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Academy of Journalism and Publicity
Nadwatul Ulama
Post Box No. 93, Tagore Marg,
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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Wisdom of Qur' an

And fulfill Allah's covenant when you have entered into it, and break not the oaths after their confirmation, when you have declared Allah your surety. Surely, Allah knows what you do.

(Surah-Al-Nahal-91)

Commentary:

The addition of the words, "after their confirmation" is to exclude commonly blurted words of oath such as, "by Allah," "I swear", etc. These are not oaths (Au.).

There is no contradiction between this verse and the report in Muslim which says, "There is no oath in Islam, and there is no oath of the pre-Islamic times but Islam reinforces it." What is meant is that there is no need for the people to enter into oaths (and promise that they will remain good), as they did in pre-Islamic times. Now, with the declaration of faith in Islam, (one is in any case required to lead a virtuous life). The meaning of the second part of the hadith is that Islam reinforces everything that was good in pre-Islamic times. Ahmed reports that when the people began to abandon Yezid b. Mu'awiyah, Ibn 'Umar gathered his family members in his house and told them, "We have entered into allegiance with this man in the name of Allah and his Messenger. And I have heard the Prophet (SAW) say that whoever betrays his allegiances and oaths will have a flag hoisted next to him and said, 'This is the betrayal of so and so.' And the worst of betrayal of oaths would be - after association with Allah - that one should back off after having taken oath on Allah and His Messenger. Therefore, let none of you do it now, or let him have nothing to do with me" (Ibn Kathir).

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Abu Saeed Khudri relates that he heard the Apostle of God say: "The (best) way for a faithful Believer to wear the Tahbund is that it extends up to the middle of the calves, and it also, is not sinful if it extends up to the ankles, but in case it is lower (than that) then he is in Hell i.e., he is going to end up there in Futurity. The narrator tells that the Apostle of God said it thrice, and, then remarked: "God will not even look at him, (on the Day of Resurrection), who will walk dragging his Tahbund along the ground on account of conceit."

Commentary:

In the aforesaid Tradition, a dreadful admonition has been administered to those who show under pride through their clothes. On the Day of Final Requit, when everyone will be pathetically aspiring for a benevolent glance from the All-Merciful. And in dire need of it, the Lord will not even care to look at such men.

Hazrat Abu Saeed Khudri's report, further, tells that the right thing for a truthful Believer is that his Tahbund does not reach below the middle of the calves, and it is, also, permissible if it goes down up to the ankles. It must, anyhow, not be lower which is a grave sin and the chastisement of Hell awaits the erring bondsman who behaves like that. The warning, nevertheless, will hold good only when it is done out of haughtiness and vainglory.

Editor's Note:

Venomous Communalism

Historians of modern India are certainly perplexed in interpreting the political upheaval through which the country is passing through. In the last century India had produced a Gandhi who is considered an apostle of peace and religious harmony. A Gandhi whose morning prayer started with '*Suratul fateha*' which after praising the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds concludes with the Submission "Show us the straight way. The way of those on whom Thou has bestowed, Thy Grace. Those whose (portion) is not wrath. And who go not astray" (S.1 A6-7 of the Quran). Now after post Babri mosque demolition and empowerment of right wing political parties scenario has changed. Latest hate speech of a BJP candidate for parliament from Pilibhit, Varun Gandhi as reported in the Hindu was couched in language so rude and so violent that it has made hardened, communalist blush. His diatribe against the Muslim community, flowing with concentrated poison and punctuated with virtually unprintable remarks, was appalling more so because it emerged from a great grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi.

Where this tirade against Muslims will lead to? In a democratic and secular country where all citizens have equal rights any discrimination against any community or section of people should not only be condemned but curbed with all the authority at the command of the state. No doubt there is a global conspiracy against Islam but in India which is known for its tolerance, accommodation, amity and warmth positive steps are needed to contain fissiparous and divisive activities.

Dominion of God

After genocide in Gujrat, attacks on Madrasas branding Muslims as terrorists now Sangh Parivar has raised another bogie of dominion. Indian Muslims have been asked to explain which of the term Darul Islam, Darul Harb (Abode of war) and Darul Aman (Abode of peace) is applicable to India. Ignorant of Muslim jurisprudence, naive of the basics of Islam, no explanation is sufficient enough to cool them down. However for academic interest we reproduce below extract of an article of Mr.A.M. Khan which has appeared in the latest issue of "Covert":

The Casuistic debate over Muslim jurisprudential terms like Darul Islam [Abode of Islam], Darul Harb [Abode of War] and Darul Aman [Abode of Peace] regarding which of these terms is applicable to India, has generated more heat than light in newspaper columns.

It is true that these terms were coined by Muslim jurists during the Abbasi period and became part of the text of Muslim law, but they find no sanction either in the Quran or the Prophetic traditions. On the contrary, the Quran asserts that in God's dispensation all mankind are one people and the whole earth is their shared dwelling place.

The Quran holds that "Unto Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth and enough is Allah to carry through all affairs[4.132]." The position that the whole world -- regardless of the fact that different parts of it are controlled by different groups of people -- ultimately constitutes "one dominion of God" is asserted in more than 35 verses of the Quran.

A Prophetic tradition holding that “the whole earth has been made a masjid [place of worship] and a tahoor [source of purification in the event of not-availability of water], therefore anyone of my followers can pray wherever the time of a prayer is due” further highlights the sanctity of the whole world as a place of worship and source of purification.

In fact, the Quran does not view certain parts of the world as abodes of belief or disbelief, but considers the whole of worldly life as consisting of tests and trials of the endowments that each and every individual has been blessed with. Since each individual has been endowed differently, his or her test is not the same, but relates to what one possesses.

The Quran categorically declares: “To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If Allah had so willed He would have made you a single people but [His plan is] to test you in what He has given you: so compete as in a race in all virtues, The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you dispute [5.48].” In another verse, the Quran says, “It is He who has made you [His] agents inheritors of the earth: He has raised you in ranks some above others: that he may try you in the gifts He has given you [6.165].”

It is clear from these verses that the diversity of belief and its various expressions in no way defy the divine will and purpose. Instead, the Quran says, “For every people there is a direction to which they face [in their prayers]. So hasten towards all that is good [2.148].”

THE CONCEPTS OF ABODES of Belief, Disbelief etc., are essentially rooted in human arrogance where a group of people view themselves as the “chosen people of God”, and assume the role of enforcing what they perceive to be the Will of God. This attitude itself is repugnant to the Quran which makes a categorical declaration that “If it had been the Lord’s Will they would all have believed all who are on earth! Will you then compel mankind against their will to believe? [10.99]”

The Quran does not divide worldly life into Darul Islam or Darul Kufr. Yes, it can be described as Darul Ibtala [Abode of Trial] as the Quran says that “He Who created Death and Life, that may try which of you is best in deed [67.2]”

SA

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Jigar Moradabadi

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The era of Ghalib and Momin, based on traditional ghazal, in line with sublime ideas of Persian culture saw a renaissance and culmination with Jigar and Hasrat Mohani. In the final analysis it was Jigar who was crowned as Malik-ush-Shoara (monarch among poets) by the literary circles of Indo-Pak sub-continent. Any mushaira (poetic symposium) would be deemed incomplete without Jigar. Lucknow, a hub of Urdu language and literature resounded with his name and fame. Shaukat Thanvi, in his characteristic humour announced: Ek duniya ki duniya Jigar ki mareez thhee (a whole world was afflicted in liver).

From Gonda (where he lived) Jigar's frequent visits to Lucknow, initially for participation in mushairas, subsequently included broadcasting of his recitation from the All India Radio on its opening of Lucknow Radio Station, with a host of connoisseurs of poetic excellence, he was extremely popular. In Lucknow he generally was a guest of Saif-ud-daulah Hisam-ul-Mulk Nawab Syed Ali Hasan Khan, the Youngest son of Walajah Amir-ul-Mulk Nawab Syed Siddiq Hasan Khan (erstwhile doyen of Bhopal State), at Bhopal House Lalbagh. Hisam-ul-Mulk was not only a poet of sorts but possessed a deep insight into and grasp over the subject. One of his sons Nawabzada Syed Shams-ul-Hasan Khan Shams BALLB(Alig), was then a young poet with a sober, dignified style. His works were published in "Al-Maarif" (magazine from Azamgarh Which in itself is a mark of authenticity. The affection and efforts of these two noble persons was conducive to Jigar opting to stay at Bhopal House.

I come from a household abounding in literary persons not averse to participation in mushairas and in which a book titled Tazkira-I-Gule Raana was authored. Yet I could participate (as part of the audience) in just one symposium. The reason was my natural inability to keep late nights, which deprived me of several interesting and devotional activities. That one mushaira in which I could be present, was at Murshidabad Palace Golaganj, presided over by Nawab Jafar Ali Khan Asar and graced by Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi. All said and done, I had no occasion to even see Jigar before partition of the country. One instance lingers in my

memory: Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, along with Maulana Abdul Bari Nadvi, was staying in the guest house at Nadwa when Nawab Shams-ul-Hasan Khan came visiting. Conversation turned to Jigar who at the time was at Bhopal House and had recently vowed to shun alcoholism. The Nawab narrated that Josh (Malihabadi) had taken Jigar from Bhopal House the previous day and given him company. Jigar could not help violating his vow, but upon return shut himself up and wept inconsolably. Maulana Abdul Bari, an expert in philosophy and mysticism besides a refined literary taste, remarked- *malum hota hia jigar kharab hai, dil acha hai* (seems it is a case of ailing liver but a healthy heart).

The above instance succinctly sums up the make up of Jigar's personality. He was endowed with a pure heart and it is not clear how he took to alcoholism, to begin with. This was a life-long tussle, abstinence against temptation and he would quote from poet Insha:

*Laga ke barf mein saqi surahi-i-mai la,
jigar ki aag bujhe jisse woh shae la.*

(A chilled goblet! I beseech the Ganymede, to quench the inner conflagration)

The qualities of heart bolstered by his inheritance and benign disposition never did desert him. Another factor, not too well known apart from his close associates, was his spiritual allegiance to Qazi Abdul Ghani Manglori, embraced at the instance of his senior friend and mentor Asghar Gondvi. Qazi Abdul Ghani was the spiritual tutelage of Sheikh Mohammad Thanvi, who in his younger days had vowed allegiance to Hazrat Syed Ahmad Shaheed, but in reality owed his spiritual development to Miyanjee Noor Mohammad Jhanjhanvi. Miyanjee was the mentor of Haji Imdad-ul- lah Mahajir Makki. The linkage still persists in Arab and Iranian domains. This spiritual heritage brought about a metamorphosis and guided jigar from addiction towards abstinence. Soon he could address his erstwhile associates, particularly Josh Malihabadi thus:

*Tu jahan aaj se pehle that vaheen aaj bhee hai,
Dekh rindan-I-khush anfaas kahan tak pahunchhe.*

(You stagnate at the same spot; behold the progress of those of pure soul)

The common belief that abstinence from bubbly douses the flames of passion and dulls the poetic radiance, is given the lie in case of Jigar. At the same time his life and poetry are undeniable testimony to the metamorphosis. A juxtaposition of Shola-I-Toor and Aatash-I-Gul (the two compilations of his works of different eras), brings out the fact that earlier his inspiration was from intoxication while subsequently it sprang from the inexhaustible resources, that is purity of heart and soul. He could ultimately synchronise with Khwaja Mir Dard:

*Jaaiye kis vaste ai Dard maikhane ke beech,
Kuchh ajab masti hai apne dil ke paimane ke beech.*

(Need one venture into pub when intoxication already saturates his innerself?)

Above narration may be a bit of a detour. I already had occasion to come in contact with some renowned poets. At Lahore were Iqbal, Zafar Ali Khan, Hafeez Jalandhari, Akhtar Sheerani. I met Khwaja Aziz-ul-Hasan Majzoob, but Jigar eluded me. He did once visit Raebareli, but I was at Lucknow. My maternal cousin, Maulvi Syed Abul Khair Barq and some other young men, arranged his visit to our ancestral abode Daera Shah Ilmullah. This was probably in 1930 when Jigar was in business of spectacles and the visit was in that context.

Beginning of my association with Jigar almost coincides with country's freedom. The events culminating into partition and the ensuing turmoil, inevitably impinged upon the sensitivities of a poetic mind and heart. He had the moral courage to express his feelings unabashedly. The presence of government officials, in mushairas organized under govt. aegis, either at Safed Baradari Lucknow or on Independence Day, would not deter him. It was the force of his character or the spell of poetic excellence that his subtle yet unminced slant was tolerated, even eulogized.

*Chaman chaman he nahin jis ke goshe' goshe' mein,
Kaheen bahar aye kaheen na aye.
Ye maikade kee saqigari kee hai tauheen,
Koi jaam bakaf, koi sharmsaar aye.
Khuloos-o-himmat-I-ahle chaman pe mauquf hai,
Ki shaakh-I-khushk mein bhi phir se barg-o-baar aye.*

(A patchy spring becomes not a garden; some emerging satiated some deprived, is a slur upon the tavern, the beneficent; it takes sincerity and stolidity for inmates to rejuvenate the withered bough.)

To my way of thinking, the following two couplets also underscore the same situation of yawning gap between proclamation and implementation.

*Bahama zauq-I-agahi, haai re past-I-bashar,
Saare jahan ka jaeza apne Jahan se bekhabar.
Shorsh-I-dard alaman gardish-I-dahr alhazar.
Bahke huye qafle sahmi huee see rahguzar.*

(Alas, the decay of human despite full sense of wisdom, surveillance of the whole world, unaware of self. Beware the excruciating ache, the churning globe, caravans adrift, awestruck routes.)

A poet, overstepping the camouflage of sublimity, would become more of a preacher, a censor of politician. Jigar being all too well conversant with this cardinal principle would never attempt a trespass.

The partition of the country gave vent to his religious, Islamic, sense of respect. Several years had elapsed since he abandoned his wayward style and developed propinquity to pious. Learned society, though not to orthodox preachers or censors. He believed firmly that the service to Islam and Muslims should to be made a profession but perfumed with self-less devotion and that the person taking up the cause should be endowed with literary and poetic perception and awareness.

I was introduced to Jigar by Syed Ali Azad Fatehpuri whose character, more than his poetic accomplishment, was valued greatly by Jigar. Azad arranged a sitting and introduced Maulana Manzoor and me to Jigar, who extended utmost courtesy to us and also recited some of his poems. May be this impromptu gesture emanated from the fact that all of us owed spiritual allegiance to the same seers, Miyanji Noor Mohammad (Chishtia) and Hazrat Syed Ahmad Shaheed (Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi). This sitting proved a harbinger of not only a series of get together, where Jigar would regale us with his poems, but a lasting association. Jigar gave some of his works for publication in Al-Furqan(magazine published under the guidance of Maulana Manzoor Nomani).

At my behest a conference of erudite, learned men, belonging to various schools of thought and jurisprudence, was convened at Nadwatul-

Ulama Lucknow. Jigar also joined in. The aim was to work out an action plan for the Muslims after deliberating upon the near-chaotic conditions obtaining in the country. I read out my essay presenting a realistic assessment of the situation and impending perils. Jigar was so influenced that he could not help voicing his sentiments and desired an encore. (The essay has since appeared in print, more than once, under the title *Nishan-I-Raah*.) An organization for propagation of Islamic message and its implications was founded then and there, with an appeal for contributions. Jigar came forward with an unrevealed amount on the spot, proving that here was a poet who would not just solicit remunerations for reciting his poems but had heart to dole out for a worthy cause. (Maulvi Manzoor later revealed that Jigar had donated one thousand rupees.)

That day on, Jigar endeavoured to be with me at the earliest on his visit to Lucknow and came down to Tablighi Markaz (Center for Preaching) or the guest house at Nadwa. At other places and among other people a request for recitation would make him lose his cool and even some highly placed persons and officers had borne the brunt. However with me he was quite indulgent and condescending to a degree. By and large, a poet on being requested to recite a particular poem or poems of his, takes exception that the listener considers only these poems worthy of attention. But in my case Jigar made a concession, without as much as a demur and acceded to my request, the fact that for a poet with incessant in flow of rich, sublime ideas, this could have been a sacrifice and mentally taxing, notwithstanding.

One of the reasons for being enamored of Jigar was that his poems depicted my own feelings, since a person like me, bereft of poetic acumen, had no means to scale the heights of eloquence and style. I have, earlier, written in the same vein about Iqbal. In fact it is a human trait which makes on to be obsessed of his own personality and pursue his own image wherever discernable.

I could sense some features in Jigar's art, which if not extinct, are rare in most other cases. An outstanding exception is Iqbal, of course. The features may be summed up as effulgent style, variety and novelty of thoughts, lofty ideas, self-respect, eschewing hackneyed traditions of literature and society. The approach may be classified as benign revolt,

selflessness, elevation of status of human being, forbidden hopes but search unabated. A poem recited on several occasions by Jigar still echos, consonant with the turmoil in his soul besides incorporating his self-respect and nobility of character.

*Jab tak gham-I-insaan se Jigār, insane ka dil ma'moor nahin,
Juz zauq-I-talab juz shauq-I-safar kuchh aur hamen manzoor nahin
Ai ishq bata ab kiya hoga kehte hain ki manzil door nahin
Waez ka har irshad baja tagreer bahut dilchasp magar,
Ankhon mein suroor-I-ishq naheen chehre pe yqeen ka noor naheen.
Main zakhm bhi khata jata hoon qatil se bhi kahta jata hoon,
Tauheeen hai dast-o-bazoo ki who vaar ke jo bharpoor nahin.
Is nafa-o-zarar ki dunya se main ne yeh liya hai dars-I-junoon,
Arbad-I-sitam ki khidmat mein itni see guzarish hai meri,
Dunya se qayamat door sahi dunya ki qayamat door naheen.*

(Human is he not who feels not humans, Heaven this world may be yet not distant from hell; I crave nought but the pinnin and journey, dreading the culminating of journey and nearing of destination; Every utterance of the preacher is true, oration entrancing, yet eyes sans euphoria of love visage sans radiance of faith; Bludgeoning blows I bear, yet chide the assassin, ineffective strike is an insult to his prowess; conclude I in this world of profit and loss, own loss I would bear but harm none; Beseech I before the marauders, world is far from doom, world's doom is nigh.)

Another poem which Jigar recited on my request begins with the following couplet:

*Allah agar taufeeq na de insaan ke bas ka kam nahin,
Faizan-I-mohabbat aam sahi irfan-I-mohabbat aam nahin.*

(Human is helpless but with God's will, dispensation of effection galore, discernment of effection rare).

For the complete ghazal (poem), compilation 'Atish—I-Gul' can be referred to but two couplets in step with Hafiz and Roomi, moulded into characterstic delicacy of Urdu, are presented.

*Aana hai jo bazm-I-janan mein pindar-I-khudi ko chhor ke aa.
Aye hosh-o-khirad ke deevane yan hosh-o-khirad ka kam nahin.
Peene ko to sab peete hain Jigar maikhan-I-fitrat mein lekin,
Mahroom-I-nigha-I-saqi hai woh rind jo durd aasham naheen.*

(Shun ego venture then into beloved's precincts, O! thou stickler for intellect and senses, here they worth naught; All partake of the bounties in nature's tavern, he that imbibes not the last drop does not catch the eye of the beneficent.)

A third poem, in small couplets, enchants me perennially and is soul stirring.

Koi keh de gulshan gulshan, lakh balaen ek nashaiman.

Kamil rahbar qatil rahzan, dil sa dost na dil sa dushman.

Ishq hai pyare khel nahin hai, Ishq hai kaare sheesha-o-aahan.

(Accomplished leader, lethal dacoit, Peerless friend, unique foe, the heart; Love is no joke, A clang of steel and glass.)

The first couplet was quoted by me during several serious discussions to make my point.

A fourth ghazal brims over with facts which transcend the frontiers of poetry and foray into the realm of history and philosophy. An exposition of each verse could run into a volume. The opening couplet

Who sabza nang-I-chaman hai jo lahlaha na sake,

Who gul hai zakhm -I-baharan jo muskara na sake.

(The greenery that fails to flourish is a slur to the pasture, Flower not blooming is a gaping wound on the spring.)

Another couplet of the same poem is a depiction of the decadence and ascent of a human being, depending on ones own mental build up.

Ghate agar to bus ek musht-e-khak hai insane,

Badhe to was'at-I-kaunain mein sama na sake.

(Lets fall, and shrinks to afistful of dust, endeavour and transcends the limits of universe and beyond)

I had addressed a congregation, comprising several educated persons, non-Muslims also at Gonda, on the subject of "martaba-I-insaniyat aur insaan ka sharf-o-bulandi" (status of human being and prestige of humantty). At the end of the function Jigar quoted his above mentioned couplet saying that it encompasses the complete topic of my speech.

My rapport with Jigar got thicker by the day and his overbearing demeanour often embarrassed me. The only reason I could figure out was our common spiritual linkage, mentioned in some preceding lines. It was probably January 1960 that I had to stay overnight at Gonda on a return journey from Basti. Jigar was ostensibly pleased and afforded me utmost

comfort. I happened to step out my room during the night and found Jigar bowing with folded hands right at the door, offering me something. His countenance clearly indicated that any trepidation on my part could disappoint, even offend his feelings. He seemed on the verge of breaking into tears. I had no go except accepting his offer and found that it was an amount between fifty and hundred rupees.

This was not the solitary instance when I had to go through such trials as Jigar would donate continually for Nadwa and once sent one thousand rupees through Maulana Manzoor Nomani. The attitude was an undeniable evidence that he derived more pleasure in giving than in receiving. I could never have an opportunity to reciprocate and waited only in vain.

One instance proved an object lesson and put me to shame no end, leading me to infer that he was heads and shoulders above those self-proclaimed preachers who hardly practice what they say. Jigar, accompanied by his better half, embarked upon a pilgrimage for Hajj in 1953, from Gonda. I had perchance joined him at Lucknow, to accompany an acquaintance-pupil, who was to perform Hajj as proxy for someone else. My programme was upto Bombay. Jigar as his expenses were borne by the person on whose behalf he had undertaken the pilgrimage. During the journey the pupil had to come upto me for some purpose and Jigar could figure out that despite being with me, he had to travel in the lower class, which he felt, was not proper, Jigar forthwith got his ticket converted to second class. Realization that this should have been my duty, raised his stature higher and lowered mine, in my own estimation.

Jigar had developed a deep devotion to Maulana Abdul Qadir Raipuri of whom Azad, Maulana Manzoor and myself were avowed devotees. On Azad's initiative he visited Raipur and also Murree Hills(Pakistan) in my presence and recited some of his poems. Whenever Hazrat Raipuri happened to be at Lucknow, Jigar made it a point to meet him at Markaz-I-Islah-o-Tableegh(Center for reforms and Propagation) and also recite his ghazals. One couplet received special appreciation from Hazrat:

Waez ka har irshad baja tagreer bahut dilchasp magr,

Aankhon mein suroor-I-ishq naneen chehre pe yaqeen ka noor naheen.

(Every utterance of the preacher is true, oration entrancing, yet. Eyes sans euphoria of love visage sans radiance of faith.)

While returning from one of my tours, I broke journey at Gonda and visited Jigar upon knowing of his indisposition and he immediately sent words inside his home to arrange for my comfort and treat. He expressed the desire of making me the trustee for all his composed and written works and of executing a will to this effect and even summoned an acquaintance of his, a retired Police officer. To my way of thinking, the person most capable of taking up the responsibility could be Syed Siddiq Hasan ICS, a common friend, connoisseur of poetry and literature. I had to use all my persuasive faculties to beg off.

Jigar, at the time, had been unwell since quite sometime when he visited Lucknow and stayed with Meer Ahmad Husain at Akbarigate and received an offer from AIR to recite his poem at Lucknow Station. In a rather choked and emotion laden voice he recited a ghazal, one verse of which cast a shadow of the imminent inevitable.

*Jaani kar minjumaal-I-khasan-I-maikhana mujhe,
Muddaton roya karenge jaam-o-paimana mujhe.*

(Remembering me as chosen one of the tavern, For ages shall the cup and goblet be in mourning).

The hour was not long in coming and the bard who lit up countless symposiums, illuminated the entire literary firmament, himself facing travails and taking it all in his stride, departed from the material world. That Lucknow, where his melody had reverberated and his dulcet voice enchanted one and all, could throw up just four persons to join him on his last journey, was nothing but a travesty of fate and fickleness of human nature. People at Gonda had been expecting a human torrent from Lucknow and had intentionally tarried over his funeral prayer postponing it from usual post-Friday congregational to evening. The four from Lucknow were Mufti Mohammad Raza Ansari Firani Mahli, Farhat-ullah Ansari editor of official UP Urdu magazine, Maluvi Atequr Rahman Sambhali and this writer. Prayer was led by Mufti Mohammad Raza Ansari. The gathering was largely of common Muslims, religious minded persons and some educated of literary persons.

It would not be out of place here to present a letter written by Jigar in reply to one of mine. Although undated, it has immense importance for me.

Hazrat-ul-muhtaram zaad-allah ikramakum

Walaikum assalam va rahmatullah-l-va barakatahu

(Respected Sir, may God enhance the bounties; may peace and bounties be showered upon you as well.)

Being a recipient of attention unlimited, from pious and exalted persons is an honour not without a pinch in the soul, though. The veracity and purity of association alluded to by you are not unknown to me, thank God. My devotion to persons of your ilk is beyond a lay person to comprehend.

I am not seized of the accuracy of my knowledge of self but not oblivious to introspection, which in itself is akin to an ailment. Having spent a long span of life in unhealthy acts, has addicted me to such ways of life. The will to disentangle seems paralyzed; heart and soul mourn over the state of affairs. The whole being seems caught up in a quagmire, thwarting all effort towards piety or religion and imposing dereliction. Despite apparent vice-like grip, the faith in Almighty is unshaken, due to an inner voice or a message from the realm of unknown.

My soul is in torment and only the Almighty can have mercy. I owe spiritual allegiance to the saint at Mangalore Shareef and scenes of divine illumination there cannot be forgotten and this unrest is a legacy of His munificence. The Almighty showers His blessings on mosque and maikhana (tavern) in equal measure.

I carve your indulgence for affording me freedom of expression. I am convinced of the efficacy of drive launched by you and keep on drawing the attention of my acquaintances towards it, in the firm belief that is the only means of ushering in a healthy social environment.

On return from Shahjahanpur I may drop in Lucknow and also would like to tour extensively for a noble cause. Do wish me success. Wishing you best of health and a long tenure in the service of Islam. •

Humble - Jigar

Prophet's Way To Correct People's Mistake★

S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has been bestowed with the unique qualities of guidance for humanity for Allah (SWT) till the day of Resurrection within all possible avenues of complete complacency, solace and satisfaction. Though his bestowal of veneration and exaltation was par excellence for himself, but such attributes were not confined to him, he frittered away energies and employed concerted efforts to bring about radical reforms and guidance with his qualities for humanity as a whole. At that time when Arab society and the whole world was reeling under the influence of polytheism, ridden with rampant anarchy, moral turpitude, dogmatism, tyrannical subjugation of common man, etc., hence morality had fallen to the lowest ebb without any sign of upgradation, the whole humanity had steadily sunk into greater destruction, corruption and degeneration. But every cloud has a silver lining. The benevolence and compassion of Allah (SWT) then bobbed up for his creation, the most respected creation which is known as "ashraful makhlooqaat" and the last and final messenger Muhammad (SAW) stood out with the last Revelation, the Holy Quran with its exclusiveness, text of veracity and authenticity for the guidance of humanity, and the blessed Prophet (SAW) first practiced himself in injunctions and dogmas of the Holy Quran to become a role model for the Muslims and dedicated his life for the noble cause of Islam – for its propagation in relation to the teachings and interpretations of the Holy Quran in accordance with the willingness of his LORD. The Prophet S.A.W was the most outstanding personality of sacred knowledge of Shreelah and imparted them with his disciples (Sahabas) and whosoever sought after him. The Holy Quran says in surah An Nahl, ayaat no. 125,

* Extract from the author's book: *Rahbar-e-Insaniyat*

“Invite (mankind, O Muhammad SAW) to the way of your LORD (i.e., Islam) with wisdom (i.e., with the Divine Revelation) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better.

Again, in Surah Fussilat, Ayah no. 33, the Holy Quran says,

“And who is better in speech than he who (says: My LORD is Allah (believes in His Oneness), and then stands firm (acts upon its Orders and Injunctions), and invites (men) to Allah’s (Monotheism) and does righteous deeds and says, “I am one of the Muslims”.

As such the representation of the Holy text in the most eloquent and unique style of humility and sublime rhetoric highly impressed the most deadliest of enemies and melted the steel heart of the oppressors and protesters as the Prophet SAW kept up his cool against all tirades, oppositions and oddities all along in an unprecedented manner. In view of his exclusive attributes that was hardly possible by any other human being. The procedures and modalities carried out by the Muslim Ummah must be in right earnest with zeal and dedications because the methodologies of the Prophets (SAW) should be a cornerstone of our existence for salvation and deliverance both in the corporeal and spiritual world.

A Hadith narrates that once a rural person began to urinate in a corner of the Holy Mosque of the Prophet (SAW), that infuriated the Muslims but the Prophet (SAW) intervened and addressed this ignorant in a very humble tone and asked him not to commit such sin because the mosque was the Holy place for prayers and ordered him to cleanse it with fresh water.

Another narration says that once an ‘arabi’ approached the holy Prophet (SAW) for some financial help though there was nothing with the Prophet to share with his demand. The outraged person misbehaved with the Prophet (SAW) by dragging his scarf, which left its mark on the Prophet (SAW) neck. The Prophet (SAW)

could have utilized his power indict him with charges of indiscipline and bad manners, but again the Prophet (SAW) maintained his magnanimous attitude of forgiveness and humility and kept on repeating that he had nothing to share with that person, as because the Prophet (SAW) at times, used to have nothing to meet his own requirement, as a human being. On many occasions, the blessed Prophet (SAW) himself had to starve for days together and had to bear the brunt of penury. Once another person accused the Prophet (SAW) as a "stingy" person, but the Prophet (SAW) replied in a very soft tone that he was not stingy. In fact, he had nothing spare to the questioner. One of the unique attributes of the Prophet (SAW) was his unparalleled manner of generosity that people used to throng within the parameter of the mosque, and with special benevolences A'shab e Suffah were permanently accommodated there. The Prophet (SAW) used to bend over backwards at his personal discomfort to please others with financial and other materialistic help. At times, when the Prophet (SAW) had to admonish people on their mistakes, he never called upon with that person by his name so as not to vilify or condemn him publicly, but he used to indirectly address people to rectify their commitments.

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Eye for an Eye-lash: How Israel brought Gaza to the brink of humanitarian catastrophe

Avi Shlaim*

The only way to make sense of Israel's senseless war in Gaza is through understanding the historical context. Establishing the state of Israel in May 1948 involved a monumental injustice to the Palestinians. British officials bitterly resented American partisanship on behalf of the infant state. On 2 June 1948, Sir John Troutbeck wrote to the foreign secretary Ernest Bevin, that the Americans were responsible for the creation of a gangster state headed by "an utterly unscrupulous set of leaders". I used to think that this judgement was too harsh but Israel's vicious assault on the people of Gaza, and the Bush administration's complicity in this assault, have reopened the question.

I write as someone who served loyally in the Israeli army in the mid-1960s and who has never questioned the legitimacy of the state of Israel within its pre-1967 borders. What I utterly reject is the Zionist colonial project beyond the Green Line. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of the June 1967 war had very little to do with security and everything to do with territorial expansionism. The aim was to establish Greater Israel through permanent political, economic and military control over the Palestinian territories. And the result has been one of the most prolonged and brutal military occupations of modern times.

Four decades of Israeli control did incalculable damage to the economy of the Gaza Strip. With a large population of 1948 refugees crammed into a tiny strip of land, with no infrastructure or natural resources, Gaza's prospects were never bright. Gaza, however, is not simply a case of economic underdevelopment but a uniquely cruel case of deliberate de-development. To use the Biblical phrase, Israel turned the people of Gaza into the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, into a source of cheap labour and a captive market for Israeli goods. The development of local industry was actively impeded so as to make it impossible for the Palestinians to end their subordination to Israel and to establish the economic underpinnings essential for real political independence.

Gaza is a classic case of colonial exploitation in the post-colonial era. Jewish settlements in occupied territories are immoral. Illegal and an

* Avi Shlaim is a Professor of international relations at the University of Oxford.

insurmountable obstacle to peace. They are at once the instrument of exploitation and the symbol of the hated occupation. In Gaza, the Jewish settlers numbered only 8,000 in 2005 compared with 1.4 million local residents. Yet the settlers controlled 25% of the arable land and the lion's share of the scarce water resources. Cheek by jowl with these foreign intruders, the majority of the local population lived in abject poverty and unimaginable misery. Eighty per cent of them still subsist on less than \$2 a day. The living conditions in the strip remain an affront to civilized values, a powerful precipitant to resistance and a fertile breeding ground for political extremism.

In August 2005 a Likud government headed by Ariel Sharon staged a unilateral Israeli pullout from Gaza, withdrawing all 8,000 settlers and destroying the houses and farms they had left behind. Hamas, the Islamic resistance movement, conducted an effective campaign to drive the Israelis out of Gaza. The withdrawal was a humiliation for the Israeli Defence Forces. To the world, Sharon presented the withdrawal from Gaza as a contribution to peace based on a two-state solution. But in the year after, another 12,000 Israelis settled on the West Bank, further reducing the scope for an independent Palestinian state. Land-grabbing and peace-making are simply incompatible. Israel had a choice and it chose land over peace.

The real purpose behind the move was to redraw unilaterally the borders of Greater Israel by incorporating the main settlement blocs on the West Bank to the state of Israel. Withdrawal from Gaza was thus not a prelude to a peace deal with the Palestinian Authority but a prelude to further Zionist expansion on the West Bank. It was a unilateral Israeli move undertaken in what was seen, mistakenly in my view, as an Israeli national interest. Anchored in a fundamental rejection of the Palestinian national identity, the withdrawal from Gaza was part of a long-term effort to deny the Palestinian people any independent political existence on their land.

Israel's settlers were withdrawn but Israeli soldiers continued to *control* all access to the Gaza Strip by land, sea and air. Gaza was converted overnight into an open-air prison. From this point on, the Israeli air force enjoyed unrestricted freedom to drop bombs, to make sonic booms by flying low and breaking the sound barrier, and to terrorize the hapless inhabitants of this prison.

Israel likes to portray itself as an island of democracy in a sea of authoritarianism. Yet Israel has never in its entire history done anything to promote democracy on the Arab side and has done a great deal to undermine

it. Israel has a long history of secret collaboration with reactionary Arab regimes to suppress Palestinian nationalism. Despite all the handicaps, the Palestinian people succeeded in building only genuine democracy in the Arab world with the possible 2006, free and fair elections for the Legislative Council of the Palestinian Authority brought to power a Hamas-led government. Israel however, refused to recognize the democratically elected government, claiming that Hamas is purely and simply a terrorist organization.

America and the EU shamelessly joined Israel in ostracizing and demonizing the Hamas government and in trying to bring it down by withholding tax revenues and foreign aid. A surreal situation thus developed with a significant part of the international community imposing economic sanctions not against the occupier but against the oppressor but against the oppressed.

As so often in the tragic history of Palestine, the victims were blamed for their own misfortunes. Israel's propaganda machine persistently purveyed the notion that the Palestinians are terrorists, that they reject coexistence with the Jewish state, that their nationalism is little more than anti-Semitism, that Hamas is just a bunch of religious fanatics and that Islam is incompatible with democracy. But the simple truth is that the Palestinian people are a normal people with normal aspirations. They are no better but they are no worse than any other national group. What they aspire to, above all, is a piece of land to call their own on which to live in freedom and dignity.

Like other radical movements, Hamas began to moderate its political programme following its rise to power. From the ideological rejectionism of its charter, it began to move towards pragmatic accommodation of a two-state solution. In March 2007, Hamas and Fatah formed a national unity government that was ready to negotiate a long-term ceasefire with Israel. Israel, however, refused to negotiate with a government that included Hamas.

It continued to play the old game of divide and rule between rival Palestinian factions. In the late 1980s, Israel had supported the nascent Hamas in order to weaken Fatah, the secular nationalist movement led by Yasser Arafat. Now Israel began to encourage the corrupt and pliant Fatah leaders to overthrow their religious political rivals and recapture power. Aggressive American neo-conservatives participated in the sinister plot to instigate a Palestinian civil war. Their meddling was a major factor in the collapse of the national unity government and in driving Hamas to seize power in Gaza in June 2007 to per-empt a Fatah coup.

The war unleashed by Israel on Gaza on 27 December was the culmination of a series of clashes and confrontations with the Hamas government. In a broader sense, however it is a war between Israel and the Palestinian people, because the people had elected the party to power. The declared aim of the war is to weaken Hamas and to intensify the pressure until its leaders agree to a new ceasefire on Israel's terms. The undeclared aim is to ensure that the Palestinians in Gaza are seen by the world simply as a humanitarian problem and thus to derail their struggle for independence and statehood.

The timing of the war was determined by political expediency. A general election is scheduled for 10 February and, in the lead-up to the election, all the main contenders are looking for an opportunity to prove their toughness. The army top brass had been champing at the bit to deliver a crushing blow to Hamas in order to remove the stain left on their reputation by the failure of the war against Hezbollah in Lebanon in July 2006, Israel's cynical leaders could also count on apathy and impotence of the pro-western Arab regimes and on blind support from President Bush in the twilight of his term in the White House. Bush readily obliged by putting all the blame for the crisis on Hamas, vetoing proposals at the UN Security Council for an immediate ceasefire and issuing Israel with a free pass to mount a ground invasion of Gaza.

As always, mighty Israel claims to be the victim of Palestinian aggression but the sheer asymmetry of power between the two sides leaves little room for doubt as to who is the real victim. This is indeed a conflict between David and Goliath but the Biblical image has been inverted a small and defenseless Palestinian David faces a heavily armed, merciless and overbearing Israeli Goliath. The resort to brute military force is accompanied, as always, by the shrill rhetoric of victimhood and a farrago of self-pity overlaid with self-righteousness. In Hebrew this is known as the syndrome of *bokhim ve-yorim*, "crying and shooting".

To be sure, Hamas is not an entirely innocent party in this conflict. Denied the fruit of its electoral victory and confronted with an unscrupulous adversary, it has resorted to the weapon of the weak-terror. Militants from Hamas and Jihad kept launching Qassam rocket attacks against Israeli settlements near the border with Gaza until Egypt brokered a six-month ceasefire last June. The damage caused by these primitive rockets is minimal but the psychological impact is immense, prompting the public to demand

protection from its government. Under the circumstances, Israel had the right to act in self-defence but its response to the pinpricks of rocket attacks was to tally disproportionate. The figures speak for themselves. In the three years after the withdrawal from Gtaza, 11 Israelis were killed by rocket fire. On the other hand, in 2005-7 alone, the IDF killed 1,290 Palestinians in Gaza, including 222 children.

Whatever the numbers, killing civilians is wrong. This rule applies to Israel as much as it does to Hamas, but Israel's entire record is one of unbridled and unremitting brutality towards the inhabitants of Gaza. Israel also maintained the blockade of Gaza after the ceasefire came into force which, in the view of the Hamas leaders, amounted to a violation of the agreement. During the ceasefire, Israel prevented any exports from leaving the strip in clear violation of a 2005 accord, leading to a sharp drop in employment opportunities. Officially, 49.1% of the population is unemployed. At the same time, Israel restricted drastically the number of trucks carrying food, fuel, cooking-gas canisters, spare parts for water and sanitation plants, and medical supplies to Gaza. It is difficult to see how starving and freezing the civilians of Gaza could protect the people on the Israeli side of the border. But even if it did, it would still be immoral, a form of collective punishment that is strictly forbidden by international humanitarian law.

The brutality of Israel's soldiers is fully matched by the mendacity of its spokesmen. Eight months before launching the current war on Gaza, Israel established a National Information to the media are that Hamas broke the ceasefire agreements; that Israel's objective is the defence of its population; and that Israel's forces are taking the utmost care not to hurt innocent civilians. Israel's spin doctors have been remarkably successful in getting this message across. But, in essence, their propaganda is a pack of lies.

A wide gap separates the reality of Israel's actions from the rhetoric of its spokesmen. It was not Hamas but the IDF that broke the ceasefire. It did so by a raid into Gaza on 4 November that killed six Hamas men. Israel's objective is not just the defence of its population but the eventual overthrow of the Hamas government in Gaza by turning the people against their rulers. And far from taking care to spare civilians, Israel is guilty of indiscriminate bombing and of a three-year old blockade that has brought the inhabitants of Gaza, now 1.5 million, to the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe.

The Biblical injunction of an eye for an eye is savage enough. But Israel's insane offensive against Gaza seems to follow the logic of an eye for an

eyelash. After eight days of bombing, with a death toll of more than 400 Palestinians and four Israelis, the gung-ho cabinet ordered a land invasion of Gaza incalculable.

No amount of military escalation can buy Israel immunity from rocket attacks from the military wing of Hamas. Despite all the death and destruction that Israel has inflicted on them, they kept up their resistance and they kept firing their rockets. This is a movement that glorifies victim hood and martyrdom. There is simply no military solution to the conflict between the two communities. The problem with Israel's concept of security is that it denies even the most elementary security to the other community. The only way for Israel to achieve security is not through shooting but through talks with Hamas, which has repeatedly declared its readiness to negotiate a long-term ceasefire with the Jewish state within its pre-1967 borders for 20, 30, or even 50 years. Israel has rejected this offer for the same reason it spurned the Arab League peace plane of 2002, which is still on the table: it involves concessions and compromises.

This brief review of Israel's record over the past four decades makes it difficult to resist the conclusion that it has become a rogue state with "an utterly unscrupulous set of leaders". A rogue state habitually violates international law, possesses weapons of mass destruction and practices terrorism-the use of violence against civilians for political purposes. Israel fulfils all of these three criteria; the cap fits and it must wear it. Israel's real aim its Palestinian neighbours but military domination. It keeps compounding the mistakes of the past with new and more disastrous ones. Politicians, like everyone else, are of course free to repeat the lies and mistakes of the past. But it is not mandatory to do so. •

All are equal before Allah's Law

Sayyid Qutb

"Indeed, We did reveal the Torah, containing guidance and light. By it did the prophets, who had surrendered themselves to Allah, judge among the Jews, and so did the divines and the rabbis; they gave judgement in accordance with what had been entrusted to their care of Allah's scriptures and to which they themselves were witnesses. No, have no fear of men but fear Me; and do not barter away My revelations for a paltry price. Those who do not judge in accordance with what Allah has revealed are indeed disbelievers. In it (i.e. the Torah), We decreed for them a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and a (similar) retribution for wounds. But for [those who do not act] in accordance with what Allah has revealed are indeed wrongdoers."

Every religion revealed by Allah comprises three essential aspects: a faith which settles deep into the mind, a set of worship rituals and a law to regulate human life. The implementation of Allah's law will always be met by opposition from people in authority, those who pursue their own interest or their vain desires and the deluded masses who may find the implementation of Allah's law a heavy burden. Allah addresses His servants to whose care He entrusts the implementation of His law not to fear any human beings or their resistance, they should fear Allah alone. Allah also knows that some of those who are charged with the safekeeping and implementation of Allah's law may find worldly temptations too strong to resist. As they realize that people with power or money and those who seek all types of pleasure oppose Allah's legislation, they may flatter them in order to gain something of the riches and pleasures of this world. Professional clerics in all generations have yielded to such temptation as did some Jewish rabbis. Allah addresses all those saying to them: "Do not barter away My revelations for a paltry price." This is the price they get in return for their silence or for their distortion of Allah's revelations or for issuing doubtful rulings. Indeed, every price offered is paltry, even if it includes all that is in this world. How could it be described otherwise, when it is

no more than a position, a salary, a title and a petty interest for which faith is bartered away and hell purchased? Nothing is more wicked than treachery by a person who is in a position of trust and nothing is more vile than the distortion of facts by a witness. Those who are given the title, "Religious men" do commit such treachery and distortion. They remain idle when they are called upon to work for the implementation of Allah's revelation and they lift words out of context in order to please those in power at the expense of Allah's revelation. In a most decisive, Allah tells us: "Those who do not judge in accordance with what Allah has revealed are indeed disbelievers." The generality of this statement makes it absolutely unrestricted to time or place. The ruling is definitive and applicable to everyone who does not judge according to Allah's revelation, regardless of where and in what period he lives. The reason is the one we have already explained. A person whose judgment is at variance with Allah's revelation denies the Godhood of Allah. A basic quality of Godhood is the authority to legislate. Whosoever observes something other than does not only reject a particular aspect of Allah's Godhood but also claims for himself retain qualities of Godhood. If that is not disbelief, I wonder what is. For what use is a verbal claim of being a believer or submitting to Allah, when action denies such a claim? Any argument about this definitive, decisive and general ruling is not more than an attempt to avoid facing the reality. To try to give this ruling a different interpretation is simply an attempt to lift words out of their context. Such arguments change nothing of Allah's clear and definitive judgment. Having explained this basic rule in all divine faiths, the surah gives some examples of the law contained in the Torah which Allah had revealed so that on its basis, prophets, divines and rabbis judge among the Jews: "In it We decreed for them a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and a (similar) retribution for wounds." These provisions outlined in the Torah have been retained in Islamic law as an integral part of it, since it is meant to be the law of all mankind, till the end of time. It is true that these provisions may not be implemented except in the land of Islam, but this only for practical reasons. Islamic

authority cannot implement these provisions beyond the borders of the land of Islam. Whenever and wherever Muslim rulers can implement these laws, they are required to do so. Since Islamic law is a code for all mankind in all generations, one provision has been added to them under Islam. This is the one to which reference is made in the following Qur'anic statement: "But for him who forgoes it out of charity it will atone for some of his sins." This was not included in the law of the Torah. Retaliation was inevitable. No one could waive it or forgo it. Hence no atonement of sins could be achieved through such a charitable gesture.

A word on the concept of retaliation in punishment for injuries that may not go amiss. The basic principle which is established through this concept is that of equality of human beings and equality before the law. No law other than that of Allah acknowledges such an equal to the crime and to remove all considerations of class, position, lineage and race. It is a principle, which is amplified by its comprehensive application: "A life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, and ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and a (similar) retribution for wounds." No distinction between rulers and ruled, or between one class and another. All are equal before Allah's law, since they all descend from one single soul created by Allah. This great principle established by Allah's law is the true and complete declaration of the birth of man when all human beings are considered equal, subject to the same law which rules on the basis of absolute equality. It is the first declaration of its kind. Human laws have lagged behind for tens of centuries before they began to aspire to rise to its level, but even then, their aspirations remained both partial and theoretical. As for practical application, they continued to lag behind. The Jews, in whose scriptures, the Torah, this great principle was established, deviated from it in their relations with other people. They used to say: "We are subject to no restrictions in relations with the Gentiles." They also deviated from it in their own internal relations, as we have already explained when two Jewish tribes in Madinah, Quraithah and An-Nadheer established a system of blood money which gave the victorious twice as much as it gave the defeated.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) brought them back to the implementation of Allah's law based on equality. He put them all on the same level. Apart from its being a declaration of the birth of man, retaliation on the basis of equality is a most effective deterrent which makes anyone who contemplates killing another or causing him bodily harm think twice before putting his thoughts into action. He knows that regardless of his position, family connections, class or race, he will be executed for killing and he will suffer the same bodily harm as he causes. If he cuts off the hand or the leg of another person, he will have his own hand or leg cut off; and if he destroys an eye, an ear, a nose or a tooth, a similar organ of his will be destroyed. But he may not hesitate that long when he realizes that all that could happen to him is a period of imprisonment, long as it may be. His own physical agony or handicap is so different from putting up with a period of punishment. Moreover, retaliation on the basis of equality is the sort of punishment which appeals to human nature. It quenches the desire for revenge which may be fueled by blind fury and it pacifies hearts and heals wounds. Some people may accept blood money while others insist on retaliation. Under Islam, divine legislation takes full account of human nature, as it has been done in the Torah. Having ensured the satisfactory punishment of retaliation, Islam appeals to the benevolent element in human nature to encourage charitable forbearance: "But for him who forgoes it out of charity, it will atone for some of his sins." It is up to the next of kin of a person who has been killed to the injured person himself in all cases to wounds and injuries to be charitable and to forgo retaliation. It is up to either person, out of his own free choice, to forgo his right to retaliation and to accept blood money in place of it, or to forgo both. If he does, Allah will forgive him some or all of his sins, It should be added, however, that even if such a person forgoes retaliation for blood money, the Muslim rule may enforce a lesser punishment, as he deems fit, on the killer. •

Muhammad, The Messenger of Allah: The Greatest Revolutionary

Ejaz Ahmed Aslam

Human history is a long-and continuing story of ups and downs and rise and fall of ideologies and nations. World has seen many revolutions in the realm of human thoughts and action. Which is the greatest and permanent revolution and who is the greatest revolutionary of all times? To decide this we should determine who, in the chequered human history, left his indelible mark on the world and who brought about the greatest change in the way people think and act, and whose influence is universal, pervasive, and permanent. Michael H. Hart, an American scholar, an astrophysicist, lawyer and also a keen observer of history, tried to probe this question and find an answer. He pre-pared a list of 100 most influential persons form the long march of human history. These great people made their distinguished contributions in different fields like philosophy/ religion, science, literature, politics, military campaigns, conquests, etc. He concluded that the most influential and greatest person among this array of great achievers and contributors is Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He says: "My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by some others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.

"Of humble origins. Muhammad founded and promulgated one of the world's greatest religions, and became an immensely effective political leader. Today, thirteen centuries after his death, his influence is still powerful and pervasive."

Michael Hart explains why Prophet Muhammad was chosen as the most influential person and concludes his article with these words: "It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history."

This should be made clear at the outset that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not a philosopher or thinker. He was a Messenger of God, and whatever he gave-to humanity was not his own but from God. Of course, we have to acknowledge his personal contribution in the shape of his

wisdom, intelligence, piety, dedication, hard work and distinguished leadership qualities.

Surprisingly he accomplished this great task of setting human civilization on a new course within a short span of twenty-three years of his Prophetic life. First thirteen years of his mission were spent in Makkah in very difficult conditions. The remaining ten years in Madinah were also very trying in nature.

Another surprising fact is that he was an Ummi (unlettered) and did not have the benefit of any type of formal education or company of learned people. Arabia was a sparsely populated deserted area, away from the centres of learning and civilization. Inhabitants of this deserted and forlorn part of world had never made any name in human history. Their contribution to human civilization was next to nothing. Culturally also they were very backward.

The Prophet (PBUH) reformed, educated and organised these members of warring tribes into a great force which changed the destiny of entire humanity and gave rise to a civilization which was dominant upon the whole world for about one thousand years. The Prophet based his revolution on the greatest and most fundamental truth that the whole universe and our earth has been created and is being controlled by Allah Almighty. Therefore, to be in harmony with nature, human beings must submit and surrender to their Lord and obey Him in their individual and collective life. He stressed that the very purpose of life itself is putting God's will in action.

Acceptance of and allegiance to this basic truth gives unlimited strength and dedication to the Prophet's followers. Within no time the semi-civilized and unlettered people of Arabia became the teachers and leaders of humanity. They were fired with hitherto unknown enthusiasm to spread the message of Islam and reshape the future of humanity. The Prophet (PBUH) gave a programme to his followers to become the best human beings and placed before them the objective of changing the world and leading people on the divinely guided path of life. He created a model in which there are no chosen people, privileged castes or classes or specially favoured people. He said that humanity is one and all human beings are equal in status and dignity and every person, in spite of being

born to the lowest of the low, is capable of assuming highest moral and social status in the eyes of Allah and people.

In this egalitarian model of society the Prophet himself, in spite of the fact that he was the most distinguished person and greatest Prophet and was appointed by Allah to lead people, was no Pope who has powers to intercede on behalf of people. He has the distinction of being the greatest Messenger of Allah, but at the same time he is a humble servant of Allah as other servants happen to be. In the religion every individual is able to directly communicate with his Creator without the help of any intermediaries.

Another Prophetic principle which inculcated the deepest possible sense of responsibility and righteousness in the followers of the Prophet (PBUH) was the concept of Akhirah and accountability before Allah is always with him, Seeing and Hearing, his every act and even his intimate thoughts and innermost feelings. Therefore he should take care to think correctly and act properly. This feeling of being always under the observation of Allah gives the Muslims a sense of being close to Allah and in the presence of Allah. This proved to be a very potential source of confidence and strength in their revolutionary struggle to create a new world.

The Prophet (PBUH) based his guidance on divine instructions which came in the form of the Holy Qur'an and wisdom which was especially granted to him. He uprooted all sorts of superstitions and prejudices and taught human beings to base their decisions on sound knowledge. This in turn gave impetus to the spirit of enquiry and knowledge base judgment. This was the true harbinger of the Age of Science. Western scholars openly admit that modern knowledge of Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, etc. was truly derived from the Arab and Spanish scholars, who got their inspiration from the Prophet (PBUH). Now gradually the world is discovering and acknowledging the contribution of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) towards the development of human civilization. This is why he is being accepted now by larger sections of people as the greatest benefactor of humanity.

Muslims, as the acknowledged followers and inheritors of the teachings of Islam, have a great responsibility of being the Prophet's true followers and committed implementers of Islam in their individual life as well as in their social, political and economic aspects of life.

Virtuous life

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

The holy Quran says: "Prosperous is who has cleansed himself" (S.87A,14) "Truly he succeeds that purifies it; and he fails that corrupts it" (S.91-10)

The aforesaid verses of the Quran are thought provoking. They vividly point out that if one wants to prosper, one will have to purify oneself. Accordingly purging heart from all kind of filthy and smutty things is the first step of those who want to get success and attain enlightenment.

No one achieve happiness in life and attain pleasure of Allah sans purification of heart from all sorts of obnoxious and nauseous acts and disgusting performance .

In this regard Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) says: "Truly in the body there is a piece of flesh: if it is healthy, the whole body is healthy and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupted. Truly it is the heart" (Bukhari). He further says: "He has succeeded whose heart Allah has purified for *Iman* and made his heart righteous and submissive" (Ahmad)

For cleansing of heart, We should take into consideration the seven admonitions of holy Prophet.

- (1) Fear of Allah
- (2) Obligatoriness of the recitation of the Quran and talking of Allah
- (3) Long silence or stability of silence.
- (4) Avoiding excessive laughter.
- (5) Telling the truth at every cost.
- (6) Giving expression to religion without fear of condemnation.
- (7) Always turning the search-light within.

It should be noted that out of seven commands of the Prophet, fear of Allah assumes great significance. Today criminality is on the rise. Murder, loot, sexual offences, kidnapping and even cyber crimes

are a galore. What is the main reason behind these inhuman acts? Lack of fear of Allah, we see these menaces around us. Fear of Allah is the best remedy to avoid all kind of unholy acts and it may make our lives happy, comfortable and cheerful.

In his book "Morals and Manners in Islam" M. Sadiq Sialkoti said: "Man can protect himself from innumerable moral vices if he has fear of Allah in his heart. Only fear of Allah can keep off from deception, fraud, falsehood, breaking promises, defection, theft, cruelty, bribery, backbiting, slandering, using invectives, cursing and condemnation, taunting, usurpation, nepotism, animus and malice etc. It is only the fear that one will have to account for one's deeds on the Day of Judgement before Allah which can adorn character and temperament."

In this context the following Ahadith are quite relevant.

The Prophet (PBUH) sent Maaz bin Jabal to Yemen giving some parting advice he accompanied him up to some distance on almost finishing his advice, the Prophet said to him, 'Maaz! It is possible that you may not be able to see me after this and when you come back to Medina, instead of finding me, you find my grave. Hearing this shocking sentence Maaz started trembling and fearing separation from the Prophet forever, began to weep. Seeing him crying, the Prophet said, Maaz! Do not be sad, We will meet after this world also (Remember) those will be nearest with me who act in this world for fear of Allah. Whoever they are and wherever they live." (Masnad-I-Ahmad)

Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib says that one day he was sitting with the Prophet under a tree. Suddenly a powerful tornado came and all dry leaves of the tree fell down and only green ones remained. Seeing this the Prophet said: "To what can this tree be likened? The Sahabi replied. "Allah and His messenger know it well. The Prophet thereupon said. "This tree can be likened to that state of a faithful when his hairs bristle up for fear of Allah and all his sins fall off and only his virtues remain."

The other important thing through which we can keep our hearts pure and candid is remembrance of Allah. It is such an asset which can keep us aloof from anti-social activities and can lead us to the path of salvation. Besides it is a main source to attain peace of mind and achieve spiritual wisdom and enlightenment. That is why this method i.e. remembrance of Allah is found in every religion is some way or the other. Moreover it brings us close to Allah. All Prophets, Messengers and religious leaders attained inspiration, revelation, wisdom and enlightenment by cultivating this way.

Noted Islamic scholar S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi writes: "A Bedouin said to the Prophet. "O Apostle of Allah detailed instructions concerning Islam have grown enough to be comprehended by an illiterate like me. Tell me something in brief so that I may cling to it. The Prophet paid full attention to the request of the Bedouin. He neither admonished him nor took his request as a pretext to shirk the responsibility of learning as much about his religion as possible. The reply holy Prophet gave to the Bedouin was: "Keep your tongue busy with the recollection of Allah" (A Guide Book for Muslims)

The holy Quran says: "Those who believe, and those hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction (S.13.A.28). And celebrate the praises of Allah often (and without stint) that you may prosper "(S.62A.10)

In a hadith-e-qudsi related by Abu Hurairah, the Prophet said: "Allah Almighty says: "I am as My servant expects Me to be. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it. And if he draws near to Me a hand's span, I draw near to him an arm's length; and if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a fathom's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed. (Bukhari and Muslim). Almighty Allah warns us saying:

“O ye who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. If any act thus, surely they are the losers”. (S.63A9)

To sum up, we can purify our hearts by adopting the above mentioned ways and devices. Apart from it we can strengthen our relationship with God and win the approbation of Him either.

In conclusion it would be apt to quote this saying of the Prophet. “O Lord! Who changes the hearts, keep my heart firm on Your *Deen* (religion)”.

May Allah give us strength to abide by the path shown by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in letter and spirit. Amen!•

Disgraceful in any case

It is related by Abdullah bin Omar that the Apostle of God, while exhorting the people from the pulpit to abstain from soliciting for charity, said: “The upper Hand is better than the lower hand, and the lower hand is the begging hand”.

Workshop on Fiqah

A three-day workshop from March 24 to March 26, 2009 on "Islamic Jurisprudence and needs of the modern age" was organized under the aegis of Al-Mahadul Al-Ali lil-Qazae-wal-Ifta, a unit of Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.

In his address Maulana S. M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi President All India Muslim Personal Law Board stressed that education and training are not seperatable from each other. Training devoid of education turn the human being a beast-like man. Thus he neither takes care of principles of religion nor is afraid of Allah. He starts running after wealth and engrosses himself in achieving material gains relinquishing his religious knowledge and instructions. Such a person will be taken to task on the Day of Judgement. Maulana called upon Muftis to acquire deep knowledge and be pious and God-fearing. Besides he advised them to strive in their respective field in such a way that self-confidence is built and they are able to solve issues themselves.

Dr. Saeedur Rahman Al-Azami Al-Nadwi, Principal Darul Uloom Nadwatul-Ulama in his speech asserted that unlike other religions, Islam knows no narrowness and rigidity. It is compatible with human nature as well as the entire Universe. Responsibility of a Mufti is not only to issue fatwa but he should be strict in adherence to the teachings of Islam. Apart from it they should not become unmindful of their duties and deviate from the holy Prophet's way. Sans piety and fear of Allah issuing fatwa dilute its gravity.

Maulana Syed Salman Husaini Nadwi averred that authorities of Nadwatul-Ulama have taken an excellent step by holding such training programme on Fiqah. Differences in Jurisprudence are boon for us. Four schools of thought are on the right way. Accordingly to call any Imam names is to violate the Quran and Sunnah. Principles of four schools of thought are derived from the same stream. The way of their interpretation, deduction and inference may differ.

Mufti Muhammad Zahoor Nadwi Vice-Principal D.N.U. elaborated methods of issuing fatwa in the light of his long experience. He advised Muftis not to hasten while giving fatwa.

Mufti Atiq Ahmad Bastavi delivered a lecture on "Introduction of Principles of Jurisprudence and the method of teaching. He dealt with various issues of Jurisprudence in sublime way.

Maulana Abdullah Hasani Nadwi called upon Ulama to disseminate the message of Islam throughout the world. He asserted that Islam is a complete code of life and the real emancipator of human beings. Only Islam can solve the hydra-headed problems of the modern age.

Dr. Fahim Akhter Nadwi lecturer Maulana Azad University, Hyderabad presented an informative and compendious paper on "Tendency towards Jurisprudence in 20th century".

Maulana Zakaria Sanbhali exhorted that we should keep ourselves at a distance from religious prejudice and bigotry and should foster ethical values of Islam so that an atmosphere of peace and amity may develop in the society.

Eminent lawyer Zafaryab Jilani said that Muslim family laws are completely preserved in Indian constitution. It gives us full right to act on our religion like that of other faiths. He further advised Muslims to settle their disputes and other religious issues in Darul Qazas.

On this occasion S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi's new publication "*Fiqh-i - Islami aur asre Jadeed*" was released by Maulana Muhammad Qasim Muzaffarpuri. Highlighting the importance of the said book he stated that this book would indeed prove a valuable asset to Jurists and Muftis.

Maulana Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi, Maulana Burhanuddin Sanbhali, Maulana Hamza Hasani Nadwi, Maulana Nazrul Hafeez Nadwi, Maulana Abdul Aziz Bhatkali Nadwi, Maulana Khalid Nadwi, Maulana Niaz Ahmad Nadwi and others attended various sessions of the workshop.

The workshop concluded with the prayer conducted by Maulana Mahbubur Rahman Azhari. • (O.R. Nadwi)

Our Representatives Abroad

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Dubai	:	Qari Abdul Hameed Nadwi P.O. Box No. 12525 Dubai U.A.E.
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