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MODERATION AND TOLERANCE

S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

Almighty Allah made Islam a compendious, moderate and simple religion. It has all virtues of other divine faiths. Apart from it Islam encompasses all events taking place right from the time of Prophet Muhammad (S) and covers the period thereafter. The present day situation is no doubt different from the one prevailing earlier. It may become more varying and different in days to come. Present day developments, spreading of education, scientific inventions and harnessing of natural resources have assumed significance. With the result that Globalization has come into existence. Phenomenonal expansion of means of communications has helped in bringing the far off nations closer. The sense of distance has vanished and neighbourly feelings have surfaced.

Accordingly, if anything takes place in any part of the world, its news spreads like wild fire as if this event occurred in any town or city of our own country. This trend of international interaction has created some uniformity in manners and ways of life.

Every part of the world, retain its own distinctive features. It is obvious that the climate of a place influences its inhabitants. If some facilities and amenities of life are available in one corner of the world, same may not be found in other part of the universe. Somewhere paucity of potable water is felt but somewhere it is in abundance. Somewhere vast land for cultivation is seen but at another place barren land stretches. Somewhere dehydrated mountain and somewhere green mountain are observed. Somewhere there are coastal and aquatic areas. Somewhere fish and other things living in water are available. Somewhere even water is hardly found. Somewhere animals are main source of livelihood. People live at some places where scorching heat reaches its zenith. Somewhere rotation of day and night takes place in the same time and some where differently. Nevertheless people have to bear such odds in their day to day life.

When we cast a glance at Islamic Shariah, which is to remain enforced till eternity and covers whole of the universe we get ample proof of its being a divine ordained.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has described religion very easy and said : “ *Addin-usrun*” (The religion is easiest). He further added that if some one presents it as a hard one he will fail in his efforts. This is the reason that it has been instructed to adopt moderation and choose the soft way so that it may be easy to practice the religion. If it was not so then at some places it would have been followed in as easy way and at other in a hard way. This would have cast doubt on its being a universal religion.

Whatever the Prophet ordained about the religion he has kept due consideration of possible relaxations according to the situation and prevailing conditions. Prophet himself practiced a particular action in different ways. He also often approved actions of Sahaba (Companions) practiced in different ways. Thus he allowed to follow Shariah in a more congenial and relaxed way according to the prevailing conditions.

The true reason of differences is that companions observed various methods of practices of the Prophet at different times. Companions narrated them in those ways after the demise of Prophet Muhammad (S). It resulted in coming up of various schools of thoughts. But main stream of all is the same i.e. traditions of the prophet.

No doubt, differences in Islamic Sharia are divine gift and mercy for all and sundry. Variations in practice and following of Shariah instructions should not be taken as a result of separation and parochialism. These are indeed a boon from Almighty God. Any School of thought should not regard itself as the true follower of Islam and others deviator of Shariah.

It should be kept in mind that such sort of differences in Bani-Israil and their oppression on others are mentioned in the holy Quran as an act of repugnance. Islam lays great emphasis on Muslims to unite and foster pan-Islamic brotherhood and fraternity.

Unfortunately, despite these facts some schools of thoughts try to intensify in religious issues because of prejudice and bias. They present points of difference in such a way as if it is an issue between Islam and infidelity. It seems that they are only on the right path and others are astray. Often it is also seen that follower of one sect do not offer (Salat) behind the other.

It is Obvious that under these circumstances we appear to be a fractured community. The holy Quran says : "Verily, this ummah of yours is a single ummah and I am your Lord and Cherisher therefore. Serve me (and no other). (S-21, A.92) The holy Quran also mentioned the doctrine of prophets: "We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers (S.2. A. 285). The holy Quran explicitly warns us not to divide among themselves.

In such a scenario Muslims should live amicably with each other as brothers and do not isolate themselves from each other.

It should be noted that authoritative interpretations of those who render service in the cause of Islam, according to the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (S) should be taken as genuine. Whether any interpretative difference exists our forefather acted upon it. A host of instances are found in this regard. Omar bin Abdul Aziz said : "I would not have been pleased hearing that differences did not occur in the lives of companions of the Prophet. For if they agreed on an issue. Next someone comes and does not act on the words of the Prophet then he becomes astray. But when differences occurred amongst the

companions, one is free to choose the one he likes. No doubt, there is an ample room in Islamic Shariah.

On the basis of it Ulema of Shawafe said about "*Amr bil-Maruf Wannahi-Anil Munkar*" (Enjoining what is right, forbidden what is wrong). "Interpretation of law point should not be denied by dint of power. If one argues with scholarly proof and fair reasons then out of two things follow one which appears correct."

Imam Ibn Taymia has mentioned such issues in detail in his collection of Fatawas. We also see Imam Shafai, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and other traditionists and Jurists as to how they maintained tolerance and moderation among themselves despite these differences on issues.

The need of hour is that we must keep their practices alive and imitate them otherwise every school of thought will regard itself the follower of right path and disagree with others.

In any way it is not appropriate for the followers of the last Prophet Muhammad (S) to create a gulf among themselves on the ground of practices and performances of religious rituals in different ways. It is time we must unite and be an emblem of this verse of the holy Quran. "And thus we have made you a community Justly-balanced, that you might be witnesses to mankind, and that the messenger might be a witness to you." (S.2, A. 143) ■

(Transliteration by O.R.N.)

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SALAT

S. Abdul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The true meaning of Salat and its real worth and significance can be appreciated only when there is an adequate awareness of the innate character of the relation that obtains between God and man. This bond is absolutely unique. It is not possible to conclude about it on the basis of the ties we experience between any two persons around us, as for instance, between the master and the slave, the weak and the strong the rich and the poor and the donor and the recipient. It is a much more sublime, strong and comprehensive relationship than any of these.

Relations are Governed by Attributes

For a proper understanding of the nature and importance of the bond between the Lord and His slaves it is, again, necessary to acquire some knowledge of the Divine Attributes for it is the attributes that govern the relations. We cannot understand the real nature of relationship between any two beings unless we are duly informed of their essential qualities and of the association of amiability and gratitude that is established between them. All the ties we cherish in the world, all the social relationship we observe and all the rights and obligation that go to mark the law and bring into existence a civilized society are determined by the moral and material attributes which are at work in the different fields of human existence.

Importance of Divine Names and Attributes in the Quran and the Shariat.

Hence, in all the revealed scriptures, religious systems and holy laws the foremost stress is laid on the Divine Attributes and it is then that the details of worship are set forth and teaching on duties and obligations and social conduct and monetary dealings formulated. The correction of the conceptual tenets and doctrines has been given priority in all Divine faiths over worship, deeds and commandments, and every Apostle, in his life-time, has devoted the greatest attention to imparting a true knowledge of the Attributes of God and His purity and sublimity, and made it the central point of his teachings. The holy Quran which is the custodian of all the heavenly scriptures and the Last and Eternal word of God offers a classical case in point. It takes it up for its central theme and returns to it again and again and deals with it in thousand ways. It is for this reason that the brief sura-i-Ikhlâs in which the oneness of God and His Sublimity has been summed up in a few verses of Matchless eloquence and profundity is often described as one-third of the Quran.

The holy Quran has dwelt upon the glorious Attributes of Allah, His Beautiful Names, His Functions and Authority, His Creativeness and Originality, His Munificence and forgiveness, His power to Bestow and to Withhold, His Control over Gain and Loss, His Knowledge and Wisdom and his Nearness and Companionship in such a thorough and authoritative manner that what emerges from it is undoubtedly the ultimate picture of elegance and Majesty, Perfection and Greatness and Beauty and Beneficence. It says:

His is the Sublime Similitude in the heavens and in the earth. He is the Mighty, the Wise.

Naught is as His likeness; and He is the Hearer (and) the Seer (of everything).

Man is a Mixture Opposites

In the revealed Scriptures one finds a number of observations that throw a flood of light on human psychology and its inner contradictions. There is, without doubt, no one more wonderful, delicate and sensitive among all the created beings than man. At the same time, he is the biggest mixture of opposites. He is weak, yet an adorer of strength; he is poor, yet crazy after wealth; he is a mortal, yet a seeker of eternity; he is an heir to a hundred ills and ailments and yet in quest of health and happiness. He is fainthearted as well as ambitious; his needs are endless and his desires unbounded. He is more sensitive than an air bubble, yet fidgety and restless. His feelings and emotions change from moment to moment. His thirst is unquenchable. He does not rest on his laurels and is never contented. He is intolerant of the old and new. What he has holds no charm for him while what he does not have is always beckoning him, drawing him to itself. This limited world, this fleeting life, is utterly inadequate for the fulfillment of his desires and aspirations.

But in these very contradictions, in the loftiness of his ambition and the restlessness of his soul, lies the secret of man's glory and his elevation to the office of the Vicegerency of God on earth. It was this sublime peculiarity of his nature which induced him to accept the forbidding responsibility of trusteeship after the heavens, the earth and the mountains had declined to shoulder it.

Lo! We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it.

Lo! He hath proved a tyrant and a fool. (- xxxiii : 72)

Love and Affection

Love is ingrained in the nature of man. His clay has been kneaded with it. Along with the five senses by which man perceives and responds to the material world there is another instinct in him which we call love, affection or attachment. This instinct can be strong as well as weak, manifest as well as hidden. But if it were to become extinct, it would be a clear proof of the fact that man has lost his intrinsic superiority and worthiness, turned away from his original destiny and into the domain of fossils and stones. Man is

both loyal and sensitive. His emotions are excitable and his feelings are delicate. He is drawn irresistibly towards beauty and perfection. He is ready to sacrifice every thing, life, liberty and happiness, for the sake of the beloved. The memorable stories of lovers, the stirring deeds of all men of faith and suffering and the entire emotional and intuitive literature and lyrical poetry of the world are inspired by the tender passion called love.

Surrender and Submission

Man has been endued with an instinctive desire to submit and surrender, to pay homage and bow down in resignation to someone. This urge has been present in him at all the stages of his evolution. He has never been able to overcome it. During the primitive times (and this state of civilization is still persisting in some parts of the world) man sought the satisfaction of this instinct by prostrating himself before trees, rivers and hills, by worshipping the fire, the sun, the moon and the stars, and by idolizing the saints, the monks, the ghosts and the angels. He was prone to be overawed by anything that was beyond the scope of his understanding, and, even today, in spite of all the claims to rationality and progress, he is caught, identically, in the spell of political leaders, ideologies and movements. In these days of 'culture', 'enlightenment' and liberalism', he is enamoured, in the same way, by writers, poets, artists and inventors and by others men of wealth and renown, and his infatuation is inspired by the same sentiments of love, reverence and self-surrender as in the days of yore, simply because by his very nature man is a loving creature and it is inherent in him to love and admire and lose his existence in the adored one. This yearning is a grand peculiarity of his being and he has never lived without it.

Man stands in needs of an ideal, an embodiment of excellence- or, in the words of the Quran, a sublime similitude which can satisfy his inner urge by virtue of being above and beyond his comprehension, by its exceptional beauty and perfection and power and authority.

The correct Concept of the Bond Between God and Man

Let us, now, recall to our minds the Immaculate Attributes of the Lord. His Omnipotence, Magnanimity, Benevolence, Knowledge and Omniscience, and His Elegant Names as revealed in and interpreted by the Quran. We may also take note of such of the attributes of man as can be summed up in the two words of indigence and helplessness as well as to his ambitiousness and passion for distinction which has not been granted to any other living being, to his unquenchable thirst and insatiable appetite in both the material and spiritual spheres of his life- to the never-ending catalogue of his needs and desire, and to the sentiment of love, devotion and submission which runs through every fibre of his existence.

From the above it follows that man should always hold himself in a state of obeisance, loyalty, worship and supplication before the Lord who is the Supreme Being. The All-

powerful, the king of Kings, Who provides for all his needs whether expressed by him vocally or otherwise (And He giveth you of all ye ask of Him, and if ye would count the bounty of Allah ye cannot reckon it), and Who is aware of his innermost thoughts and feelings and even of desire and aspiration he himself has forgotten or given up out of despair and in respect of which, sometimes, his heart does not tolerate even the participation of the intellect.

And know that Allah cometh in between the man and his own hearts.

He knoweth the transgression of the eyes, and that which the bosoms hide.

And if thou speakest aloud, then lo! He knoweth the secret (thought) and (that which is yet) more hidden.

Who is nearer that the nearest and hears and responds more than any other hearer:

And when my servants question thee concerning me, then surely I am high. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me. So let them hear My Call and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led aright.

We verily created man and We know what his soul whispereth to him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.

And We are nearer unto him than ye war, dut ye see not.

He loves him who beseeches Him supplicates to Him for his needs and cries out to Him for help, more than those who do not:

And your Lord hath said: Pray unto me and I will hear your prayer. Lo! Those who scorn My service, they will enter Hell, disgraced.

(O mankind!) Call upon your Lord humbly and in secret. Lo! He loveth not the transgressors."

It is related that the holy Prophet once said: "God is displeased with His servant who does not supplicate to him for his needs."

The Entire Creation is occupied with paying Divine Honours to God

Since the beginning of time the sun has been the source of light and energy and it has been continuously discharging its function, without a fault or interruption, and the moon has been determining the months and years by its movement. Similarly, the mountains have been doing duty at their posts for thousands of years, the trees are standing where they are, engrossed in Divine worship and rendering service to mankind with their shade and fruit, the air is blowing from one place to another carrying the message of life to man (who is the leader of the universe and the Vicegerent of God), the clouds are floating from place sending down the rain which imparts a new life to earth, causes the springs to flow and induces the crops to grow and the fields to open up their bowels, the quadrupeds, presenting a picture of Ruku are running here and there serving as beasts of burden and providing milk, meat and hides to mankind, and even the insects that crawl on their bellies are mutely

fulfilling the will of God and serving the cause of man in various ways. All these created things which their homage to God and carrying out His command. There is no intransigence on their part, no revolt, no defiance, no protest. They are incessantly occupied with paying honours to the Almighty.

Hast thou not seen that unto Allah payeth adoration whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the hills, and the trees, and the beasts, and many of mankind, while there are many unto whom the doom is justly due. He whom Allah scorneth, there is none to give him honour. Lo! Allah doth what He will.

And unto Allah maketh prostration whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth of living creatures, and the angels (also), and they are not proud: They fear their Lord above them, and do what they are bidden.

And unto Allah falleth prostrate whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, as do their shadows in the morning and the evening hours.

The sun and the moon are made punctual. The stars and the trees adore.

Allah is He who created the heavens and the earth, and causeth water to descent from the sky, thereby producing fruits as food for you, and maketh the ships to be of service to you, that they may run upon the sea at His command, and hath made of service unto you the rivers;

And maketh the sun and the moon, constant in their courses, to be of service unto you, and hath made of service unto you the night and the day. And hath given you of all ye ask of Him, and if ye would count the bounty of Allah ye cannot reckon it. Lo! Man is verily a wrong-doer, and ingrate.

The living and non-living things, in spite of the difference of form and nature and in the modes of their worship, are engaged in the veneration and glorification of the Lord in a manner typical to their function and disposition. But only those blessed with spiritual insight can perceive it.

The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him and there is not a thing but hymneth His praise: but ye understand not their praise. Lo! He is ever Clement, Forgiving.

Doth thou not know that Allah, He it is Whom all who are in the heavens and the earth praise and the birds in their flight? Each of them knoweth verily the worship and the praise; and Allah is aware of what they do.

Place of Man in the Scheme of Creation

Of all the created beings man was, by virtue of the inherent superiority of his position and latent qualities of mind and character, most worthy of staying permanently in a state of Divine worship and veneration, singing His praises and glorifying His names all the time.

The special favours bestowed upon him by God and the exquisite rewards set apart for him would seem to require that he did not spend a moment of his life in anything except Divine worship and adoration and devoted his entire existence to His glorification and adulation like the angles about whom it has been said in the Quran.

Unto Him belongeth whosoever is in the heavens and the earth. And those who dwell in his Presence are not too proud to worship Him, nor do they weary: They glorify Him night and day; they flag not. (xxi : 19-20)

But since man had to serve as the Vicegerent of God in the world and to fulfil a crucial role in the entire design of creation provided with feeling and emotion, with the twinge of love, the sensation of joy as well as the pang of sorrow, and with the zeal endowed with the power to unravel the mysteries of nature and to harness them to his use. The distinction he enjoys of having been taught "All the Names" is indicative of his intrinsic worth and merit and symbolic of his high position as the representative of God on earth. Says the Quran:

And when thy lord said unto the Angles: Lo! I am about to place a vicegerent on the earth. They said: Wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn thy praise and sanctify thee? He said: Surely, I know that which you know not. And He taught Adam All the Names, then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform Me of the name of these, if ye are truthful.

They said: Be Glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the knower, the Wise.

He said: O Adam! Inform them of their names, and when he had informed them of their names, He said: Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and of the earth? And I know that which ye disclose and which ye hide.

He it is who created for you all that is in the earth.

Say: Who hath forbidden the adornment of Allah which He hath brought forth for His bondman and the good things of His providing? (-vii : 32)

It is for these reasons, for the carrying out of the obligations that go with the exalted office of Divine Vicegerency and the fulfillment of the mission which is the real purpose of His creation that man has not been bound to constant worship and prayer, he has not been constrained to keep himself engaged permanently in Qayam, Ruku and Sujood and in the other forms of God-remembrance as the case is with planets, trees, mountains, birds and animals. Were he even to try to do so he would be making an admission of his failure as the Vicegerent of God and providing a confirmation of the objection raised by the angels who had offered their services in his place thinking that they were more suited to wear the mantle of Vicegerency as they were constantly occupied with worship and veneration.

In view of it, there was needed for man a form or system or worship that was in

keeping with the distinctiveness of his personality, with his task and function and place and position in the world and with the duties and obligation entrusted to him as the deputy or representative of God. Worship was essential for him for it constituted the high requirement of his nature and the lofty purpose of his being. Yet, it had to be wholly in accord with his natural instincts and the peculiarities of his position, fitting his entire personality like a well-cut garment.

Salat

Salat is the attire, the raiment that has been designed and tailored exclusively for man.

Should He not know what He created? And He is the Subtile, the Aware.

Lo! We have created everything by (a particular) measure.

The method adopted for Salat is a marvel of smooth and orderly progress towards a dignified ideal. In the Meraj Fifty daily prayer-services were prescribed for the believers and, then, their number was reduced to five. This was done to impress upon man that the number of daily services originally ordained for him was fifty and that he had been found capable by God of devoting such a large part of his time and energy to His worship. One who kept it in mind will never regard the five daily prayers as excessive. On the other hand, he will realize that he had been found worthy of much more and had the Lord, out of His Grace, not made the concession he would be carrying out His command dutifully and celebrating as many as fifty prayer-services (Salat) every day. God showed His favour to him and treated him with kindness and made the five prayers equivalent of fifty. But the original command, still, is there to stir his ambition and urge him on to greater effort.

This contention is strengthened analogically by the Quran which tells that initially the Muslims were required to remain steadfast in the face of an enemy ten time stronger but, later, a concession was made and they were told to be resolute against an enemy twice as strong as they were and to overcome him it says:

O Prophet! Export the believers to fight. If there be of you twenty steadfast they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a hundred steadfast they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they (the disbelievers) are a folk who understand nothing.

Now hath Allah lightened your burden, for He knoweth that there is weakness in you. So if there be of you a steadfast hundred, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a thousand steadfast they shall overcome two thousand by permission of Allah. Allah is with the steadfast.

Inspite of the allowance made in the above verse the original command proved very helpful in rousing the Muslims to superhuman deeds of valour and inspiring them to be

brave and fearless against the heaviest odds. If this verse is still recited, despite of courage and fearlessness among the Muslim and to impress upon them that this, in fact, is the way of true Muslims and faithful crusaders.

Spiritual Substenance

The five daily prayers are to be celebrated only at the hours prescribed for them by God. (- iv : 103)

Worship at fixed hours hath been enjoined on the believers.

The time-schedule of Salat has also been indicated in the Quran and Rak'ats for each of them have been fixed which it is necessary to observe. The holy Prophet, and after him, the blessed Companions scrupulously observed these hours throughout their lives and in all circumstances. Even in time of war they did not suffer an alteration in them. There has been such a great deal of continuity, regularity and uniformity about the Salat that it is impossible to find a parallel in any other community. The Muslim Millat has preserved it zealously and passed it on dutifully from one generation to another without a single day's break however adverse things might have been for it.

The five daily prayers, with their fixed hours and Rak'ats, are the spiritual food, restorative and panacea prescribed for mankind by its Creator and Preserver, the Lord of Lords, the All-Knowing and the All-Wise. One should refrain from questioning the Law and Wisdom of the Supreme Being, the All-Seeing and the Omniscient, who is not only the Healer of the soul but, also their Maker and submit implicitly to His Will. The Salat ought to be offered up at the hours and in the form, measure and manner laid down by God. The celestial significance of these hours, their inner radiance and the heavenly blessings which descend during them and the rich provision of spiritual advancement they contain are known only to Allah and His Apostle.

One of the reasons for the marking out of these hours is that the polytheists used to worship their false deities like the sun, the stars, the stones and the fire, at that very time. Hence the same hours were fixed for the worship of the One God.

Follow unquestioningly, as we do, the instructions of our physicians with regard to the dosage of the medicines prescribed by them, although they are, after all, humans like ourselves and their knowledge is at the best only relative, there is no reason why should our attitude be different towards the commands of God whose glory is such that:

He gave unto every thing its nature, then guided it aright. (- xx : 50)

Should He not know He created?

And He is the subtle, the Aware.(ixvii : 14) ■

THE SUPREME BEING

Shamsul Huda Qasmi

The foundation of a religion lies on the assumption of a supreme entity that created the human beings and the whole universe. It is He who controls and runs the whole world with His power and commands. The entire construction of a religion will be demolished the moment a man rejects the foundation of religion; the existence of any Supreme Lord and he would be regarded an atheist. All faiths and beliefs to him will remain as superstitions, and he will regard others living in fool's paradise.

But when we observe the universe, the creation, the human being itself, we are directed and forced to believe in an existence that could create it all and control it. The whole universe is the clear sign of God (Allah). And one who has little intelligence needs not evidence to prove it further. Today we may find many people not believing in God and refusing His entire entity but the majority of people still believe in God in today's materialistic world. The concept of God is the key point of a religion.

Islam has been a major religion of the world. It vigorously asserts to believe in Allah alone, the Supreme Being, the creator and the sustainer of the whole universe. The Glorious Quran, the sacred scripture of Islam, at numerous places talks about Allah. It argues for the existence of the Supreme Lord in its inimitable style. A man with little intelligence will surely repose his faith in Him after he studies the arguments of the Quran. It invites all to ponder over the creation of the whole universe and its mechanism wherein you too are the part of it. Your study and research in depth will lead you to the reality and will guide you to the truth.

The glorious Quran says:

"Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men, and the water which Allah sent down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and (in) the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth: are signs (of Allah's sovereignty) for people who have sense." (Surah Baqrah)

The Holy Quran further says:

"Lo! Allah (it is) who splits the grain of corn and date-stone (for sprouting). He brings forth the living from the dead, and is the bringer-forth of the dead from the living. Such is Allah. How then ye are perverted?" (Surah Anaam verse 96).

In the above verse the Quran produced the example of seed, buried deep in the

ground, comes out of the ground and sprouts and spreads it, delicate buds and branches. Who split the dead seed and brought forth cracking the ground! Did all these take place by their own? Never. It is Allah who creates and puts life into dead. All these are observed in our day to day life.

In another verse of the Quran the sign of Allah is described beautifully. The glorious Quran says:

“Let men consider his food. How we pour water in showers. Then split the earth in cleft. And cause the grain to grow therein. And grapes and green fodder. And olive trees and palm trees. And garden-closes of thick foliage. And fruits and grasses. (Surah Abas Verse 24 to 31).

If an intellectual ponders upon the verse beautifully talking about the food of man, will easily able to find out the truth and will believe in Allah, the Supreme Being.

The Quran again question concerning the doubt of the existence of Allah and says: “Can there be doubt concerning Allah, the creator of the heavens and the earth?” (Surah Ibrahim Verse 10)

In the form of question the Quran invites all mankind to think into the universe. Eminent scientists and scholars are always busy in exploring the universe but at last they admit their ignorance and inability to discover all the features of the universe expanded by the Supreme Lord and prove the existence of a powerful being that is recognized as Allah (Swt).

Accordingly a man should contemplate over his own organs of the body, the faculties, and the system of life. He should also think about his origin and beginning and the days in the womb of his mother. Who beautifully moulded the baby, and who put life and spirit in the dependent embryo? How light came in his eyes. Who enabled his ears to hear and nose to smell? Who put sense in the tongue to taste and feel the flavour? How he became able to speak and who gave him the power of speech.

Here, one has to surrender before the Lord and chant the glory of One who is one and absolute, one who begets not nor was begotten and who has no likeness of him.

May Allah, the all powerful, enable us to recognize and understand him! Ameen).■

CORE OF EDUCATION AS REVEALED IN THE HOLY QURAN

Mohammad Alamgheer

Islam is the only universal code of human life, including his life in the world and world hereafter. To make him successfully capable of leading honest and truthful life in this mortal planet, he has been blessed with the Divine guide Hazrat Mohammad (SM) who was entrusted with the preaching of holy script Al-Quran, the last and Final words of Allah the Almighty. And it is strikingly noteworthy that the revelation of this book starts with its maiden holy verse IQRA BISMILLAH: meaning Read in the name of the Lord Who createth. It is because a man, illiterate and ignorant, would not be able to appreciate the significance of his life, his Creator and the world in which he has been sent down to stay till his death successfully and profitably. Famed historian P.K. Hitti is therefore, seen to interpret the term IQRA in the way that it is there very Quran connoting "recitation, lecture, discourse." Or the study of the Quran intensively and comprehensively asks to shape one's mind, manner and attitude just after the directives of the Quran alone. That is why the term education is being used to define as the process of changing the attitude of a child to the desired direction, and here it means the direction of the teaching and manner as the Quran asked for. However in 'Misket Sharif', one of the holy six volumes on Hadith, it is stated that Allah (Swt) Himself, recited the chapters (suras) viz. 'Taha' and 'Yasin' before the Angels, thousand and thousand years before the creation of the universe. The divine recitation had uniquely spellbound the Angels who are seen to opine, "Certainly that people are fortunate indeed upon whom this would be revealed, that heart might be happy which would be able to sustain it, and the tongue would indeed be delighted enough which would discuss and dialogue on and about it."

However through it is known that man is the best of all creations, but at the same time it is to be noted that the Holy Quran is unquestionably superior to him. Because this Holy Book has been designed to make man superior to other creation by endowing him alone with the power of articulation or the art of literary, rhetoric expression, in using terms and terminologies, in creating poetic as well as prosaic rhymes and rhythms both rationally and morally to upkeep his control & superiority over all the creations. Allah (Swt) has already such declaration for him in His holy book about which both humans as

well as the Jinns face His challenge in composing another work equal or equivalent to this Revelation.

His this challenge has gone unmet and will remain so till the day of resurrection.

Al-Quran is the creation of Allah and the subject matter of it are all the things, lives, visible and invisible, that Allah has created to decorate the universe for good living and breathing of all mortal beings. His last creation is Man, the lovely expression of His won image in the form of Adam (AS).

Now to make him well fitted is this world to lead meaningful and wise living till his death. Adam (AS) was well acquainted with all the things and objects along with their inherent qualities and characteristics. Allah Himself taught him directly showing all the essentials. And from this event, we have had the maiden examples of (1) Direct Method of Teaching (2) Teaching by Demonstration (3) The concepts of a Teacher and (4) A Student – Allah being Himself the First Teacher and Hazrat Adam (AS) His first Student. Moreover we have also got the concept of the contents of curriculum, nay Curriculum for mankind as a whole therefrom. Hence it would have not been possible to have such concept of Teaching and Education provided Hazrat Adam and his espouse Bibi Hawa (AS) were not expelled from the Heaven as the rewarding punishment for taking fruit of the forbidden tree having been allured by iblish for the Satan. And this incident is also one of the core-subjects of education indeed.

Thus from Hazrat Adam (AS) to the last Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM), a train of Prophets had been sent down to the earth for making mankind educated and enlightened to build up the edifice of human civilization and culture through the passage of ceaseless flowing of time and Energy. All the Prophet had with them Shaifa or Kitab (the Holy guide books) to teach their nations, and from this tradition we have got the concept of the “TEXT BOOK” for us to be followed in forming our minds and manner to imbibe the will and wishes of our creator, Allah the Almighty as best as possible.

Allah has by the way of emphasizing the verse laid the alsooute importance to acquire the art and skill of learning in one Makkan Sura: The Clot (Al-Alak), where He said to His Prophet Mohammad (SM) “Read in the name of the Lord Who createth, createth man from a clot. Read and thy Lord is most Bounteous who teacheth by the pen, teacheth man that which he knew not (96, 1-5).” Translation from M. Pickthall’s The Glorious Quran? This extract if minutely is studied, it becomes transparent that the contents of the education of Holy Quran are:

1 God centering Whom 2. Man has to study Him and His creation not fully known and 3. His bounties to preach through his words and writings. In other words: the subject matter of the Holy Quran, as it is envisaged by the Islamic Scholars and Islamicists, are in

succession:

1 Allah – the Creator of the worlds.

2 Man of different categories : Mومن, Munafiq, Mushrek and Kafirs.

3 The Nature-both in literary and literal sense.

The aims and objectives of the teaching of the Holy Quran are inculcate upon human-mind the following in scientific method and reasoning.

Allah: Allah alone is the Creator of the entire worlds.

He is the Creator of Man,

He has sent down Adam (As) and his progeny with a specific purpose to be fulfilled by him in the way as desired by the creator.

To make man pious and God-fearing through which he would be fortunate become favorite to his master both here in this world and the world hereafter.

To help man reach this cherished goal, Allah has sent the last and final Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (Sm) to him mankind as in the words of him (Prophet) "Buestu Muallima" I have been sent down on earth as the Teacher". Thus the Prophet (Sm) has undying golden example of following the lessons of the Quran both in letter and spirit.

Hence we in fine see that it is the Holy Quran that has provided Humanity to study curriculum and syllabus following Prophet Mohammad (Sm) as the Teacher along with the Quran and his Hadith as the core-subject of teaching.

We should indeed be evergrateful to Allah, the Benign, for giving us the way to be supreme among all His creations acquiring His Prophet, teaching from "the cradle to grave" of our lives remembering the following holy verse of Him stressing the fact:

The Beneficent hath made known the Quran. He has created men, he hath taught him utterance. ■

Ayeshā[ؓ] reports a hadith that the Prophet (S) said, "Gabriel has always been emphasising to me about keeping a watchful eye on the right of the neighbours. So much so that one day I thought that perhaps very soon the neighbour was going to be given the right to inherit (the neighbour)."

ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Ahmad Zaki Yamani

Man, who in his history has often suffered from injustice and oppression has always dreamed of equality. People yearned for it in bygone days, but usually found it only in the books of philosophers. It was like a mirage which vanishes as you approach it.

The messenger of Allah, Muhammad ibn Abdullah (Sm) also strove to translate the dream of equality into practice. This changed the course of history, and established, for the first time, a society open to all mankind, a society that truly practiced equality instead of waxing eloquent about its promotion. The fact that a socio-economic order based on justice and equality remains more of dream than a reality in the contemporary Muslims world, is the fault of Muslims who have neglected the true teachings of Islam, and have thus deprived themselves and other of an important pillar of strength. As for Islam, it is an immortal religion whose springs can never dry up. Where we to return to it, we shall also come to know the ways to establish justice in its best form as well as to establish an egalitarian system under which no superiority is accorded to anyone except on the grounds of personal merit such as righteous conduct. Muslims are religiously commanded to practice justice and equality and their faith demands not merely the changing of pious formulas, but an earnest struggle to transform the ideals of their faith into living realities of life.

Regardless of how hard the West tries, it will never succeed neither its left nor its right- in establishing a society in which equality and justice prevail. There will always be glaring shortcomings to tell story of the evil ingrained in people's souls, an evil which can be uprooted only by the teachings of Islam. History tells us how the dream of equality and justice came true in the time of Prophet (SAW) and the early Imams (As), and from time to time thereafter, this achievement even fills non-Muslims with wonder. Justice and equality have become handy slogans to exploit the gullible masses. In the name of these beautiful ideals, human beings are massacred, millions of innocent people are uprooted, and the struggle to get rid of the old chains quite often leads to the forging of new, heavier and more oppressive chains.

According to Marx, equality denotes the state in which all persons enjoy equal income and equal standards of living regardless of their abilities or actual work output. Where such an ideal to be realized, those who are more gifted and diligent would be prevented from living better than those who are less gifted and less diligent. Marx urged the establishment of a society based on the dictum: "From each according to his ability, to each to his need." Communism met its first setback, however, when faced with the

unpalatable realities of life and was led to renounce this kind of equality in favor of equality of rights" which allows for varied fortunes to go along with varying abilities and amount of labor. Thus it thought to establish a society on the basis of the dictum: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work." Thus the original ideal was abandoned in the very first years of the Communist Revolution.

As for Islam, the equality, which it envisions, denotes equality not in a narrow, material sense. This equality also encompasses the souls of Muslims. For Islam liberates the souls of people from all forms of servitude, raises their moral standards, and refines their feeling with the result that every Muslim acquainted with the basic concepts of Islam considers himself to be the brother of every other Muslim and fears none except God. This kind of equality 'equality at the psychological level' – has been altogether ignored by the West. However, it is precisely this kind of equality, which is the key to the success, which crowned the struggle of early Muslims when they earnestly strove to realize that ideal.

The starting point for Muslims is their absolute faith in their Lord Who grants life as well as causes death, which confers His bounties as well as withholds them and exercises total control over their destiny. Besides, no intermediary is recognized between man and God. Everyone, regardless of how exalted he might be, is His servant. The Qur'an emphasizes this absolute dependence of man on God and brings it out even in matters relating to the Prophets (As). Since Muslims hold the beliefs such as those, mentioned above, a direct nexus is established between the weak, mortal self of the believer and his Lord-God, the Almighty, the Compassionate. It is from this belief that a Muslim derives inspiration and strength, which make him feel equal to every other human being in the sight of God. Islam emphasizes this direct relationship between the frail human being Almighty, albeit Merciful God, which is evident from a number of Verses of the Holy Qur'an:

"Say: O Allah, Master of the kingdom! Thou gives the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the Kingdom from whomever Thou pleasest" (3:26)

And if the spirit of a Muslim transcends above the fear of death, it is because he knows that God Alone grants life and causes death. When these beliefs strike roots in the hearts of Muslims, then society is able to overcome the first obstacles in the way of true equality: It is then that Islamic Law begins to play its role in producing a community which has been characterized by the Qur'an as follows:

"You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of men).....(3:110)

The Quran is replete with verses which categorically affirm the principle of equality.

Thus;

"O you men ! Surely we have created you from a male and a female, and made you

tribes and families, that you may know each other, surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing, Aware." (49:13)

Again the Quran says :

"And not your wealth nor your children, are the things which bring you near Us in whoever believes and does good, these it is for who is a double reward for what they do, and they should be secure in the highest plaes." (34:37)

The mission of Prophet Muhammad (Sm) was to bring about a revolution that would undermine the foundations of the society that was based on discrimination between masters and slaes. He raised the position of slaves and made them stand shoulder to shoulder with their masters. This infuriated their overlords. For instance, Abu Jahl, protested to the Prophet (Sm) and said: "Did you, O Muhammad! Come to make the lowly Ibn Sumayyah and eqaul of the noble al-Walid?" Muhammad (Sm) firmly and confidently said : "Yes, to that and he recited the following Quranic verse :

"Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them rulers in the earth as He made those before them, and that He will certainly establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them, and that he will most certainly after their fear give them Security in exchange ... " (24:55)

This statement of the Prophet (Sm) wasn't sheer verbosity, a rhetorical statement devoid of the intent to implement it. It was instead, a mandatory order of the Creator, and was thus faithfully put into effect by the Prophet (Sm) himself as well as by his Companions. In deference to the Prophet's (Sm) desire, his own cousin, Zaynub bin Jahsh, was married, despite for noble lineage, to his freedman, Zayd. This act is very significant since at that time marriage was the greatest criterion of true equality in the Arab society. Moreover, when the Prophet (Sm) joined his followers in Medina into pairs of brethern-in-faith, he made his uncle, Hamzah the brother of his freedman, Zayd. Likewise, he made Abu Bakr the brother of Kharijah; and Khalid ibn Ruwayhah the brother of Bilal ibn Abi Rabah. He even placed Zayd, and at a later date, Zayd's son Usamah, at the head of the Muslim army, a majority of which consisted of eminent Muhajirun (the Emigrants) and Ansar (the Helpers). After a few years, Caliph Umar ibn al Khattab expressed the opinion that had Salim, the freedman of Abu Hudhayfah, been alive he would preferred him to all others and appointed him as his successor to the Caliphate.

The Prophet (Sm) by his own conducted, set the most magnificent example of equality. Once a man called "Ukashah" came to him and claimed that the Prophet (Sm) had once struck him with a whip on his back and shoulder, and that he should be allowed to take revenge for the wrong done to him. The Prophet (Sm) answered that he didn't recollect

that he had done so. The man, however, persisted in his claim. The Prophet (Sm) then asked him to get even with him by striking on his back and shoulder. The plaintiff however, burst into tears, fell prostrate, and said: "By Allah O Messenger of Allah, you never hit me. I just wanted to test you."

Likewise, once a Jew came to the Prophet (Sm) and fireciy insisted on the repayment of the amount borrowed by the latter before the scheduled time of repayment. He even taunted the Prophet's (Sm) family for habitually delaying the repayments of debts.

The Prophet's (Sm) Companions were hurt by these insulting remarks and came forth with the intent to beat him up. Placing himself between them, the Prophet (Sm) merely said : "Let him go. Whoever has a due claim has the right to speak (harshly)." ■

"O son of Adam, I fell ill and you visited Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I visit You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so had fallen ill and you visited him not? Did you not know that had you visited him you would have found Me with him? O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you fed Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I feed You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so asked you for food and you fed him not? Did you not know that had you fed him you would surely have found that with Me? O son of Adam, I asked you to give Me to drink and you gave Me not to drink. He will say : O Lord, how should I give you to drink when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: My servant So-and-so asked you to give him to drink and you gave him not to drink Had you given him to drink you would have surely found that with Me."

MUSLIM WOMEN AND THE RIGHT TO DIVORCE

S. Sarwar Ali*

Women's position in society is one of the burning topics of the day. This article focuses on one aspect of the issue- the position of Muslim women and their right to divorce. The common perception is that Muslim women are at considerable disadvantage compared to Muslim men. Whereas the men can divorce their wife without any reason, the women cannot get release from the marriage bond unless the husband agrees to give Khula (divorce) to the wife. Such, however, is not the position in so far as the present law is concerned or as propounded under the Shariah.

Let us first take up the present law as applicable to Indian Muslims. The dissolution of the Muslim Marriage Act, 1939, was enacted by the then Central Legislature and came into force from 17 March 1939. The law was enacted at the instance of Muslims themselves.

The government of the day did not impose it on Muslims against their will. The Act was "to consolidate and clarify the provisions of Muslim Law relating to suits for dissolution of marriage by women married under Muslim Law".

Relevant provision

The relevant provision is Section 2 which empowers a woman married under Muslim Law to obtain a decree for dissolution of her marriage on any of the grounds mentioned in the above section. There are nine grounds mentioned in the section. The first eight are specific grounds. The ninth ground (Section 2 (IX)) is a general and comprehensive ground and reads: "On any other ground which is recognized as valid for dissolution of marriage under Muslim Law."

It is, therefore, necessary to examine the position in Muslim law or Shariat with respect to the right of a Muslim woman to obtain the release from the marriage bond without the consent of the husband.

The question as to what the law is arose in the life time of the prophet himself. Reference in this connection may be made to a tradition (hadith) as mentioned in Sahih Bukhari, one of the authentic books on tradition. In the 1987 edition of Sahih Bukhari (Volume page 2021) it is stated: "The wife of a man called Thabit ibn Qays came to the Prophet and said (in complaint against her husband): 'I do not find any fault in Thabit's religion, commitment or his morals but I dislike him so much and cannot continue to live with him for fear that he drives me to apostasy.'

The Prophet asked her, 'Will you give back to him the garden he gave you (the

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lower)? She replied, 'yes'." The Prophet ordered Thabit to take back the garden and divorce his wife. This decision of the Prophet was naturally in conformity with the Quran (Quran :229) which says: "Divorce can happen twice, and (each time) wives can either be kept on an acceptable manner or released in a good way.

It is not lawful for you to take back anything that you have given (your wives), except where both fear that they cannot maintain (the marriage) within the bounds set by God: if you suspect that the couple may not be able to do this, then there will be no blame on either of them if the woman opts to give something for her release."

From the above quoted tradition of the Prophet it is clear that the petition for divorce was not based on any obvious fault of the husband. It was only based on the wife's extreme dislike of the husband. The Prophet's decision was that in such a situation the wife was entitled for dissolution of the marriage without any fault on the part of the husband on the condition that what has been received by her as dower has to be returned to the husband.

This position had not been doubted in any of the four main schools of Muslim Law.

Eminent Islamic jurists have, however, considered the question as to the permissible amount and type of compensation a husband is entitled to in the above circumstances. Both Imam Malik and Imam Shafei are of the opinion that a woman can secure her redemption by paying the equivalent of, or more, or less than, what her husband had given her as a dower, while a few jurists permit the husband to take only the dower he has given and regard any amount more than that as unlawful (Ibn Rushd, 1996 vol 2 page 80)

Power of delegation

This discussion will not be complete without a reference to power of delegation (tafweez) to divorce by the husband. As already noticed, a husband has unrestricted legal right to divorce his wife.

But the power of divorce can be delegated to the wife on a third person, either absolutely or conditionally. The person to whom power is delegated may then pronounce the divorce accordingly (Mulla's Mohamedan Law Art 314). Marriage under the Mohamedan law, being contractual, if at the time of nikah, delegation (tafweez) takes place, the wife would be in the same position as the husband so far as divorce is concerned.

I understand that a modified nikah nama is under contemplation of Muslim organization including the All-India Personal Law Board. If the power of tafweez is incorporated in the model nikah nama, all objections to the disparity between Muslim husband and wife would disappear.

It is thus clear that where a marriage has irretrievably broken down, a Muslim woman has full right, even without the consent of her husband, and without any fault on the part of the husband to have the marriage dissolved under the provisions of the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act 1939, or under the delegated power of divorce (tafweez) wherever applicable. ■

CALL OF THE CUBE

Biju AbdulQadir

It was that time of the year again and Max had half expected it to happen anyway: at least two hundred and fifty dead in the stampede at the stoning ritual.

Some were so young-as young as thirty: Max observed.

Thirty.

Not too young.

Not too old.

But a 'vie-able, dieable' age. For what one believed in.

Two hundred and fifty dead. And that was the official figure. But as he scanned the headlines earlier in the day, Max knew that the death toll could very well be higher. These were people who had come heeding the call of the Cube.

Well almost a cube, if one went by exact dimensions.' Max corrected himself.

But it did have six flat surfaces- a fact that immediately pointed out the one many symbolisms associated with the rites centered around it. The cube faced the world in six directions: north, south, east, west and the two vertical directions. In all, therefore, the cube addressed the world or man in direction with which he was well versed; in directions from which he would come heeding its call down the ages.

But the cube sits on a sphere, as it were,' as the Wayfarer had once pointed out the Max.

Like the Relative within the Absolute.' Max had joined in then.

'Yes, Max. Like the mind of man within the Universal Mind.

The, cube was conspicuous by the contrast that its black colour presented against the ocean of white moving around it. Max had been staring at his computer screen since the morning hour that he reported for work. He had to get the right image for the article to be published in the next issue of the periodical that he worked for. Not that the cube in focus now was never photographed better. On the contrary, there were hundreds of images of the most famous cube of all time. And that was just what Max's problem was. He had to select the best, most awe-inspiring, image of the ka'aba that he could lay his eyes on.

Awe-inspiring.

'Yeah, that's the only word for it,' thought Max as he started at the several colour photographs of the main rites of the Hajj, or the Islamic Pilgrimage, on his computer screen. Max had never been there amongst that ocean of humanity circumambulating the ka'aba

the house built by the patriarch Abraham and his elder son. Ishmael, dedicated to the eternal remembrance of God.

At Makkah

In the land of Arabia.

In the land where Abraham's celebrated descendent would proclaim the culmination of the Revelation centuries after Ishmael, Isaac, David, Solomon, Moses and Jesus.

In the land where Muhammad was born.

No. Max had not yet received that opportunity of a lifetime, but he could very well feel something of the throbbing pulse of the east sea of humanity that now thronged around the cubical structure. Around the cube that was the Ka'aba.

The center of the world.

'the center of the world?' Max thought again. 'Okay, that might be stretching it a little bit.'

But one thing was for sure: two million human beings, irrespective of race, colour, language and culture converging onto one spot with nothing but the same, single, intention must definitely be some centre of power. There was no mistaking that, no matter what your were: a Muslim, a Hindu, Christian, a Jew or even one without any particular religion.

The same, single intention: Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik! Here am I! O God! Here am I!

For how many centuries has that call reverberated through the valleys of Makkah every year since Abraham: that cry of the pilgrim on his journey towards fulfilling the command of his Maker. A journey that is almost always expected to be one way.

The way.

The road that would carry the pilgrim to salvation and offer hopes of a rebirth, free of sins. Of a Renaissance spiritual. And then of the expectant return unto the maker in as clean an image as the one in which He first created His servant.

Except, of course, in one instance: the one in which the pilgrim embarked on the pilgrimage without having settled dues that he owed to any other of his own kind.

Dues in insult and in kind.

Dues in insult and harm done.

All had to be atoned for.

All had to be forgiven by men before the rest could be forgiven by God.

Yes, the pilgrim could always return from his pilgrimage and seek this forgiveness so essential, but what if he never came back home from his pilgrimage?

What if he was to pass away into the presence of his Maker en route to the completion of this physical pilgrimage of the body?

What if the physical pilgrimage of the body was to lead to the spiritual pilgrimage of the soul even before its last rites were completed?

Who could then atone for his sins of commission to those whom he had to pay up?

So, logic dictates that the pilgrim must settle scores before he, or she, sets out for the pilgrimage. That one's Maker may accept one as sinless could he, or she, be destined to meet with death on the way: incidentally the longing of the ideal, true, pilgrim.

There is no theme within the symmetric perfection of Islam that more fully portrays inherent symbolisms as do the rites of Hajj. Indeed, the Hajj is replete with symbols and suggestions.

Symbols pointing to the eternal struggle that is always the lot of Man in his movement towards God.

Suggestions evocative of the sacrifice that must necessarily dot human life as it progresses to meet its Maker.

But what really shook Max, once the Wayfarer informed him of it, was the symbolism of the Tawaf, or the movement around the Ka'aba, with his explanation, the Wayfarer had pointed out the dual implications of the term 'revolution'. In one very obvious sense, the circumambulation around the Ka'aba marked a pilgrim's revolution around it. But this was never to be a static revolution, for the objective of the pilgrim's revolutionary path was undoubtedly its centre. A centre occupied by the House of God, the slightest touch of which was every pilgrim's fondest desire. For the mere sight of which the pilgrim would have traversed half the world on his meager resources.

But then, 'revolution' has meant dynamic, drastic change in the state of affairs as well. It has always meant change and, almost always, for what was apparently better. It has always meant a transition from 'what is' to 'what ought to be'. Thus, every true revolution implies a movement towards the ideal at the centre. Much like every circumambulation implies a desire, and an effort, to shorten the radius to the Ka'aba, the metaphoric House of God.

So as to get to the home of the pilgrim's heart.

So as to seize the idols erected therein with the passage of time and of memory.

So as to break those idols into a thousand pieces against the barren floor of unadulterated monotheism, even as one did of old.

So as to erect anew, within the pilgrim's aching heart, the Temple of Love dedicated to the singular, sole, worship of the one True God: the Owner of the Ka'aba, Object of the Pilgrim.

'It is a coincidence then that most systems in the Universe revolve around an axis?' the Wayfarer had asked Max. Of course, the earth went around the sun like the other plan-

ets, while the sun itself moved around an axis along with the entire galaxy in an ever-expanding universe.

‘And Max, there is the Sign of the Right, too.

‘The Sign of the Right, Wayfarer?

‘Yes. In the Islamic scheme, one is supposed to begin with the right always.’

The Tawaf, Max. How do you start it?

Clockwise or counter-clockwise?’

‘Counter-clockwise, of course. But what’s your point, Wayfarer?’

‘What’s counter-clockwise, Max? Is that going from right to left, or left to right?’

‘Right to...But, of course!’

‘Coincidence, then, Max?’

‘Very unlikely, Wayfarer. Very unlikely, indeed!’

And if all that was not enough, there was the symbol of the sacrifice. For, every pilgrim was to sacrifice an animal as part of the rites of the Hajj. A sacrifice that was commemorative of an event where a father relented to sacrifice his only son at the altar of God’s command. It was in memory of the patriarch, Abraham, who offered to sacrifice Ishmael, his beloved son born to him in old age, in compliance with the order of his Maker. Abraham had his faith tested severely on several occasions in the past: indeed, his whole life had been one epic of endurance under the most exacting of trials and tribulations. But this was perhaps the ultimate test: and one in whose execution Abraham stood true to his Maker.

Abraham: the upright, the Haneef.

And Ishmael: ever the worthy son of a worthy father. One who asked his father to be patient and firm in the execution of his duty.

In the execution of his only, beloved, son.

It was a test wherein both father and son proved their credentials as torchbearers of the prophetic tradition: proved themselves worthy combatants who took the sword and the fire into the Demon’s lair.

The pilgrim has ever since, in making his won sacrifice of the animal during Hajj, commemorated this event of joy and of victory.

But has he ever gone out in search of the true meaning of sacrifice?

Has he ever realized the pain that separation from his beloved implies?

‘Have we even started looking out for our Ishmaels?’ Max had asked himself then.

‘Yes, Max. You realize then that you, too, have Ishmaels, don’t you? Asked the Wayfarer.

‘Of course, Wayfarer. There are the smaller Ishmaels and the bigger Ishmaels, too.’

The only problem, though, is that we still haven't started looking at the bigger ones up front. We are still held up with the smaller ones all the time. The smaller Ishmaels that we haven't learned to let go.' 'You have learnt well, Max.'

'Yeah, now I have to just put it into practice. That's all.' Max had hardly hid the sarcasm in his voice.

'Indeed! For, learning without action is like the blind holding aloft the torch to see in the darkness.' The Wayfarer commented, ignoring Max's sarcastic remark.

The man at the computer stared and stared at the screen searching in vain for now he knew not what. His eyes blinded by the fires set ablaze by the rapidity and content of his thoughts.

'The Ka'aba, of course. Yes, that was it.'

'Yes. That, indeed, was it.' ■

Courtesy: Young Muslim Digest.

"Anas bin Malik reports a hadith that the Prophet (S) said, "That (senior) who does not show mercy (affection and kindness) to his juniors and that (junior) who does not respect his seniors, is not from us (men of the faith)."

"Adi bin Hatim reports that the Prophet (S) said, "Save yourself (by giving charity) from the fire of Hell even though the charity consists of a piece of date. But if you cannot afford even this much, speak sweet word so that you are saved from the fire of Hell (even by this charity)."

INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

The Marriage is a social institution, as old as the mankind. Right from the advent of Adam and Eve till date this custom is in vogue in the society. Unlike other religions, Islam has attached much importance to it. The main reason is that the wedding bondages keep people away from unscrupulous and obnoxious acts and lead to a virtuous life. Islam despises recluse and solitary life.

The holy Quran says: "And of His signs is that He has created wives for you from yourselves that you might find peace of mind in them and He put between you love and affection. He it is who created you from a single soul and of the same he made his spouse, that he might find comfort in her." The holy Quran further says: "They your wives are as a garment to you, and as a garment to them."

Sayyid Abul Aala Maududi says that, "Islam has closed all the ways leading to sexual anarchy. But for satisfaction of man's animality and propagation of the human race it was inevitable that at least one door for sexual satisfaction must be kept open. This was done by giving permission for marriage. Islam ordained that the sexual desire must be satisfied, not by unlawful sexual liaison secretly or openly and immodestly, but through the prescribed course so that the whole society comes to know, and it is established beyond doubt, that such and such a man and woman are now meant for each other."

Here are a few sayings of the Holy Prophet that amply illustrate the point : "You should marry, for that is the best way of saving yourself from casting evil eyes, and of safeguarding yourself against sexual immorality. The one who does not possess the means to marry should fast, because fasting curbs sexuality." (Al-Tirmizi)

"By Allah, I am the best among you in the matter of fearing Allah and avoiding His displeasure. But in spite of that I observe fast and break it, offer prayers and sleep at night, and marry women. This is my way, and whosoever shuns my way does not belong to me." (Al-Bukhari)

"The woman should not observe a non-obligatory fast without the permission

of her husband.” (Al-Bukhari)

“The woman who passes a night with a view to evading the desire of her husband is cursed by the angels till she attends on him.” (Al-Bukhari) “When one of you happens to see a woman and is attracted by her, he should go to his wife, for she has the same as she (the other woman) had.” (Al-Tirmizi)

It is unfortunate that today lot of money is spent in marriage ceremony. But scant attention is being paid towards dower (mahr). While Mahr is obligatory to bond the relationship between husband and wife. The holy Quran lays great stress on paying the dower. It states : “And lawful for you are all women besides those, Provided that you seek them with your property, talking them in marriage, not committing fornication. Then as those whom you profit (by marriage) give them their dower as appointed” (4:24)

Contrary to it dowry has no place in Islam. It is a free gift given by the parents to their daughters at the time of their marriage. But unfortunately this menace has taken the roots of social cancer. Often innumerable nubile girls remain unmarried due to this menace. Parents face hurdles when their daughters reach puberty. Even they have to sell their movable and immovable property to provide dowry.

It can be said without any hesitation that because of our own doings the dowry has become a gigantic issue. The girls are neglected after their marriage. As they have no share in their parents property. This is the main reason that this menace is increasing apace.

As regards Islam, it presents a unique solution to solve this problem. Islam has given women their share. The holy Quran says : “From what is left by parents and those nearest related, there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the Property be small or large, a determinate share” (4:7)

In this context, it would be worthwhile to mention that divorce has been a telling issue of today. Islam strictly prohibits divorce for obvious reason. The Prophet Muhammad said : “of all the lawful things, divorce is the most detestable thing in the sight of Allah” (Abu Dawod). Islam mooted so many ways to avoid this obnoxious practice. The holy Quran says: “And if you fear a breach between them (i.e. husband and wife), appoint an arbiter from his family and an arbiter from her family. If they seek to set things a right, Allah will cause their reconciliation : For Allah has full knowledge and is acquainted with all things. (4:35) Islam permits to divorce only in critical

condition. Needless to add that similar right has also been given to women that is called Khula in Islamic laws. The Holy Quran says : "And it is not lawful for you that ye take from women – of that which you have given them, except (in case) when both fear that they may not be able to keep within the limits Imposed by Allah. And if you fear that they may not be able to keep the limits of Allah in that case it is no sin for either of them if the woman ransom herself". (2:229) Islam does not allow divorce for sexual enjoyment. Another tradition says: "Allah showers curses on those men and women who move frequent use of divorce for the sake of sexual enjoyment.

It is reiterated that Islam is a complete code of life. It is the religion of an equilibrium between body and soul. It solves every issue of human life and leads to such a way in which human beings may live with peace and amity.

It is imperative that we must follow the right path and be an excellent exemplar for others and abstain from extravagance. In the words of the Quran "verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Satan. And the Satan is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful." (17:27) ■

Six Claims of Muslims

Abu Huraira narrates that the Prophet (S) said that a Muslim has six claims on other Muslims.

- (1) When he is ill the others go to enquire about his health.
- (2) When he dies others go to offer the Janaza prayers.
- (3) When he is met by others they say Assalam-o-Alaikum to him.
- (4) When he invites for a meal others accept it.
- (5) When he sneezes others say "May Allah have mercy on you," on hearing from him "All praise is for Allah."
- (6) They must be his well-wishers (in all matters of this world and the Hereafter) both in his presence and absence.

DEBATE

SHOULD MADRASA CURRICULUM BE MODERNIZED?

Saiyed Hamid :

My answer is an emphatic yes, but I would not stop there. The process of modernization should be extended to the teaching technique as well. In the ultimate analysis, pedagogy is more important than curriculum. Over the last two centuries, tremendous changes have taken place due to experimentation in the teaching technique. Incidentally, learning by rote, that happens to a large extent in madrasas, deviates from the spirit of Quranic injunctions stressing observation and contemplation in order to unravel the mysteries of nature. It's ironical that the static technique that puts curiosity and reasoning to rest stayed put. Adoption of modern teaching methods that aim at developing a child's personality and vision will itself generate a demand for review of curriculum.

As for modernization of curriculum, it should be nobody's case that any segment of human activity of intellectual endeavour should be frozen at a given point in time. Interpretation of the scriptures has to be related to changes in the society. With developments in science and technology, the material and physical world has changed, thereby affecting human relationships, making life more complex and giving rise to new problems that religion would be called upon to interpret.

It would be unjust to deny to any system of education, the benefits of progress, particularly to the progress, particularly to the teaching of a religion that is dynamic in essence. There is a strong case, therefore, for inclusion of modern subjects in the curriculum. These include subjects which deal with Mother Earth, its past and present, psychology, attitude and relationships and material and moral well-being of its human progeny.

As of now, madrasas are institutions that impart religious education. It was not so always. For years, madrasas considered all knowledge as their province. The great scientists and thinkers that Islam produced from the 9th to the 12th centuries AD were all products of madrasas.

If madrasa students are siphoned off from mainstream education, it would lead to segregation and mistrust. Also, it might warp their attitude and distance them from national concerns. Much of the criticism against modernization stems from the government's modernization schemes whose implementation has been hampered. There is a failure to perceive that the reorientation of madrasa education is split based on mode of education within the community, but also enhance mutual understanding between the major communities.

Imtiyaz Ahmad :

We need to ask three questions: What does modernization of madrasa curriculum mean? Who wants modernization and why? What will modernization do to the purpose for which madarasas were created and exist even today? No one has a clear idea of what modernization means. The concept has caught people's imagination but without understanding what it really means or should mean. It is like half-baked bread being pushed into the market as a finished product.

Three constituencies vociferously advocate modernization – the West, some members of India's middle class and the State. The middle class is bothered by Muslim refusal to be assimilated into the mainstream of their imagination as a means to make Muslims liberal. The State advocates it because madrasas function outside its umbrella. It thinks through its financial incentives for modernization, it can bring madrasas under its umbrella. Liberal Muslims, dismayed by the abysmally low participation of the community in secular education, come forth with this proposition they hope madrasas can be converted into vehicles for communication of modern knowledge so that Muslim participation in secular education increases.

This anticipation is illconceived as no more than 3%-4% Muslim children go to madrasas. Madrasas are institutions of traditional religious learning whose primary objective is to pass on a tradition to succeeding generations. A task they continue to perform effectively.

Critics say the madrasa curriculum (dars-e-nizami) has remained unchanged for over two centuries. It would be foolhardy to expect that they simply because time has changed and madrasas should now orient themselves to meeting the demands that secular educational institutions should meet. It would amount to digging their very roots out of existence.

“As for the argument that madrasas cultivate conservativeness and narrowness of outlook, it's a matter of perspective. What appears to be clinging on to traditionalism is rather the only choice open to a community whose traditions and identity are seriously threatened. Whether they are actually threatened is not the question. What matters is the perception. And the clerics who manage the madrasas do feel that such a threat does exist. Even if there are significant internal differences within that traditions the common perception is that their culture is being threatened and **can be preserved** only through traditional learning methodologies and pedagogy. ■

(Times of India)

Book Review :

ISLAM THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASSES OF THE WEST

Syed Wasi Alam

Book: Foundations of Islam- The Making of a World Faith

Author: Benjamin Walker

Publisher: HarperCollins Publisher, India

Pages:350

Price: Rs 500/=

More and more the West finds itself ideologically bankrupt and confused. the more it is turning to East to tar it with the same brush of sleaze and mud. Tones of literature are churned out every year in the West to speculate on the Ideologies and religions of the East and to find some loopholes in it. Though most of the West finding East as its new haven of solace, wallowing in its spirituality, yet some unable to digest this superiority are out to create confusion.

Islam has over the years registered its ideological superiority over the other religions of the world, yet it had not stopped its detractors from hitting out at it. The present work tried to depict Islam in the same light, although, it may have very little effect on the Muslims. Though the author, Benjamin Walker, did try to confuse the non-Muslims view on Islam but he is more confused himself than confusing.

In the first chapter, the author pretends to be unbiased, although he mostly quotes the historians hostile to the cause of Islam. He tries to come out with something to implicate Islam in idol worship but even from these sources he failed to do so and could not bring any solid proof, at any time, where Muslim can be implicated in idol worship. Yet, while concluding the chapter he bared his based view of Islam by telling that Sang-e-Aswat (attached to the wall of the Kaaba, and is supposed to be there from the time of Abraham) is a stone which the Muslims worship.

Another instance of bias is when the author describes the Prophet's ancestors, his grandfather and father as *hanifs*, a term for monotheist before Prophet Mohammad (hanifs is oft quoted in the Quran also). He described the Prophet's ancestors as pious and generous, who fed the poors and provided drinking water to wayfarers. But while at another place the author says: "Throughout this period Muhammad remained faithful to the idolatrous practices of his fathers..." How can that be, when his ancestors never believed in so many

gods. All these instances shows that the author is either poor in drawing inferences or is having a deep-seated bias against Islam.

The different names of Allah had the names of at least ten gods of pre-Islamic period, of the idols in the Kaaba. This the author had presented as the case of continuation of the pagan religion but the fact is something else. This is because of the simple reason that the names of the idols were on certain powers of nature, like wind and storm, or certain strong emotions like anger, wrath etc. So while all the names of Allah are based on qualities and powers, and therefore this commonality. This commonality can also be found with the name of gods of other religions. But does that make Muslims adherent of those religions? No, certainly not.

The book seems to be a concoction of historical facts and myths, trying to cast aspirations on Islam. An effort to cover or call right the impurities that crept in the previous abrahimie religions and therefore trying to prevent the inevitability of Islam and limiting its purpose. All the time, trying to create a schism between different sects of Islam but ignoring the fact that the holy book of the Muslims, i.e. Holy Quran, is one and same in every sect, without an alteration of even a doubt.

The author in so many words wanted to say that Islam did not bring much refreshing changes in the already existing Abrahimic religions and therefore there was no need for it. This assumption is false. Islam is the most refreshing and original philosophy for all times to come, it is altogether different matter that Muslims are not good followers. ■

Abu Huraira reports that the Prophet (S) said, "You will not be allowed to enter Paradise unless you have accepted the faith. And you will not be able to develop (perfect) faith unless you cultivate friendship and love (for the sake of Allah). Should I not tell you that thing by acting upon which love and frienedship are born amongst you? (Listen). Spread the practice of saying Salaam amongst yourselves."

GHUSL AND TAYAMMUM

M. Manzoor Nomani

1) It is related on the authority of 'A'ishah that "when the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to take bath, he first washed both the hands, then cleaned the private parts with the left hand and poured water over them with the right hand, and , then performed Wudhu as is done for Salah. After it, he took water and made it reach the roots of the hair with his finger till he was sure that the water had got to every place, and then, poured water over his body, (right first then left), and afterwards, washed both his feet." (Bukhari and Muslim)

2) Abu Hurayrah narrates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said "When you wear a dress or perform Wudhu, begin from the right side of your body." (Musand Ahmad, Abu Da'ud)

3) It is related by Samurah ibn Jundub that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Whoever performs Wudhu on Friday (i.e. for Friday prayers), it is correct and adequate, and whoever takes a bath, then to take a bath is better." (Musand Ahmad, Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, and Darimi)

4) It is related by Abu Dhar al-Ghiffari that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Clean earth is the means of purification for a Muslim if water is not available even for ten years. When he finds water he should pour it over the body, i.e. perform wudhu or bath with it for there is much good in it." [Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, and Abu Da'ud]

5) It is related on the authority of Ammar ibn Yasir that a man came to 'Umar and said, "I am in the state of ceremonial impurity and no water is available. What am I to do then?" Upon it Ammar (Who happened to be present) said (to Umar), "Do you remember that once you and I were together on a journey (and it had become necessary for both of us to take a bath). You did not pray in that condition but I rolled on the ground (and offered Prayer), thinking that like a bath, the Tayammum of ceremonial impurity too, was of the whole body. When we returned from the journey I told about it to on the ground. It would have been sufficient if you did like this.' On saying it, the Prophet stroked lightly the earth with his hands, and then below off the dust and passed his hands over his face forearms." (Bukhari and Muslim)

6) Abu Sa'id al-Khudri narrated to us that "two Companions went on a journey (and during it), it so happened that the time for Prayer came and they were without water. So, they both prayed by doing Tayammum but water was found before the time for Prayer had elapsed.

Upon it, one of them offered the Prayer again after performing the Wudhu while the other did not Pray for the second time. Afterwards, when they returned and went to the Prophet, they related the incident to him. The Prophet told the Companion who had not prayed again, 'You did the right thing, and the Prayer you did by doing Tayammum will suffice for you.' And to the Companion who had Prayed the second time by performing Wudhu, the Prophet said, 'You will get a double reward (because your second Prayer became a super-erogatory one). And Allah does not allow a good deed to go waste.'" (Abu Da'ud and Darimi). ■

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