encouraged with reward. Moreover, Surat Al-Muzzammil verse 20 affirms, 'and establish prayer and give zakah and loan Allah a goodly loan. And whatever good you put forward for yourselves - you will find it with Allah. It is better and greater in reward...'

The positive aspects of Islamic contribution, not least its social cohesion, as well the possibility for personal expansion; Surat Ar-Rum verse 39 states, 'And whatever you give for interest to increase within the wealth of people will not increase with Allah. But what you give in zakah, desiring the countenance of Allah - those are the multipliers.'

Charity and zakat are consistent with the needs of Muslims as a growing spiritual and financial community. 'And We made them leaders guiding by Our command. And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, establishment of prayer, and giving of zakah; and they were worshippers of Us' Surat Al-Anbya verse 73.

Surat At-Tawbah verse 34 says, 'O you who have believed, indeed many of the scholars and the monks devour the wealth of people unjustly and avert [them] from the way of Allah. And those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah - give them tidings of a

painful punishment.' Accordingly, Muslims must not hoard wealth at any cost.

Therefore, all these examples emphasize that Zakat has a deep humanitarian and socio-economic value. It creates brotherhood between rich and poor as well as improves the economy of the nation.

Clarification in tradition:

The tradition and teachings of the Prophet provide a context for interpreting the Qur'an and delivers several legal standards. It also contains a reference to zakat.

Narrated by Abu Huraira, the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) said, 'The best charity is that which is practiced by a wealthy person. And start giving first to your dependents' (Sahih Al Bukhari). In another hadith the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) noticeably pointed out the obligatory feature of zakat when he sent his representative to Yemen: 'Inform them that Creator made it obligatory to take alms from the rich to give to the poor...'

Zakat payment is clearly traced at the period of Abu Bakar, the first Caliph. Abu Bakr said, 'By Allah! I will fight those who differentiate between the prayer and the Zakat as Zakat is the compulsory right to be taken from the property (according to Allah's orders)' (Sahih Al Bukhari). So, from the period of Abu Bakar, there is a precedent of mandatory zakat payment to the central government, then distributed it to the needy. In view of Zakat's importance, it should be paid before other debts.

Narrated by Abu Huraira, the Prophet said, (On the Day of Resurrection) camels will come to their owner in the best state of health they have ever had (in the world), and if owner had not paid their Zakat (in the world) then they would tread him with their feet. Similarly, sheep will come to their owner and if zakat had not paid, then they would tread him with their hooves and would butt him with their horns. The Prophet added, I do not want anyone of you to come to me on the Day of Resurrection, carrying over his neck a sheep that will be bleating/ a camel that will be grunting. Such a person will (then) say, 'O Muhammad! (please intercede for me,) I will say to him. 'I can't help you, for I conveyed Allah's Message to you ' (Sahih Al Bukhari). Overall, it is expected that the zakat payment will purify the zakat payer's income, satisfy the basic needs of needy, and solving the problems of poverty.

Poverty Alleviation:

Poverty has become a financial, social, and political issue around the world. Particularly the poor and developing countries, including many Muslim countries are suffering the problem. History shows that zakat is an effective instrument to alleviate poverty. In the era of Omar bin Al Khattab and Omar bin Abdul Aziz, zakat played a vital role to eradicate poverty. Nevertheless, with the collapse of the Islamic Empire, zakat institutions lost their magnificence.

During the reigning of Omar bin Al-Khattab (the second caliph), the governor of Yemen, Mu'adh bin Jabal sent one-third of the zakat collection in a specific year to Omar bin Al-Khattab. Omar rejected and

said, 'I sent you to take from the rich and render it to the poor among them'. Mu'adh claimed that there is no one who deserved the zakat money. In the following year, Mu'adh sent half of the zakat collection and faced a similar situation. Later, in the third year, he sent all the zakat collection to Omar as well as said, 'This year I did not find a single person to donate the zakat. Same thing happened during the period of Omar bin Abdul Aziz. Then, the then Egypt's governor sent him a letter asking on direction of zakat funds donation as no eligible unfortunate was found in Egypt. According to Omar bin Abdul Aziz, the funds can be utilized to, 'Buy slaves and let them free, build rest areas on the highways and help young men and women to get married'. Hence, Zakat is efficient in fighting against poverty if being managed properly. Therefore, the zakat system gave rise to exemplary social unity and significantly improved the living standard of poor.

Importantly, under the rule of Omar bin Al-Khattab, a new technique of zakat collections was introduced, known as al'ashir. Omar established several checkpoints on major highways, particularly those coming from another country. At each checkpoint, an appointed tax collector, collected zakat from the Muslim traders. Alternatively, the non-Muslim merchants were required to pay taxes on imports (Ahmed, 2004; Dogarawa, 2009). This system continued through the early history of Islamic government (Ahmed, 2004). Omar also introduced the theory of Baital-mal or Public Treasury to manage the zakat as well as waqf funds in 15 AH.

Generally, Islam aims to create a society free from poverty. Besides poverty alleviation, zakat aims to eradicate greediness among Muslims.

Modern Implications:

In early Islamic history, zakat was distributed locally. Islamic governments remained in charge of zakat collection and distribution through a mechanism known as 'Bait-Al-Maal' or Treasury House. It comprised of collective fund to support the destitute. If country did not need this support, it was transferred to another country. Nowadays, many Muslims consider that majority of governments use their political agenda with this fund. So, they no longer trust them to 'Bait-Al-Maal'. However, zakat collection and distribution system varies from country to country.

In the present world, charitable actions are no longer limited to a particular region but shield the entire world. We are experiencing the benefit of digital communication and modern transportation. In the past, individual initiatives and humanitarian assistance were limited to the domestic level. In the case of zakat payments, mainly people's needs are prioritized. Then the surplus distributed in other areas or as instructed by the central government.

In today's modern life, cutting-edge technology is utilized for religious activities. E-Zakat or the on-line zakat system is a crucial breakthrough in modern technology. The traditional way of zakat payment and collection was done through the zakat collection points or offices. Currently, several countries are introducing

the e-zakat system to improve the zakat collection system as payment method is easier. Similarly, it is expected to inspire rich people to pay zakat more enthusiastically. It would also enable individuals and companies to find information and get service from zakat institutions. Equally, the amount of collected zakat can be increased. It will be very helpful to eradicate poverty from society. But, the e-zakat system must not violate the Shari'ah in case of responsibility, transparency, and efficiency. As zakat is rooted in religious law.

Conclusion:

Ambition has no rest. Thus, zakat can act as a bridge between the spiritual and financial connections of Muslims. Zakat acts as a shield to protect Muslims from the evil pleasures of wealth hoarding. It is one of the central global economic frameworks. It can be ideally placed to coordinate efforts to address economic hardship. Currently, the coronavirus epidemic is putting enormous stress on economic systems throughout the world. It could lead to serious disruptions in the world market, particularly to low-income people due to price hikes and food deficiency. Usually, epidemic comes and go, but some true stands out in society. If the epidemic continues, the civilization will disappear. It is important to eradicate the problem as it is enormous. Today the main duty of every Muslim is to look after the poor to repair society and eliminate social injustice. We hope that all Muslim countries would utilize charity in this regard. Zakat can face this challenge and balance the growth of the Muslim community.'■

Population Bogey

UP's new policy and draft bill are conceptually weak & disruptive. No good can come of them.

UP's population policy for 2021-30 unveiled by CM Yogi Adityanath wants to incentivise couples to stick to a two-child norm. It's an idea whose time has long gone. The past decade has witnessed a sharp fall in India's total fertility rates, even in UP, India's most populous state. NFHS-4 data from 2015-16 indicates UP's TFR fell to 2.7 in 2015-16 from 3.8 ten years prior. Sample Registration System report for 2018 pegged UP's TFR slightly higher at 2.9 in 2018 but even this was a fall of 23.1% in a decade, bettering the national TFR decline of 18.5%.

Falling TFRs are massive demographic changes catalysed by education of girls, economic growth, migration, falling infant mortality rates and higher institutional births. All happened without drastic population control policies. By all indications, UP will also hit replacement TFR levels of 2.1 in due course like other states.

Apart from being unnecessary, the approach taken by the UP Law Commission's draft Population (Control, Stabilisation and Welfare) Bill is also dangerous. It has prescriptions portending a bureaucratic nightmare for ordinary citizens, especially the poor. It requires devoting energies to identifying state employees and the general public who qualify for a raft of special incentives. Disincentives barring access to welfare schemes and even the PDS for larger families, though not retrospective, poses exclusion risks, massive corruption and social discrimination.

Badly conceived laws which trust bureaucracy with inordinate control over people's lives are a recipe for disaster. Ironically, the poor, and especially UP's rural areas where TFR is 3.0 against 2.1 in cities, will be penalised for structural deficiencies in schooling, public healthcare, and employment opportunities. The potential for widespread social disruption can even undermine any political gains Adityanath may expect in the UP assembly polls from the draft bill's ample references to polygamy. UP should junk this idea. ■

(Editorial, The Times of India 12-07-2021)

The Struggle For Our Freedom (A Brief Survey)

- G. Allana

The establishment of Pakistan as an independent and sovereign state was indeed a unique phenomenon. It was the culmination of a historical movement, that won for us our freedom, enabling us to live our life as an independent nation. The history of our struggle for freedom has been a dialectic process, during the course of which Muslims of this sub-continent became conscious of their destiny, learnt to fearlessly voice their political demands, and their will to live as a separate nation found its final articulation. Some political philosophers have said that history is primarily concerned with the activities of individuals, whose life and work have been the main instruments for the writing of history. Like other nations, we also have our heroes of history, without whom the present may not have been what it actually is today. In reading their lives, we discover the thought expressed in their constant endeavour, and in discovering that thought we already begin to have a better understanding of the entire historical process.

A perusal of our history reveals the reasons actually operating in the course of events, as it also makes clear what was being achieved and how it was brought about. During the course of this investigation, one cannot fail to observe that we succeeded because of the life of the "spirit", whose chief characteristic according to Hegel is self-movement or "freedom" that runs like a silken thread, holding the beads of the rosary together. Just as spirituality has many grades or

levels, so also 'is freedom a matter of degree. The development our 'spirit" has always been a measure of progressive achievement of our freedom. The full realisation of unfettered national freedom has been the goal and aim of our history.

When we inquire as to how our was achieved, we realise that it was by means "will", which is, after all, the only method of achieving anything spiritual. The individual and collective will of human beings is the pen that writes the books of history. Our destiny has been worked out not by the passions and needs generated by private aims and selfish desires, but by the enlightened and heroic actions of our men of destiny. They had an insight into the needs of their times, although to some of them the larger significance of their own actions may not have been quite clear. Further, it must be said to their credit that they made their private goals coincide with the development of freedom.

The great men of our history have contributed to the development of the human spirit by conscious striving to establish our freedom. Freedom is not the mere expression of individual caprice, but is possible only through "discipline". The ethical importance of a freedom movement depends upon the form and level of spirituality, which has been possible for it to achieve. in the case of a social group based on religion, its culture and religion play an important role In crystallising its concept of freedom and "spirit".

The Muslims of this subcontinent had their own distinctive culture, for the understanding which no element is more significant than the understanding their religion. According to Hegel, religion is "the sphere in which a nation gives itself the definition of that which it regards as the True." The work of our heroes represents stages in the historical development of our struggle, which gave rise to the human spirit, leading us to the progressive social organisation of freedom.

The history of our freedom movement has been a developing process and, broadly speaking, can be divided into three parts. The first was the phase when we tried to forge unity among the Muslims by making them realise the necessity of looking upon Islamic polity one and indivisible. The second phase coincides with the emergence of a people who, although having their homes thousands of miles away from India, came to acquire sovereign control over the destinies of India. Then came the British, and the mounting opposition against the British culminated in the rebellion of 1857, which was in a sense a spontaneous rebellion of the oppressed, shaking the foundation of the British Rule with the force of a volcanic eruption. The third phase started soon thereafter, and continued until 1947, when we won our Independence, and Pakistan came to be established as a free and sovereign state. During all these three periods, the fight for freedom was relentlessly waged by our people, led by reformers, rebels and revolutionaries. Reformers preached a way of life which, according to them would regenerate the Muslim nation, and make it realise its

ultimate destiny. The rebels took up the sword against the British to wrest power from their hands and to force them to leave the shores of India. The revolutionaries propounded political theories and suggested revolutionary alternatives, when the British would be compelled, by the force of circumstances, to hand over power to the peoples of India. The methods and fields of activity of the leaders in these three distinct categories may have been different, but their goal was common, namely, the freedom of the Muslim nation. If the fight for freedom by our historical individuals before the advent of the British represents the inarticulate childhood of the spirit of our freedom movement, the struggle by such heroes of the subsequent periods may well be said to represent the poetic adolescence and the prosaic manhood of our will to live as a free nation.

The freedom that our nation enjoys today is the product of a great historical process, which found its fulfillment in the first half of the twentieth century. Through the lives of our heroes of history, we can show retrospectively how the present grew out of the past as its inevitable outcome. The consciousness of our destiny as a separate nation is a recurring phenomenon in our long and sustained struggle for freedom, and out of this grew the consciousness of our right of self-determination. It was not an isolated event, but merely an outcome of world force. The American and French Revolutions had thundered from the rooftops of the world for the right of national self-determination.

It is not through the movements of

masses that history works itself out, but they are merely Instrumental in producing the heroes of history. It is these heroes that lead the aspirations of the masses to their rendezvous with heroic achievement. Socio-historical forces find their voice in the words and deeds of the hero in history, who leads the masses to their cherished goal. In order, therefore, to fully appreciate the life and work of the Fighters for our Freedom. It is necessary to understand and appreciate the difficulties that beset them in the times in which they lived. A brief survey of the history of the Muslims ever since the advent of Islam on this subcontinent would greatly help us in this task.

The history of a country is prone to be influenced by its geography, just as the political institutions of a people are apt to be influenced by their religion. The boundaries of India, standing on its apex like a gigantic triangle, are protected on the northeast and northwest by mighty mountains, thick jungles and icy wastes; and its western, eastern and southern boundaries are protected by the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. Although nature has implanted it thus in a protected position, yet its mountain gateways and its ocean navigation have made it accessible to the outside world. The waves of different races that penetrated these two barriers have mingled in the Indian crucible, resulting in a fusion of races, cultures, language and religions. "In the days of early invasions by these distinct racial groups each race brought with itself its own tales of mythology, its panorama of superstition, and its bagful of philosophy,

and, in the absence of a universal creed, the tendency was towards antithesis instead of synthesis, towards heterogeneousness instead of homogeneousness."

While her proverbial wealth tempted outsiders to come to conquer India, many of them were themselves captivated by the charm and spell of this land. A dual process was simultaneously in progress—the outsiders were endeavoring to strike root in a foreign environment; the indigenous peoples lost in their speculative thinking and dominated by a rigid caste-system, did not desire to live together in common brotherhood with the outsiders.

Alexander the Great invaded India in 327 B.C., and the Greek historians and physicians that accompanied his invading armies wrote about India that lay beyond the east of the river Indus, and with this begins the external history of India. The Greek armies crossed the Indus above and, fighting the armless of Porus, one of the kings, inflicted a crushing defeat on him. The outcome of this battle, which took place where the river Jhelum takes a sharp bend, resulted in Porus tendering "his submission and was confirmed in his kingdom, and became Alexander's trusted friend. "Alexander pushed on to Sind from the Punjab, and found that "the country was hostile" But he captured Multan, the capital of Sind, being, however, severely wounded in the fight. Appointing Greek governors to rule over the territories he had conquered, he pushed further on, and founded on the banks of the Indus a city that he named Putala, which is Hyderabad of today. Part of his army set sail along

the Persian Gulf, and he himself led a part of it through Baluchistan and Persia to Susa. The first foreign invasion of India ended, and the invaders had founded no kingdom. "The only traces which the Greeks left in India were their science of astronomy, their beautiful sculptures, and their coins."

About the year 126 B.C., the Scythian tribe of Su drove out the Greeks from the Bactrian kingdom, to the northwest of the Himalayas, and rushing through the Himalayan passes conquered a part of the Punjab. The Scythians, belonging to many tribes, came from Central Asia, "and they form a connecting link between India and Chinese history Budha himself is said by some to have been a Scythian." About a hundred years later, the Scythians had founded a powerful kingdom in Northern India. The most famous of the Scythian kings was Kanishka, whose sovereignty extended over Kashmir, Agra, Sind, Yarkand and Khokand. Kanishka carried on wars as far as the borders of China, and a town in the Punjab, called China-Pati, was said to be the place where the king kept his Chinese hostages. The Scythians came in large numbers to India and spread all over the Punjab, and some writers are of the view that the Rajputs and Jats of the Punjab are descended from the ancient Getae tribe, one of the Scythian tribes. The inroads into India by Scythians continued for about 4m years, and "The Scythian monarchies of Northern India were in contact with the Buddhist kingdom under the successors of Asoka in Hindustan. The Scythians there had become Buddhists; but they made changes in that

faith."

Thus we see that in ancient times there were three distinct races that made up the inhabitants of this subcontinent—the non-Aryans or the aborigines, who were the original inhabitants; the Aryans, who came from Central Asia in pre-historic times; and the Scythians. These three races had their own respective notions of morality and religion, of customs and social codes, and each race brought its own language. The non-Aryans "kept up the early form of marriage, according to which a woman was the wife of several brethren, and a man's property descended, not to his own, but to his sister's children. In their religion, the non-Aryans worshipped demons, and tried by bloody sacrifices of human victims to avert the wrath of the malignant spirits whom they called gods." The Aryans, progressing beyond the stage of a nomadic hunting society, had reached a stage of semi-settled life of agriculture and industry. The Scythians were somewhere in between these two races in the scale of social development. The Aryans contributed more than the other two races in supplying a civilising influence in India. One of their castes, the Kshatriyas, subjugated the non-Aryans; another caste, the Vaisyas, helped develop agriculture; and the most powerful of these castes, the Brahmans, gave to the people religion and literature. Around 90 B.C., a new creed, Buddhism, helped to enhance the superiority of the Aryans, and the Scythians largely accepted Buddhism as their religion. "It did something to combine the non-Aryans, the Aryans, and the Scythians into a people with similar

customs and a common faith. But it was driven out of India before it finished its work." Subsequent upon the weakening of the influence of Buddhism, the power of the Brahmins became supreme. One of the kings of southern India in the eighth century commanded his servants to put to death the old men and the young children of the Buddhists, from the southernmost point of India to the Snowy Mountain. "Let him who slays not, be slain." The anathemas of the Brahmins against Buddhism became a rallying-point on the battlefield of religion, paving a new way to unity. "This new bond of union was Hinduism."

About fourteen hundred years ago, the advent of Islam brought to the fore a new world force, which was soon to alter the course of world history. Its insistence on the universal brotherhood of man had a special appeal for a world torn and divided by false notions of superiority based on worldly possessions, on race, on religion, on colour, on caste. Its appeal was irresistible, and it spread across continents and countries. "Islam, therefore, entered the subcontinent within a few years of the proclamation by the Prophet of his mission." The Arabs were enterprising seafarers and carried on trade by the sea-route with many parts of the world, including India. The Indians, on the other hand, "did not like to go to other countries, being afraid of not being able to observe the caste taboos regarding food and untouchability." During the first three centuries after the Holy Prophet of Islam, many settlements of Arabs sprang up, particularly on the southwest coastline of India. These settlements were important

centres in the sea-trade carried on by the Arabs from Arabia to Ceylon and the Far East via India. The Arab trade was mutually beneficial to the Arabs and to the Indians, and this strengthened the bonds of friendship between them. "The Muslims thus had no grievance against the authorities of the Indian, states in which they carried on their business. They were respected and there were occasions when they were called upon to accept high offices or were entrusted with important duties." Many Arab settlers married Indian women, and thus the Arab population increased rapidly, and in some places their population was about twenty per cent. Islam, being a missionary religion, found many ready converts, and this work of conversion was greatly helped by the preaching of Muslim Sufis, who came either to places on the western or the southern coast of India. More and more mosques began to be built, keeping pace with the Arab settlements that grew up in India, and in each mosque there was an Imam who, besides his other duties, imparted religious education to Muslim children.

The local rulers in Sind, realising that their interests were to some extent antagonistic to those of the Arabs, did not welcome the Arabs, either as sea-traders or settlers. Besides, the Hindus of Sind were not inhibited with the same prejudices as the Hindus of the South to leave their own homeland, to cross the seas, and to go in search of overseas trade. The Sind coastline was infested with pirates, who often harried and plundered Arab boats that were on their way to Ceylon and to the South of India. The nefarious

activities of the Sindhi pirates were resented by the Umayyad Government and strong protests were lodged by it with the rulers of Sind. One of the ships carrying presents from the ruler of Ceylon for Hajjaj, the Umayyad Governor of Iraq, was plundered by the pirates off the coast of Sind, and once again the Umayyad Government vehemently protested and demanded reprisals against the guilty pirates as well as it demanded compensation. The ruler of Sind ignored this protest and refused to punish the pirates, so that Arab navigation for purposes of trade could be made safe. This roused the anger of the Arabs. Mohammed Bin Qasim, a young Arab General, was entrusted with the task of invading Sind and making the seaway safe for Arab navigation. The fighting that took place between the forces of Mohammed Bin Qasim and those of the local rulers was fierce and lasted over one year, A.D. 712 to 713. Mohammed Bin Qasim, in the end, won a spectacular victory, and thus Sind came to be annexed to the Government at Baghdad. A Rajput garrison "raised a huge funeral pile, upon which women and children first threw themselves. The men having bathed took a solemn farewell of each other, and throwing open the gates, rushed upon the weapons of the besiegers, and perished to a man." It was for the first time that Muslim rule had been set up in India, and this proved to be an event of far-reaching consequence. The introduction of Muslims on the Indian political scene greatly benefited the people of this subcontinent. "India was enriched by the addition of a new religion (Islam) to her

repertory of faiths, and the variety of her multicoloured civilisation was diversified by the infusion of new elements The languages and literatures of the Muslims exercised a pervasive influence on the speech and writing of the Hindus In architecture, painting, music and the minor arts, profound changes occurred and new styles made their appearance in which the elements of both were fused."

A great mass of the people of Sind were Buddhists, who were an oppressed section of the population under Hindu rule. The relationship between the Buddhists and the newly arrived Arabs was, however, on a more accommodating basis. The fact that there was no organised opposition to Arab rule in Sind either from the Hindus or from the Buddhists, is proof of the liberal manner in which Arab dominance over Sind came to be established. In the subsequent three hundred years, a substantial part of what is now known as West Pakistan came under Arab influence and control, and Lahore rose into eminence as one of the Muslim capitals of the world. "The first collision between Hinduism and Islam on the Punjab frontier was the act of the Hindus." The Hindu chief of Lahore, Jaipal, attacked the territories of the Ghaznavid kingdom of Sabuktigin. In the wars that followed, ultimately Mahmud of Ghazni subjugated the kingdom that had been under Jaipal. Thus both Sind and the Punjab come under the sovereignty of Muslim rulers. From now on Muslim influence, thought, culture, language, and literature came to exercise a far-reaching influence on the indigenous culture, language and literature, and this gave birth

“to a rich new culture which came to be the distinctive feature of the Muslims of Sind and the Punjab, soon to spread from across the boundaries of these two provinces to stride the entire sub-continent.” Islam spread in India in the subsequent centuries. Muslims became intimately involved in the political and economic life of the country, but they continued to look upon themselves as a distinct cultural group. “This feeling of distinctiveness, ever present in their consciousness, was to later on make articulate their subconscious urge to look upon themselves as a separate nation.” The culture of the Muslims had been basically and overwhelmingly Islamic in letter and in spirit, and the interplay of many centuries did not make them lose their distinctive character. “The Muslims of the subcontinent emerged as a distinct entity because they developed a separate culture and well-defined aims and ideals. They belonged to a habitat, which affected their tastes and manners, but with which they refused to identify themselves so completely as to lose their distinctive qualities; they were a people living, as it were, in two worlds; one was that of their immediate surroundings and the other was the world of the sources of Inspiration which sustained their spiritual existence.”

In the thirteenth century Muslim influence spread all over India, and Bengal came under its political orbit. At this time the barbaric hordes of Ghengiz Khan had subjugated the eastern part of the Muslim world and they were now carrying fire and devastation into India through its mountain passes. But they were successfully held at bay by the Muslim kingdom of Delhi.

Muslims during this period had produced eminent scholars, statesmen and soldiers. Muslim Sufis enriched Islamic mysticism, and their lives and work were a source of great spiritual awakening among the Muslims.

The Muslims, coming into India as they did from many Muslim countries, spoke their own language and also learnt the languages spoke by the natives of the soil. Out of this inter-action and inter-mingling of languages there arose a lingua franca, which came to be spoken both by the Muslims as well as the Hindus. The official language continued to be Persian; Turkish was the mother tongue of Muslims from Turkey, and Arabic was the language of the religion. The mixture of these languages with that spoken in India came to be known as Urdu, and it became the language of polite society and of sublime poetry. It gradually supplanted Persian, and became a language spoken in all homes and understood in most parts of India. Urdu is neither pure Prakrit nor pure Persian. It is a language which has risen as a result of the mixture of foreign and native language. This is symbolic as well as characteristic of the culture developed by the Muslims in this subcontinent. They did not discard their original culture. Urdu had a powerful appeal and its literature grew rapidly. “Sufi saints who were interested in propagating the message of Islam were pioneers of Urdu literature During the eighteenth century Urdu spread to all corners of India and Urdu literary circles were established in every province of India.” With the rise of militant Hindu nationalism in the twentieth century, the general acceptance and

popularity of Urdu was an eye-sore to the Hindus, and it became a matter of bitter controversy between the Congress, as the spokesman of the Hindus, and the Muslim League, the mouthpiece of the Muslims of India.

“The development of Urdu, more than anything else, epitomised the cultural fusion between the Hindus and the Muslims, and its rejection by the Hindus a breaking away from a common heritage.”

In 1526, Babar invaded India and, winning a decisive victory at Panipat, became the first of the Moghul Emperors. When he died at Agra in 1530, his empire extended from the river Amu in Central Asia to the Gangetic delta in Lower Bengal. The Moghuls completely identified themselves with the interests of their conquered subjects and ushered in a glorious chapter of history during their rule. They have made a lasting contribution to the cultural heritage of this subcontinent. The Moghul Emperor Akbar, in his desire to placate Hindus, tried to bring about a synthesis between Islam and Hinduism, thus establishing an era of unprecedented religious tolerance. Akbar's experiments in the domain of religion introduced an element of heterodoxy, which was resented by the orthodox, and the Mujaddid movement was the first organised attempt at fighting these forces of heterodoxy, generated by Akbar. After the death of Aurangzeb, the Moghul Empire was heading towards its decline, and the weakening of the Central power at Delhi had given rise to the Marathas to challenge the Moghul Emperors in open battle. The rise of the Maratha power “ignited the

imagination of the Hindus, who saw in its success an opportunity to lay the foundation of a Hindu Empire in Bharat.” The successes of the plundering and marauding armies of the Marathas had done irreparable damage to the socio-economic structure of India, and “The prosperity which had been built up by long years of ordered and benevolent government under the diligent care of the Moghul Emperors was once again destroyed by anarchy and disorder. This period played a considerable part in creating the conditions of chronic poverty of the Indian masses.” However, with the rise of Ahmad Shah Abdali on the scene and his military successes, the Marathas received a severe setback.

In the fifteenth century the Moors retreated from the Hispanic peninsula, and the Spanish and Portuguese naval forces pursued the Muslims on the highways of the seas, in order to crush them out of existence. As an offshoot of this conspiracy against the Muslims, Vasco Da Gama, the Portuguese naval chief, in 1498 landed his forces at the port of Calicut, and this incident introduced a new dimension in the relationship that had hitherto existed between Asia and Europe. “The Portuguese adventure had far-reaching consequences. In the first place, it drove Turkish and Arab shipping out of the Indian centres and thus brought to an end the peaceful commercial intercourse which had existed between India and her West Asian neighbours since the time of the Abbasid caliphate and before. India's exports and imports used to be transported in Indian and Asian ships. They were transferred to the Portuguese

bottoms and a mortal blow was struck at the Indian shipping Industry.” And, it must be remembered that it was the Muslims who had introduced the overseas shipping trade and industry in India, and this industry was in their hands when the usurpers from the West made their first appearance on the Indian scene. The Portuguese infiltration in the subcontinent had shown the way, and other European powers were not slow in following the same sea route and in obtaining a foothold in India. Europe during that time was in a state of dynamic activity, aided by its phenomenal discoveries in science, and its relentless drive for amassing wealth and power through its material superiority. Militant Europe was not only knocking at the gates of a fabulously wealthy India, but had breached its gates, and was already within its citadel.

Blinded by her expansionist policy, Portugal soon discovered that it was holding more foreign territory than it could control. Within a hundred years after the landing of Vasco Da Gama at Calicut, Portugal had lost its supremacy in the Hispanic peninsula, and she yielded her power to the superior forces of Spain, which loomed as a great power on the world horizon. Spanish supremacy was challenged by smaller but better organised and more dynamic nations like the Netherlands, France and England, and they gradually pushed Spain out of the combat. The Netherlands could not last long in the struggle, and thus by the middle of the eighteenth century only England and France were left in the race for supremacy. All these Western powers had entered India at first under the guise of traders, and

then came openly in the field to carve out their spheres of influence and domination. France was shaken to its roots during the French Revolution of 1789, and it stood a house divided against itself. Considerably weakened by internecine warfare, the home country could not reinforce her forces in possession of territories in India, and thus began the decline of France as a possible paramount power on the subcontinent. The Seven Years’ War proved to be the proverbial last straw on her back, and France gradually faded out as a strong rival of the English in India.

The English were masters in the art of ruling alien nations by the classic but immoral method of “Divide and Rule”. This was the decisive key-note of their State policy, and they succeeded admirably in setting one chief against the other, one prince against the other, and every time they reaped rich dividends due to the foolishness of the Indian rulers themselves. The East India Company, which was the original company under whose auspices the English had come to India, was ostensibly there to make profits. With more and more political power coming into her hands, the profits that the company and her officers made were fantastic, both through visible as well as invisible means. Some of the financial scandals by the Englishmen in India are so fantastic that they appear difficult of belief. But a more grievous scar on the soul of the people of India than mere financial losses was that they had deprived of their freedom and that they were being ruled by a foreign power that began to treat India as a mere colony for downright economic, political and military

exploitation. India had ceased to be the master of her own destiny, and become a mere pawn which British strategy moved on the chess-board of world politics to suit her own ends.

Babar had laid the foundations of the Moghul Empire in the sixteenth century. His successors proved to be benevolent and farsighted rulers. At the time of the death of Aurangzeb the Moghul Empire extended from the Karakoram Mountains and the Oxus River in the north to the Kaveri River in the south, and from Persia on the west to Burma in the east. The Moghul Empire was the largest and the most prosperous of any in the world at that time. "Its system of government and administration guaranteed peace and order over a vast region and it offered unique opportunities of advancement in arts and letters. Its achievements constitute a brilliant chapter in the history of world civilisation." The power of the Moghuls increased with the passage of years, until in the days of Aurangzeb it had reached its high-level watermark. The central authority at Delhi was very strong and all-embracing, law and order being well kept in its far-flung territories, and a reasonable degree of prosperity being shared by the people. In spite of what some of his detractors have written, Aurangzeb was a benevolent ruler. "In the discharge of his extremely onerous duties he had shown a devotion, assiduity, courage and calmness which mark him as a unique ruler of men. In his personal life he was the model of a good man. He was free from the vices so common among Asian potentates and princes. He lived simply, nay, austere."

With the weakening of the central authority at Delhi, after the death of Aurangzeb, fissiparous tendencies set in, and the consequent fissures that developed in the edifice of the Moghul Empire had encouraged the Marathas to gain accession to the revenues of the Empire and had enabled them to interfere with impunity in the administrative machinery. The English were already entrenched on the door-steps and as the Moghul Empire headed towards its decline, the English were emboldened to transform their role by stages from that of being traders to becoming the builders of a mighty empire. Western influence and domination had come to stay in India. The interaction that followed between Western thought and methods and Indian tradition and culture brought about consequences that threw all the peoples of India into a deep moral and spiritual torment. Indian economy began to be modeled so as to suit the imperial needs of England, resulting in progressive impoverishment of the resources of India.

The disabilities and disadvantages that British rule ushered in fell more heavily on the Muslims than upon the Hindus. The Muslims, a powerful and freedom loving people, found themselves fettered by the chains of social, economic, cultural and political subjugation, and an unceasing struggle ensued for liberation from foreign domination. Freedom was the guiding star on their onward march to their political destiny. This freedom struggle produced many heroes, whose foresight, leadership, and sacrifices have made it possible for our nation to breathe in freedom. ■

The Muslim Mind

- Maryam Jameelah

To become a Muslim involves far more than observance of rituals. Although the rituals are indispensable, they cannot achieve their purpose unless the entire mental, moral and spiritual outlook of the convert is changed. The most important change which took place after I embraced Islam was the transformation of my mind from a Kafir mind into a Muslim mind. In order that the outsider may gain deeper understanding into the workings of the Muslim mind, I shall attempt to describe from personal experience how a Muslim looks at the world, how he regards life, and the effect of his faith upon his behaviour, his tastes, and his aspirations. Much will surprise or even shock the outsider until he attains sufficient insight into the inner mean and intrinsic merit of genuine Islamic values.

The most essential belief in Islam is the concept of man as the slave of God. The Arabic word for "slave of God" is "Abdallah" which is among the commonest names in every Muslim country. "Islam" itself means literally "submission to the will of Allah" and all who choose to do so are Muslims. Since God is the supreme and only sovereign of the universe, the Christian concept of "division of Church and State" appears utterly illogical to the Muslim mind. The purpose of Islamic rule is to enforce the law of God in the Quran and Sunnah. The Muslim ruler cannot become a law unto himself

nor has he the right to create any new legislation on his own. The Shariah or sacred law can never be changed and only can be interpreted within strict limits. Everything belongs to God. Man owns nothing and is utterly dependent upon Him. All that a man possesses, even his own body, is merely loaned to him by God to put to the best possible use. If a man shirks this responsibility, he will be severely punished. To serve God as His slave, a man must be willing to sacrifice everything, if necessary—his personal happiness, his pleasures, his desires, conveniences, wealth, his possessions and even his life. The genuine Muslim will not hesitate to sacrifice all his transitory pleasures for the greater good. In so doing, he attains lasting happiness and serenity of mind. To be a "slave of God" means freedom from the tyranny of men. A true Muslim does not fear any man. He fears only God.

The Muslim divides the world into two opposing camps—Dar-ul-Islam or the Abode of Islam and Dar-ul Harb, or the "Abode of the Unbelievers." The worst affliction of mankind is not poverty, disease or illiteracy but Kufr. Teen-age pregnant brides, unwed mothers, venereal disease, abortions, rapes, illegitimate children, drunken derelicts and chauvinistic nationalism—all reflect the consequences of Kufr. Whatever is in harmony with Islamic teachings constitutes the supreme

good while Kufr is open rebellion against God which can never be tolerated. A Muslim judges his fellow man solely on the basis of the correctness of his belief and its practical implementation in his daily life. A man's race, nationality, wealth or social position have no relevance to his intrinsic merit as a human being. If a man does not make any attempt to practice what he professes to believe, he is no more than a hypocrite and really has no faith at all. The Muslim is convinced that a man's deed is utterly dependent upon his creed because he cannot conceive of morality and ethics apart from their supernatural, theological foundations.

The true Muslim has no fear of death, because death is only the passage-way to life eternal with God. If a Muslim contracts an illness, he will do all medically possible to promote his recovery but after doing all he can, should these medical means fail to restore his health and save his life or those of similarly afflicted loved-ones, he will accept death with serene resignation. The Muslim believes that God has set the span of each life in advance so that nobody can die before his allotted time nor can all the doctors and medicines in the world delay his demise one instant longer.

The true Muslim is not a fanatic. The Holy Quran forbids spying and backbiting. He does not believe in heretic-hunting. No Muslim, however wrong he may be, ever can be ex-communicated by another Muslim unless he publicly renounces his

faith. The Muslim does not persecute other religions nor try to convert people by force. Religious minorities in the Muslim state live in autonomous, self-contained communities of their own where they are allowed to follow their religious laws, educate their children as they see fit and perpetuate their culture in addition to the complete safety of their lives and property. However, despite all these rights guaranteed to the protected minority by the Shariah, although all men are considered by Islamic teachings as deserving of equal justice and fair treatment as human beings, a non-Muslim can never be considered as equal to the Muslim. The non-Muslim under Muslim rule is exempt from military service because only those who believe in the cause of Islam can fight for it. For the same reason, the non-Muslim is not eligible to occupy strategic positions in the Government. A Muslim feels the closest bonds of kinship with all other Muslims regardless of racial or national origin. He can never feel at home among non-Muslims.

Those who imagine that the morality of Islam makes of it a heavy burden for humanity as to prevent its realization in their lives derive this belief from the tribulations undergone by the individual Muslim living in a society which is not governed by Islam. Under such circumstances the morality of Islam is in reality a heavy burden; it almost crushes the individuals who live with their pure Islam in the polluted society of ignorance. A specific environment then is

indispensable for the life of this concept, an environment with its own specific values. Islam is a realistic system and it therefore supposes that the people who live according to its path will be living in an Islamically-governed society. Without this environment, the life of the individual becomes impossible or at least extremely difficult. Therefore whoever wishes to be a Muslim should know that he cannot devote himself to his practice of Islam except in a Muslim environment dominated by Islam. He is mistaken if he imagines that he can realize his Islam the midst of a society devoid of Divine guidance.

Islam is a universal faith actively seeking converts. Unlike the Christians, we feel no need for professional missionaries. Every Muslim is a missionary. To propagate Islam as far as he possibly can is his sacred duty. It may surprise non-Muslims to learn that vast areas of the world (particularly South-East Asia and Africa) have turned Muslim through the activities of ordinary Arab and Indian merchants and traders. No force or violence was ever used. Nor were any of these countries politically subjected by them. This was possible only because those merchants and traders put Islam first and business afterwards.

Like the strict orthodox Jew, the Muslim believes that man draws closest to God through obedience to His sacred laws. Therefore he draws no sharp distinction between ritual and morality which are inseparably inter twined. The Muslim does not separate the spirit from

its outer form because he is convinced that no belief is effective without its tangible expression. Ablution and prayers must be performed in a precise manner after the practice of the Prophet. The Muslim who performs his Salat as he should, develops a keen conscience and high character because there is nobody but God to see if he does it properly. No other religion places so much emphasis upon the necessity personal hygiene and cleanliness. Physical purity affects spiritual purity and the outer man is an expression of the inner man.

The penal law of the Quran and Sunnah is the subject of the greatest misunderstanding on the part of non-Muslims. What Islam regards as the worst crimes against society are hardly considered crimes at all in Western countries and, with the possible exception of theft, legal penalties are rarely, if ever, enforced. The Muslim does not believe that the merit of a law depends upon its leniency nor that the criminal deserves greater sympathy than society. To the Muslim, the penal law of the Quran and Sunnah is not the cruel and barbaric product of primitive 7th century Arabia irrelevant for today; on the contrary, he is convinced that it is far more humane than the extreme psychological deprivation and moral depravity of our modern prisons and in the context of a genuine Islamic society, infinitely more effective in combating crime than any man-made law.

A Muslim believes that the strict segregation of the sexes is essential for a

wholesome society. This means that men and women are forbidden to intermingle freely. That is why a Muslim cannot tolerate mixed social functions, co-educational schools or courtship before marriage. Men must not look at strange women nor women at strange men. Modest dress is required at all times; women are required to shroud their entire bodies whenever they find it necessary to go out and behave as inconspicuously as possible in public. A woman's beauty is for her only. Her body is not under any circumstances to be on public display exposed to the vulgar gaze of strangers. Public demonstrations of affection between men and women are severely punished. In Islam, the man is responsible for his social duties outside the home while the woman is responsible for everything within the home. Therefore it is not for women compete with men in business or the Muslim knows only too well that once the woman leaves the home, here is no home!

Celibacy is condemned by the Quran and Sunnah and every normal man and woman is expected to marry. Although a man is permitted to marry up to four wives, Islam does not ordain polygamy; it is not even encouraged ; it is merely allowed. The overwhelming majority of Muslims have always been monogamous. The restricted polygamy permitted by Islam curtails illicit sex to a minimum because if a man desires relations with another woman, he must marry her first, undertake the responsibility of her support and fatherhood.

Islam differs from all the other religions in its discouragement of the "arts". A Michaelangelo, a Rembrandt, a Beethoven or a Mozart would not receive any acclaim in a Muslim community. Consequently, this is why in Muslim cities there is such a conspicuous absence of symphony concert halls opera houses, theatres and art museums. The genius of Islamic art has expressed itself most fully in an architecture that has never been surpassed and Arabic calligraphy.

Instrumental music is banned from the mosque and condemned elsewhere. The social status of professional musicians in the Muslim world is extremely low. Instrumental music detracts the mind away from the remembrance of God and eventually leads to lewdness. If a man feels compelled to give vent to his emotions, he is allowed to sing to-please himself but it is better if he refrains. No respectable Muslim woman will sing in public. The only laudable music is chanting of Holy Quran, Adhan and unaccompanied chants in praise of the Holy Prophet.

Because dancing is the most powerful known stimulus to illicit sex, it is prohibited completely.

Acting in plays, whether on stage, cinema or television screen is discouraged for the same reason. Islam condemns plays, whether one participates in them as actor or watches them as spectator, because they encourage people to become increasingly preoccupied with their private fantasies and less and less

with real life. Islamic cultural values regard it degrading to the human personality for an actor to dress up and pretend to be what he is not and utterly unthinkable for a respectable Muslim woman to perform as an actress in public.

Literary fiction in the form of either the drama or the novel is not indigenous to any Muslim country but oratory and poetry are highly developed and eloquent speech most keenly appreciated by Muslims everywhere, especially in the Arabic-speaking world.

True Islamic culture can have no part of the Western mania for sports and games which is their inheritance from ancient Greece. An Islamic state would encourage athletics as part of military training to promote physical endurance. Thus all sports having military value would be included as part of the physical training in schools and colleges. Horseback riding, swimming, fencing, archery, weightlifting, calisthenics, wrestling, mountain-climbing; etc. would be favoured. Cricket, foot-ball, base-ball, hockey, basket-ball, rugby, soccer, tennis golf which are useless for this purpose would be discouraged as a waste of time and energy. Such athletics as are tolerated in an Islamic state, would be strictly amateur. Islamic culture does not honour professional athletes. Nothing could be more abhorrent to Islamic values than for whole populations to stop work for hours or even days on end to attend, watch on television or listen on the radio to a cricket or base-ball match and waste large sums of money which could be far

more profitably spent elsewhere to construct vast sport stadiums.

The Islamic way of life is based upon transcendental values. Morality and truth are absolute, eternal and universal. They are instituted by God and not by man. Therefore man has no right to tamper with them. To the Muslim, the Quran is God's book—not Muhammad's book. He believes every word in the Quran is literally true and must be obeyed. The Quran is the source of all knowledge and to question any part of it is tantamount to rejection of God's guidance. The Hadith, or sayings of the Prophet, and the Sunnah or the practice of the Prophet, are essential for a correct interpretation of the Quran. One is meaningless without the other. Since the Quran is God's infallible, complete and final revelation to man, Islam cannot be "reformed" or "changed". It will never be "improved". Islam is complete and self-sufficient. It has no place for eclecticism. The Muslim understands "progress" as bringing his life into closer conformity with the letter and spirit of the Quran. His earthly goal is not worldly success but preparation for the Life Hereafter.

Islam demands the Muslim's total allegiance. A Muslim is a Muslim every minute of the day. Islam is rigorous to a degree inconceivable to a person of any other faith. Its laws control every aspect of his life from birth to death. Awake or asleep, Islam is always with the Muslim. He is never for a single instant allowed to forget what he is. ■

Divine Judgement About Mankind

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Allah is the One Who sends down rain after men have given up all hope, and scatters His mercy far and wide. He is the Protector, Worthy of all praise.

(al-Shura 42:28)

This Qur'anic verse embodies immeasurable guidance for everyone. The "rain" in the verse may also be taken to mean anything that rescues one and provides one with help in a crisis. It is Allah alone Who comes to man's rescue as he faces problems. Again, it is He Who lends man a supporting hand. As a dying person is revived when a drop of elixir is given him, Allah provides solace to the scorching earth by blessing it with rainfall. Allah responds to man's petition. At a time when everyone, including the high and the mighty, had despaired of rain, Allah sends down rain which revives the dead land. Thus He showers His mercy. For He alone is man's protector Who deserves all praise.

The divine attributes mentioned in this context appear to be very carefully chosen. All of His names are excellent. His is the best example. Reference is made, nonetheless, to two of His attributes Protector and Worthy of all praise, for these are directly linked with rescuing humanity and with truth. Allah is the Protector of humanity. No owner would like to see his field as barren. As mankind's Protector, Allah ensures its revivals in equal measure, Allah is deserving of all praise. It does not befit His mercy and majesty to abandon humanity. ■

The Conspiracy Behind Jallianwala Bagh, 1919

- Maharajakrishna Rasgotra*

During my childhood, in a village named Shakargarh, a person named Dev Datt was a frequent visitor to our home in the evenings. He was an avid traveller and a good raconteur. The ghastly massacre in Jallianwala Bagh was his favourite story. He claimed that he was present in the Bagh and had survived by hiding behind or under a heap of dead or wounded persons. For decades after the event, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre was the subject of common talk in the villages and towns of Punjab. Visitors to Amritsar considered it a sacrilege to return without touching the Bagh's sacred earth.

Jallianwala Bagh loomed large in my imagination when I was sent to Amritsar in 1940 to join Hindu College to study for a Bachelor of Arts degree. Luckily for me, within weeks of joining college, I met Vishwa Nath Datta, a fellow student, and an enduring friendship grew between us. The bond grew closer when he told me that his family's ancestral home was in a village not far from mine, and that his family had lost everything in the Partition, as my family had. But Datta's father had a substantial business establishment in Amritsar and he did his schooling there. He knew Amritsar well, and soon, one day after college, he dragged me to the

Bagh and treated me to an impassioned guided tour of every nook and cranny of the Bagh.

In the next four years, we visited the Bagh many times. We read a lot of Indian writing on the massacre, and when we parted in 1944 to study for Master of Arts (MA) degrees in different universities, Vishwa Nath, at least, was certain that one day, he would write a clear and objective account of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

After his MA degree, Datta studied history for four years in Cambridge. On return to India, he joined the history department of a nascent Kurukshetra University and stayed there till his retirement in 1986. He could have got a high position in any one of the older universities, but he found the allure of working in a new university at the historic site of India's greatest war, Mahabharat, irresistible.

Datta wrote several important books of which Jallianwala Bagh is of special significance. It is a pioneering work for its meticulous research and the honesty and objectivity of its narrative. Datta's history writing is free from ideological or political bias. He corrects the exaggerations in Indian writing by authoritatively putting the number of deaths in the massacre at 700, and stating that there were no women and children in the Bagh. To damn the British,

* *Maharajakrishna Rasgotra is a former foreign secretary.*

he dug out evidence of a conspiracy, which London and imperial New Delhi had buried in their archives.

The book, published locally in 1969, did not attract much notice; it has now been re-published by Penguin with a luminous introduction by Datta's daughter, Nonica Datta, a distinguished historian at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Datta's book draws attention to a conspiracy for an organised slaughter of Indians.

Consider this. One, from April 11, the city was quiescent; on General Reginald Dyer's arrival at Amritsar at 9 pm, deputy commissioner Miles Irving handed formal charge of the city to him, and Dyer rapidly established military control over the city, without the proclamation of martial law. On the morning of April 12, Dyer issued a proclamation prohibiting all meetings. Later, accompanied by a detachment of troops, he inspected some areas of the city.

Two, at 9 am on April 13, Dyer issued another proclamation prohibiting all public meetings. Meanwhile, a secret agent of the government, Hans Raj, accompanied by some intelligence officers was having the Bagh cleaned by sweepers and preparing a stage for the speakers. On the afternoon of April 12, Hans Raj had taken steps to ensure that a meeting would take place in the Bagh at 4 pm on April 13.

Three, the meeting was on when Dyer approached the Bagh at 5pm with

his armed Gurkha and Baloch troops. As the gathering panicked on seeing the military, Hans Raj mounted the stage to say that the military will not fire, and that the meeting should proceed with its work. He then signalled Dyer by dropping his handkerchief, walked towards the General and vanished forever.

Dyer had come to Amritsar in a fury to avenge the assault on a European woman and the killing of four European men by rioters on April 10. The Bagh had been prepared well for the monstrous act of an organised slaughter of innocent people. Lieutenant Governor Michael O'Dwyer, General Dyer, Miles Irving and Hans Raj were the main conspirators.

The carnage proved an asset to the national cause. At the annual session of the Congress at Amritsar in December 1919, Mahatma Gandhi's leadership of the freedom movement was affirmed. But strangely, following the session, Punjab was ignored and its leaders sidelined.

Punjab's hero, Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew, whose house and other properties had been destroyed in the Partition riots died in penury in independent India. And sadly, an illustrious Indian historian also passed away last year unsung and unrewarded by the governments of both Punjab and India. ■

(Courtesy: Hindustan Times, 03-07-21)

Muharram - A Month To Remember

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Muharram, the first month of Islamic calendar is considered one of the four sacred months. The holy Quran says: "Verily, the number of months with Allah is twelve months in a year, so it was ordained by Allah on the Day when He created the heavens and the earth; of them, four are sacred. (Muharram, Ziqadah, Zilhijjah, and Rajab). That is the right religion, so wrong not yourselves therein." (At-Tawbah-9:36) History bears witness that the month of Muharram assumes great significance because of various events. Adam was created on the 10th of Muharram and he entered paradise the same day. He was thrown out of the paradise the same day and his repentance is also accepted that day. This is also said that the first time rain descended on earth in month of Muharram. Prophet Noah's ark touched Mount Judi from horrible deluge in this month. Namrud's fire turned into flowers on Prophet Ibrahim on tenth of Muharram. Prophet Jonah was taken out from abdomen of fish after a long time in this month. A splendid throne was conferred on Prophet Solomon on 10th of this month. Prophet Moses got rid of oppressions and atrocities of Pharaoh in this month. Hazrat Husain, grand son of Prophet Mohammad (S) was martyred on 10th of

Muharram too." It may be noted that when Prophet Muhammad (S) migrated from Mecca to Madinah, he saw that Jews observe fast on 10th of Muharram. They said that it was the day on which the Prophet Moses and his followers crossed the Red Sea miraculously and the Pharaoh was drowned in its water. On hearing this from the Jews, the Holy Prophet said, "We are more closely related to Moses than you" and advised the Muslims to keep fast on the day of Ashoorah. The Prophet said: "The best of fasting after Ramadhan is the fasting in Allah's favourite month of Muharram. A number of Traditions describe virtues and attributes of Muharram in a sublime way. Let us see to what extent we observe the day of Ashoorah (10th day of Muharram). Here there is no difference or distinction between different sects of Muslims as they observe this great and sacred day reverentially." There is no dispute that the martyrdom of Hazrat Husain on 10th of Muharram was indeed a great event in the annals of history. In his book "The Life of Caliph Ali", Maulana S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi writes: "Abu Makhnuf relates that after Husain was martyred he saw his body bore marks of 33 cuts by lances and 34 by other weapons. The number of martyrs who laid their lives

with Husain was 72. Muhammad b. Hanafiyah relates that 17 of the martyrs were the Progeny of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet. The day on which this tragedy befell was Friday, the 10th of Muharram, 61 H/10th of October 680 A.D. Husain was then of 54 years six and a half month of age." In fact Hazrat Husain was on the right path. He dedicated his whole life to the cause of Islam. His martyrdom reflects his courage, bravery, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, justice and righteousness to fight against evil and disruptive forces. Needless to add that Yazid whose forces attacked Hazrat Husain's party himself confessed his sin and mourned the death of Hazrat Husain. "Hisham says that when the head of Hazrat Husain was brought before Yazid, his eyes got filled with tears. He said to his courtiers: "I would not have admonished you if you had not killed Husain. May Allah curse Ibn Sumayyah. By God, had I been there, I would have forgiven him" (Al-Bidayah, Vol. VIII, P. 189) "

It is a point to ponder over that Sunnis and Shias have no difference with each other on this issue. Sunnis and Shias both have high regard for Hazrat Husain. Needless to add that Hasan and Husain are called the leaders of youngmen in paradise. In Friday sermons Sunni Imams often praise

Hasan and Husain in their congregational address. " Ibn Taimiyah says: "Allah honoured Husain with martyrdom and disgraced those who took his life or assisted in the misdeed or assented to it. Husain was a paradigm of the earlier martyrs of Islam since he and his brother are the leaders of the youth in Paradise. They had been brought up during the initial period of Islam and so they had been deprived of migration and sufferings for the cause of Islam and the persecution undergone by their predecessors. Therefore Allah blessed them with martyrdom and raised them in honour and esteem and enhanced their status. His martyrdom was grievous tragedy" (Fatawa Ibn Taymiyah Vol. IV: P. 483) "

To sum up, Sunnis and Shias both hold Hazrat Husain in high regard and esteem. The tragedy of Karbala is considered by both too painful to be forgotten. It is unfortunate that today a political colour is given to this tragedy. The best tribute to Hazrat Husain would be to keep fast and get involved in good deeds and pious and holy acts on 10th day of Muharram. Husain laid down his life for the cause of establishing an egalitarian, fair, honest and God-fearing society so he should not be betrayed by raising disputes on the interpretation of his mission and thus dividing the community. ■

Around the World

Pegasus fallout: Israeli panel set to review NSO

Israel has set up a commission to review allegations that NSO Group's controversial Pegasus phone surveillance software was misused, the head of the parliament's foreign affairs and defence committee.

"The defence establishment appointed a review commission made up of a number of groups," lawmaker Ram Ben Barak told Army Radio. "When they finish their review, we'll demand to see the results and assess whether we need to make corrections," the former deputy head of Mossad spy agency added.

Pegasus has been implicated in possible mass surveillance of journalists, human rights defenders and 14 heads of state.

Their phone numbers were among some 50,000 potential surveillance targets on a list leaked to rights group Amnesty International and Paris-based Forbidden Stories.

NSO has said the leak is "not a list of targets or potential targets of Pegasus". NSO chief executive Shalev Hulio told Army Radio that he would "be very pleased if there were an investigation, so that we'd be able to clear our name". He also alleged there was an effort "to smear all the Israeli cyber industry".

Morocco files libel suit against Amnesty, NGO

Morocco has filed defamation claims against Amnesty International and a French NGO who claim its intelligence services used the Pegasus mobile phone spyware against dozens of French journalists, lawyers for the government said. Paris prosecutors opened their own inquiry this week into the claims by Amnesty and the non-profit Forbidden Stories.

Canada: Over 160 graves found near indigenous school

MONTREAL: The western Canadian Penelakut Tribe said it has found more than 160 unmarked graves near the site of a former indigenous

boarding school, Canada's fourth discovery of this kind in recent weeks. In the last month, discoveries of more than 1,000 graves prompted a reckoning over Canada's painful past and its policies of forced assimilation towards indigenous communities.

KEY MILESTONE: UAE UNVEILS EMBASSY IN ISRAEL'S TEL AVIV

TEL AVIV: The UAE opened an embassy in Israel housed in Tel Aviv's new stock exchange building; in the latest normalisation move under a deal brokered by Washington last year.

The venue in the heart of Israel's financial district highlighted the central role of economic cooperation in their ties since the UAE became only the third Arab country to recognise the Jewish state.

Amnesty: HK seeing a 'rights emergency'

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's national security law has created a "human rights emergency", Amnesty International said a year after China imposed it on the city to crush a pro-democracy protest movement.

Amnesty's strong observation came a day before China celebrates the 100th anniversary of the ruling Communist Party on July 1.

The legislation - which criminalises anything authorities deem subversion, secession, collusion with foreign forces and terrorism with up to life in prison - has radically transformed Hong Kong's political and legal landscape.

"In one year, the national security law has put Hong Kong on a rapid path to becoming a police state and created a human rights emergency for the people living there," Amnesty's Asia-Pacific regional director Yamini Mishra said.

Taliban welcomes exit

The Taliban thanked the US troops for leaving. "We consider this withdrawal a positive step. Afghans can get closer to stability and peace with the full withdrawal of foreign forces." Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told Reuters. ■

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