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Post Box No. 93
Lucknow-226007**

**Ph. No. : 0522-2740406
Fax : (0522) 2741834**

**e-mail: nadwa@sancharnet.in
Rs. 10/-**

The Fragrance of East

Founder : Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (RAH)
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Asstt. Editor :
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Our Representatives Abroad

- Britain** : **Mr. Akram Nadwi**
O.C.I.S.St. Cross College
Oxford Ox 1 3TU (UK)
- Dubai** : **Qari Abdul Hameed Nadwi**
P.O. Box No. 12525
Dubai U.A.E.
- Pakistan** : **Mr. Ataullah**
Sector A-50, Near SAU Qrs.
109, Township Kaurangi,
Karachi 31 (Pakistan)
- Qatar** : **Dr. Aftab Alam Nadwi**
P.O. Box No. 1513
Doha, Qatar
- Saudi Arabia** : **Mr. Tariq Hassan Askari**
P.O. Box No. 842
Madina-Munawwara
(K.S.A.)
- South Africa** : **Mr. M. Yahaya Sallo Nadwi**
P.O. Box No. 388
Vereninging, (South Africa)
- U.S.A.** : **Dr. A.M. Siddiqui**
98-Conklin Ave. Woodmere,
New York 11598

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MESSAGE FROM KOLKATA

The 20th session of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board held in Kolkata from February 29 to March 2, 2008 demonstrated once again that this forum provides an effective platform to Indian Muslims to voice in unison their problems. Keeping aside all sectarian differences, clerics leading various sects gathered together and firmly affirmed that they are the trustees of the Divine Book, the holy Quran, and followers of the last Prophet through whom God conveyed His message

In his presidential address Maulana Syed Mohammad Rabey Hasani Nadwi, Rector of Darul uloom Nadwatul Ulema and President of the AIMPB, exhorted Muslims to hold the holy Quran firmly. He said, that they cannot get peace in this world and hereafter without it. Maulana asserted that God has assured the protection and preservation of the Holy Quran which implies that He is the protector of all those who follow this holy scripture. Maulana further warned Muslims that present day travails of Muslims are reflective of the fact that the community has distanced itself from the Quran. The Quran guides us to become firm and faithful Muslims.

In his presidential address Maulana praised Kolkata for its acceptability of inhabitants of different communities. Tracing back some uncomfortable historical events of the past associated with the city Maulana reminded us that it was this city from where 200 years ago British started spreading their wings and ultimately made us their slaves. But true to our love for the nation we stood up to the occasion, setting aside our communal, linguistic and regional interests and fought with the colonial powers. This ultimately resulted in their running away from our country. This unity helped us in achieving great success. After independence the Indian Constitution thus contained the ingredients of unity and integrity to help nation in its proper growth and development. Maulana showed his optimism that as long as Indians continued to adhere to the Constitution the country will progress and peaceful and lovable atmosphere will prevail.

Coming back to the problems of Muslims Maulana said that most of the problems facing the community are the result of its distancing away from the 'Sharia'. We must follow the guidelines given to us in the holy Quran and explained

in depth by the Prophet. Deprecating some social evil practices which have, of late, percolated in the Muslim society Maulana asked the community to observe restraint in unmindful expenditure, eschew the system of dowry and make use of the rightfully earned money for better causes. He condemned the recent practice of female infanticide and other such unnatural adoptions which violate the norms prescribed by the 'Sharia'. Maulana laid emphasis on protection of the Divine ordains.

The crux of Maulana's address was the call for the unity and protection of 'Sharia'. He said that both are inter-dependent. Without unity we can not fight with anti-Islamic forces to protect and preserve our identity. We hope Muslims will take the message from Kolkata in right earnestness and work on it.

Some other prominent delegates expressed their concern on the malicious propaganda against the 'madrasas' and termed it a planned conspiracy to malign the community and their system of education. Threatened by the Islamic values and its expanding acceptability world-wide Muslims are being projected as 'terrorists'. They emphasized that this was wrong since Islam has very forcefully prohibited violence . ■ SA

We solicit articles for publication in The Fragrance of East. Suitable remuneration will be paid to writers. We prefer receipt of articles on e-mail : shariq_alavi@yahoo.com

ISLAM AND THE WEST*

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Dear Friends,

First of all, let me express my earnest gratitude to you for inviting me to this meeting which has been organised to discuss such a thought-provoking subject as "ISLAM AND THE WEST" at this great Oxford University known and respected all over the world as a premier seat of higher education.

I am especially grateful to Dr. D.G. Browning and his colleagues who have afforded me an opportunity to address this distinguished gathering and to meet a number of scholars and students of Islam.

Britain was the first country of the West to come in contact with the Islamic world during the closing decades of eighteenth century. As a pioneer the closing decades of eighteenth century. As a pioneer of western culture, education, science and technology as well as a representative of western political power, this country spent a considerable period of time in several Muslim lands particularly in the Indian sub-continent and legitimacy of its imperialistic presence in those regions, it was expected of it, even from purely intellectual and psychological view-points, to have taken a sincere interest in trying to understand the spirit of the most effective and energetic religion of its colonies, if only because that religion had acted as the greatest source and springhead of revolutionary change during the past centuries over a large portion of the world. It had left a deep and durable mark on human civilization. It can, of course, be said that it was Islam which had saved humanity and its nobler values from destruction and given them a new Ummat-which drew its strength from truth and virtue and fought against the forces of darkness and ignorance since it considered this to be the the very end and goal of its existence. It had changed the course of history not by marking a total break from the past like certain militant and despotic powers before it, but by showing a new way of life to the world. It was because of its labours that human civilization was not only enabled to proceed ahead on the road to progress but the task was also made easier by it. Its call in the seventh century A.D. propagated monotheism with such vigour and determination as was never witnessed before, restored human dignity, fostered equality and universal brotherhood through practical examples, gave rights to women, created a deep and living relationship be-

* This paper was read in the seminar held
in the Oxford University on 22 July, 1983.

tween man and his Creator by inculcating love and sincere devotion to Him in a way unparalleled in the history of religions. Social service with a view to win the good pleasure of God was raised to the level of divine worship by it. This religion also created and eagerness among the masses for the cultivation of knowledge and produced not a few encyclopedic writers whose creations are still regarded as the most valuable treasures of learning. All these achievements of it are undeniable facts supported by reliable historical evidence.

Institutions for the study of Islam the Quran and the life of the Prophet with adequate financial and other resources should have been set up, as a natural consequence, in every part of Britain. Encouragement should have been given to an objective study of Islam free from all prejudices arising out of the Crusades, religious bigotry, and political aims and ambitions which very often do not allow one to look dispassionately at the intellectual legacy, faith and culture of subjugated peoples. I do not mean to under-rate either the importance or utility of the departments of Islamic Studies and West Asian Culture in the British Universities, but what I seek to emphasize is that a deeper study with greater sincerity, breadth of vision and largeheartedness was required than mere schooling for the attainment of certain economic and material benefits.

Unfortunately, however, there has been only a one-way traffic between Britain and its colonies, or rather between the East and the West, during the last hundred years and more. The western countries have used education in the East largely as an instrument for producing men who could think and act like them, and serve their imperialistic needs and purpose; they never felt the need of taking or learning anything from the East. Undoubtedly, this attitude can partly be attributed to the political weakness of the East, and resultant feeling of frustration and inferiority complex. The East had also lost even a semblance of the courage of conviction which had inspired a poor man blessed with prophethood in a far-off Arabian town called Yathrib, now Medina, to send envoys to the Emperors of the most powerful kingdoms of the day ruling over almost the entire civilized world of his time. He wrote to the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (A.D. 610-641) and the Iranian monarch Chosroes II (A.D. 590-628), inviting them to the faith of monotheism. In his letter to Heraclius, he cited the following verse of the Quran :

"O people of the Scripture ; Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And, if they turn away, then say : Bear witness that we are they who have

surrendered (unto Him)."

It is possible that the day he dictated these letters, he might have gone without a meal or had no oil to light the earthen lamp in his house for this was the way he normally lived throughout his life while the slaves of those to whom he addressed them might have been taken sick on that very day because of overindulgence.

When the followers of this man met the warlords and other dignitaries of these empires and were asked the reason for the visit, they replied: "We have been sent of fellowmen to His own overlordship, from the narrow confines of this world to its boundlessness and from the oppressiveness of other religions to the fairness and justice of Islam."

Frankly, I am not surprised at the reply they gave for they had really gone forth to emancipate mankind from the bondage of fellow beings in order to make them true servants of God and considered themselves to be the harbingers of human freedom and preachers and upholders of true monotheism. But I do marvel at the other part of the reply given by those half-clad and ill-fed dwellers of the desert. They were claiming to lead the rulers of vast and populous countries from the narrowness of earthly life to the limitlessness of God's universe. Their reply shows that they were convinced of the fact that all those who were merely after material benefits and thoughtless appeasement of the senses were, in fact, the prisoners of their own desires and man-made, conventions, and no better than serfs and slaves. Such persons could be compared to birds with beautiful plumage and a sweet voice that were shut in a golden cage.

Had the youngmen of the erstwhile British colonies and protectorates coming to the universities of this country for higher education possessed self-confidence and a firm conviction in God, they would have been able to convince at least their friends and class-mates, if not their teachers, of the need to undertake a study of Islam in depth instead of getting overawed themselves by the glitter of European civilization.

I would be guilty of injustice, if I did not mention here some of the Muslim youngmen who received western education which had been introduced also in India and who used English as the medium of expressing their thoughts. A few of them earned the recognition of English-speaking people and some were even praised by the scholars of this country for their contribution to literature and providing food for thought to others. One of these was Rt. Hon. Syed Ameer Ali about whose *Spirit of Islam* a noted orientalist. Mr. Osborn said that the book was certainly commendable

for its author had a masterly command over the English language. Mr. Osborn further remarked that there were few Englishmen who could emulate his inimitable style which was free from the defects common in the writing of Indian writers in English language. He congratulated Indian Muslims for having such a writer among them.

Another luminary was Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal (Cantab) whose depth of thought and poetic genius have been recognised by the top-most intellectuals of the West. Prof. Nicholson of London University rendered Dr. Iqbal's *Asrar-i-Khudi* (Secrets of the self) and *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi* (Mysteries of selflessness) into English. In the centenary celebrations held to commemorate the memory of Dr. Iqbal at Lahore in December, 1977, under the auspices of the Government of Pakistan, it was revealed that the number of books and journals published by that time in different languages and quite a number of these were in English language.

I cannot help looking back to another great fighter for Indian freedom who really brought the freedom movement into active public life. A zealous Muslim as well as a noted writer and speaker, he was a graduate of Oxford University and used to write Oxon with his name. This was Maulana Mohammad Ali of the Khilafat movement's fame. But these are just few individuals from among the thousands of promising youngmen who came to England for higher education from its dominions. They returned to their countries armed with academic degrees from British universities. But as I have said earlier, it was only a one-way-traffic from here which was hardly of any benefit to the East or the West so far as Islam was concerned. It never received the attention it deserved. England attracted thousands of Muslim youngmen from its vast empire spread all over Asia while France used to have a large number of students from its dependencies in North Africa but no serious attention was ever paid to Islam because these youngmen lacked the self-assurance, religious fervour and missionary zeal which had been the distinguishing feature of the seventh century illiterate or semi-literate Arabs. This was despite the fact the difference in the cultural levels of seventh century Arabia and its Byzantine and Iranian neighbours was much greater than that obtaining between the West and India, Egypt or North African countries. Muslim students coming to the West from these countries used to acquaint themselves with western culture and civilization in their own lands and, at any rate, none of these countries was as backward as the seventh century Arabia.

Both the parties were equally responsible for this lamentable state of affairs although it is always imperative for every vigorous, developing and pragmatic society to devote itself to such intellectual endeavour. When physical sciences and technol-

ogy took the command of human thought and knowledge in the middle of the nineteenth century, they had a golden opportunity to utilize religion (of which Islam was a living and forceful representative) for pressing the fruits of knowledge and power into right channels for the betterment of humankind. It was the time to inculcate self-restraint, to raise the people above the barriers of countries and nations, to propagate human dignity and equality of all the peoples and to discourage the highly dangerous and senseless rivalry in the acquisition and display of strength among the different nations of the world which have, by now, been pushed to the edge of the precipice. Had it been done the world leadership would have been willing to-day to lend its ears to the divine call.

And for that Abode of the hereafter, we assign it unto those who seek not exaltation in the earth, nor yet corruption. The sequel is for those who are God-fearing.

The world to-day would have been altogether different if the progress in science and technology had been accompanied by the fear of God and respect for human values. Then its powerful and unlimited resources would have been guided by loftier aims and ideals, and it would have promoted cooperative endeavour between different nations instead of generating the spirit of contest, collision and conflict. Then we would have found ourselves living as members of a civilized and enlightened family instead of being divided into the present power blocks of East and West whose rivalry is threatening the very existence of human civilization or rather the human race itself. But development of ephemeral knowledge, science, and technology yoked to unbridled politics and physical gratification has brought humanity on the verge of self-destruction. Iqbal had correctly predicted that :-

The insolent thought that
Had laid bare the nature's secrets,
Had put its own hearth in danger
by its lambent flame.

Ladies and Gentlemen ; we cannot deny that modern civilization and contemporary intellectual leadership have failed in the sphere of character-building and giving to the world conscientious individuals, guided by a living sense of social responsibility. It can 'enchain the sunbeams,' 'seek the orbits of the stars', send 'men to the planets', and put the atomic energy to a great purpose. It can remove poverty and make everyone literate. No one can deny its achievements. But its helplessness is self evident where the raising up of good and virtuous individuals, of men of faith and moral rectitude is concerned. That is why the work of centuries is being wasted, and

an overpowering feeling of frustration and non-fulfilment is creeping over the world. What is more man is losing faith even in science and learning which can set off a powerful reaction against knowledge and civilization and mark the beginning of a revolt against the traditional values and accepted norms of society. Misguided men have perverted even the sound and harmless means and implements and turned them into tools of corruption and destruction. A strong boat cannot be made with rotten boards. It is a fallacy to believe that the boards may be weak and decayed, piece by piece, but when they are out together, they become good and strong. Thieves may be thieves individually, but if they form a group, they get transformed into watchmen and begin to act as responsible citizens. The individuals whom modern intellectual leadership is producing are devoid of faith and earnestness. They are ignorant of the true station and dignity of mankind. It is only the logic of strength and the doctrine of pleasure that they understand. Or they swear by nationalism. Whether such men are the leaders of a capitalist or socialist system, they cannot set up a healthy and Godfearing society, nor an environment of peace and well-being. They can never be trusted with the destiny of mankind.

We are passing through a critical time when the fate of not one country but of the entire humanity is at stake; it is facing the danger of total destruction. Efforts of a few moderate and discreet reformers and educationists, howsoever well-meaning, will be of no avail. I do not mean to deny their utility in normal conditons, but at a time so crucial as to-day, when humanity is standing at the crossroad of life and death, largehearted men possessing moral courage, boldness of spirit and the zeal of martyrs are needed for these are the type of men who have saved humanity from death and destruction at such times.

Friends ; excuse me, if I say that the West which had produced in the past such giants in the field of social and physical sciences as well as in politics who changed the map of the world, whose brilliance was acknowledged and whose discoveries were utilized with advantage by all, is now passing through a phase of intellectual stagnation. The West now needs a new and revolutionary leadership possessing prophetic courage in order to alter redically the end and purpose of science and technology from destruction to re-construction, to infuse a sense of equanimity and self-control and to bring about a readjustment between the rival political camps for saving human society from impending decay and death. West has been lacking in such a leadership for a long time. Iqbal had foreseen this danger about three quarters of a century ago and drawn attention to it in these lines, in which he describes the western

civilization as :

Without a Kallam whose splendour is
 Without a Khalil whose fire ;
 Reckless intellect is the enemy of love's fortune.
 Its atmosphere is devoid of heat of
 Impatient sigh ;
 And its patrons, without the stumble of an
 Intoxicated soul.

What Iqbal wants to convey in these couplets is that the West abounds in the signs of God as well as the sensibleness to acquire God's cognition through them but the tragedy is that man who can summon the people to God like Moses and show them the path of virtue and goodness with the help of revelatory guidance is non-existent. Iqbal says that in this welter of materialism many are to be seen with the arrogant claim : 'I give life and cause death', but no Abraham to disclaim them and proclaim : 'My Lord is He who gives life and causes death', and face the consequences with courage and determination. The West's atmosphere seems to be charged with the hectic bustle of machines and economic endeavour but really it is frigid because there is no warmth of feeling and fervidness of heart. Its intellect annihilates love and worthiness of soul. It is so mindful of loss and gain that even the risks taken are always well-calculated and pre-meditated. Daring and instantaneous impulses have led the sages and savants of the old to take revolutionary steps for arousing the slumbering humanity. Such impulsive decisions make even the intellectuals to revise their thought and stand, for it is only through such decisions that the world takes a revolutionary turn.

A revolutionary leadership is now required to save human civilization, especially in the West (of which Britain forms a part and also has a glorious history). Such leadership needs to be realistic, noble-minded, courageous and self-denying for being successful in instilling a new life into the dying frame of modern civilization and even humanity. The educational and intellectual centres, literatures and writers of this country can play a leading role in this noble endeavour and I hope that the proposed Islamic Centre which is being set up by you here at the most appropriate time, will prove to be the first step in the direction. This is the hope and desire that has brought me here despite ill-health and heavy engagements.

I, once again, thank you all for the honour, and pray to the Almighty that your endeavours may succeed and prosper and fulfil the expectations of the Centre's wishers. ■

DIALOGUE IS FINE, COURT IS BETTER : AIMPLB

The Dalai Lama's suggestion that the Ayodhya issue be resolved through consensus is highly welcome, but there is no harm in waiting for the court verdict, "All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) chairman Maulana S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi said.

In an extensive interaction with Media pointed out that (AIMPLB) was never averse to talks. But talks including two rounds of discussions with the Kanchi Shankaracharya, had not achieved anything and that was why the Board was relying on court verdict.

"Court mein barson se case chal raha hai. Aur thodi baaki rah gayee hai Faisle ke liye intezaar karne mein koi harz nahin honi chahiye. (The case has been going in the court for years. It is only a matter of time. There should be no objections to wait for the court verdict)," he said.

Nadwi pointed out that the matter was taken to court only because the dispute could not be resolved by the two communities. "Court ne abhi tak jitna bhi mehnat kiya hai usko koode mein to nahin dal sakte. (All the efforts of the court cannot be thrown into the dustbin now)" he said.

Pointing out that Islam did not permit construction of mosque on any ordinary site, he said the Board was willing to accept the court verdict irrespective of which way it went.

Reiterating that Muslims in general and the AIMPLB in particular, had never said no to a negotiated resolution of the issue, Nadwi said there was also a question of who represented the Hindu community. "When the Shankaracharya came up with a set of proposals there was such a hue and cry from some sections among Hindus that he withdrew the proposals," he said. However, the Board, on which all Islamic sects and school of thought were represented, was willing to talk with any section if they were conducted on definite and credible proposals.

Admitting that the issue was an emotional one, he said it needed to be handled tactfully and not politicised. "Masle ko samajhdari aur thande dimagh se hal karna chahiye use aise suljhana chahiye ki pooraa qaum use qu bool kare (The issue need to be resolved with tact and equanimity. It has to be resolved in such a way that it is accepted by the entire nation)", he said.

On demands for a uniform civil code, Nadwi pointed out that India was a diverse country and that it would not be right to enforce a uniform code. Pointing out that any government would find it difficult to impose uniform dictary habits or dress code he wondered how a common civil code could be implemented. "Zabardasti karenge kya ? Hukumat koshish karte karte thak jayagi (will they try to implement it by force ?Government will only get tired trying to do so.)"

Moreover, Muslim Personal Law was handed down by Allah Himself. "Kisi ko bhi use badal ne ka haq nahin hai Usme kuch tabdili nahin ho sakti (No one has the right to change that. There can be no amendments to it)," he said.

Welcoming the thaw in Indo-Pak relations, Nadwi said that prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf should take the process forward. If countries in European Union, there should be no difficulty in the two Asian neighbours coming together as European Union, there should be no difficulty in the two Asian neighbours coming together.

Bhai nahin to sahi dosti se to jec sakte hain Beshaq donon mulkon ko zamana majboor karega (If not as brothers, we can at least live as friends. Without doubt time will force the two countries to come together)," he said.

(I.E. 21-01-04)

SINCERITY

S. Sulaiman Nadwi

The distinguishing feature of religion is that it appeals to the heart of man and all its activities, actions and deeds depend upon it. It is the main-spring of our belief, "Ibadat (acts of devotion), ethic, dealings with human beings. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has elucidated this fact in a Hadith :

"Know that in the body there is a bit of flesh; when it is sound the whole body is sound, and when it is corrupt the whole body is corrupt. Know it is the heart."

It is due to soundness of heart that man acts rightly and avoids the wrong. Therefore, the edifice of religion has been built upon it. Islam teaches that there should not be any material selfish motive behind our actions nor they should be for the sake of showing off or winning popularity. So all our actions should be free from all sort of hypocrisy and should be in obedience to the commands of Allah and to please Him. This is called sincerity and devotion to Allah. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was ordained:

"So we have revealed the Scripture unto thee (Muhammad) with truth; so worship Allah, making religion pure for Him (only)." (39:2)

This means that religion and worship should be purely for Allah alone and it does not become us to ascribe partners unto Allah, may these be in the form of stone, heavenly bodies, or any false god of our own lust. Therefore the Holy Quran has said:

"Hast thou seen him who chooseth for his god his own lust? Wouldest thou then be guardian over him?" (25:43)

It is, therefore, an important aspect of the teachings of Islam that all our actions should be free from all sorts of evil thoughts of adoration of any other than Allah. Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was ordained to declare :

Say (O Muhammad): Lo! Am commanded to worship Allah making religion pure for him (only).

And I am commanded to be first those who surrender (unto Him).

Say : Lo! If I should disobey my Lord, I fear the doom of a tremendous day.
(39:11-13)

During the preaching of Islam, the Prophets (peace be upon them) and always been long declaring that what they were doing was not for the sake of getting any worldly or material benefits therefrom but it obedience to the command of Allah :

It was declared in the words of Nuh (Noah) (peace be upon him):

"And I ask of you no wage therefor; my wage is the concern only of the Lord of the worlds." (26:164)

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said :

"Say : Whatever reward I might have asked of you is yours. My reward is the affair of Allah only. He is witness over all things." (34:47)

That is, He is aware of everything. He knows even the intentions of our hearts. He knows that my endeavour is selfless and for His sake only. He said at another place:

"This it is which Allah announceth unto his bondsmen who believe and do good works. Say (O Muhammad unto mankind): I asked of you no fee therefore save lovig kindness among the kinsfolk." (24:23)

That is, Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the greatest benefactor of humanity made selfless efforts not for personal gain but for the welfare of the people. What he desired was that they should fulfil the rights of their near relatives and live amicably.

It has also been said in the Holy Quran :

"Say: I ask of you no reward for this, save that whose will may choose a way unto his Lord." (25:57)

Without sincerity and devotion man's relationship with both Allah and his fellowmen cannot remain correct and intact. Sincerity towards Allah prompt him to whole hearted devotion in worship and weed out of his character whatever trace is there of hypocrisy, greed, selfishness, envy or the desire for reputation or power, while sincerity toward his fellow human beings, lead him to behave in an open and straightforward manner and he does not use or manipulate them for his own purpose and he likes for them which he likes for himself and thus their relations are not straitened.

The Holy Qur'an has related the sotry of the two sons of Adam (peace be upon him), Abel (Habil) and Cain (Qabil) when they offered their offering to God (Abel's being a ram and Cain's being produce of the earth. It was accpeted from one of them, that is from Abel. Cain was enraged; but he concealed his envy until Adam performed pilgrimage, when he said to his brother: I will assuredly slay that. Abel said : Where-

fore ? Cain answered : because of the acceptance of thine offering to the exclusion of mine. Abel replied : God only accepteth from the pious. It is clear that sincerity and whole hearted devotion to Allah are essential features of our 'Ibadat.

Pharaoh and his people would not distinguish between a Prophet and magician. Both of them (Moses and magicians) displayed their wonderful and amazing acts. Although there was no apparent physical difference between the two, the feats of the magicians or sorcerers were a mere magic show and jugglery and tricks or sleight of hand but the act of Moses (peace be upon him) was to bring about a revolution in the moral and spiritual life of the people. The world has long forgotten the feats of the magicians being transitory and for the time being but the miracles of Moses (peace be upon him) gave them a new Shari'ah and infused a new spirit and vigour in the life of the people and created a new state on the new ideology, which existed for a long time.

The word trust or confidence (in Allah) is significant in the terminology of Islam. There is a wrong notion about this world in the minds of a common man. It is so often incorrectly stated that one should no strive, plan or work and simply sit back and let thing take their course in blind resignation to fate or destiny as he has not the power to alter it and what is to happen must occur. There is hardly any grain of truth in it. It is a mere thought of some shallow-minded theologians. ■

Verily, those who live in awe for fear of their Lord, who believe in their Lords, signs (or revelations), who do not ascribe partner to their Lord, who give what they give in charity with their hearts full of fear because they are to return to their Lord; it is these who hasten in all good acts and they are foremost in them. (23:27-61)

FEMALE FOETICIDE THREATENS EXISTENCE OF SOCIETY

Lucknow : Concerned over the skewed sex ratio in the country , leading Muslim clerics and intellectuals said that increasing cases of female foeticide and killing of innocent girls and women for dowry are not only social crimes but a sin and the sooner this practice is abolished the better it would be for the society.

The clerics, speaking at the convention on 'Female foeticide and dowry system', organised by All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) appealed to the people to shun this inhuman act as it would ruin the very existence of the society. They said that change in the mentality of the society can only solve the problem and not mere speeches and sermons.

Speaking at the convention, AIMPLB president Maulana S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi while expressing serious concern over the adverse sex ratio in the country said that there was an urgent need to change the mentality of the society. The sex ratio in any society is based on equity. Any attempt on the part of human beings to disturb this divinely ordained equilibrium, just for their selfish motives, will destroy relationships among the people as well as the society itself", he said.

A noted Islamic scholar, Maulana Khalid Nadwi Ghazipuri, while strongly condemning female foeticide called it a blot on the modern civilisation. "It is painful that as per available data this inhuman and spiteful practice is being resorted to mostly by the people who are educated and belong to financially well off families,": he said.

Social activist and former vice-chancellor of Lucknow University Roop Rekha Verma cited various reports in this regard and said there was a need to create more awareness among the people to get rid of the problem.

(The Times of India)

RESURGENCE OF MUSLIM IS THE GOD'S WILL

S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

The system and functions of the entire universe are ordained by God and are under His direct control. The essential requirement for initiating and promulgation of a pure, pious order of life was that the minds of the target population be uncontaminated and free of any predilections. At the time of emergence of Islam, Rome and Sasanians (present day Iran), both endowed with quality culture, knowledge and wisdom, military power (much akin to USA and USSR of our times). Arabs, bereft of and totally uninitiated to any of such qualities, dwelt in a different territory, in a state of disarray.

This deprivation rendered them as a clean slate upon which original words of advice, guidance and exhortation to positive action, could be inscribed, without having to eradicate too many pre-concieved notions. This coupled with their natural valour and willingness for vigorous actions, marked them out as an ideal repository for a new, righteous way of life. They embraced the divine order, Islam and became the pioneers for its magnificent uprising.

By virtue of untiring devotion and a burning zeal, the Arabs, within a period of two hundred years, became a highly enlightened race and a force to reckon with. So much so, that for over seven hundred years no other nation could consider itself in the world owes its origin and existence to Muslims, specially the Arabs. Genesis of this lofty status lay in a simple and pious way of life.

Complacency precedes decline as a natural phenomenon. The Muslims, ensconsed in a false notion that their status, attained through glorious deeds of their ancestors, would sustain forever, let things drift. As is the law of nature, absence of improvement led to deterioration. As of now, Muslims are one of the most retarded lots as far as education, scientific advancement, social, cultural values, political and military power are concerned. The essence of Islam lies in learning whereas its followers now neglect this aspect to a limit.

The orchestrated efforts of current world powers and media are focused at depriving the Muslim of proper education and block whatever little opportunities are left with them. Media specially concentrate on further degradation of moral and culture of Muslim through meticulously designed programmes. Media all over the globe almost, is controlled by Jews who have a firm grip over the economy also. The basic

and important reason is the total devotion and zest of their youth to educational advancement and acquisition of knowledge.

Our government is based on secularism and as a logical sequence, system of education should be secular. Ground reality is quite something else. Under such an environment, our efforts should be directed to provide at least basic knowledge to the young in a manner which would ingrain in their minds the true message God and teaching of the holy Prophet (PBUH) so that the survival of Islam and righteous mode of life on earth is ensured. As it is, we have not been able to take care of Urdu language, which is a serious matter and should be paid due attention to.

That the world media and literature are going whole hog to present Muslims as a retrograde, destructive and subversive people, while, at the same, time suppressing the noble and virtuous traits, can be gauged to a great extent by two examples. One illustrates a subtle and other a blatant exercise.

A Western writer, in his book, eulogised the deeds and character of holy Prophet (pbuh) describing him (pbuh), as a noble soul yet, side by side, presenting him (pbuh) as a great leader, devoted exclusively to the cause of Arabs. A lay reader would not be in a position to unravel the camouflage designed to pass over the role of prophet (pbuh) as the messenger of truth and peace for the whole world.

The other example is of a blatant attempt to belittle the Muslims. A congregation of Muslims in Calcutta (now Kolkata) actually attended by seven lakhs, was reported in an English daily as consisting of a mere few hundreds.

In fact such gimmicks are a global phenomenon, while there is no media under Muslim control or ownership which could counter such vendetta and also bring before the world the true and real image of Islam.

The rationalists have postulated physical theories for the earthquake which occurred in Gujarat in not too distant past, but a discerning mind would know that basically such a scourge is the expression of God's displeasure. When God designated the man being as his vicegerent on earth, the angels ignorant beyond what had been revealed to them by the Almighty objected, and it was Adam who was gifted with a vast knowledge, by the Creator, at the very outset.

It is the bounded duty of Muslims all over the world, to re-learn the lesson of the original message and the last revelation for leading a life in accordance with God's commandments and along the path marked by his chosen messenger (pbuh). There in lies the one and only way for regaining the lost glory.

Some indications are evident of steps having moved in the right direction. Future action and hope for revival are the responsibility of the coming generations as the present one is on the way out. God helps those who help themselves, in the first instance. ■

INDIAN MEDIA ON THE FOOTPRINTS OF ITS WESTERN COUNTERPART

Nazrul Hafeez Nadwi

Anti- Muslim Propaganda

Indian media generally depends upon Western news agencies particularly for national news, which is shaped in accordance with the pattern of Western news.

One can clearly visualize how Jewish agenda is carried out and the policies of Zionists followed in India by considering this: An article entitled "A for Allah, B for Bandook" published in Hindustan Times (16/01/1997), makes a malicious propaganda against the madrasas of Kashmir by trying to prove them the hubs of terrorism. The story written by a UNI correspondent reveals that Arabic, though a foreign language, is taught in these madrasas and observance of Friday as a holiday instead of Sunday is a step forward towards inculcating a partisan approach and an inclination of students towards terrorism and hatred. He further laments that the previous government had banned these madrasas but the court's decision in their favour has encouraged them to carry on their fanaticism more enthusiastically than before. The Indian governmental as well as the non-governmental sectors are persistently spreading the false message that madrasas are the ISI sponsored agencies. Like the Jews who always ascribed a common misdeed of a Muslim to his religion, the Indian media leaves no stone unturned to project the Muslims as terrorists. As was the attack on Iraq's atomic reactor not termed Jewish terrorism nor were the Irish activities termed Christian terrorism, so was not the demolition of Babri Masjid and the killing of thousands of Muslim in different Indian cities by the Hindu hoodlums and the PAC called as Hindu terrorism.

Indian Media Spreads Licentiousness

Indian media unsparingly spreads sexual immorality in the society by means of films, newspapers and magazines and journals like 'Fantasy' and 'Debonair'. Since independence the Indian film industry has been exactly imitating the Western films

and advocating free sex and illegal sexual relations. Not only the films but also the journals and novels published in hundreds during this period have gradually tried to justify immorality and such novels and magazines, published generally after 1960, used to be supplied secretly to the lower class for they were not according to the taste of the saner section of the society who would hate to read such indecent stuff. The trend changed only when in the name of 'cultural exchange' Western films were imported to utterly spoil the moral taste of the people.

There is no need to wonder over the Indian media's glorification of licentiousness and nudity as all this has its roots in the Hindu religious literature itself.

Kama Shastar (a book of Hindu code of law having religious sanction), written in the 4th century A.D, provides the basic source material for sexual wilderness in Hindu society. A century ago this book was banned in the West. It became available in Britain first in 1962. Its study admitted to be a successful means for leading sexually immature school children to maturity. It mainly teaches how to motivate other's wives for enjoying sex, homogamy, prostitution etc. Not only this but Kama Shastar clearly legitimized exploitation of wealth and woman to the maximum possible extent.

Apart from blue films there are nearly hundred such magazines published from every nook and corner of the country that tatter woman's modesty and chastity and put a question mark on the moral values attached to her. One of these magazines is the Fantasy magazine that has so far easily succeeded in suppressing all voices in favour of human values and morality. Although this magazine is now in the seventh year of its publication, it first came in headlines of newspapers at a time when it published a nude photograph of a girl student who had allegedly been seduced by some photo journalist to give him her pose naked. The editor of the magazine along with the accused photographer was arrested only to be released immediately on bail. Ironically enough, this incident gave rise to a debate in the media whether the arrest of an editor was a step against the freedom of press or a legal action against an illegal practice, but not to show how grave a social offence the act itself was. More surprising is the fact that only a month later a Delhi advocate namely Anjali Kapoor gave her naked photographs to the same magazine to get them published reasoning that she had a right on her own body. Similarly a feminist named Madhu Kishore termed it silly and mere conservative

priesthood to oppose such type of magazines.

Next to the Fantasy is another magazine Debonair which, despite its being a mere obscene stuff, is popular among so called enlightened people.

Besides, there are more than a hundred of such magazines duly registered by the government that throw Indian society headlong into the hell of immorality. Add to all such publications the novels, which according to Arvind Kumar, a research scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, are more dangerous than would excite him to kill his health gradually by making sex by resorting to unnatural ways.

Provoked by the naked pictures and TV films two girl students kidnapped another girl student, raped her and photographed the whole incident to different magazines.

In one of his interviews the Fantasy editor admitted that they would repeatedly receive phone calls of women from various sections of the society and even from the parents of virgin girls offering them to publish their and their daughters' naked photographs so that it would become a permanent source of income for them.

A married woman of Mumbai is very fond of being snapped naked. Her husband feels elevated and takes pride in being the husband of a pretty beautiful woman who exposes her body to others.

A girl student of 21 of Delhi Khalsa College reasons out that when film actresses like Mamta Kulkarni and Puja Bhat are respected in the society given that they present themselves on screen in nude scenes, why then should she not earn fame and fans in a similar way.

Similar arguments are made by a noted journalist like Khushwant Singh.

Dr. J.K. Jain, the owner of Jain TV, says that there is nothing wrong in seeing blue films and nude pictures tirelessly as this will make people get ultimately fed up and put a check to forced rape.

In addition to the indecent films and journals, the obscene literature has led the Indian society into such a hell of immorality where it has indulged in 'spouse swapping', a new curse imported from the West. It didn't end here but India, according to its old custom of one woman for sixteen husbands, is falling headlong into the pit of moral bankruptcy very fast.

How impudent is the following advertisement published in the Fantasy magazine!

My name is Ravindra Mohan. I am an M.A of 25. My wife's name is Sunita. She is 20 years old. We are extraordinarily broadminded. We are fond of seeing nude films and reading obscene magazines. We mutually enjoy talking about sex. Any body who wants to exchange his wife can contact me on the following address.

April 1994 issue of the Fantasy magazine contained seventy such ads and replies of 600 'extraordinarily boardminded' couples. With the result spouse swapping in five star hotels has now become routine of life among the "highly civilized Indians" where there is no restriction of age or relation. A large number of people confessed that they enjoyed sex with their own sisters, cousins, aunts, nieces and even with their daughters. They say that when man is born free and life a limited gift why should then parents create hurdles in the way of their sons and daughters for enjoying life. The India Today correspondent ends this report with the starting statement: After all it is necessarily to be proved that India is the land of Kama Shastar.

Unfortunately, the Muslims, despite being heirs of a complete and perfect code of conduct, seem to be exception to this moral and ethical bankruptcy in the Indian society, instigated by the media and patronized by the government itself in the name of democracy and freedom of people.

The Delhi based monthly Yojna published (in August, 1995), a survey report conduct by Dr. Svita Bakhri, about the impact of TV on the Delhi society. she counts entertainment, increase in the general information of the people and fulfillment of emotional desires among the merits of TV and education and training of bad values, social crime, sexual anarchy, rise in terrorist and disruptive activities and encouragement of hoodlum\$, killers, adulteres by showoing sympathy towards them, among its demerits. While only 33% people thought that TV is good for entertainment, the rest of the people considered it to be responsible for the rise of social and sexual extremism prevailing in the society.

The Delhi based biweekly Da'wat reported that a noted bureaucrat in the central government raped his own daughter. Similarly another Central minister used to enjoy sex with his daughter for a long time. There also came the sad news in the same Da'wat about S.S. Malhotra, a magistrate in the Delhi High Court, who, in the guise of

an investigator into a rape case, molested a woman in his office chamber. Still one more news was published about the arrest of a well-known political activist, Satya Prakash Yadav for killing his 8 year old daughter after rapping her and throwing her dead body near the house of his opponent. Before this dreadful act the same leader had raped two sisters of his house owner.

On September 5, 1996, the daily Qawmi Awaz published a news about the murder of a man named Jang Bahadur Singh. He was murdered by a professional killer who was hired by his own divorced daughter whom he had raped in addition to his own widow daughter – in-law and his niece.

In 1995, the police commissioner of Delhi admitted in his annual report that there was a 24% increase in crime in 1995 as compared to 1994. He also said that only 20% crimes had been registered in the police records while 88% of the guilty had committed crime for the first time in their life.

Looking for the causes of this drastic increase in crime in the Indian society one can easily find that nude films, obscene TV serials, immoral books and magazine, half-naked dances in clubs and hotels, lascivious cinema, posters and pictures, ads provoking lust, 'skin-tight' and 'see-through' dresses worn by women, co-education system, free mixing of women in market places, clubs, colleges, schools and places of entertainment, and use of win and drugs are the main factors responsible, for all such moral and ethical bankruptcy.

Juvenile Delinquency

According to the daily Pioneer, two thousand unmarried girls of Delhi commit abortion every month. In India 40,000 incidents of rape took place during 1996 alone while the victims for fear of disgrace did not register 90% of the total cases. There are languishing in various courts of Delhi as many as 893 rape cases.

According to reports of Delhi police, TV, cable networks and Internet are responsible for the increasing crime among children. Criminal incidents like that of rapping minor girls, eve teasing, kidnapping, stealing etc., are day to day practices of Delhi children. A Pioneer report reveals that in 1993, one hundred and ten youths were arrested from West Delhi of whom 24 were accused of rape, 25 of murder, 27 of attempt to murder, 20 of dacoity and 14 of snatching golden chains. 95% of these

yought belonged to wealthy families.

In 1991, five children were arrested for committing murder. A (Times of India, Nov. 29, 1996) report reveals that 126971 children were imprisoned in Lucknow during 1995.

The Delhi police commissioner of crime furnishes reports every year about increasing crime and compares them with the proceeding report. In one such report the number of cases of bomb blasts, murder, kidnapping, prostitution, trafficking of women and children and rape was collectively 45365 in 1995. It reached to 65000 in 1996. There was an increase of 88% in FIR in two years.

The alarming increase in crime graph in our country can be imagined by considering the 1994-96 report of the National Crime Record Bureau which says that the biggest cities in India in terms of crime were four viz. Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmadabad and Banglaore. Total number of crimes in these four cities was equal to half of the total crimes committed all over the country.

In 1997 the number of incident of rape in official reports was 14998 (only 10% of the actual number), molestation and sexual harassment cases were 70692 while 420 women were killed for dowry. Incident of molestation of minor girl are twice the number of women molested in Delhi. 1996 data show that 88% of such criminals are from the kith and kin of the victims.

A survey report of Jawaharlal University (JNU) shows that 67% of the university girls have been molested at one time or the other, most of them being hostel residents. In 1996 rape of maids and other women by their close relatives witnessed 68% increase in Delhi.

Impact of TV on the Indian Society

The role of television in promoting immorality, juvenile delinquency, adultery, dacoity and other crimes is not any hidden thing. In its official report, the Delhi administration itself admitted that due to dish antenna there was 70% increase in forced rape and adultery. Another such report reveals that excessive and close watching of TV has resulted in epilepsy, obesity and various other disorders in children.

Psychiatrists and psychologists like Dr. Nayna Vohra, Dr. Manuranyan Shay, Dr. Neelam Kumar Vohra. Lt. Col. M.C. Srivastava and Dr. Satish Agarwal agree with

the research that sleeplessness, nervous tension and peevishness in children is due to their excessive watching of TV from a very close distance. In June, 1996 Rinku of Lucknow, a six year old girl, died when she fell from the three storied building while she was trying to imitate a coca cola TV advertisement. Nine years old Piya of Sleempur Delhi died a sudden death when she watched on TV a film actress committing suicide.

According to experts children are the most affected class because they take whatever they watch on TV, as to be true and begin to imitate it.

Australian experts say that radiations emitted from TV effect brain cells. Since children's brain cells cannot tolerate such radiations, their brain gets afflicted and they go on watching TV continuously whatever kind of programme it be.

According to Dr. Ram Manohar and Dr. Naina Vohra, both neurologists, when a person watches TV, the brain cells get affected with light and get highly activated and thus a molecular imbalance is created inside the brain. This may, at times, lead to epilepsy. Such strokes are hard to diagnose as no foam comes out of the patients mouth in such cases. This problem gets detected only at a time when it is usually incurable.

According to a survey there are 5200000 epilepsya patients, three lakhs of whom are the victims of TV.

Dr. Manoranjan says in a report that if the children, habitual of watching TV, are forbidden from excessive watching of TV, they may get easily excited. After this, another report, published in the Indian newspapers, revealed that the Indian people have, now, admitted that there is least difference between what is present on the screen and what happens in the society, and this difference is decreasing day by day. Even the South Delhi Additional Commissioner of Police makes films and TV responsible for glorifying sexuality and violence, and for attracting minor children to crime. He says that the excessive use of violence shown in films makes negative impact on the mentality of new generations. On one hand the younger generation becomes more and more rebellious while on the other any strict law to curb (these sources of rebellion) is absent. He further says that no sooner did the cable TV get widespread popularity than films on sexuality and violence spread to every nook and corner that in turn led innocent lives to get indulged in crime.

We will quote here two examples of course out of numerous, to show now dangerous role films have played in the Indian society.

Influenced by film Baazigar, Danish Qazi, a youth from Mumbai, first made his girl friend write about her suicide and then killed her by pushing her down from the roof of a tall building.

Similarly, after getting influenced by a adventurous scene of film Raghubir, a child killed another child.

Dr. L.K. Bhagat, Delhi psychologist, says that there are only two roles in films that are highlighted the most : While on one hand there is the hero with all good in him, on the other hand there is the villain, an embodiment of evil. The hero kills hundreds and still survives and is praised. The viewers sometimes try to act as their hero does. This gives rise to crime in the society.

Mr. Anil Kalia, Director of a NGO, compares TV addiction with drug addition in so far as the latter's role in giving rise to recantation and rebellion among youth is concerned.

A recently held analysis reveals that cinema has rendered our youth incapable of facing the challenges of life (as they cowardly turn away from the realities of life and continue to live in their own world of fancies).

The Delhi police recently arrested seven young boys for blackmailing and raping a girl. During interrogation all of the seven confessed their guilt and said that they had done it under the influence of a TV film. However, R.K. Tiwari, former Additional commissioner says that parents are equally responsible for their children's disaster.

In June 1996, a Delhi court asked Zee TV, Star TV and Doordharshan (National Channel) to furnish to the court the names of producers, directors and managing directors of their various programmes. The court warned the TV Channels of legal action. All this was done in response to the appeal of Mrs. Nirmla Sharma President Jagriti Mahila Samiti (a feminist organization working for the enlightenment of women). She had accused these channels of spreading immorality and indecency in society, in her interview to The Times of India. ■

EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Before the advent of Islam women were no better than animals. They were exploited and treated like a commercial commodity. They had no right, no privilege and no status in the society. Above all the birth of a female child was thought to be a cause. The holy Quran depicts this fact in a quite sublime way : “When news is brought to one of them of the birth of a female child, his face darkens and he is filled with inward grief” (16:58). It is Islam which raised their position in the society. According to Islam the world and all things in it are valuable, but the most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous woman. At the very outset Islam bestowed great importance to women. The prophet Muhammad manifests the importance of women as follows: “Heaven lies under the feet of mothers”; “Women are the twin-halves of men; “If a girl is born to anyone... and he does not bury her alive nor illtreats her nor discriminates her (favours his son over her), Lord shall grant him the bliss of paradise.” The holy Quran says: “O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty towards God in whom you claim your rights of one another, and towards the wombs that bore you. Lo! God hath been a watcher over you.”(4:1). And again in the Quran: “It is He who created you from a single soul and made his mate of like nature, that he might dwell with her in love.” (7:189)

Needless to add that Islam granted the share of inheritance from parents and other kindreds to women. The following Quranic citation is meaningful in this regard : “unto the men of a family belongeth a share of that which parents and near kindreds leave, and up to women as share of that which parents and near kindreds leave, whether it be little or much – a legal share”. (4:7).

It goes without saying that men and women are alike in the sight of God in

terms of equality in spiritual duties and responsibilities. The holy Quran states that "The believers, men and women are protectors one of another, they enjoy in what is just, and forbid what is evil; they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and Obey Allah and his messenger" on them will Allah pour His mercy, for Allah is exalted in power, wise" (9:71). It further says: "Any one, male or female, who does what is good and is faithful will enter the garden and will not be wronged at all (4:124). "... So their Lord accepted their prayers, (saying: I will not suffer to be lost the work of any of you whether male or female. You proceed one from another..." (3:195)

An American Judge Pierre Crabites has rightly said : "Prophet Muhammad (PBHU) was probably the greatest champion of women's rights the world has ever seen. Islam conferred upon the Muslim life property rights exactly the same as her husband. She is free to dispose and manage her financial assets as he pleases without let or hindrance from her husband."

Despite the above mentioned facts there is a general feeling that Islam is a great impediment for women's progress and prosperity alleging that Islam orders women to observe purdah and not let them allow to take part in outdoor activities. These allegations are quite contrary to the spirit of Islam. It is Islam's

distinction that it placed men and women on equal footing and removed the stigma of wickedness and impurity from women. As regards purdah, it is nothing but a tool of protection of them. Today we see a rise in cases of rape, molestation, eve teasing and a lot of other sexual abuses. No doubt, the main reason of these menaces is nothing but nakedness and immodesty. It is purdah alone which may stop these menaces and provide safety and security to them. That is why Almighty Allah said addressing prophet Muhammad : "O Prophet ! tell thy wives and thy daughters and to women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them when they go abroad. That will be better, so that they may be recognized and not annoyed. Allah is oft forgiving, most merciful." (Al-Ahzab 59)

Strangely, it is generally thought that women's liberation movement began between 19th and 20th century. But the fact is that the last Prophet Muhammad (SWA)

favoured the same 14,00 years ago. Islam bestowed upon women all kinds of rights whether it be social, educational, matrimonial, political or economic. A woman once came to the Prophet and complained: "My father has forced me to marry my cousin in order to raise his own status. The Prophet told her that she was free to dissolve that marriage and choose whoever she wished to marry, she replied : "All right, I concede to my father's choice, but my aim was to let the people know that fathers have no right to interfere in the marriage" (Ahmad).

In this context deliberations of the recently held convention in New Delhi under the banner of Islamic Fiqh Academy (IFA) assume great significance. Amin Usmani General Secretary of IFA has said that it is total injustice to force a girl to marry a boy whom she does not like. In Islam the girl has every right to marry the boy of her choice and her parents can not impose their decision on her. He further said if a girl is forced to marry by her parents or anyone against her wish, she can declare the marriage "null and void."

As regards acquiring knowledge of females, it is the same that of males. The prophet said : "Seeking knowledge is a mandate for every Muslim (male or female).

In this context, it should be noted that even if we have stepped on the threshold of 21th century which is considered the century of science and technology but it seems that we are reverting back to the dark age. In ancient time people buried their female infants alive and today we kill them alive in foeticide itself. This menace has been a common practice these days. It is indeed a heinous act. At this juncture we may recall the admonition of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). When this verse of the holy Quran "For what crime she was killed" (81:9) came. The Prophet along with his companions fanned out into the streets of Mecca imploring people to shun the old practice of female infanticide. Then the Almighty God revealed this verse." We have bestowed the dignity to the children of Adam (17:70). The accusation that Islam is insensitive on gender issue is absolutely wrong and reflect, the ignorance of Quranic dictates and Prophet's sayings. ■

MUSLIM PERSONAL LAW BOARD FOR PRESERVATION OF SHARIAT

Kolkata : Muslim clerics demanded the ouster of controversial Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen from India and called for preservation of the personal Law while opposing the proposal to compulsorily register marriages.

There have been several attacks against the Muslim Personal Law which is not very desirable. Muslims in this country have their own identity and that can only be preserved by the law framed according to the holy Quran, : assistant general secretary of All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), Mohammad Abdur Raheem Quraishi, told a rally organised by the Board and attended by 1.5 lakh people.

Demanding Nasreen's ouster, All India Minority Forum president Idris Ali accused the government of trying to protect her though. "Taslima has not only hurt the sentiments of Muslims, but she has defamed the Indian Constitution. The government should not extend her visa and she should leave the country immediately," Ali said.

Other speakers at the rally emphasised the need to preserve the Shariat law, which, they maintained, could preserve the identity of the Muslims in general.

Nearly 500 delegates from all over the country addressed the open session after the completion of the two-day national seminar organised by the Board after a gap of 23 years in the city.

Quraishi also spoke against compulsory registration of marriages, asserting that by making it compulsory it will create hardship and difficulties for a large section of people.

"There have been some social evils like dowry and process of *talac* (divorce) which do not follow the basic norms of the Islamic law and so the Muslim Personal Law Board is keen to restore the sanctity and integrity of Muslim society," Quraishi said.

(Hindustan Times)

ISLAM'S FORGOTTEN GENIUSES

Jim Al-Khalili

Next year, we will be celebrating the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth, and the 150th of the publication of his "On The Origin of Species," which revolutionized our understanding of biology.

But what if Darwin was beaten to the punch? Approximately 1,000 years before the British naturalist published his theory of evolution, a scientist working in Baghdad was thinking along similar lines.

In the Book of Animals, Abu Uthman al-Jahith (781-869), an intellectual of East African descent, was the first to speculate on the influence of the environment on species. He wrote: "Animals engage in a struggle for existence : for resources, to avoid being eaten and the breed. Environmental factors influence organisms to develop new characteristics to ensure survival, thus transforming into new species. Animals that survive to breed can pass on their successful characteristics to offspring."

There is no doubt that it qualifies as a theory of natural selection – even though the Book of Animals appears to have been based to a large extent on folklore rather than on zoological fact.

Despite the strong feelings Darwin provokes among many Muslims-many Islamic scholars see the Quran as creationist, and so at odds with evolution-it seems astounding that al-Jahith's quote has been largely ignored.

In fact, although popular accounts of the history of science typically show no major advances taking place between the Romans and the Renaissance, al-Jahith's work was part of an astonishing flowering of invention and innovation that took place in the Muslim world, and in Iraq in particular, in the Middle Ages.

This world view, based on a mixture of theology and rational thinking, produced wonderful advances in philosophy, astronomy, medicine and mathematics, in particular the emergence of algebra and trigonometry.

Although the Muslim world equipped for scientific discovery, we can look back to Baghdad and see the origins of the modern scientific method, the world's first physicist and the world's first chemist; advances in surgery and anatomy, the birth of geology and anthropology; not to mention remarkable feats of engineering.

For 700 years, the international language of science was Arabic; and Baghdad, the capital of the mighty Abbasid Empire, was the centre of the intellectual world. The story starts around 813, when the caliph of Baghdad, al-Ma'mun, is said to have had a vivid and life-changing dream. In it, he met the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who instructed him to "seek knowledge and enlightenment".

This was the starting point for a lifelong obsession with science and philosophy. Al-Ma'mun created the famous House of Wisdom, a library, translation house and scientific academy unmatched since the glory days of Alexandria.

The caliph would then recruit some of the greatest names in Arabic science, such as the mathematician al-Khwarizmi and the philosopher al-Kindi. Although many of these thinkers were not Arabs themselves, they conducted their science and wrote their books in Arabic.

In the West, though, they were better known by their Latin names, such as Alkindus, Alhazen, Averroes and Avicenna. The most famous of all was Avicenna (or ibn Sina, to give him his correct name).

Born in Persia in 980, he was a child prodigy who grew up to become one of the world's greatest philosophers and physicians. His great work, the Canon of Medicine, was to remain the standard medical text both in the Islamic and Christian worlds until well into the 17th century.

He is credited with the discovery and explanation of contagious diseases and the first correct description of the anatomy of the human eye. As a philosopher, Avicenna is referred to as the Aristotle of Islam; as a physician, he is its Galen.

Indeed, it would not be inappropriate to refer to Aristotle and Galen as the Avicennas of the Greeks. My favourite of all the Abbasid scientists, however, is another Persian scholar by the name of al-Biruni.

Here was a polymath with a free-ranging and formidable intellect: not only did he make significant breakthroughs as a philosopher, mathematician and astronomer, but he also left his mark as a theologian, encyclopaedist, linguist, historian, geographer, pharmacist and physician.

Famously, having developed the mathematics of trigonometry, he was able to measure the circumference of the Earth to within a few miles. The only other figure in history whose legacy rivals the scope of al-Biruni's scholarship would be Leonardo da Vinci. So what went wrong?

What brought to an end this golden age of Abbasid and Arabic science? The

standard answer is that the ending came suddenly, in 1258, when the Mongols ransacked Baghdad. During the occupation, a large number of the books in the House of Wisdom were destroyed.

But Baghdad was by this time far from the only centre of scholarship in the Arabic speaking world- and wonderful advances continued to be made in Cairo and Cordoba right up to the European Renaissance in the 15th century.

There is also an argument that the decline was due to a change in attitude of the Islamic world towards science. This was primarily a consequence of the work of the 11th century scholar and theologian al-Ghazali, who famously criticized Muslim scientists for their over-reliance on the philosophy of the ancient Greeks.

Yet this, too, cannot be the whole story. Al-Ghazali was primarily attacking a theological viewpoint that relied on ideas he deemed anti-Islamic. Hard science should not have been so affected by this more metaphysical dispute.

The real decline had much more to do with a weakening of the power of the caliphate as a whole, of which the Mongol invasion was merely one symptom.

By the end of the 11th century, Baghdad had lost control over much of its empire, and weaker caliphs were simply less inclined to encourage and finance scientific scholarship. But, just as the golden age of Arabic science began with the translation of the great Greek texts of Aristotle, Euclid and Ptolemy, so was the work of the Arabic scholars transferred to Europe.

For example, al-Jahith's Book of Animals was a major influence on Arab scholars of the 11th to 14th centuries, and the Latin translations of their work in turn became known to Charles Darwin's predecessors, Linnaeus, Buffon and Lamarck.

By the 16th century, while scientific and technological progress continued to be made at a gentler pace in the Muslim world under Persian and Ottoman rule, the European Renaissance was well under way.

The mystery is why the debt the West owed to Muslim scholars was then overlooked: acknowledged at all, the Abbasids are normally credited with nothing more than acting as the guardians of Greek science.

In a world of increasing religious tension, the untold story of Arabic science is a timely reminder of the debt the West owes to the Muslim world- and, perhaps more importantly, of the proud heritage today's Muslims should acknowledge. ■

THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD FROM THE ARAB WORLD

Because of its characteristics, its situations, and its political importance the Arab World has the right and the necessary competence to shoulder the responsibilities of the mission of Islam. It can easily take up the leadership of the entire Muslim World, strengthen itself to look at Europe in the face, and by the grace of God and the strength of its faith, acquire supremacy over it, and lead the world once again from darkness to light, from wretchedness to grace, from destruction and ruin to peace and prosperity. In the words of the Muslim messenger to the court of Xerxes it could once again "lead men from the worship of Man to the worship of God, from the narrowing trivialities of life to the expanse of faith, from the injustices of creeds to the justice and equality of Islam".

The whole world is looking towards the Muslims as its saviour and the Muslim World to the Arabs for guidance and leadership. Can the Muslim world fulfil the expectations of the world? Can the Arab World rise to the occasion? For long a bruised and maimed humanity has been crying, in the words of Iqbal, for succour, still believing that the hands that built the Ka'ba can build humanity again :

"Thou art the custodian, the trustee of the Eternal Order.

Thou art the right and left flank of the Lord of the Universe:

Oh! thou creature of dust, thou art the Time and thou art the Earth.

Drinking the wine of conviction and get away from the tavern of uncertainty.

Wake up ! wake up ! from thy deep slumber

From thy deep slumber, awake, from thy deep slumber, awake, awake.

From thy deep slumber, from the deep slumber awake.

I cry mercy from the wantonness of Europe.

I cry mercy from the Sheerins and Purvazes of Europe.

The world has become dissolute by the despoilation of Europe.

O! thou builder of the Ka'ba, arise and build a new world again."

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

STRIVE FOR SUCCESS

Ms. Umatul Mo'amen

Islam is a precious treasure sent for the dwellers of earth. If only humanity realize the veracity of its truth that it abounds in, they will never to astray. What is the state of individual in today's world? How and what does he seek? Has he succeeded on this planet earth? Let's find answers to these probing questions in the light of the Holy Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

What is success? The achievement of a desired end, is the meaning that one finds in a dictionary. Human being is born with endless desires – the root cause of all miseries. The desire to be successful in every aspect of life is deeprooted in each individual. Some people desire for wealth, and if they achieve, it is success to them. What does the Qur'an say of those who amass wealth? In Surah Al-Humazah Allah says: "Who pileth up wealth and layeth it by, thinking that his wealth would make him last for ever! By no means ! He will be sure to be thrown into that which breaks to pieces." (104:2-4)

While there are some others who feel what they say or do is right, and their principles put together, should unquestionably be accepted. This sense of pride prevents them for considering the values of others. Have they forgotten the words of others. Have they forgotten the words of the Almighty Allah in Surah Al-Imran, when He says : "And believe no one except the one who follows your religion. Say : O Muhammad (pbuh)! Verily right guidance is the Guidance of Allah and do not believe that anyone can receive like that which you have received" [3:75]

Take, for example, the case of an ordinary housewife. If she is blessed with something better than her neighbours or friends, she prides herself in its glory. More often than not, wherever women gather, the topics of discussion is focused on clothes, jewels, etc. How much wealth has one accumulated? How much greater is one's husband than the other? How many people bragging about their excellence unquestioned. Rarely does one come across thanking the Almighty Allah for His bounties. Aside, there are some disgruntled lots among them who resort to all possible means (haram

or halal) to equal or harm the other. Allah says in Surah Al Kahf: "Your riches and your children may be but a trial : Where as Allah, with Him is the highest Reward." (64:15)

I have cited only a few examples, however, the list is unending. Excellence is no more than a bubble that appears and vanishes with time. It is precisely the pride that makes one host of his/her greatness, and is precisely what made Satan the rejected, rebel against the Al-mighty Allah.

Such are the people who think are the successful ones in life. If a believer in Islam considers this a success, he is certainly wrong. He has failed to realize the purpose of man's creation. Allah says : "Nothing is the life of this world but play and amusement. But best is the home in the Hereafter, for those who are righteous. Will you not then understand." (6:32)

However, it does mean that one has to renounce the world and lead a monastic life. Islam is against monasticism. Allah says: "Then, in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our messengers: We sent after them Jesus son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and Mercy, but the Manasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribed for them: (We commanded) only the seeking for the good pleasure of Allah; but that they did not foster as they should have done." (57:27)

It is clear from this Ayah that Allah does not advocate monasticism. But He certainly requires that men shall return to the Path which leads to His good pleasure. But that does not mean gloomy lives, or perpetual and formal prayers in isolation. Allah required that His servants earn their livelihood, get married, raise children, maintain his family with the basic needs, educate and bring up children in the Islamic way. Allah's service is done through pure lives in the turmoil of this world.

Then what is success and how to achieve it? Successful are those blessed in the Hereafter. That is the only success that humanity should hope for in the light of the Holy Quran. Allah says: "Every soul shall have a taste of death: and only on the Day of Judgement shall you be paid your full recompense. Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have succeeded: for the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception." (3:185)

The first step to success is the fear of Almighty Allah and total submission to His will. A believer should first develop taqwa (God consciousness or fear of God), which control all his activities. How many of us do really possess taqwa? How many of us have really submitted to His will?

We come across Ahadith, where even Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) has wept in his prayer fearing Allah. So if one wants to be successful in the present and Hereafter, he has to abide by the command of Allah. Allah says in Surah Al Maidah : "So fear Allah, O men of understanding, in order that you may be successful."

In brief, the only option open to us to attain eternal success is to abide by and follow the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). There is no choice in Islam when it comes to discharging one's duty ordained by the Almighty. To be selective – acceptance and rejection of religious duties – according to one's convenience is considered to be a loss. Allah has clearly stated: "Then is it only a part of the Book that you believe in, and do you reject the rest? But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this, but disgrace in this life? And on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous chastisement for Allah is not unmindful of what you do."(2:85)

Thus, the path to success begins with the performance of the righteous deeds, pleasing to Allah. The intentions while doing such deeds must be totally for the sake of Allah, without any pomp or fame. Every believer should ensure, his acts is with Ikhlas and acceptable to Allah. This righteous conduct of a believer would be a source of admiration to the non-believer, which in turn would influence him to step into the fold of Islam. Insha' Allah. ■

"A man came to the Prophet and asked him about the best knowledge. The Messenger (pbuh) replied that it was 'knowledge of Allah'. The man then asked about the best action, and the Prophet (pbuh) said it was 'knowledge of Allah.' Upon wondering about the identical reply, the Prophet (pbuh) explained to the man: 'Little action is beneficial with knowledge while ample action is not beneficial with ignorance.'"

Great Man-Made River

Libya has Made 8th Wonder of the Modern World' Possible

Khushthar Jamal

Libya has built almost the eighth wonder of the world' by extracting the water from its under-desert aquifers and taking them to its cities on the coast.

By the year 1980, the first phase of Libya's greatest manmade river (GMR) was in full operation. It took water from an underground natural reservoir to the coast through a 1,900 kms long pipeline.

Most of Libya's 40 lakh people live along the coast. Growing numbers and the need to expand agriculture had put a strain on its water supply.

Initially water was taken in from the Sarir and Tazeboo fields. From their twin pipes will take the water by gravity to the reservoir Ajdabjya and from there by single pipes to Sirte and Benghazi. The pipeline is planned to carry two million square metres of water per day to provide for domestic, industrial purposes and to irrigate vast tracts of desert land in order to turn it into a fertile land.

Future phase of the GMR will involve taking water from the Fezzan field to Tripoli. There are plans to extend the pipeline into the Kufra, and also to link Tbruk with Ajdabjya.

Libya scientists state that the underground reservoir is being constantly replenished by rainfall and underground seepage. Other geologists state that the water originated at a time, when this area was much wetter and that is about 30,000 years ago, before desertification set in. Tests also show that the rate of replenishment of the water may be less than its extraction.

There are also suggestions that the depth of water increases as pumping goes on. There are also apprehensions that water late of neighboring countries of Egypt and Sudan would dip as Libya sucks out the water.

By 1996, when the water began to be used for garden and home of Libya, the Great Man Made River Project had reached on of its final stages. Leader of American Blacks Louis Farrakhan, who took part in the opening ceremony of this important state of the project, described the Great Man-Made River as "another miracle in the desert".

The Great Man-Made River, as the largest water transport project ever undertaken, has been described as the "eight wonder of the world." It carries more than five million cubic meters of water per day across the desert to coast areas, vastly increasing the amount of arable land. The total cost of the huge project is expected to exceed \$25 billion.

(Islamic Voice)