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THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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Great influence on Human Race

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

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

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Wisdom of Qur'an

("And recall when We said to you, (O Muhammad), that your Lord encompasses these people; and that We have made the vision which We have shown you, and the tree accursed in the Qur'an, to be only a trial for men. We go about warning them, but each warning leads to greater transgressions.")

(Al-Qur'an-17:60)

Commentary:

In the early phase of Muhammad's prophethood, when the Makkan unbelievers had set out on a course of opposition to him, God had declared, unequivocally, that He encompassed the unbelievers. Regardless of the extent of the unbelievers' resistance, it would simply be impossible for them to prevent the Prophet's call from spreading. The task assigned to the Prophet (PBUH) was bound to be accomplished, and in the teeth of their opposition. If the unbelievers truly needed a miracle in order to mend their ways, they should reflect upon what they had already witnessed, i.e. that which had been foretold in the very early days of Islam had already come to pass and that their opposition and hostility towards the Blessed Prophet had proved to be of no avail in preventing the spread of Islam.

The word ru'ya is not used here as a synonym of a dream, rather it signifies seeing something with one's own eyes. God enabled the Blessed Prophet to witness a number of things in the course of the Ascension. This was in order that people might learn certain truths for sure through no less truthful and trustworthy a person than the Blessed Prophet. ●

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

"Khabbab bin Arat relates: "We complained to the Holy Messenger (PBUH) of our increasing persecution by non-believers of Makkah. He was then reclining in the shade of Ka'aba, having made a pillow of his sheet. We requested: 'Why do you not pray for heavenly help for us' Why do you not request for Allah's help for us?' He answered: 'From among those who have gone before you, a man would be caught and held in a pit dug for him in the earth and he would then be sawn in two with a saw placed over his head, or his flesh would be combed away from his bones with iron combs; but none of this would wean him away from his faith. Allah will surely help Islam complete his mission, till a rider will proceed from San'aa to Hadharmaut, fearing nothing save Allah and the danger of the wolf concerning his sheep. But you appear to be in too much of a hurry'."

(Bukhari)

Commentary:

Allah would surely help Islam complete its mission. Then there would be no rule but the rule of Allah, and all the affairs of the world would be run according to the Qur'an and Sunnah. The society would be completely rid of all sorts of loot and corruption. The Holy Messenger (PBUH) said the day would witness total peace. The image of a rider proceeding from San'aa to Hadharmaut is symbolic of the situation when peace would prevail on earth. ●



Violence and Tyranny

The violence and tyranny have gripped a good number of nations all over the globe. These two most alarming malaises have not spared our country also. Though history of communal riots in India is traced back to 18th century but in recent time the partition of India in 1947 had been accompanied by ethnic cleansing and bloody riots. However, during Nehruian era except some disturbances in Kashmir (theft of the Prophet's relic from Hazrat Bal), some violence in W.Bengal and Orrisa in retaliation of riots in East Pakistan (Now Bangla Desh) situation remained normal. In 1970s also saw some serious bouts of Hindu - Muslim rioting in Moradabad and Jamshedpur among other places. However, in 1980s and 1990s ideal of a secular India came under serious strain. The

communal polarisation of these decades was enabled by the rath yatra of Mr. L.K. Advani, a mascot of Hindutva and front runner of the Ram Mandir campaign. This helped fuel a wave of religions violence in the country and culminated with the Gujrat riots in 2002.

Recapitulating the scenes of violence and destruction in 1992-93 we are reminded of the historical speech delivered by Late Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (RAH). After wide spread violence and tyranny in northern and western part of India in December 1992 when Babri Mosque structure was pulled down in Ayadhya on December 6, 1992 Muslims, victims of the violence, were terrorised and quite disturbed. Here we reproduce some extracts of Maulana's speech which are as relevant to day as they were

decades ago:

“There are many such instances in history when the anguished sigh of a grieved person and the painful cry of a distressed woman has been enough to annihilate an era. The most important factor for the welfare of the countries is that there should be no tyranny, however developed the country may be and glorious its past history, or vast and inexhaustible its resources. No weak person should be tyrannised, no bread-winner be killed, no woman be molested and no curse of the oppressed be invited.”

“The crux of the matter is that all the religions agree that tyranny is ruinous. It invites the wrath of the Creator of the universe; such horrible chastisement and calamities and afflictions visit those places

that a man shudders at the very thought of them. I do not like to say all this as I belong to this country and my life is linked with it. But I must warn that Almighty God inflicts His vengeance on the oppressors, thunders and earth-quakes strike such a place. It is visited by famines and pestilence.

I warn you again that tyranny is to be feared most and that all the religions and reformers, saints and sufis agree that man is the most valuable living being on earth. He may profess any religion or belong to any society, nation or race and even though he may not be useful to the society - he is the creation of God, he is the personification of His Mercy. If we do not call him a masterpiece then what else can be called by that name.”

S. A.

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Sufi Saints of India and Their Impact on Society

Sufistic Orders

Although the chief Sufistic Orders had their origin outside India, they attained the greatest success in this country. This was due partly to the circumstances of history and partly to the inherent Indian character and temperament. There branched forth from these Orders such fraternities in India which themselves grew into permanent orders and recognized schools of Islamic mysticism. Apart from the well-known Sufistic Orders the Qadiriya, the Chishtiya, the Naqshbandiya and the Suhrawardiya there are other Orders and fraternities that are essentially Indian and are attributed solely to men who were born in India and returned to its dust, as for instance, the Madariya Order, the Qalandriya Order, the Shattariya Order and the Mujaddidiya Order. India has been the standard-bearer of Tasawwuf (Islamic mysticism) and spiritual evolution and self-reform since the 17th Century. It was at that period of time that an infinite number of persons profited spiritually from Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi and his illustrious son and successor, Khwaja Mohammad Masoom. The deputies of the latter were found in several foreign countries like Iran, Afghanistan and Turkestan. Similarly, votaries from Turkey, Bahgdad, Syria, Samarkand, Bokhara, Egypt, China and Ethiopia were drawn to the Khanqah of the 19th Century

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

saint of the Mujaddidiya line, Shah Ghulam Ali Dehlavi. The Mujaddidiya Order was popularized in Iraq, Syria, Kurdistan and Turkey by Sheikh Ghulam Ali's deputy, Maulana Khalid Rumi, where it still endures. Then, at the beginning of the current century, it was the turn of Haji Imdadullah Muhajir to rise to dizzy heights of fame. Known popularly in the Islamic World as the 'Spiritual Guide of the Arabs and the Non-Arabs', innumerable Arabs, as well as non-Arab Haj pilgrims coming to Arabia, availed themselves of his priceless spiritual guidance during his stay in that country. In the contemporary Muslim World, also, it is India which is keeping the spirit of God-seeking alive. An uninterrupted chain of earnest and exalted men of God has enabled it to maintain its distinction as the universal centre of spiritual and Sufistic endeavour. It is now the sole refuge in the world of the votaries of Sufism.

Popular Enthusiasm

The Muslim epoch in Indian History was, in fact, heralded by the Sufi divines, particularly by Khwaja Moinuddin Ajmeri who also laid the foundations here of the Chistiya Order of Islamic mysticism. From the earliest days the rich vied with the poor and the high with the low to do homage to these elevated self-denying men of God till the whole sub-continent was lit with a thick cluster of spiritual

luminaries and their religious establishments. Apart from the more important towns, there was hardly a Muslim hamlet which was left without a moral teacher or a spiritual guide.

The enthusiastic devotion of the people to the Sufi saints and their overwhelming responsiveness to religious emotion can well be imagined by the facts we are now going to narrate.

The daily average of votaries staying at the Khanqah of Seyd Adam Bannuri (d. 1643) was one thousand. They took their meals at the Khanqah. A great throng of men, including hundreds of theological doctors, followed the saint wherever he went. It is stated in Tazkira-Adamiya that 10,000 persons formed his entourage during the visit to Lahore in 1642. Seeing the phenomenal popularity of Syed Bannuri, Emperor Shahjehan became so apprehensive that he thought of a plan to send him out of India. He sent to him a large sum of money and then suggested that as possession of money made the Haj pilgrimage obligatory for a Muslim he should waste no time in proceeding to the Hejaz to discharge the duty. The saint, thereupon, migrated from India.

Hazrat Mujaddid's celebrated son and spiritual deputy, Khwaja Mohammad Masoom (d. 1668) had as many as 9,00,000 disciples who did the Bai'at and repentance at his hand. Of them, 7,000 rose to be his Khalifas.

It is recorded about Shah Ghulam Ali in Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's *Asar-us-Sanadeed* that "not less than 500 destitute persons used to live in

his Khanqah all of whom were fed and clothed by him."

Unprecedented scenes of popular enthusiasm were witnessed during the missionary tours of the famous divine and spiritual leader of the 19th century, Syed Ahmad Shaheed, as also during his journey to Calcutta while on the way to Arabia for the Haj. In many of the towns that fell on Syed Sahib's route few persons were left who did not offer bai'at and repentance at his hand. At Allahabad, Mirzapur, Varanasi, Ghazipur, Azimabad, (Patna) and Calcutta, specially, his disciples must have run into lakhs. The limit was that at Varanasi the indoor patients of the sadar hospital sent to him a petition begging that since they were unable to move out he might condescend to visit them in the hospital so that they could take the bai'at. About a thousand persons became his disciples every day during his two months' stay at Calcutta. From morning till late at night a stream of men and women would pour in where he was staying. There was hardly any time left for Syed Saheb to attend to his personal needs. When it became impossible to administer the vow to everyone individually, it was arranged for the aspirants to collect in a large house where Syed Saheb went and initiated ground when he went there and the aspirants were told to hold them at different places, while one end of them was held by Syed Saheb himself. He then taught them the fundamentals of which they repeated, and, thus, the ritual was completed. This was done

opposed him. They were the persons who had poked fun at him, pelted stones upon him, sown thorns in his way, tortured and killed the helpless believers and instigated the whole of Arabia to destroy the Prophet and his faith. On that day they all stood as criminals, conscious of their guilts, surrounded by ten thousand well-armed warriors ever willing to square the past accounts with them. At last the Prophet broke silence and asked: "O Quraish, what do you think that I am about to do with you?" "Good, Muhammad (SAW), they replied, "You are a noble brother, son of a noble brother." The Prophet then gave his verdict: "Go your way for you are the freed ones."

This is how the enemy is loved and forgiven—a shining example without any parallel in the annals of the world. One has not to indulge in rhetorics and high sounding words to teach a lesson, but to wade through blood and tears for setting a noble example.

It should now be clear why Islam invites us to follow not merely the injunctions of its Scripture but also demands to take after the example of the Messenger of divine Scripture. If other religions only ask to comply with the teachings of their founders, it is because they do not have any living modern of their preceptors. The Prophet of God had told his followers a few days before he departed from this world:

"I have left you two things, and you will not go astray as long as you hold these fast. The one is the Book of God and the other is my own way."

These are the two lighthouses of guidance still pointing out the way to virtue and goodness, and so shall they remain to the end of time. "Verily I the messenger of Allah ye have a good

example," says the Lord to ratify the Apostle's dictum.

Islam, thus, presents the practical example of its Prophet in support of its teachings, and this is its distinguishing feature amongst the religions of the world. It does not merely say "Offer prayers," but also asks its Prophet to exhort, "Offer prayers as you see me praying." Similarly, the Prophet directs his followers: "The best amongst you is he who is good to his wife and children, and I am the best of all in being good to my wife and children." Take another example. During the last haj—the Haj of farewell the Prophet has a hundred thousand believers round him. He intends to convey the message of God, the principles of peace and justice and human brotherhood; but he does not forget to illustrate everything he wants to preach by his own example. He says:

"All the blood shed in the pagan past of Arabia is to be left unavenged. The first claim on blood I abolish is that of my own nephew, the son of Rabi'a b. al-Harith b. 'Abd al-Muttalib. All the usurious transactions are abolished this day and I abolish first of all the claims of my uncle 'Abbas b. 'Abd al-Muttalib."

Security of life and property of the individuals is the basic need of very civilized society. Next comes 'honour' which more often than not means acting in accordance with the prevalent customs, rites and etiquettes of the society. To abolish any customs, even stale and useless, is to incur disgrace in the eyes of one's compatriots. For an undying shame is attached to the discontinuance of time-honoured customs even the greatest reformers have often found it difficult to mark a total break with the social usages and

conventions. But, what is the record of Muhammad (SAW) in this regard? Slaves were accorded the lowest place in pre-Islamic Arab society. The Arabs were so conscious of the nobility of blood and race that they even deemed it a dishonor to fight an enemy unequal to them in social standing- it was shameful to stain one's sword with the blood of a low-born man. This was the mood and emperor of Arab society when the Prophet declared:

“Lo! You are all son of Adam and Adam was created of clay. The blacks have no superiority over non-Arab nor the non-Arabs over Arabs. The best amongst you is one who is more pious, God-fearing.”

This declaration brought all, the high and the low, the master and the slave on an equal plane, but it had to be accompanied by a striking example to catch the imagination of the people. Allah's Messenger, therefore, declared his slave to be his adopted son. Going a step further, he married his won cousin sister, belonging to the noblest and blue-blooded tribe of Quraish, to his freed serf Zayd, who has since been adopted as his son. It was then that the writ of God was revealed abolishing all artificial relationships, as the custom of adoption was, in order to restore the hereditary rights of blood-relations. Zayad b. Muhammad again became Zayd b. Harith.

For the time-honoured customs die hard, social reforms seldom succeed unless pressed to their logical end. But, the task was difficult as well as dangerous, because marriage with the widowed or divorced wife of the adopted son was looked down upon by the Arabs as ignominious and incestuous. The commandment of God had,

nevertheless, to prevail, if only to curb the evils emanating from that custom. Although it meant sealing the divorced wife of Zayd. He broke the age-old custom of the pagan past and put an end to the system of adoption and its evils for ever.

There are many more examples to be cited but the limited time available would not permit me to do so. Still, the instances just given are enough to set you thinking whether there is any other teacher to guide humanity right from Adam to Jesus Christ who was able to present such illustrious models of practical morality in every field of life?

A few words more and I would finish the day's discourse. You would have seen several eloquent preachers talking about the spiritual coupling of the Heavenly Father and His only begotten Son. But, if a tree is known by its fruits, you have to see whether divine love was also discernible in the life of its gosseller! Read the biography of the adorer of God born in Arabia and you would find that when the whole world fell asleep, this lover of God used to bow down in worship, his hands raised in prayers, his tongue singing the praises of God, his heart troubled and uneasy and his eyes shedding tears in holy breathing. Does this present the picture of love or the life of Jesus?

When Jesus was crucified he “cried with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli lama sabach thani?- My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” But when the Prophet breathed his last he was reciting “Allahummah-Rafiq-al-Ala- My Lord, me dearest friend.”

Whose was the spirit of piety and devotion that flowed into his life and conduct and mode of expression? ●

Scientific Miracles of The Qur'an

The Birth of A Human Being

Harun Yahya

Many diverse subjects are mentioned in the Quran in the course of inviting people to believe. Sometimes the heavens, sometimes animals, and sometimes plants are shown as evidence to man by God. In many of the verses, people are called upon to turn their attention to their own creation. They are often reminded how man came into the world, which stages he has passed through, and what his essence is:

"It is We Who have created you. Why, then, do you not accept the truth? Have you ever considered that (Seed) which you emit? Is it you who create it? Or are We the Creator?" (The Qur'an, 56:57-59)

The creation of man, and the miraculous aspect of this, is stressed in many other verses. Some items of information within these verses are so detailed that it is impossible for anyone living in the 7th century to have known them. Some of these are as follows:

1. Man is not created from the entire semen, but only a very small portion of it (sperm).
2. It is the male that determines the sex of the baby.
3. The human embryo adheres to the mother's uterus like a leech.
4. The embryo develops in three dark regions in the uterus.

People living when the Quran was revealed, to be sure, know that the basic substance of birth was related to

the semen of the male emitted during sexual intercourse. And the fact that the baby was born after a nine-month period was obviously an observable event not calling for any further investigation. However, the items of information just quoted were far above the level of learning of the people living at that time. These were verified by 20th century science. Now, let us go over them one by one.

A Drop of Semen

During sexual intercourse, 250 million sperms are emitted from the male at a time. The sperms undertake a arduous journey in the mother's body until they make it to the ovum. Only a thousand out of 250 million sperms succeed in reaching the ovum. At the end of this five-minute race, the ovum, half the size of a grain of salt, will let only one of the sperms in. That is, the essence of man is not the whole semen, but only a small part of it. This is explained in the Quran:

"Does man reckon he will be left uncontrolled (without purpose)?

Was he not once a drop of ejected semen?" (The Qur'an, 75:36-37)

As we have seen, the Qur'an informs us that man is made not from the entire semen, but only a small part of it. That the particular emphasis is this statement announces a fact only discovered by modern sciences is evidence that the statement is divine in

origin.

The Mixture in the Semen

The fluid called semen, which contains the sperms, does not consist of sperms alone. On the contrary, it is made up of a mixture of different fluids. These fluids have different functions, such as containing the sugar necessary for providing energy for the entrance of the uterus, and creating a slippery environment for the easy movement of the sperms.

Interestingly enough, when semen is mentioned in the Qur'an, this fact, which was discovered by modern science, is also referred to, and semen is defined as a mixed fluid:

"We created man from a mingled drop to test him, and We made him hearing and seeing." (The Qur'an, 76:2)

In another verse, semen is again referred to as a mixture, and it is stressed that man is created from the "extract" of this mixture:

"He who has created all things in the best possible way. He commenced the creation of man from clay, then He made his progeny form an extract of discarded fluid." (The Qur'an, 32:7-8)

The Arabic word "sulala", translated as "extract", means the essential or best part of something. By either implication, it means "part of a whole". This shows that the Qur'an is the word of a Will that knows the creation of man down to its slightest detail. This Will is God, the Creator of man.

The Sex of the Baby

Until fairly recently, it was thought that a baby's sex was determined by the mother's cells. Or at least, it was believed that the sex was

determined by the male and female cells together. But we are given different information in the Qur'an, where it is stated that masculinity or femininity is created out of "a drop of sperm which has been ejected".

"He has created both sexes, male and female from a drop of semen which has been ejected." (The Qur'an, 53:45-46)

The developing disciplines of genetics and molecular biology have scientifically validated the accuracy of this information given by the Qur'an. It is now understood that sex is determined by the sperm cells from the male, and that the female has no role in this process.

Chromosomes are the main elements in determining sex. Two or the 46 chromosomes that determine the structure of a human being are identified as the sex chromosomes. These two chromosomes are called "XY" in males, and "XX" in females, because the shapes of the chromosomes resemble these letters. The chromosome carries the genes that code for masculinity, while the X chromosome carries the genes that code for femininity.

The formation of a new human being begins with the cross combination of one of these chromosomes, which exist in males and females in males and females in pairs. In females, both components of the sex cell, which divides into two during ovulation, carry X chromosomes. The sex cell of a male, on the other hand, produces two different kinds of sperm, one that

enjoying all the reasonable comforts of life. At the dinner-spreads of the Sufi ascetics no distinction was observed between the rich and the poor, the friend and the foe, and the kindred and the stranger. The dinner-spread of Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia was proverbial both for its extensiveness and sumptuousness of the meals served on it. At the Khanqah of Sheikh Saifuddin Sirhindi, a Mujaddidyah divine of the Seventeenth Century, 1,400 persons used to dine every day and every one of them was served with food of his own choice. Of another Chishti saint of the late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth centuries, Syed Muhammad Saeed alias Shah Bheek, it is reported by his biographer that, apart from the 5,000 votaries who lived permanently in his khanaqah, an equal number from among the daily visitors also dined with him regularly. Once Roshanuddaulah, who was a Seh-Hazari feudal lord of the Court of Emperor Farrukh Siyar of Delhi, presented to him Rs. 70,000/- for the construction of the Khanqah. The Shah advised him to leave the money and go and have a little rest: the work would commence in the afternoon. After Roshanuddaulah had retired Shah Bheek sent the entire money to widows and other needy and indigent people of Ambala, Thanesar, Sirhind and Panipat through the ascetics of the Khanqah. When Roshanuddaulah returned in the afternoon, Shah Saheb said to him, "You could never have earned so much Divine reward by the construction of the Khanqah as you have by serving so many poor, helpless persons and hermits. What would an humble ascetic

like me do with a palatial building?" On another occasion, Emperor Farrukh Siyar, Roshanuddaulah and Nawab Abdullah Khan sent him promissory notes worth Rs. 3,00,000 along with their petitions. The divine had all the money distributed in the neighbouring towns and among indigent families of good birth. As Maulana Manazir Ahsan Gilani had very appropriately observed:

"The Khanqahs of the Sufi saints served as the connecting link between the rich and the poor. Even reigning monarchs paid tribute to the courts of these august men. Take the case of Sultan-ul-Mashaikh. It has been shown how Khizir Khan, the heir-apparent to the throne of Delhi, was his bondman. Sultan Alaudding Khilji used to collect the tribute from all parts of the country, but there was one treasury in which he also had to deposit the submission money The Khanqahs were the channels through which the share of the poor and the needy used to reach them throughout the land. This is what was implied by the well-known saying that 'the property of the Sufi is at every body's disposal.'

"This confluence of poverty and riches, i. e., the holy Order of the Sufis to which the rich and the poor alike paid homage was the agency by means of which the needs of innumerable destitute Muslim families were satisfied. Indeed, there was no phase in the whole era of Muslim supremacy in India, and no province, in the entire sub-continent, in which the Prophet's command that 'it should be taken from those among them that are

rich and given to those among them that are poor, was not dutifully carried into practice by some extraordinary circumstance, had come to acquire influence over the rich and privileged had come to acquire influence over the rich and privileged sections of the community: the fortunes of the distressed sections would, then, literally wake up."

Resignation and Contentment

The holy Sufis, generally, abstained from accepting offices of the State or gifts or grants from the wealthy lords, princes and other well-to-do people. By their conduct they set a tradition of sublime asceticism, contentment, reliance upon God and self-respect which encouraged and sustained in the general Indian society the ideals of magnanimity, large-mindedness and integrity, and held aloft the honour and dignity of humanity in the market-place of gain and loss which is the world, and where human beings also are bought and sold. Their life-principle and open declaration in this behalf was:

I shall not exchange my tattered pallet for royal standard

Nor my poverty for Solomon's dominions;

The treasure I have discovered in my heart because of poverty's pang

I shall not exchange it for the comforts of Kings.

There is practically no Sufistic Order which does not abound in glorious episodes of the triumph of the abstract and spiritual values of life over worldly and materialistic urges and temptations. Here, however, we will

quote instances only from the last two centuries to show on what a lofty plane did the Sufis continue to operate even when materialism had made its headway in the Indian society and transcendental values had begun to be at a disadvantage everywhere.

Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan was a Sufi leader of the Naqsh-bandiya Mujaddidiya Order. The Emperor of Delhi approached him with the request to accept something from the vast Empire God had blessed him with. Came the reply, "God has said about the kingdom of the seven climes (i.e., the habitable world) that 'the stock of the world is meager'. Of it only a country of one clime has come to your lot. How much can it be that I extended a covetous hand towards it?" Once Nawab Asaf Jah presented him with 20,000 rupees which he refused. The Nawab urged, "Take them and give them away to the poor". Mirza Jan-i-Janan replied, "Start distributing them as you proceed from here and they will be used up by the time you are back home. If any of them will be left they will be finished there.

Nawab Mir Khan, the ruler of Tonk (in Rajasthan), wanted to make a grant for the maintenance of the Khanqah of Shah Ghulam Ali of Delhi. The divine, when he came to know of the ruler's intention, had this verse written to him:

We do not disgrace resignation and contentment, Tell Mir Khan, one's portion is pre-ordained.

Once a high-ranking Government officer who had come to meet Maulana Shah Fazlur Rahman of Ganj Moradabad (b. 1895) was so

much impressed by the high moral level of his conversation that he said, "If you are willing, I can move the Government to bestow a grant on your Khanqah." The Maulana observed, "What will I do with the grant of your Government? By the grace of God, I have a stringed cot, two earthen lotas and two pitchers of clay. Some disciples bring me a little millet from which bread is made, and my wife cooks some pulses or cheap vegetables with which I eat the bread."

Again, it is related by Molvi Mohibullah that Nawab Kalb-i-Ali Khan of Rampur once expressed the desire that the Maulana honoured him with a visit. Molvi Mohibullah asked what would he offer to the Maulana then went to Ganj Moradabad to persuade the Maulana to undertake the journey. "Come to Rampur." He pleaded with him, "Nawab Kalb-i-Ali Khan is very eager to have you as his guest. He will make a present of one lakh of rupees if you went there." The Maulana heard as if it mattered absolutely nothing to him. Then he said, "Forget the one one lakh (of rupees), and listen to this:

When I behold His favours on my heart,

To me it appears far more precious than the cup of Jamshed."

Refuge of humanity

People got imbued with excellent humanitarian ideals in the society of the Sufis. They were guided by an earnest solicitude for humanity to render whatever service they could to fellow-men without regard to their race or creed. They believed in and

fashioned their conduct on the Prophet's advice that "God's creatures are His family: among His slaves, He loves him most who serves His family with the greatest devotion."

Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia is reported to have said about himself that "when a person comes to me and relates his troubles I feel twice as much distressed as him". Another of his favourite dictums was: "On the Day of Judgement, nothing will carry greater weight than the desire to serve and to please."

Many a soul-weary and broken-hearted person would find refuge in the Khanqahs of the saints. The arms of the revered Sufis were ever open to welcome those whom fate had jilted or who had been forsaken by their kinsmen or the society. The dejected, the anguished and the outcaste would come to them and find shelter, food, love and recognition. They would find the balm for their broken hearts and wounded spirits. When the spiritual guide and mentor of Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia was sending him off finally to settle in Delhi, he had bestowed this blessing upon him: "You will be like a huge, shady tree under which God's creatures will find comfort." History bears witness to the fact that for full seventy years people came from far and near to find shelter and protection under his benevolent shadow. Thanks to the Sufi ascetics, there existed at hundreds of places in India such 'huge, shady trees' under whose merciful shade broken-down travelers used to find new life and freedom. ●

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It is obvious that with whom we love we do not harm him and always try to keep him happy and cheerful. The same is the treatment of God with His creatures and servants. Accordingly, God taught us various ways and devices to perpetuate human dignity and as to how we live with each other with peace and serenity. He says: "O ye who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others; it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): nor let some women laugh at others; it may be that the latter are better than the (former) not defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) wickedness, (to be used of one) after those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong. (S49, A.11) He further says : "O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible) : for suspicion in some cases is a sin and spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother ? nay, ye would abhor it..... But fear Allah : for Allah is oft returning, most merciful" (S: 49, A. 12). God further lays great stress on human dignity by declaring that "If any one slew a person unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" (S: 5.A.32)

He further warns us saying that "The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger, and strive with his might and main for mischief through the land is: execution or crucifixion, or the cutting off hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land : that is their disgrace in this world and a heavy punishment is their's in the hereafter." (S.5.A33)

In this context it should be kept in mind that God sent Prophets and messengers to show people the path of salvation. All Prophets performed their duties with integrity and honesty.

But a long time had passed since the raising of Jesus by God, humanity had reached the edge of precipice. People had gone astray. Even divine books were not intact. Hence God sent Muhammad (SAW) to extricate people from the darkness to lead the right path and enlightenment. It is Muhammad who first taught people the lesson of brotherhood, fraternity, love and equality. Besides he first introduced Human Rights and stressed its importance. Indeed the last sermon of the Prophet was the first Charter of Human Rights. S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (RAH) says: "The world before the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was divided by manifold divisions of castes and creeds, tribes

and nations, some claiming ranks of nobility for themselves and condemning others to the position of serfs and chattels. It was for the first time that the world heard the revolutionary message of human equality from the Prophet of Islam."

"O mankind, your God is one and you have but one father. You are all progeny of Adam and Adam was made of clay. Lo! the noblest among you, in the sight of God, is the best in conduct. No Arab has any preference over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab save by his piety." The Prophet said : "The entire creation constitutes the family of God and he is dearest to Him who is the best in his dealings with God's family." Narrated Anas (R): The Prophet (SAW) said : "none of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself. He said : "A person whose neighbour is not safe from his acts of misdemeanor shall not enter Paradise" "He who has had a full meal while his neighbour sleeps at night on an empty stomach is not a true Muslim" Narrated Musa (R) : some people asked Allah's apostle (S) whose Islam is the best ? i.e. (who is a very good Muslim?" He replied. "One who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands."

Despite these instructions and advice of the holy Quran and Sunnah, if any Muslim gets involved in unholy and anti-social activities, he is not a good Muslim. What to speak of harming and killing any one, a true Muslim can not even call anyone names.

It is imperative that we must keep away from inhuman and terroristic acts. No religion allows such sort of atrocities and offences. If anyone commits such kind of heinous crimes and wrong doings, he is not true follower of his faith. He is reprobate, malevolent and not loyal to his religion.

The need of the hour is that we should abide by the teachings of our respective religions in letter and spirit. Moreover, we must develop humanitarian attitude and come forward to render welfare and charitable services for the poor and down-trodden sections of the society irrespective of caste, creed, colour and region.

To sum up the argument it will be apt to quote the Prophet "God shows His mercy on those who show mercy to others." Maulana Hali has beautifully and ably composed the above tradition of the Prophet in this couplet.

"Karo Mehrabani tum Ahle Zami par
Khuda mehraban hoga Arshe-Barin Par"
(Be kind to man on earth God will be kind to you on the Emphyrean) ●

Practicality

S.Sulaiman Nadwi

Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example. (Q. XXXIII: 21)

How to follow an apostle of God is an important question, though, unfortunately, hardly touched upon by the biographers of earlier prophets and founders of religions. In the case of Muhammad (SAW), the Messenger of Allah, however, this is the most detailed and illuminating part of his biography. The practical examples set by him are, of a fact, so illustrious and leadership of all the saints, sages and prophets sent by God for the guidance of human race.

There has never been any dearth of the words of wisdom, couched in sweet and pleasing phrases, but what is lacking is the act and the deed—the deed demonstrating the impressive aphorisms. If one goes through the biographies and writings of religious preceptors, one would find interesting doctrines, engaging parables, elegant discourses and graceful utterance which would undoubtedly be fascinating, but one would labour in vain to discover how these great sages had themselves acted upon their precepts.

Morality is the practical system of human behavior making a distinction between the right and the wrong. Still, no religious scripture has claimed, like the Quran, that the promulgator of its faith was the best in conduct amongst his followers. But the Quran asserts:

“Nay, verily for thee (Muhammad) is a Reward unfulfilling, And lo! thou (standest) on an exalted

standard of character.”

The two verses cited here are coordinative according to their grammatical construction since they imply the inference of one statement from another. The first clause claims a “great reward “for the Prophet, which is abiding also, while the latter gives the reason for it. Unfailing recompense is promised to him because of his sublime nature and character. Such was the Messenger of Allah who had demanded from the people: “why say ye that which ye do not?”

The Prophet had a right to ask this question for he always did what he said. Weigh the characters of two prophets, just for a comparison, one on the Mount of Olives and the other on the Mount of Safa, and you would see the difference. One has lofty homilies unaccompanied by any practical example while the other does whatever he preaches. To forgive your enemy after you have gained power and authority over him is noble and virtuous, but the quietism of weak and helpless person cannot be taken as a proof of his eschewing revenge. One can only lay a claim to negative virtues, say, by not hitting anybody, not killing anyone, not being wrongful, not laying hands on another man's property, not constructing a house for oneself, or not amassing riches. He may have committed none of these wrongs but the question is whether he has helped anyone, saved anyone from being

killed or done any good to someone, or distributed alms to the poor and destitute? World needs positive virtues for an act consists of doing something and not merely of abstaining from it. The Quran is quite clear on this aspect of Muhammad's (SAW) character.

"It was by mercy of Allah that thou was lenient with them (O Muhammad) for if thou hadst been stern and fierce of heart they would have dispersed from round about thee."

This verse speaks about the kindheartedness of the Prophet and also adduces the proof that "They would have dispersed from round about" him if he had been stern and hardhearted.

Again, the Quran says;

"Then hath come unto you a messenger, (one) of ourselves, unto whom aught that ye are overburdened is grievous, full of concern for you for the believers full of pity, merciful."

The Quran speaks here of the concern of Muhammad (SAW) for the welfare of entire humanity. God informs that the persistence of the unbelievers in their ungodly ways is sure to invite divine wrath, and this is heart ending to His Apostle. The merciful nature of the Prophet and his ardent desire to save mankind from the impending catastrophe impels him to call the people to the path of righteousness. He is even more kind to those who listen to his call. The revelation, thus, testifies to the inclination of Muhammad (SAW) for the whole mankind, in general, and to the Muslims, in particular.

Nobody can claim to know a man more intimately-about his character, behavior and disposition- than his own wife. When Muhammad (SAW) made

the claim that he had been bestowed the mantle of divine apostleship, he had been married to Khadija for fifteen years. This was a sufficiently long time for any woman to know her husband fully well. But, what was the opinion formed by Khadija about her husband. The moment he told her about the revelation and his brotherhood, Khadija accepted his words without the least hesitation. It was the prophet himself who was a bit perplexed, but she assured him: Nay, it will not be so, I swear to God, He will never make thee melancholy or sad, for you are kind to your relations, you speak the truth, you clear the debts of others, you help the poor, you are hospitable, you assist your fellowmen and you bear the afflictions of people in distress. Such has been the prophet's conduct even before he was chosen by God for apostleship.

Of all the wives of the Prophet, one more dearly loved by him after Khadija, was "Ayesha who had spent nine years of her life with the Prophet. She affirms: "He never spoke ill of anybody. Instead of returning evil for evil, he used to forgive those who gave offence to him. He was always clear of iniquity and even had his revenge. He never hit any maid or slave or servant or even a dumb creature. He never turned down a seemingly request whosoever made it."

Among the relatives of the Prophet, nobody was closer to him than 'Ali. He had been with the Prophet from his childhood. He bears witness that "the Prophet was of cheerful disposition, kindhearted and had a clear conscience, warmhearted and

gracious, he was never harsh to anybody nor did he ever cast reflection upon anyone. If he disliked the request made by someone, he normally kept quiet instead of giving a blunt reply or acquiescing to such demands. Those who knew his habit, understood what he meant by his diligence. He never liked to sadden anybody; rather, he used to set the hearts at ease; he was kind, compassionate.

Ali further adds: He was benevolent, lavishly generous, truthful and exceedingly kindhearted. It was a pleasure to have his company. Whoever met him for the first time was filled with awe but on closer contact became attached to him.

The well-known British historian Gibbon has also expressed almost the same opinion about the character of the Prophet.

Hind, son of Khadija from her former husband, says about the Prophet: Kind of heart, he was nice and sweet-tempered. He never liked to displease or cause offence to anybody. He thanked others even for trifling favours. He took whatever food was placed before him without making any adverse remark. He never got angry for anything concerning his own person, but if anyone opposed what was just and right, he used to get sore and helped the right cause with all his might."

These are the testimonies furnished by those who were close to the Prophet and knew him like the back of their hands. How unblemished would have been the character so praised by those who had a long and intimate experience of his conduct and behavioral?

Another aspect of the Prophet's character, which is even more praiseworthy, is that he always practiced what he preached to others.

The Prophet called upon his companions to develop a deep and abiding affection for God through worship and remembrance. Leaving aside the living awareness of God, conspicuous in the life and character of the Prophet's companions, let us see how far the Prophet himself lived up to his teachings? Was there a single moment throughout the day and night when he lost the communion with or was forgetful of God? Illuminated by the light-divine that had broken in upon him, he maintained consciousness of the living, loving God whether sitting or walking, eating or drinking, sleeping or waking. A great portion of the awaits, extant today, consists of his supplications, entreaties and glorification of God, which he used to recite on different occasions. The *Hish Haseen* is a book of two hundred pages containing the implorations which he used to utter from time to time. Every word of these litanies fervidly breathes of his unbounded devotion to God and his impassioned admiration for Him since these were embedded deep into his heart. The Quran, speaking of the pious and God-fearing souls, says

"Such as remember Allah, standing, sitting and reclining."

This is how the Prophet spent his life. Ayesha says that he used to be ever engrossed in the remembrance of God.

The Prophet enjoined upon his followers to offer prayers, but how did he pay the divine honours himself? He had made the obligatory prayers, five

times a day, incumbent on others, but it was his custom to be on his knees eight times every day. Besides the five prayers of zuhr, 'asr maghrib and isha, he also offered the prayers of ishraq, after sunrise, chasht, when the sun had well risen and tahajjud, after midnight. These three were voluntary prayers no incumbent on every believer. A man normally performs seventeen rak'ats of prayer in the five obligatory ones, but the Prophet continued to offer about sixty rak'ats throughout his life. He never missed even the midnight orisons. He used to stand in the prayers for such remonstrated with him: "Why do you take all this trouble? God has already redeemed you." "What," she got the reply, "Should I not behave like a thankful servant?" His was not the supplication arising out of fear or awe, but was an expression of his ardent devotion and unbounded love for God. He used to remain bowed before his Lord for spells so long that it appeared as if he had forgotten to move over to prostration.

The Prophet had begun offering prayers from the very beginning of his ministry. The pagans of Mecca detested his way of orison, but he always offered prayers in the K'aba in front of the holy sanctuary. Many a time he was attacked by the disbelievers while he was engaged in prayers, but he never left the practice. It was still more difficult to offer prayers in the din of warfare when the enemy rode full tilt against his small body of followers, seeking the Prophet to end the dispute for ever. But no sooner the time did arrive for prayers than he was leading the faithful in the service of God. In Badr, when the two

armies were arrayed against each other, he hastened to his prayer mat to raise his hands supplicating God for the victory of his ill-equipped force. Never was he late in offering the prayers, nor did he ever miss them except on two occasions. Once, in the Battle of Trenches, he was not able to say asr prayers owing to the fierce assault by the enemy, and then, on another occasion, he had to offer pre-dawn prayers after the sunrise since everybody had fallen asleep after a night-long journey. After the Apostle's illness had worsened, a few days before his death, he came to the mosque supported by two of his companions in order not to miss the congregational prayer. When he was unable to get up, towards the fag end of his life's journey, and was relapsing into swoon, he tried thrice to join the congregation but fell down unconscious after each attempt. This was the way the Prophet showed, by his own example, how one should pay homage to God.

The Prophet commanded keeping of fasts throughout the month of Ramadhan. But, in addition to these, he punctuated every week with a fast or two. "When he took to the keeping of fasts", says 'Ahyesh, "it appeared as if he would never give them up." The Prophet forbade his followers to prolong the voluntary fasts beyond a day at a time, but he himself used to fast continuously for days together without even taking anything during the night. If his companions tried to emulate him, he dissuaded them saying: "Who amongst you is like me? My Lord provideth sustenance to me."

Normally, he kept fast for the whole of two months during Sh'aban and Ramadhan, the 13th, 14th and 15th of each month, the first ten days of Muharram, six days following the "Id-ul-fitr, and on Mondays and Thursdays in every week. In this manner did the Prophet teach his followers how to keep fasts.

The Prophet emphasized the merit of almsgiving, but he also showed the way to it by his own magnanimous charity. We have mentioned elsewhere how Khadija had praised his philanthropy—"you clear the debts of others and help the poor." Muhammad (SAW) never asked his followers to forsake their houses, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers and children for his sake, nor did he advise them to sell all they had and give the money to the poor. He did not even say that it would be very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven. Spend of that We have bestowed upon thee' was the divine command and the prophet exhorted the people to give away a part of one's earnings in charity as an act of thanks giving to one's Lord. But how did he himself act on his precept? He always gave away whatever he had with both hands. Booty of war came laden on camels but he never kept anything for himself or his family. Extremely frugal in his habits, spending days after days without anything to satisfy his hunger—this was the way of living chosen voluntarily by him. After the capture of Khaiber in 7 A.H./628 A.D., his normal practice was to distribute the cereals received after the harvest among his wives for their maintenance. But before the year was over, a large part of it was

given away in charity with the result that his household had to live from hand to mouth for several months. "More generous than all of us," says Ibn 'Abbas, "was the Apostle who used to give away freely during the Ramadhan. He never said 'no' in reply to any request, and never took his food his alone. No matter in what small quantity were the victuals available, he invited all those present to partake it with him. He had asked us to inform him if any Muslim died without paying his debts, for he always took the responsibility to repay it. The legacy of the deceased, of courses, devolved on his." Once a Bedouin said to him rudely. "All this does not belong to thee or thy father. Let my camel be loaded with it." Instead of taking ill of his insolent remark, the Prophet immediately agreed to his suggestion and got his dromedary laden with date and oats. He often used to tell his companions: "I am a trustee charged to apportion everybody's share. Verily, the donor is Allah."

Abu Darr, a companion of the Prophet, relates that once he accompanied the Prophet going somewhere in the night, when he remarked: "Abu Darr, if the mount of Uhad were into gold for me, I would not like three nights to pass with a single dinar left in my possession. Of course, that excludes whatever I may keep apart for clearing somebody's debts."

This was not merely a pious wish but the words of a Prophet expressed with the determination to act on his precepts. And he always did act in that manner. A large amount of that was once received from Bahrain. The Prophet directed the companions to

store it in the courtyard of the Mosque. Next morning he came to the mosque for performing his prayers but passed by the heap of treasure without even setting his eyes on it. The prayer ended, and he sat down near the bags distributing the money to one and all. He stood up only after he had given away to the last shell as if it were a filth which he wanted to get rid of as quickly as possible.

Another time cereals loaded on four camels were brought from Fadak, which was meant to meet the requirements of the Prophet's family. A portion of it was first given away in satisfaction of the debt incurred earlier. Then bilal was asked by the Prophet after some time that some of it was still left as nobody was available to receive the charity. Extremely perplexed to hear the news, the Prophet remarked: "I cannot to take rest in my house so long as this worldly pelf remains lying here." He spent that night in the mosque and went to his house early next morning when Bilal told him that the good gracious God had been kind enough to unburden him of his care. The Prophet thanked God before returning of his house, but he came back, visibly agitated, after a short while. When asked about the reason for his coming back, he replied, "It recurred to my mind that this small piece of gold was also lying in my house. I feared lest the sun should go down again and it remains with me."

Umm Salma has related another incident. She says: The Prophet looked sad and melancholy when he came to my house one day. On being asked the reason for it, he said, "Umm Salma, the

seven dinars I had received yesterday are still lying on my bed." There is another episode of even greater significance. It is related that when the Prophet's illness took a turn for the worse and he was lying on his bed restless with an splitting pain in his head, he suddenly recalled that a few gold sovereigns received earlier had not been given away. He directed to give away the sovereigns at once with the words: "Shall Muhammad (SAW) meet his Lord while he had these sovereigns still with him?"

Such was the example of charity set by the holy Prophet.

The Prophet of Islam commanded frugal living and contentment. It has been stated earlier that spoils, tithes and poor-came to Madina laden on par-animals from every nook and corner of the country. But the ruler of Arabia more often than not had nothing in his house, not even enough to make the two ends meet. 'Ayesha related after his death: "The Prophet left his world but he never had a full meal twice in a day." She adds that the day he died, she had nothing with her except a handful of oats. His coat of mail had already been pawned with a Jew. He used to say: "Son of Adam has not right to possess anything except a small hut to live, a pair of clothes to wear, simple bread to eat and water to fill his belly." He perhaps alluded to his own way to living in this manner, for, had a mud house with only one room, thatched with date-leaves and camels' hair. Ayesha says that she never had to keep the Prophet's dresses, meaning thereby that the clothes put on by him

were the only one he had at that time. Once a beggar came to complain that he was hungry. The Prophet sent words to his wives but none had anything to offer except water.

Abu Talha relates that once he saw the Prophet lying in the mosque. He was, at the time, hungry and restless. Some of his companions, on another occasion, complained of hunger to the Prophet and showed him the slab of stone each had tied to his stomach to mitigate the aching void. They found the Prophet still more famished for he had tied two slabs of stones to his stomach. At times his voice showed that he was starving. Another time, when he had nothing to eat for quite a few days, he went to see Abu Ayyub Ansari who immediately brought some fresh dates and got some victuals cooked for him. Before taking anything brought to him, he sent a bread with some meat to Fatima who also not taken anything for the last two days.

Fatima and her two sons, Hassan and Husain, were deeply loved by the Prophet, but he never gave them costly clothes and jewellery. Once he saw a gold necklace round the neck of his daughter. He admonished her saying, "Fatima, do you want the people to say that Muhammad's (SAW) daughter is bedecked with the necklace of fire?" Fatima at once took off the necklace and sold it to liberate a slave with its price. Similarly, on another occasion, he got his beloved wife 'Ayesha to cast off gold bracelets she had been putting on. The Prophet often used to remark: "Man needs only that much of the world as a wayfarer requires petty cash to meet his urgent

needs." This was not a piece of advice meant for other. Some of his companions who were pained to see the marks of a rough mat on his body, offered to provide him a soft bedding, but he dismissed their suggestion with the remark: "What have I to do with world? Only that much is lawful for me as a rider going on his errand requires rest under a shady tree."

The entire belongings of the Prophet in 9 A.H./630 A.D., when the frontiers of the Islamic State had extended from Yemen to the borders of Syria, consisted of an undergarment which hung down a few inches below his knees, a rough bedstead, a pillow filled with the bark of date, a handful of barley, a hide-skin and a water pail. This was all he possessed, and such was his contentment with bare subsistence!

Many a preacher can be seen exhorting others to become noble-minded and eschew selfishness, but does anyone himself observe that golden rule? Nevertheless, here is an exalted example of one who preached this lofty ideal not through words but by his deeds. All of us know how Muhammad (SAW) adored his favorite daughter, Fatima, but this very beloved blisters through driving the handmill and drawing water from the well. Distressed and pinched by her privations. She approached her father one day to ask for a maid servant. The reply she got was, "Fatima, my daughter, no provision has yet been made for the poor Suffah companions. How can your request be granted?" Another reply ascribed to him is: "The orphans of Badr had made a request before you did."

A companion presented a shawl to the Prophet at a time when he needed one. A man present on the occasion remarked, "How fine!" Prophet presented the shawl to him instantly. Another time, a companion had to celebrate certain function but he had nothing to entertain his guests. The Prophet directed him to go and take a basketful of flour from 'Ayesha although nothing else was available for his own household on that day. Once he came to 'Ayesha with his Suffah companions and asked her to bring whatever food was available. A few breads, some soup of dates and a cup of milk were all that was available in his house to entertain guests. This is how the Prophet taught the lesson of self-denial and contentment.

What endurance and patience is needed to demonstrate one's absolute reliance on God? For a practical example of it we shall have, again, to turn to Muhammad (SAW), the Prophet of God. The Lord had commanded the Prophet.

"Then have patience even as the stout of heart among the messengers (of old) had patience."

And, he calmly endured all the hardships and insults heaped upon him by an unmannerly and harsh people. The Meccans, among whom he was born, were uncultured and boorish, arrogant and insolent. Unwilling to hear a word against their deities, they were always ready to kill and be killed rather than countenance disgrace to their idols. But the Prophet cared nothing for their wrath and always went to preach the Unity of God in the sanctuary of the K'aba. This was also the rendezvous of

the Mecca's chieftains, but Muhammad (SAW) had made it a point to prostrate before the Lord, within their sight, without paying any heed to their furious opposition. Then was received the divine command:

"So proclaim that which thou art commanded."

We know how Muhammad (SAW) carried out this command by summoning the whole of Mecca from the summit of Mount Safa. The persecution of the lonely Prophet started. They manhandled him, abused and oppressed him, threw rubbish over him, tried to strangulate him, sowed thorns in his way, but never did he stop from publicizing God's religion. When his uncle Abu Talib hinted at abandoning him, the inspiring reply he gave to his uncle was: "O may uncle by God, if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left on the condition that I abandon this course, I would not do so until God has made it victorious, or I perish therein." He was forced to remain confined within the vale of Sh'eb Abu Talib for three long years, nothing reaching him and his family in the confinement. He was exhausted and the children and the old were emaciated by taking leaves of trees to satisfy their pangs of hunger. At last, a conspiracy was hatched to kill him but he remained firm and unshaken. He took refuge in a cave where he was almost tracked down by the enemy in hot pursuit of the fugitives. His companion then mumbled in terror: Oh, Apostle of Allah, we are only two here." The Prophet, however, had ample of patience and faith in God. "Grieve not", he replied, "Lo! Allah is with us." Again,

during the same journey when Saraqa got near the two on his horse, Abu Bakr could not help crying out, "O Messenger of Allah, we have been caught." The Prophet was even then serene and calm, chanting the Scripture with full confidence in the succor of his God.

Madina was also not safe from danger. Threatened by surprise attack of his former enemies, he had also concealed adversaries like the Jews and hypocrites of Madina. Guards were detailed for keeping night-long vigils but, then, revelation was received; perhaps, again, to demonstrate what faith in God meant to the Prophet. "Allah will protect thee from mankind," assured the Lord, and he promptly came out to ask the guards to go away and take rest since God's protection was enough for him.

On his return from an expedition of Najd, the Prophet was taking rest under a tree. No companion was near him. A Bedouin came forward with an unsheathed sword in hand and demanded from the Prophet: "Muhammad (SAW), who can now save you from me?" The Prophet's sleep was disturbed, he opened his eyes and said calmly: "Allah." The reply was so reassuring, so full of trust in God that the enemy put his sword back in the scabbard!

The same was the story at Badr also. One thousand well-armed Meccans were locked in battle against three hundred Muslims not all of whom had arms. But where was the Commander of these three hundred empty-handed soldiers? Away in a corner of the battlefield he could be seen bowing and prostrating and lifting

his hands in prayer. "O God," he was entreating, "if they are destroyed today, Thou will be worshipped no more."

There were also occasions when the Muslim had to suffer a defeat. They were, at times, so overwhelmed by the charging enemy that they had to run for their lives but the one who had absolute trust in God, stood firm at his place like a rock. At Uhad the Muslim forces were put to fight and the enemy slew many of them. The Prophet, however, stuck to his place. He was hit by a stone, fell on his side and one of his teeth was smashed; his face was scarred, his lips were injured and blood smeared his face. Still, he did not unsheathe his sword, for he was confident of the help of his Lord. Again, in the battle of Hunayn, when the Muslims were terrified by a sudden attack and took to their heels none heeding the other, Apostle dismounted from his dromedary and called out: "Where are you going men? Come to me. I am God's Apostle. I am Muhammad (SAW), the son of 'Abd Allah."

Is there any other Commander who holds fast to his post in the battlefield even after his army takes to flight? Who neither takes to the sword nor loses his heart but remains firm in his faith in God! Who does not forget even in such a precarious situation to beseech the help of God for granting him victory! Such was the heroism and the fortitude and the faith of Muhammad (SAW) since he had to set an example for those who fight solely for the sake of God.

You would have heard the preachment "Love the enemy", It is not

necessary to present here the hardships undergone by the Prophet at Mecca where he was persecuted and helpless, for it is not use making a virtue to necessity. When Muhammad (SAW) was migrating to Madina, the pagan chiefs of Mecca had set a reward of hundred camels for capturing him alive or dead. Saraqa b. Malik b. Ju'shum took to his horse in pursuit of the Prophet, thrice did he cast his divining arrows and thrice he got the reply: "Do him no harm." He refused to be put off and went ahead but, lo, thrice his horse stumbled, its forelegs went into the ground, throwing him away from the horseback. He then came to conclusion that the Prophet was protected against him and would have the upper hand. Psychologically speaking, he had lost his nerves. He decided to turn back, but before doing so he called out to the Prophet requesting him to write for him a document of safety for the day when he would gain victory over the Meccans. The document was promptly given to him. Saraqa embraced Islam after Mecca was captured. When he came to see the Prophet, the latter did not even ask Saraqa why he had gone in pursuit of him on the behest of his enemies.

You know Abu Sufyan alright. He was the leader of the Quraish in the battles of Badr, Uhud and Trenches, to name but a few. How many Muslims were killed because of him and how many times had he tried to root out Islam and kill the Prophet? He was such an arch-enemy of Islam that when he came to see the Prophet, just before the conquest of Mecca, along with 'Abbas, those who were present on the occasion recommended to kill him. But Abu Sufyan was confident in his heart of

heart Muhammad (SAW) would never take revenge. And, he was right, for Muhammad (SAW) not only forgave him but also allowed him to proclaim that whoever would enter his house in Mecca would be safe against the assault of the invading army.

Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan had been present in the battle of Badr inciting the pagans of Mecca to fight to the last against Muslims. In the battle of Uhud she had cut off the ears and noses of Muslim martyrs to make anklets and collars. She has cut out the liver of the Prophet's uncle Hamza and chewed it and so mutilated his dead body that the Prophet was sickened to see it. After the capture of Mecca she came veiled in disguise to accept Islam, but was still insolent in her replies to the questions asked by the Apostle of God. She was, nevertheless, forgive without being asked to explain her previous conduct. Astonished by the remarkable mercy of the Prophet, Hind exclaimed: "Muhammad (SAW), no tent I hated aforesaid more than yours, but none is now dearer to me than your pavilion."

Wahshi had killed Hamza in the battle of Uhud. When Mecca was conquered, he fled to Ta'if, but when Ta'if also surrendered, he was in an impasse but someone said to him, "God heavens, what is the matter" He does not kill anyone who enters his religion. You cannot get peace anywhere except in his company." He came back to seek forgiveness. The Prophet recalled the mutilated corpse of his uncle on seeing Wahshi, but condoned his crime. He simply said: "Hide your face from me and never let me see you Again."

'Ikramah was the son of Abu Jahl, the worst enemy of the Prophet.

He hated Islam like his father and had fought against the Muslims on several occasions. After Mecca was occupied by Muslims, he reflected over his past crimes and thought it wise to leave for Yemen. His wife, Umm Hakim, embraced Islam and repaired to Yemen to console him and to bring him back to Mecca. As soon as the news of his arrival was received, the Apostle got up so hurriedly what his shawl fell from his shoulders. He hailed 'Ikramah with the words: "Welcome to thee! O émigré rider!" Father of this man had been the leader of persecutors, and had caused the Prophet untold miseries. Was rubbish not thrown by Abu Jahl over the prophet and had he not conspired to kill him? Had he not led the infidels against Muslims at Badr and rejected every counsel of peace with the Muslims? But now, his son was received with open arms to tell the world that the enemy is loved in this wise!

There was another man, Habbar b. al-Aswad by name, who was responsible for the death of Muhammad's (SAW) daughter, Zaynab. He was one of those few heartless criminals who had been condemned after the conquest of Mecca. He wanted, at first, to go away to Iran, but on reconsideration went straight to the Prophet and confessed his guilt. "I wanted to leave for Iran," said he, "but looking back to your clemency I have come to you, O Prophet of God. The reports you have received about me are all correct." Confession of Habbar so softened the heart of the merciful Apostle that he forgave him instantly forgetting even the death of his own daughter!

'Umayr, b. Wahb was another

leader of the Quraish of Mecca. Shortly after the battle of Badr he sharpened his sword and smeared it with poison, and went off to Madina to seek his revenge from the Prophet. He was seen entering the mosque and was taken prisoner. His guilt was proved, but the softhearted Prophet allowed him to depart in freedom. 'Umayr had agreed to kill the Prophet on the promise of another chief, Sawan b. Umayya, who had undertaken to discharge his debts and to support his family. After Mecca had fallen to the Muslims, Safwan fled to Jidda to take a ship for Yemen, 'Umayr, however, told the Prophet that Safwan was the chief of his people by the plight of his former enemy that he granted him immunity. On 'Umayr's request for a sign to prove it to Safwan, the Prophet gave him his turban with which he had entered Mecca. 'Umayr overtook Safwan before he could embark the ship and begged him to return with him. Safwan was not agreeable, however. He said: "I go in fear of my life because of Muhammad (SAW). But 'Umayr who was not very long ago after the blood of the Prophet replied: "He is too clement and too honourable to kill you." At last Safwan returned and asked the Prophet: "I have been told that you have granted me immunity. Is it correct? When the Prophet replied in affirmative, Safwan asked for two months in which to make up his mind, and the Prophet gave him four months to secede. But four months was a pretty long time in the company of the merciful Prophet. Safwan accepted Islam well before the time was up.

When the Prophet led an expedition to Khaibar, the stronghold of the Jews, and captured the city after a

fierce battle, a Jewess brought a roasted Lamb poisoned by her to kill the Prophet. After chewing a morsel of the meat the Prophet came to know of the poison and asked to produce the women before him. She confessed what she done, but the Prophet let her off although he suffered from the toxic effect of the food brought by her for the rest of his life.

On yet another occasion, a disbeliever was apprehended on the charge of lying in wait to kill the Prophet. He was in a flutter, when he was produced before the Prophet, because of fear, but the Prophet consoled him saying: "Don't fear. You could not have killed me, even if you wanted to do so."

A band of eighty warriors was rounded up just before the capture of Mecca. It wanted to bear down upon the Prophet, but was let off by the merciful Apostle of God.

You would have surely heard of Ta'if. It was the city which had refused to grant asylum to the persecuted Prophet. It had declined even to listen to him. Here it was that, encouraged by 'Abdu Yalil, its chief, the touts and slaves had insulted and shouted and pelted stones on the Apostle until his shoes were filled with his blood; and when he had sat down tired and brokenhearted to take some rest, the touts had compelled him to move along amidst their missiles. How could the Prophet forget the sufferings of Ta'if, for it was the worst of torments he had had to endure in his whole life. In 7 A.H./628 A.D., The Muslims army had laid a siege of Ta'if but it had to retire after suffering a loss, since the walls of the city could neither raise the siege without reducing they city begged the Prophet to curse the people of Ta'if. But, when he

raised up his hands in prayer, he was heard not cursing the people of Ta'if but invoking blessings for them. "O God, guide the people of Ta'if and make them accept Thy religion," was the prayer sent up by the merciful Apostle of God.

In the battle of Uhad when the Muslims were put to flight and the enemy tried to get at Prophet, he was hit by a stone which smashed one of his teeth, his face was scarred and his lip was injured. The Prophet's incisor was broken and blood began to run down his face. He wiped the blood saying the while: "How can a people prosper who have stained their Prophet's face with blood while he summoned them to their Lord? O God, show them the right path for they know it not." This was the practical example of loving one's enemy. It demanded putting one's life at stake rather than preaching a high flown to a peaceful crowd.

We have mentioned 'Abdu Yalil, the cruel-hearted chief of Ta'if. When he ultimately came to Madina, the Prophet got a tent pitched for him within the sacred mosque. He had parleys with 'Abdul Yalil, after there night prayers were over, and told him about the hardships undergone at Ta'it. The love and respect accorded to the former enemy was yet another example of loving one's enemy not through words but by deeds.

When Mecca fell to the arms of the Prophet, all the chiefs of the city assembled in the courtyard of K'aba. This was the place where the Prophet had once been insulted and beaten, where conferences of the elders of Mecca used to be held for doing away with him, and the persons present were those who had persistently denied and

seventeen or eighteen times each day.

Social significance

The virtuous Sufis would call upon those taking bai'at at their hands to offer earnest repentance for their sins and make a solemn affirmation of loyalty and obedience to God and the Prophet. They would warn them against licentiousness and self-indulgence, injustice, oppression and violation of the rights of others. These pious teachers' abbeesses themselves to the moral elevation of vices like vanity, malice, kealousy and lust for wealth and power. They urged them to remember God and to do well to his creatures and practice self-abnegation and contentment. Besides the bai'at which symbolized forging of a special link between the guide and the disciple, the revered teachers also exhorted and gave good counsel to whoever came to them and strove to awaken in his breast the love for the Divine and the ambition to seek His countenance and to strive with all his might for self correction and inner reform.

Illustrative of the powerful, inspiring and morally regenerating influence exercised on the society by the Sufi leaders through their tremendous sincerity, moral excellence and preaching and instruction the following from the renowned historian, ziauddin Barni, depicting the social conditions prevailing in India during the reign of Alauddin Khilji.

"The leading Sufi saints at the time of Alauddin Khilji were Sheikh-ul-Islam Ruknuddin. A world received enlightenment from them and took the

bai'at their hands. Sinners were inspired by them to repent for their sins and thousands of evildoers and habitual defaulters of Namaz abandoned their evil ways and became devout worshippers; a strong fervor was created among them for religious deeds and their repentance attained perfection. The obligatory duties of worship and Divine ordinances in the other spheres of life began to be observed as a matter of course. Excessive attachment to worldly desires and aspirations, which lies at the root of most of the evils, got reduced under the force of the high morality, asceticism and profound self-denial of these spiritual masters People grew truthful as a result of their blessings; they became honest in the management of worldly affairs and were fired by the ambition to improve and evolve their inner selves to the inspirational influence exercised by the laudable moral conduct, abstinence and spirituality of the Sufi leaders....."

The historian goes on to say:

"In the last years of Sultan Alauddin's rule the general moral level had improved so much that a majority of the people abstained from drink, adultery, gambling and other social and moral perversions. The major sins were shunned as equivalents of infidelity. Muslims refrained from open usury and hoarding for fear of each other's censure. Adulteration, deceit and under weighing were eliminated from the market."

It is manifestly impossible, in these few pages, to give a coherent,

historical picture of the reformation brought about in public morals by the Sufi divines. It is enough to know here that the Sufi saints have made an enormous contribution towards the evolution of a healthy, conscientious environment in India which is the nation's greatest asset and which has provided it with worthy leaders and redeemers at every critical turn of history. Leaving aside the intervening centuries, the material on which is widely distributed in the memoirs and biographies of the spiritual leaders, we will take an instance from the life of Syed Ahmad Shaheed, a religious reformer and Sufi saint of the 19th century, to show the extent of the moral impact of his personality on society. It is recorded in connection with his brief stay in Calcutta that "the liquor business in that great city was suddenly brought to a standstill. The liquor merchants complained to the authorities that though they were paying the taxes regularly, they had been forced to close down their business since the arrival in the city of a saint under whose influence more and more Muslims were getting reformed daily and taking the vow not to indulge in intoxicants any more. They did not even look at the liquor shops now."

The venerable divines enjoined on the new entrants into their Orders fairness in monetary dealings, paying back of debts and scrupulous satisfaction of the claims of others. To cite an example, Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia was bidden emphatically by his spiritual mentor, Khwaja Fariduddin Ganj Shakar, "to do his level best always to placate the opponent and

render to everyone what was his due." Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia owed a person some money, and a book he had borrowed from someone had got lost. When, on arriving in Delhi, he went to settle these accounts, the person to whom he owed the money remarked, "It seems you are coming from the society of Muslims," while the owner of the book said, "It is always like that at the place from where you are coming"?

People, likewise, were imbued with the desire to oblige and be of help to others under the guidance and instruction of the Sufi saints. During the entire course of the long Haj journey, Sayed Ahmad Shaheed and the large band of his companions missed no opportunity to do an act of public service. While they were sailing down the Ganges they came across, at the landing-ghats of Mirzapur, a boat which was laden with cotton. The owner of the cotton was in need of labourers to remove it to the godown. Seeing his plight, Syed Saheb, at once, told his companions to unload the boat and so energetically did they apply themselves to the task that in a couple of hours the witnessed the deed were left thoroughly amazed. "What sort of men they are?" They commented among themselves. "They did not even know the cotton merchant and yet they have toiled so hard for him without charging a pie. Surely, they are the devout men of God."

What was achieved by the Sufi divines in India in the sphere of general moral uplift was solely the result of their evolved spirituality and loftiness

of character. No government, no law, no other institution could bring about so much improvement in so many people or keep them so steadily within the bounds of moral propriety and rectitude.

Fearlessness

A most valuable service rendered by the holy Sufi saints was that they stood fearlessly against the unjust and degenerate ways of powerful despots and tyrannical rules, and saved the kingdom and the society, in general, from the consequences of their follies by boldly telling the truth at their face. Inspired by their example, people also fear and became courageous and straightforward. The history of Muslim rule in India offers any number of instances when Muslim saints there the consideration of personal safety to the winds and fulfilled, at the gravest peril of their, the Islamic duty contained in the Prophet's Tradition that a most superior form of Jihad is to speak the truth in front of a tyrannical ruler.

Sheikh Qutbuddin Munawwar was a Chishti saint who lived in solitude at the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Once the King chanced, on one of his tours, to pass through the area in which the saint lived, but the saint did not come to meet him. The King, then, summoned him to Delhi. When the Sheikh entered the royal palace, the court nobles, ministers, heralds and attendants were standing in a double row in front of the throne. One seeing the imposing spectacle, his young son, Nurudding, who was with him, and never had been in a king's durbar before, was seized with fright. The

Sheikh admonished him sternly. "Glory is for God, Baba Nuruddin," he said to him in a loud voice. The son related later that as soon as he had heard these words, he felt a new strength surging within him, all the fear disappeared and the Court grandees began to look to him as meek as goats. The King complained to the saint, "When I was in your neighbourhood you neither counselled me nor honored me with a visit." The Sheikh replied, "The dervish does not consider himself worthy of royal society. In his solitary he prays for the King as for the general body of Muslims. He will now beg to be excused. After the interview, the King confided to a nobleman that he had noticed to shake hands, that their hands trembled at the time, but Sheikh Munawwar's grip was so firm that he seemed to be completely unaffected by the event". The King, then, presented to him a purse of one lakh gold coins, whereupon the Sheikh exclaimed, "Glory be! Two seers of pulses and rice and a pice worth of ghee are enough for the dervish. What will he do with all this money? After great persuasion and on being advised that the King would be antagonized by a blank refusal, he agreed to accept 2,000 pieces which, too, he distributed among his brother-saints and other poor and indigent people before returning from Delhi.

To take another instance, again from the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Maulana Fakhruddin Zarradi had a strong aversion to meeting him. He used often to say that he saw his head rolling in his presence

and the King will not forgive). At last, he was once called by the Sultan to his court. "Give me some good advice," the Sultan asked, "Suppress anger," The Maulana said. "What anger?" Asked the Sultan. "The anger of the wild beasts," the Maulana replied. The King grew red in the face at the reply, but he kept quiet. After this the royal meal was ordered. The king shared his vessel with the Maulana, and, sometimes, even fed him with his own hand. The Maulana ate with apparent dislike. When the meal was over, the Maulana came away.

The Sufi saints upheld steadfastly the traditions of detachment, fearlessness and undaunted championship of truth though those were the days of absolute monarchy and despotic rule. The Kings, too, under the force of their spirituality, felt compelled to allow them the freedom to perform their duty even when they showed no consideration to the forthright and honest Ulema. The spiritual leaders guarded zealously their selfrespect and dignity before mighty rulers, chieftains and noblemen right till the last days of the Mughal Empire. It is reported that "Emperor Shah Alam, once, was present in the Mahfil-Sima'a of Khwaja Mir Dard when, troubled by a painful leg he could not help stretching it a little. The Khwaja protested, "It is against the decorum of the society of the fakir to sit like this," He said. The Emperor apologized and indicated his discomfort upon which Khwaja Mir Dard remarked, "If you were not feeling well, what was the need to come?"

Propagation of Knowledge

and Learning

The Sufis of India were great patrons of learning. Some of them were outstanding men of letters themselves. Their belief was that it was impossible to know God without knowledge, and also that 'an ignorant Sufi is the Devil's plaything.' There are instances when they refuse to admit in their folds votaries of striking promise and aptitude until they had completed their education. As we will see in proper detail in another chapter, the remarkable educational and literary progress of India under the Muslims was due, directly or indirectly, to the encouragement given by the Sufi divines. The two of the greatest scholars and teachers of the 14th century, Qazi Abdul Muqtadir Kindi and Sheikh Ahmad Thanasari were the spiritual protégés of Khwaja Naseeruddin Chiragh-i-Delhi. The renowned 17th century educationist and teacher, Maulana Lutfullah of Kora Jahanabad, through whose pupils, and pupils of whose pupils, educational activity was kept going till the 19th century, was a Sufi saint of the Chishtiya Order. More often than not, the Khanqah and the Madrasa of Shah Pir Muhammad at Lucknow, the seminary of Shah Waliullah at Delhi and the Khanqah of Maulana Rasheed Ahmad at Gangoh were the best examples of it.

Benevolence

The needs of thousands of men used to be satisfied through the saints; in countless homes the hearths were lighted because of their benevolence; a vast number of people lived in their Khanqahs as permanent guests

contains X chromosomes and the other Y chromosome. If an X chromosome from the female unites with a sperm that contains an X chromosome. Then the baby is female. If it unites with the sperm that contains a Y chromosome, the baby is male. In other words, a baby's sex is determined by which chromosome from the male unites with the female's ovum.

None of this was known until the discovery of genetics in the 20th century. Indeed, in many cultures, it was believed that a baby's sex was determined by the female's body. That was why women were blamed when they gave birth to girl.

Thirteen centuries before human genes were discovered, however, the Quran revealed information that denies this superstition.

The Clot Clinging to the Uterus

If we keep on examining the facts announced to us the Qur'an about the formation of human beings, we again encounter some, very important scientific miracles.

When the sperm of the male unites with the ovum of the female, the essence of the baby to be born is formed. This single cell, known as a "zygote" in biology, will instantly start to reproduce by dividing, and eventually become a "piece of flesh" called an embryo. This of course can only be seen by human beings with the aid of a microscope.

The embryo, however, does not spend its developmental period in a void. It clings to the uterus just like roots that are firmly fixed to the earth by their tendrils. Through this bond, the embryo

can obtain the substances essential to its development from the mother's body.

Here, at this point, a very significant miracle of the Qur'an is revealed. While referring to the embryo developing in the mother's womb, God uses the word "alaq" in the Qur'an:

"Recite: In the name of your Lord Who created man from alaq. Recite: And your Lord is the Most Generous." (The Qur'an, 96:1-3)

The meaning of the word "alaq" in Arabic a thing that clings to some place". The word is literally used to describe leeches that cling to a body to such blood.

Certainly, the use of such an appropriate word for the embryo developing in the mother's womb proves once again the Qura'n is a revelation from God, the Lord of all the World. ● (Al-Jumuah)

"Soon will We show them Our signs in the furthest regions of the earth, and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things?"
 (S.41,A.53).

Islam and Knowledge

M.I.H. Farooqi

"He has taught you that which [heretofore] you knew not". (Quran, Surah 2: 239)

Although the meaning of knowledge in Arabic is 'Ilm' but the word Ilm has a much wider connotation than knowledge. It covers all aspects of knowledge including both of deen (religion) and duniya (world). Importance of knowledge in Islam can be judged by the fact that the first word of Allah to Islam is "Read" (Iqra). As a matter of fact there are more than 700 verses of the Quran., which use the word Ilm, or it's derivatives. Through these verses Man is invited to use his intellect to know and discover the mysteries of the earth and the universe. In these verses there is a command, an advise and encouragement for us to observe the phenomena of nature, the succession of day and night, the movements of stars, the sun, moon, and other bodies of heaven and earth. Of course all these observations lead us to know the Oneness of God. Some of the Quranic verses regarding knowledge (Ilm) are as follows:

"O my Lord! Increase Me In Knowledge." (20:114)

"Say: Are those who know equal to those who know not? It is only men of understanding who will remember." (39:9,)

Allah will raise up to (suitable) ranks those of you who believe and

have been granted knowledge. (58:11)

"They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration). Say: "The spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord. And of knowledge it is only a little that is given to you (o mankind)." (17:58) Now such were their houses in utter ruin because they practice wrongdoing. Verily in this is a sign for People of knowledge." (27: 52)

Travel through earth and see how Allah did originate creation" (29: 20)

And such are the Parables We set for mankind but none will understand them except those who have knowledge." (29: 43)

"Worst than the beast are those who do not understand (do not use Aql)" (8:22)

"Those truly fear Allah among His Servants who have knowledge: for Allah is exalted in Might Oft-Forgiving." (35:28)

"Only the learned know the secret of universe" (Surah 58:11)

In the Quranic term, knowledge (Ilm) is the spring of piety, (35: 28); self-control (Zohad) (28:80); achievement (28: 78); patience, (18:68); purification (2:129) and faith (34:6); It is also a pride (27: 15-16) source of light & brightness. (13:16) and light & brightness. (13:16).

Apart from the emphasis on knowledge, man is also warned of ignorance. In Allah's world, only "the

Hellish are ignorant" (Surah 7: V 179). Ignorance is the source of blasphemy (kofr) 7: 138), corruption (27:55), stubbornness (48:26), rudeness (49:4) and conflicts (59:14)

Beside various Qur'anic verses stressing the importance of knowledge, there are a large number of Prophetic Traditions that encourage Muslims to acquire all types of knowledge from any corner of the world. The Hadith literature (Sayings of the Prophet) is also full of references to the value of knowledge. Some such sayings of the Prophet are as follows:

"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave"

"Verily the men of knowledge are the inheritors of the prophets"

Seek knowledge though it may be as far as China"

Seeing knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, men or women".

"The ink of the Scholar is more holy than the blood of the Martyr." If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, Allah will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise"

"The inhabitants of the heavens and the Earth and the fish in the deep waters will ask forgiveness for the learned man".

"The superiority of the learned man over the devout is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars".

The learned are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets leave neither dinar nor dirham (money, leaving only knowledge, and he who takes it takes an abundant portion."

O Allah, I seek refuge in Thee

from four things: Knowledge which does not profit, a heart which is not submissive, a soul which has an insatiable appetite and a supplication which is not heard".

O Allah, I ask thee for Beneficial Knowledge, acceptable action, and good provision"

Wisdom is the lost property of a Muslim; hence collect it from whoever you find it with"

"To listen to the instruction of science and learning for one hour more meritorious than standing up in prayers for a thousand nights"

"An hour's contemplation and study of Allah's creation is better than a year of prayers."

These Quranic injunctions and Prophetic Sayings (Traditions) echoed throughout the history of Islam and encouraged Muslims to seek knowledge wherever it might be found. Exercise of the intellect (aql) is of significance in the entire Islamic literature, which played an important role in the development of all kinds of knowledge, scientific or otherwise, in the Muslim world. For Islam, intelligence lies in understanding and knowing the Signs of Allah. Islam emphasizes the importance of knowledge both religious and mundane. As a matter of fact, one cannot be a good Muslim unless he/she acquires worldly knowledge along with religious knowledge. Muslims are required to maintain a balance between the two. They are expected to seek good things of this world. Allah Himself commands us to pray: "Our Lord! Give us good in this

world and good the hereafter!"

Islam is a religion based upon knowledge for it is ultimately knowledge of the Oneness of God combined with faith and total commitment to Him that saves man. The Qur'an invites man to use his intellect, to ponder, to think and to know, for the goal of human life is to discover the Truth.

Scientific knowledge, comprising natural and physical sciences, was sought and developed by Muslim scientists and mathematicians vigorously from the very beginning of the Islamic civilization. The scientific endeavor found its flowering period with the establishment of scientific institutions and academies in Islamic world. One such Academy named Bait al-Hikmah (House of Wisdom) was established during Abbasids at Baghdad. Islam never maintained that only religious knowledge was useful and the empirical sciences of no use. It was only during their periods of stagnation and decline that Muslims, unfortunately, considered theology as the only obligatory knowledge, they erroneously tried to limit all Quranic verses and ahadith on knowledge to religious knowledge. They forgot that the first generation of Muslims demonstrated their good understanding of Islam. They were pious men and they contributed to scientific discoveries and other spheres of Knowledge. Alas, only few Muslims of the present generation do this. Present day educated Muslims are either well versed in religion and ignorant in modern knowledge or vice

versa. It is also sometimes alleged by Muslim scholars and intelligentsia that many Ulemah, not familiar with the modern world, are oppose to the progress of science and technology, which in their opinion is the cause of all the ills in the society. Thus, they are not able to guide the Ummah for securing a place of dignity amongst the comity of nations. According to a Muslim Scholar, "the concept that knowledge meant only religious learning was made by Muslim rulers after 16th century, of course with help of semi-literate clerics attached to their courts. Their purpose and sinister design was to keep common Muslim in the darkness of ignorance and superstition so that they would not oppose un-Islamic tyrant rule."

In Islam learning is incumbent for both men and women. In true Islamic traditions Muslims began to study and to master all the fields of learning like religion, linguistic, architecture, mathematics, physics, astronomy, geography, medicine, chemistry and philosophy. They translated the known works of the ancient world from Greece, Persia, India, even China. Based on these works they improved and expanded the knowledge of science for the benefit of humanity. In this scientific pursuits Islam produced some brilliant men who were philosophers, scientists, explores, poets, musicians, physicians and religious scholars, like Zakaria Razi, Abul Qasim Zahravi, Al-Kindi, Ibn Haytham, Ibn Nafees, Jabir bin Hayyan, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Abu Kamil, Al-khwarizmi, Al-Ghazali, Al-Farabi, Al-Bairuni, Al-Baghdadi, Al-

Idrisi, Al-Masudi etc.

All the great scholars of Islam including Al-Farabi emphasized that the teaching of Holy Quran and Hadith place a great importance on the acquisition of knowledge. A stated earlier by knowledge it was meant all kinds of scientific, technical, social, and political in addition to the religious and spiritual. The Prophet implored his followers to travel even to long distances to seek knowledge. That is why every traditional Islamic city during middle ages, possessed public and private libraries and some cities like Cordova Baghdad boasted of libraries with over 400,000 books. According Dr, Hans Koechler of Austria, "It is a historical fact that the shaping of a genuine European intellectual life in the Middle Ages was the result of the flourishing Islamic civilization in Spain."

The Universities of Islamic Spain had generally ten thousand students on their roles where all branches of knowledge were taught. Students from other parts of Europe like France, Italy and England used to study in these Islamic Universities. Today the trend has been reversed. Muslims go to Europe and America for learning science and technology. Even Islamic Studies is taught in many centers of the Western Universities. In the words of late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the eminent Islamic thinker, after the 16th century A.D. Europe followed Islamic attitude towards knowledge and made great progress whereas Muslims followed the behavior of the Europeans of the Middle Ages (Dark Ages) which was based on superstition, ignorance and bigotry. And this was the causes of

FALL of Muslims in the present day world".

Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, in his book on the conflict between Islam and the West, has very rightly observed "Humanity has greatly suffered (in recent past) because of severing the ties of knowledge (Science) with religion and this separation has caused great harm to Islamic Society. Science (Ilm) progressed very fast in the West (last century) and Religion (Iman) got the boost in the East. Today Iman need the company of the knowledge and knowledge need the patronage (Sarparasti) of Iman". In the words of an eminent Scholar Mahmood "The Ummah of Islam stands at present at the lowest rung of the ladder of nations. In this century, no other has been subjected to comparable defeats or humiliation" Another scholar Hassan gives the reason as "diminishing Muslim vision of knowledge is singularly responsible for the decline of creativity, dynamism, vitality and power of the Islamic civilization."

Now, for attaining dignity and respect, Muslim Ummah has to understand the Quranic warning:

"Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people, until they change it themselves" (13:11)

Remember also the Command of Allah:

"Do not forget your role (share) in this world" (28: 77) ●

(Extracted from Muslim Societies Rise and Fall)

The Dignity of Humanity

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Allah is the Lord of the Heavens and of the earth and of all that between them. "To Allah belongs all that is in the Heavens and earth : to Allah do all matters return." But out of all creatures mankind has been endowed with highest rank, status and dignity. He Himself says: "We have honoured the sons of Adam, provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation' (S. 17, A70). We may easily comprehend the position of mankind through the following verse of the holy Quran. "And when thy Lord said unto the angels ! Lo! I am about to place a vice regent in the earth, they said: 'with thou place there in the earth one who will do harm and will shed blood. We hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee. He said : Surely I know that which ye know not" (S.2, A, 30)

The above mentioned two verses of holy Quran indicate that God bestowed upon human beings the highest position as compared to other creatures of Him.

The dignity of mankind has been emphasized by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in a hadith which runs : "Allah will ask on the Day of Judgement : "O Children of Adam, I fell ill but you did not come to see Me? Man will say in reply, 'Allah ! Thou wert the Lord of the worlds ! how could have I attended Thee ? God will then say; Did you not know one of my servants had fallen ill, but you did not come to attend him. Did you not know that if you had attended him, you would have found Me by his side ?

'O Children of Adam, I asked for food from you, but you did not give it to me, 'God will ask. Man will answer, Allah! Thou wert the Sustainer of the worlds how could have I fed Thee ? God will then say, ' One of my servants asked you for food, but you refused it to him. Had you fed him, you would have found Me near him.

"O Children of Adam, I asked for water from you, but you refused it to Me, God will ask. Man will again say in reply, Thou wert the Lord of the worlds, How could have I quenched Thy thirst?' God will answer, one of my servants demanded water from you but you refused. Had you given him water you would have found Me near him."

Late S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (RAH) says regarding this saying of the Prophet: "Can there be a better concept of human dignity and nobility? Has man ever been granted this honour in any religion or social philosophy?"

Needless to add that God has put every thing in the Heavens and the earth in the service of mankind. Besides mankind was endowed with the faculty of knowledge. This is the biggest divine bounty and greatest asset for mankind. Knowledge is such an essence through which human beings may distinguish between good and evil and Halal (permitted) and Haram (Prohibited) and may live with peace and amity by restoring human dignity, nobility and grandeur.

Continued on page 16

Around the World

First Muslim Cemetery in France

Paris: France inaugurated its first municipal Muslim cemetery in the city of Strasbourg, a move hailed by Islamic leaders as a step in recognizing one of the country's largest minority groups. Local officials and Muslim leaders attended a ceremony on February 6 in the northeastern French city to launch the cemetery, which has space for about 1,000 graves. Mohammed Moussaoui, the head of the French Council of the Muslim Faith, hailed the cemetery's opening as a "historic" moment for Muslims in France and said it was "an important symbol of belonging" for the community. "If a religious community is to feel entirely at home in a city, it must be helped in building places for worship and for the burial of its believers," said Strasbourg Mayor Roland Ries. France's 1905 law on the separation of church and state forbids the building of municipal cemeteries restricted to only one religion. But the Alsace-Moselle region, which includes Strasbourg, operates under different basic laws dating from its reversion from German to French control after World War I. ●

Islamic Theology Centre Opened

Bonn: German Federal Education Minister Annette Schavan officially opened Germany's first Centre of Islamic Theology at the University of Tübingen on January 16. The centre in Tübingen is the first of four planned Islamic study centres throughout the country, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research with a total sum

of around 20 million Euros (as reported earlier). During the opening ceremony, Annette Schavan said the centre was a "milestone for integration" of Germany's approximately 4.3 million Muslims. And indeed, the plans to establish Islamic study centres and introduce study programmes in Islamic theology are part of a modern integration policy. The centre will mainly function to train imams and teachers for Islamic studies; so far, most imams currently in Germany are from Turkey and many of them do not speak German. The head of the centre is Omar Hamdan, who so far is the only professor teaching at the centre. A total of 23 women and 13 men began the four-year Bachelor's degree course in Islamic Theology at the University of Tübingen in October 2011. ●

Islamic Studies Online

Dr. Bilal Philip's launched the World's tuition-free first Islamic Online University (IOU) on April 1, 2010. It offers Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies through English medium, completely online. The IOU represents a major step towards helping Muslims across the globe fulfill the Prophet's command to seek knowledge of the religion and correct their understanding of its tenets.

After successfully running a collection of 24 free diploma courses since 2007, in which more than 50,000 students are currently registered from more than 202 different countries, Dr. Bilal has taken the bold step of offering a BA in Islamic studies along similar lines.. ●

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