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The Fragrance of East

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Wisdom of Qur' an An Obligation

O Believers! Fasting is enjoined upon you, as it was enjoined upon those before you, that you become God-fearing. (Al-Qur'an- 2:183)

Commentary:

This verse of the Holy Qur'an tells the believers not only the obligatory nature but also the real intent of fasting in the holy month of Ramadhan. It in fact conveys three important facts: (1) that Allah enjoins upon the believers fasting in the holy month of Ramadhan; (2) that fasting is not something new for them as it was enjoined upon the earlier peoples as well, and (3) that the real intent of fasting is *La'allakum tattaqoon* (so that you may become God-fearing).

Fasting in Ramadhan is mandatory, not optional. Each and every Muslim man and woman must fast during this holy month if he / she is adult, sane and physically well.

Like Salat (Prayers), fasting has been an essential duty for the followers of earlier Prophets. The Bible says that Jesus Christ fasted for forty days (Matthew 4:1-4, Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-4). In Peter 2: 21 the followers of Christ are enjoined to fast as the Prophet did. Even the Vedas and the Puranas prescribe fasting. Thus earlier peoples fasted though with a difference in the number of days and the prescribed time of fasting.

Fasting in one of the main sources of inculcating and nurturing piety. It is a month- long training course, in which the believers abstain from eating, drinking and intercourse from dawn to dusk. •

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Virtues of Ramazan

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of God said: "When the month of Ramzan' comes, the Gates of Heaven are thrown open, and the Gates of Hell are shut, and the devils are put behind the bare." (In another report, the "Gates of Mercy" are mentioned in place of the "Gates of Heaven." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Commentary:

Commenting on this Tradition, Shah Waliullah remarks that as the devout bondsmen apply themselves to worship and good-doing during the month of Ramazan and spend their days in God-remembrance and recitation of the Quran while Fasting, and a major part of their nights in *Taraweeh* and *Tahajjud*, Supplication and repentance, under the influence of their high spirituality and devotional exertions the hearts of the common Muslims, too, become more inclined towards prayer and piety and they, on the whole, succeed in abstaining from good many sins. Owing to the generation of the atmosphere worship and virtue in the Islamic circles, people who are not wholly disregarding of transcendental truths develop a fondness for things that are pleasing to God and an aversion for acts that are repugnant to Him. Moreover, in this blessed month the recompense on even smaller acts of moral goodness is made much greater by God than on other days. In consequence of all this, the gates of Paradise are opened and of Hell are closed for such people and the devils are not left free to tempt and mislead them. •

Editor's Note:

Where will it lead To

On July 2, 2009 a Division Bench of the Delhi High Court comprising Chief Justice Ajit Prakash Shah and justice S. Murlidhar pronounced the judgment that Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in so far as it criminalizes consensual sexual acts of adults in private is violative of Article 14, 15 and 21 of the Indian Constitution. Thus expanding the scope of an Indian citizen's rights by equating "sexual orientation" with the Constitutionally protected identities of gender, caste, religion and race, the Delhi High Court decriminalized gay sex between consenting adults.

The judgment has set a fierce controversy both for and against, views are being debated in media and intellectuals gatherings. Annoyed with the decision of the court some public figures have approached the Apex court requesting to turn down the High Court's judgment. Though Delhi High Court judgment does not apply all over India but it will have "persuasive" "not" binding value in other states. However, if Supreme Court upheld the High Court's verdict then the decision will cover whole of India. The Supreme Court refusing to stay the order has issued notices to all concerned including Government of India to file their views. Surprisingly Government of India has developed the cold feet on the issue and its Law Secretary is of the opinion that there is no lacuna in the judgment and High Court's verdict stands firm on legal scrutiny. Almost all religious heads have strongly opposed the verdict. Baba Ramdev has already filed an appeal in Supreme Court whereas All India Muslim Personal Law Board in its recently concluded conclave at Calicut has decided to contest the case in Supreme Court.

The most reprehensible aspect of the issue is that some prominent social activists and lawyers have come out openly the support of the verdict. It is strange that eminent lawyer and former Law Minister Ram Jethmalani justifies the striking down of Section 377 of IPC on the analogy that fish, iguana lizards, roosters, dogs,

cats, horses, rabbits, lions and many other species mount others of the same sex. He argues that Homosexual behaviour is so rampant in non-human species that it is difficult to justify the epithet unnatural for this behaviour.

The logic that IPC was drafted in 1861 and Section 377 of it is based on ancient religious scriptures and echoes Victorian morality is absurd. Not only IPC but Cr.PC, Evidence Act and many other Codes and Acts were drafted and enacted more than one and half a century ago. All of them stood the test of the time. Even after 60 years of independence our legislatures have not been able to replace them. It is strange that inspite of the fact that Medical Experts are unanimous that homosexuality is a perversion and unhealthy practice, medically too not only socially. Someone approach the judiciary and get a favourable verdict. It is satisfying to note that at least UP government has taken firm decision to stand firmly behind Section 377 of IPC. State DG Police whose opinion was sought by the government has opposed all suggestions to repeal the IPC Section stating that the act covered under the section was a" completely unnatural and cannot be socially permitted." "There is no reason why the clause should be removed."

Anyway the issue has triggered off an animated debate all over. Religious heads cutting across the lines of faith, have gathered on a single platform to unanimously oppose any change or deletion in Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. We hope and pray that they come out" victorious". . • S.A.

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Sharing Other's Sufferings Man's Chief Excellence

S.Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

If man loses the ability of sharing other's sufferings, he will become bankrupt. Even if a nation is blessed with the wealth of America, administration of Russia, and petrol wells of Saudi Arabia, even if rivers of gold and silver flow in it, and even if wealth showers over its land like rain, it will still be truly pauper if its stream of love is dried. The blessings of Allah will not descend on it. It is a matter of great satisfaction that man's eyes can still shed tears and that his heart can still suffer with the pain of others. The heart which loses this quality is not a heart; it is just a piece of stone. Such a heart has not value in the sight of Allah, no matter whether it is the heart of a Muslim, or a Hindu, or a Christian. The value of the human heart, in fact, lies in its quality to long, shiver, cry, and love. The human heart should be greener than the land, broader than the universe, more affluent than the waterfall, and more bountiful than the heavy clouds ready to stream down.

The eye which does not become wet is not a human eye; it is the eye of a daffodil. The heart which does not feel pain of others is not a human heart; it is the heart of a lion. The forehead which does not become wet with the perspiration of penitence is not a human forehead; it is a piece of rock. The hand which does not move forward to serve humanity is virtually paralysed and lifeless. The claw of a lion is better than that hand of a person which cuts the throat of another human being. Had the Creator wished man to live to kill, He would have created man with swords in place of hands. If the aim of man's creation were to store wealth, he would have been born with an iron safe in place of a throbbing heart. If man had been created to plan destruction, he were born with a devil's mind instead of man's.

People marvel at the wonders of man's physical self but the wonders of man's heart are so much more curious. Man has such a sensitive heart that if one person suffers in the east, another person feels the pain in the west. It was the same kind of heart which kept the Prophet of Allah restless at home all night because the non-Muslim captives of the Battle of Badr (who were his arch enemies) were tied down and groaned in pain. It was the same sympathetic human heart which made him shorten his prayers when he heard a baby crying, thinking that its mother praying behind him in congregation might become restless. How can then a heart be called a heart if it inflicts pain another heart?

Man's Ultimate Responsibility

If human beings subjugate themselves to the supremacy of material things and become slaves to their selfish desires, life on earth will become hellish and unbearable. Man has to remember that his place in the scheme of creation is that of God's vicegerent. As the Quran bears testimony, Allah ordered the angels to bow down in front of man as a mark of respect. This clearly establishes that it is highly humiliating for man, God's deputy on earth, to bow down in front of anybody except his Creator, Had there been any such scope, Allah should have allowed man to bow down in front of the angels as they carry on Allah's orders on the earth: they, for instance, bring rain and make the wind blow. By making the angels bow down in front of man Allah clearly revealed His will that the world has been given to the care of man as His vicegerent and that he himself is created for the worship of Allah the Almighty. Man must look at his present miserable lot and tell himself that he is supposed to do better. He must rise to his appointed position as Allah's vicegerent, take none else except Allah as his Lord, and save himself and the world from eternal suffering. •

Good Works

S.Sulaiman Nadwi

The sum and substance of all the teachings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is that the success and salvation of man depends upon only two things, the one is Iman (Faith) and the other is A'mal-e-Saleh (good work). In the previous volume of Sirat-un-Nabi we have explained in detail the implication and significance of Iman (Faith) and its impact on human life. In the present volume we shall discuss the Islamic concept of good works and deeds. Iman implies firm conviction or belief in the fundamental or basic principles of Islam and A'mal-i-Saleh mean the application of these principles in practical life and acting upon them. Mere theoretical knowledge of a thing or belief in it is not sufficient unless it is practiced or translated into practical reality.

According to Islam, the success or salvation of man depends upon both these things i.e. Iman (Faith) and A'mal-i-Saleh are the walls or pillars without which no structure or building can stand.

The best example in this respect that can be quoted is that of geometry and its rules or formulae. Without acting upon these rules or formula, we can never find out the exact result, shape, figure measurement etc., of a thing. The science of geometry is absolutely useless without the practical application of its rules or formulae.

The Holy Qur'an has, in its various verses, laid stress on the point that the success and salvation of man lie in both Iman (Faith) of good works along with Iman (Faith):

By the declining day,

Lo! Man is in state of loss.

Save those who believe and do good works. (103:1,2,3).

The history of mankind rightly bears testimony to this undeniable fact that the people and nations who had firm belief in the Divine realities and who did good and righteous works according to their belief ultimately succeeded:

Surely we created man of the best stature

Then we reduced them to the lowest of the low,

Save those who believe and do good works, and this is a reward unailing. (95:4-6)

In the following verse of the Holy Qur'an it has been stated that how the best potentialities in man were degenerated due to his own folly. Only those were not led astray whose beliefs as actions were good. The Jews claimed that they had been granted the special right and privilege to go to Paradise, but the Holy Qur'an says:

And those believe and do good works; such are the owners of the Garden. (2:82)

That is, the attainment of the paradise would not depend upon nationality, race or caste and creed of a person but upon Iman (Faith) and good actions. One whose good works and deeds would outweigh one's sins on the Day of Judgment would enter paradise and he who had spent an evil and sinful life would be humiliated in this world and in the Hereafter. Iman and good and pious works would not only make his worldly life better and comfortable, but his life in the Hereafter would full of immense joys and pleasures. This is the Divine Law which is not subject to change. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an:

We said: O Dhu'l Qarneyn! Either punish or show them kindness.

He said: As for him who does wrong we shall punish him, and them he will be brought back unto his Lord who will punish him with awful punishment. But as for him who believeth and doeth right, good will be his reward, and we shall speak unto him a mild command. (18:88-89)

Now there hath succeeded them a later generation who have ruined worship and have followed lusts. But they will meet deception.

Save him who shall repent and believe and do right. Such will enter the Garden, and they will not be wronged in aught. (19:59,60)

While those who believe and do good works (will be) in flowering meadows of the Gardens, having what they wish from their Lord. This is the great preferment.

This it is which Allah announceth unto His bondsmen who believe and do good works. (42:22,23)

Lo! Those who believe and do good works, theirs are the Gardens of Paradise for welcome. And whosoever hopeth for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous work and make none sharer of the worship due unto his Lord. (18:108,111)

One whose belief in a thing is firm and unwavering is bound to act according to his belief and he cannot even think to do anything contrary to it. As a matter of fact it is due to his weakness and lack of belief that he acts otherwise. It is against the human nature to act and behave against ones belief. When a man is fully convinced of the reality of a thing and believes in it from the core of his heart, he can not but act upon it. For instance, when we are convinced that fire burns how can we put our hand into it, but a child who is not aware of this reality would not hesitate to put his hand into it. So all our wrong doings, evils, sins and crimes are the result of lack of out belief.

This is the reason why both Iman and A'mal-i-Saleh have been stated to be the means of success and Paradise.

The sovereignty on that day will be Allah's. He will judge between them. Then those who believed and did good works will be in Gardens of Delight. (22:56)

The following verse has been repeated forty-five times in the Holy Quran:

Those who believe and do good works. (22:50)

And to whom Allah has promised sovereignty and kingship in this world will be those endowed with the virtues of both Iman (Faith) and A'mal-i-Saleh (good works).

Allah has promised such of you as believe and do good works that he will surely make them to succeed (the present rulers) in the earth.(22:55)

And Allah has promised forgiveness and reward for such people.

Those who believe and do good works, for them is Garden and a rich provision.

At some places, the words, Islam (surrender) and Ihsan (good and pious works) have been used in the Holy Qur'an, and rejecting the claim of the Jews to Paradise it has been said:

Nay, but whosoever surrendereth his purpose to Allah while doing good his reward is with his Lord; and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve. (2:112)

It is evident from these verses of the Holy Qur'an that success and salvation of man depends not only on Iman (Faith) but also on A'mal-i-Saleh (good works). It is a fact that before the advent of Islam most of the religions of the world had many wrong and exaggerated notions about faith and good works. In Christianity, as is evident from the epistles of St. Paul, the salvation of man depends upon faith only. According to Buddhism it depends upon good actions while some believe that it can be attained through meditation and remembrance. But the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has given this message to mankind that success and salvation of man depends upon Iman and A'mal-i-Saleh. The first and foremost thing is that we should be sure and fully convinced about the truth of our belief or faith called Iman and the second essential thing is that our actions and deeds should conform with the fundamental principles of our faith. A patient can not be recovered from the disease merely by his belief in the rules of medical science unless he acts upon them. Similarly unless a man observes and act upon the principles of Islam he can not succeed in the world and in the Hereafter merely by profession of his faith in Islam. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an:

*Successful indeed are the believers
who are humble in their prayers,
and who shun vain conversation,
and who are payers of the poor-due,
and who guard their modesty
and who are shepherds of their pledge and their covenant,
they are the heirs
who will inherit Paradise.* (23:1-11)

We can not succeed in this world simply depending on our belief. Although it is our belief that bread is a sure treatment of our hunger, it can not be cured or satisfied unless we strive to procure bread and swallow it after chewing it. Although we are sure that our feet can move from one place to another unless we move our feet toward a certain direction we can not reach that place. Similar is the case of all our worldly activities. We can never achieve success in this world or in the Hereafter unless the principles of Iman (belief or faith) are practically applied and practiced in all spheres of our lives. Of course a believer in the principles of faith is better than the disbelievers as the former has a chance to reconsider his attitude at any time of his life and rectify himself by adopting the principles of faith. Just possible, he may be forgiven by Allah on account of his affirmation of faith.

Kinds of Good Actions and Deeds

A'mal-i-Saleh is a very comprehensive term having vast meanings and it comprises all good works, big and small. However, its division is 'Ibadat (acts of devotion), morale and dealings.

In Islam great stress has been laid on the word Ibadat (acts of devotion). They include all those works and deeds which are done by a person with a view to earn the pleasure of Allah. Therefore, ethic and moral conduct and behavior also come under the category of Ibadat if the purpose behind them is to please Allah, but Fuqaha (scholars of Islamic jurisprudence) have divided them into three separate sections and the detail thereof is that A'mal-i-Saleh are of two kinds, the first relates to the rights and duties we owe to Allah and the second which relates to human beings. The latter are further divided into two kinds, the first relates to our morals and the second concern's our dealings.

These three kinds of A'mal-i-Saleh have been explained in detail in the present volume and in the subsequent volumes. •

Man – Where he Stands

S. M. Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi*

There is a theory of western thinkers that the middle age was an age of tyranny, violence, restrictions on views and thoughts and oppression, and the westernized people of the Islamic world have accepted this theory blindly. This theory has become so common that every author who wants to write about that period cannot evade it and writes the tales of injustices, violence, oppressions, victimization of the subjects and the autocratic behaviour of beaurocrats.

It is a fact that in the past ages, there individual rules everywhere; in Asia, Europe and Africa. At that time means to collect money and hike the standard of living were not available, as they are available now; in this factories and expansion of commerece; opportunities for educational and technical experts, purchasing power, import and export facilities, advancement in science and another which are available now, were not available in the great achievement of modern times and it is much better than the past. But if the practical life of man is looked into it will be seen that inspite of al this progress and achievements availability of many facilities, industrial advancements, man could not find freedom from different unwillingness; but they have increased, instead. Types of worries and anxieties have changed names and forms only.

To know the present position, the reports of Amnesty International are enough, which are published from time to time. These reports describe the present position of human rights in the world. They are like a mirror where can be seen how aggressively one race is behaving with other; one class is behaving with other; and one government is treating its own people by way of injustice fundamental rights, partiality of color and race, incompatibility of political views and thinking's, difference in way of living. This thing does not need a deep and thoughtful thinking but simple common sense is enough to understand it.

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Armed struggle, cheapness of human blood, violent actions are very common in the world. The hands of big powers as well as small powers are covered with blood. An example of it is the flood of refugees, migrating from one country to another, is even increasing. There is an organization of the UNO to handle the problem, the number of staffers of this organizations is, now, equal to the entire population of the ancient world. Capable people, learned and genius people are not free in their countries. A great number of them compelled to migrate to other countries. Politicians, thinkers and ex-ministers are afraid for their lives, and insecurity in their home country. The use of lethal weapons and killer gases has become common to maim human beings and many large factories are manufacturing them. Attacks on weak people are common in present world. It is demonstrated equally in the political and social fields. Anyone who possesses a slight awareness of history will confirm that whatever means are used to obtain anything legal or illegal, were not known in the ancient world and the common folk are as helpless as they were in olden times.

We agree that the possibilities in the field of science and engineering, industry and craftsmanship are very large. But instead of using science and industrialization for constructive purposes they are used for destructive purposes. If one hesitates' defense budget expenditures and compare it with the expenses on warfare jobs.

The big powers infiltrate in another country under the pretext that the power balance is changing. And they exert great efforts in making others believe that, in case they go out and leave the country, it is certain to lose balance of power and it is also known that, their political gestures are full of political considerations and internal trickery. That is the reason that, wherever their help or presence is badly needed, they do not go to, and where they are not needed, they go as undesired guest. An oppressor finds some excuse for doing oppression and injustice and calls his act of oppression, assistance and liberation. The oppressed one keep crying for being wronged and no one comes forward to redress his grievances.

This hypocrisy and open contradiction has come to light in their handling of the Bosnia Herzegovina crisis. The world has seen the tumult general apprehension, arrest and penalization after the explosions in their World Trade Center and the policy of these powers on the sorrowful tragedy of the blaze in Ibrahimi mosque. Their policies are also known on Sudan, Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan and after the 9/11 event, Americas so called anti-terrorist campaign is a clear example of it.

The only cause of international problems and their entanglements in it is that there is no impartial power, no impartial organizations and no impartial judicial system which can intercede in international matters on the basis of principles and justice and stop the oppressor from misacts and assuage the wronged ones. This is such a bad situation that is becoming a danger to the entire humanity. The international institutions dedicated to the job have become tools in hands of big world powers.

No problem of humanity can be solved unless a power comes forward who is impartial, just and foregoes material gains, if any, and stands firm in international problems and stands as rock against and oppressor.

The secularism of Europe has unveiled. Religious extremism is common in Europe. It has marred the face of entire world, and has defaced its marks and prints.

Efforts are being made to impose their language, culture and faith. Christianity is, openly, being preached and whoever sees the tours of Pole and his speeches, the budget of missionary word and its network will make out that these missionary activities, these bloody wars, these bloodsheds, are being carried out with the support and connivance of the world powers. The world is now standing on the edge of a volcano. Ethics, fairness in dealings have all vanished. To act according to change and progress. This entire world is suffering from servitude of one set up. Even the media is not free. Agriculture, industry and education as well are obediently following western countries. Inspite of it the recitation of the virtues of the western culture has become the habit and custom of the westernized people because the sense of judgement between right and wrong, and self-respect has died down.●

Religion, Morality, and Global Peace: Islamic Perspective

Badiur Rahman*

Religion

Islam plays a very important role in the life of Muslims. It is like air and water to us. It is the sustenance for our inner soul. Even the knowledge of relation between God and His creature is gradually attained through it leading to a state of bliss. It is this religion, which keeps its believers happy, confident and content. And this religiosity is held very seriously and earnestly. People who are atheist if remark scornfully against this religion, al-Quran advises to "Forsake those who take their religion for a pastime and a jest; and whom the life of the world beguileth.." [al-Quran, 6:70]

However, acceptability of this religion is left open depending upon one's choice to accept it or to reject it for "there is no room for coercion in Islam" But once accepted he has to accept it in totality. Picking and choosing of the matters that suit and quitting those that do not suit him is not allowed. It is very much rational and practical. The approach is natural and humanistic.

Islam descended down along with Adam [AS] which was bequeathed to other Prophets viz: Abraham, Moses, Isa etc, through ages until it took final shape in the hands of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Therefore the Islam preached by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is not at all a new religion. He was the last Prophet who laid the religion of Islam on its purely puritanical foundation.

Arabic word 'Islam' denotes complete submission of oneself to the will of God. The concept of this God is strictly monotheistic. The statement: 'If there were therein gods beside Allah, Then verily both [the heavens and the earth] had been disordered " [al-Quran, 21: 22], though argumentative but sounds acceptable. The following verse of the holy Quran: whether different gods are better or the One and All powerful Allah? (12: 39) and many similar verses inculcate the oneness of God. So much so that any form of polytheism is considered the greatest sin in the eye of Allah. He declared: verily God forgives not the giving of

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partners to Him; other than this will He forgive to whom He pleased, but whosoever gives a partner to God has conceived a monstrous sin. (chpt,4:51). However the religion of Islam lays greatest stress in the oneness of God; the spirit of which is contained in a brief but incisive saying of God to his Prophet "say: He is God, the one and only; the Eternal, the Absolute; He begetteth not nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him." [113: 1-4] refer again to the holy Quran where He has been exalted justly; God! There is not God but He, the Living , and the selfsubsistent. Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His will He knows what is present with men and what shall befall upon them, and nought of His knowledge do they comprehend, save that what He wills. His throne is wide as the heavens and earth, and the keeping of them wearies Him not. And He is the High, the Mighty One" [2:255

Islam, the favourite religion of the above mentioned God is a synthesis of two kinds of distinct yet co-related things. Certain things are concerned with belief while others are dependant on active and personal participation. Former believing part can well be elucidated by a quotation from the Holy Quran "O Scriptures which He has sent down formerly. Whosoever denies God and His Angels and His Books and His Apostles and the last day has strayed far from the Truth"(chpt 4: 136)

Believing in these five things entail some active actions for doing while refraining from something else. The unique feature of Islam is that it has codified everything as what are permissible and what are prohibited and are to do what are not to do. The principal among the dos are belief in one God & Prophet Muhammad [S AW] as His last messenger, and five times prayer, Fasting, Alms giving, and Haj pilgrimage ----which are known as five pillars of Islam. One of them dealing with belief has been mentioned earlier and the rest deserve mention though briefly.

The importance of five times prayer is immense to keep the belief in Islam afresh. Regular performance of prayer with due piety, humility, sincerity and devotion is the best way of expressing gratitude to the Creator; the minimum of piety expected in the prayer is that the worshipper should think that he is beholding God in his front, if he

cannot reach that level at least he should think that God is looking at him. Only then this prayer can lead him to nocturnal journey i.e Meraj, and it can elevate him to the angelic innocence- shedding of all human vices for which the Holy Quran states: 'for ones should and helps increase contentment and self- confidence. Moreover the congregational prayers remind the teaching of equality in Islam - for Islam stands vehemently against any form of distinction in respect of caste, colour or creed. Rather Islam proclaims.: the best of you to Allah is the most God fearing among you." However this form of prayer is so important that no one, whether a rich or a poor, educated or uneducated, is exempted from it as the line of demarcation', the Prophet said, ' between faith and infidelity is renouncement of prayer.]

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is enunciated as another important religious act to be observed by all. It is such a perfect and profound act of worship that at every moment it gives a reminder of God's omnipresence. Keeping that in mind a fasting man restrains himself wilfully and overwhelmingly from food, drinks and carnal desires. One month fasting embodies physical, mental and spiritual exercises. The whole month turns as a global season of worship remembering of God and reciting the Holy Quran; the grandeur and beauty of which is appreciated by all. The objectivity of fasting is to ensure discipline, correction of character and improvement of disposition, and restraint from evil desires. It helps understand value of food and water while the rich realizing a bit of the pangs of hunger unhesitatingly gets ready to extend hands for the poor and needy.

That is why Zakat (poor due alms giving) is enshrined as another important act of Islam. Unlike the previous ones. which were common to all, this Zakat is obligatory to the rich only. The philosophy behind Zakat is that Allah is the absolute owner of all things while man is the temporal owner of property and wealth. Therefore distribution of a certain part of excess money through poor- due is not only logically humane but also morally desirable; for Islam discourages accumulation of wealth in one's hand.

Haj is another important act of Islam enshrined obligatory for those rich who can afford it financially and physically. It is the reminder of Prophet Abraham's mission of sacrifice and his preaching of monotheism for which Al Quran made a reference to Abraham and said:

it is the cult of your father Abraham; it is he who has named you Muslims (chpt 22: 78). A pilgrim, in all rituals of Haj gets an elevated spiritual contentment matching against his thirst for the love of God. During Haj people of different countries assemble together and having clad in uniform Ihraam- dress pronounce together the following same words in Arabic, with the same spirit: Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik Laa shrika Laka Labbiak innal hamda wannemata laka walmulk laa shrika lak i.e. I 'm present, O Allah! I 'm present there is no partner unto you. All praise and virtues are for You as is the sovereignty, You have no partner.

Moreover, Islam is a religion of ordained divine laws covering every aspect of human life, social, economic or political. Every phase is considered worship if the following philosophy is held fast "inna salati wa nusiki wa mahyaya wa mamati lillahi rabbil aalamin" i.e. my worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the whole Universe.

Besides above mentioned dos Islam has ordained to restrain from certain things; as found in the holy Quran "He hath forbidden you only carrion, and blood, and blood and swineflesh and that which hath been immolated to [the name of] any other than Allah. [2 : 173] also vide [5: 3] Islam also censures and prohibits consuming alcohol, committing fornication and adultery, backbiting giving false witness, telling a lie, misappropriation of orphans and minors property etc. etc .

Morality: The religion of Islam teaches to pray by the utterance of : *alhamdu lillahi rabbil aalamin ar rahmanir rahim* " i.e All praise be to God who is the Lord of the Universe who is most compassionate and merciful. On its scrutiny we find Allah is the Lord of all and not Lord of the Muslims only. He is equally benevolent to all for which all mankind breathe from same air, get warmth from the same sun, get water from the same rain and enjoy same physiological and biological characters and metabolism. When God himself is an embodiment of kindness so how can His favourite religion be lacking from moral teachings?

To be good at home is more important in Islam. For the obedience to parents Islam says show kindness to your parents, whether one or both of them attain to old age with the; and say not to them Uff! Neither reproach them, but speak to them with respectful speech and tender affection [27: 23]. For all-round teaching to behave with parents Quran

says: refer humbly to your parents; with humility and tenderness, say, O Lord be Merciful to them, even as they brought me up when I was helpless." [17: 24]. The epitome of mother's greatness can be traced in the saying of the Prophet: the paradise lies at the feet of the mothers. [sayings of Muhammad, S.A. NO. 105. Henceforth, Sayings]. There is another unique saying of the Prophet regarding good behaviour and good conduct with wife, the Prophet said : He is the most perfect Muslim whose disposition is best; and the best of you are they who behave best to their wives, [Sayings, No 203]. His other statement bears broader spectrum: " he is of the most perfect Muslims whose disposition is most liked by his own family [sayings, No 202]. To understand the spirit of these sayings of the Prophet requires not few pages but volumes.

The position of man is elevated to the extreme point of height in the Quran by declaring him vicegerent of God on the earth. According to Islam all human being is essentially equal on humanitarian terms. According to the teachings of Islam if a person fails to sympathize and support an aggrieved person, he is like one who fails in obeying Allah. God often asks to provide food to the hungry to fetch water to the thirsty, and to dress the undressed.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said: whoever is kind to His creatures God is kind to him, therefore be kind to man on earth whether good or bad; and being kind to bad is to withhold from badness so that those who are in heaven may be kind to you. All aspects of morality have well been treated in the Holy Quran and Hadith. We get admonitions for abstaining from vanity, pride, cruelty, misbehaviour rather we are inspired for alms giving, charity to the poor, the kindred, the wayfarer; we are also advised to keep trust and covenants, to make good relations with neighbours; not to speak ill of others and particularly of the dead etc. The prophet Muhammad said: Feed the hungry and visit the sick and free the captive if be unjustly confined. Assist any person oppressed, whether Muslim or non-Muslim"[Sayings, No 142] It was possible only for our Prophet who could declare: the best of the mankind is the who is the most helpful to the people.

Global peace: As the religion of Islam has often tried to inculcate morality it also laid great stress on peace. Global peace is core issue of the hour for our every existence. It is incumbent for religious, secular and all humane people ensure global peace by any means to make this

world such a habitat that our heart speaks out "O God, you have not created this world meaningless."

Causes of the breach of peace and conflagrating the fire of war, besides misunderstanding of religion, are industrialization, market grabbing capitalism etc. But the significance of the word Islam is as actually derived from salaam-primarily meaning to be in peace, safety, salvation, and to greet etc and its secondary sense is to surrender oneself to Him with whom peace is made. Therefore there is not wonder when we see that the motto of Islam is peace. Al-Quran said:-work not confusion in the earth after the fair ordering [thereof], and call on him in fear and hope. Lo! The mercy of Allah is nigh unto the good.(chpt 7: 55). There are other verses of the same spirit -not to break peace and not to spread anarchy. The Prophet of Islam has also often advised to maintain peace. Al-Quran also said: "Whosoever killeth a human being for other than man slaughter or corruption in the earth it shall be as if he had killed all mankind and whosoever saveth the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life all mankind [5: 32]

These days peace is often at stake due to misunderstanding of religion which ultimately leads to a kind of superiority to others. Though al-Quran said: "Lo! Religion with Allah(is) The Surrender (to his Will and Guidance (3: 19) and since surrender to His Will denotes Islam so it is admitted that Islam is the favourite religion to Allah. But it never provoked breach of peace on the plea of religion rather the spirit of the above saying can be fathomed through all-round reasonableness of Islamic faith and rituals which have been enshrined with every minutest detail. So much so that Islam rightly claims that it is such a religion which has made clear distinctions between what is lawful and what is not. But Islam however it may conclusively be reasonable, it is seen through centuries that all human being are not ready to accede to this faith and belief. It is found in the Holy Quran that many of the people will not be faithful believers. Even for this reason Muslims do not breach peace as Al-Quran teaches: "And if thy Lord had willed, He verily would have made mankind one nation, yet they cease not deferring (12: 118). Al-Quran also teaches that: "Revile not those unto whom they pray beside Allah lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance. Thus unto every nation have We made their deed seem fair....(6: 108)

The acceptability of Islam vests on the beauty of Islam as was manifested in the very life of the Prophet (PBUH); and as is and always remain manifested in the glorious Quran. The former has been codified elaborately in the apostolic Hadith. If anyone is earnest enough in understanding those beauties he should refer to the aforesaid miraculous books either in original Arabic or through translations in various languages of the world. I am confident that he will admit that Islam always teaches to be tolerant in respect of religion. Holy Quran says: "there is no compulsion in religion (2: 256)." For people who follow other than Islam, Al Quran says: "unto you your religion, and unto me my religion (109: 6)".

Our prophet Muhammad (PBUH) always preached his mission earnestly desiring to win over the hearts of people. But many of them did not pay heed to his counsel causing the Prophet often hurt and disheartened. Observing this bitter experience of the prophet Allah often consoled Him through numerous revelations. As the refusal of infidels was tormenting to the Prophet; that condition may be if they believe not in this statement, that thou (Muhammad) wilt torment they should will grief over their footsteps (19: 6)." To rejuvenate the Prophet in these circumstances Allah occasionally gave Him a reminder saying "remind them for thou (Muhammad) art but a remembrance, thou art not at all a warder over them (Al Quran, 88: 21-22); and similar types of sayings in the Quran are abundantly found viz "...then it is thy duty only to convey the message (unto them)... (3: 20), "the duty of the messenger is only to convey (the message)" 5: 99) etc.

Moreover Muhammad (SAW) was a prophet as well as a human being. As a human being he had some limitation in winning the hearts in respect of guidance. For that when the Prophet (SAW) could not make his uncle accept Islam he was reminded by the revelation: "Lo! thou (O Muhammad) guidest not whom thou lovest". On the other hand the Almighty power of Allah was ascertained in that respect by complementing: "but Allah guideth whom He will". Al-Quran (28:56).

So however much the Prophet (SAW) felt aggrieved for not accepting his mission by a number of heathens he never thought of breaking peace neither did he wage wars against them unless being compelled to be defensive against their aggression. Even then he used to be very cautious in dealing with elderly people, women and children

of the enemy group. He was always against war against innocent peace loving people. He said "the greatest enemies of Allah are those who entered into Islam and do acts of infidelity and who, without cause, shed the blood of man." (Saying, no 74). We can never ignore his saying: God's all creatures are His family and he is the most beloved of God who trieth to do most good to God's creature. (Ibid, No. 35). I cannot resist from quoting another unique saying of the Prophet (SAW) in the same context: "do you love your Creator? Then love your fellow beings first." (Ibid, No 434). The Prophet (SAW) who was an embodiment of love for mankind how can he or his religion be a threat to global peace?

I believe the onus of threat to global peace do not lie upon the Muslims. All of us, belonging to any religion, should uphold tolerance and peace. If God can tolerate all diverse beliefs and thoughts, if He can nurture all of us with equal natural resources why should we not honour other's religion or belief and live peacefully?.

"Actions are judged by motives (innamal a mal-u bin-niyyat)."

-Sahih Bukhari

Islamic Perspectives of Inter- Community Relations*

Yahya Nomani

The issue of what Islam has to say about inter-community relations is one about which much misunderstanding exists. Anti-Muslim propagandists claim that Islam preaches hatred for non-Muslims, and that the Quran is a menace to world peace. They go so far as to argue that world peace is simply impossible as long as the Quran exists. In order to back their propaganda, they have deliberately twisted and misinterpreted certain verses of the Quran. Many people with little knowledge have fallen prey to this poisonous propaganda, which has been aggressively spread on an enormous scale through the media.

At the same time, we must also admit that some Muslims themselves entertain misunderstandings and extremist views about the issue of relations between Muslims and others that are based on a completely wrong interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah, the practice of the Prophet. This calls for a detailed study, so that misunderstandings, wrong interpretations and extremist views about Islamic teachings regarding relations between Muslims and others can be countered.

It is true that Islam stresses that Muslims, here understood in the sense of true submitters to God, are distinct from others in terms of their religious views and ethical virtues. It cautions them from imitating others, especially their religious symbols and rituals, which Islam does not accept. It is also true that Islam strictly forbids befriending enemies of the faith and those who conspire against Muslims. At the same time, however, Islam exhorts Muslims to relate to other non-Muslims with softness, good manners, gentleness and love.

Respect for the Human Race Islam teaches that all human beings, irrespective of community or race, are children of the same

* Translated from Urdu by Yoginder Sikand.

set of primal parents, and, so, are bound together by their common humanity. As the Quran states: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you." (Quran 49:13).

This basic Islamic teaching about the whole of humankind being children of the same parents stresses the need for consciousness of our common humanity and of us being brothers unto each other. This is why, according to a hadith report, the Prophet would, after finishing his prayers, supplicate with God, saying, 'O Allah! Sustainer of myself and of everything! I bear witness that all human beings are brothers of each other.' According to the Quran, human beings are creatures worthy of respect: "We have honoured the sons of Adam [...]and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our reation." (Quran 17:70) This clearly indicates that Islam regards human beings as deserving respect, love and concern on the basis of their humanity. A hadith report well illustrates this teaching. Once, the Prophet was present along with some of his disciples when a funeral procession passed by. The Prophet stood up. Seeing the Prophet stand out of respect for the dead man, some of his companions informed him that the man had been a Jew. But, the Prophet responded, 'Was he not a human being?' After the Prophet, some of his companions, too, followed this example of his, as is related in the books of Hadith compiled by Bukhari and Muslim. In another hadith report, the Prophet exhorted his followers to relate with kindness to all creatures thus: 'God is merciful to those who are merciful. Deal with mercy towards creatures on earth and He in the heavens will be merciful towards you.' (Sunan Tirmidhi, 1924; Sunan Abu Daud, 4941). This hadith report very clearly expresses a basic Quranic teaching. The Quran states that the true path to salvation is through showing mercy and love to others: "And what will explain to thee, the path that is steep? (It is:) freeing the bondman; Or the giving of food in a day of privation to the

orphan with claims of relationship, or to the indigent (down) in the dust. Then will he be of those who believe, and enjoin patience, (constancy, and self-restraint), and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion. Such are the Companions of the Right Hand.” (Quran 90: 12-18) This is the path of salvation—not simply to be kind-hearted, but also to participate in the mission to promote, in practical terms, kind-heartedness and compassion for others. Such are the steps on the path to salvation.

Islam does not restrict good behaviour simply to other human beings. Rather, it insists that Muslims should behave in this way with all living creatures. Thus, according to a hadith recorded in the Sahih of al-Bukhari, the Prophet said, ‘There is merit (sawab) in behaving well towards all living creatures.’ The Bond of Nation/Community (Qaum) Islam recognizes a certain sort of brotherhood and feeling of oneness among members of the same community/nation as an established fact. This is expressed in the Quran in the form of various prophets, such as Hud, Saleh, Shoeb and so on, addressing the non-Muslim members of their communities as brothers, and, in this way, accepting a relationship of nation- or community-based brotherhood between Muslims and non-Muslims belonging to the same nation or community. When these prophets of God preached His message to their own people (who were not Muslims, or ‘submitters’ to God), they addressed them as ‘ya qaum’ or ‘O my people’, appealing to their hearts and reminding them of the common bond of community that they shared with them. This clearly indicates the sort of concern and love that Muslims should adopt when addressing their non-Muslim compatriots and in seeking to cement bonds with them. The importance of how concern and love should infuse relations between people belonging to a common race or nationality, despite their religious differences, is evident from the fact that the Prophet Muhammad cared for the (the then non-Muslim) Egyptians just because the mother of the Prophet Ismail (Ishmael), son of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), was from Egypt. The Prophet instructed the Arabs to remember this ancient racial tie, saying that they would

soon conquer Egypt and that he wanted them to deal with the Egyptians kindly because they had the right to protection (haq-e zirr ma) and because their racial ties with the Arabs demanded this. Kind Behaviour Towards Non-Muslims: Some Examples Various Islamic teachings and Sunnah or practice of the Prophet indicate the kindness and concern that non-Muslims deserve from Muslims. The Quran mentions that needy non-Muslims are deserving of the financial assistance of Muslims, and that, therefore, they should be helped. In the Surah Al-Baqara of the Quran, God says that guiding others to the faith is not the work of human beings, and that God guides whom He wills. The Quran adds that we must not refuse to help a needy person simply because he or she refuses to accept Islam. It says that we shall be rewarded for whatever we spend in God's way: "It is not required of thee (O Messenger) to set them on the right path but Allah guides to the right path whom He pleaseth. Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls and ye shall only do so seeking the "Face" of Allah. Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly." (Quran 2:272)

This verse indicates that while providing financial help to others it is not necessary to distinguish between those who accept Islam and those who do not. In other words, all needy people are deserving of such help. Elaborating on this verse, the noted scholar Imam Ibn Jareer Tabari wrote in his Tafsir-e Tabari that the verse commands Muslims not to deprive non-Muslims of charity. He was of the view that this was how numerous companions of the Prophet and those who came after them in the next generation understood this verse. This was also the practice of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. Thus, as mentioned in the Kitab al-Kharraj by Abu Yusuf, the Caliph Umar sent a letter to his governor, instructing him to provide for his poor and needy non-Muslim subjects from the wealth of the Muslims. Reconciliation and Kind-Heartedness Islam stresses kindness

towards relatives, especially close relations, so much so that it says that God declares war against he who does not fulfill his responsibilities towards his relatives (Masnad Ahmad 1684; Sahih al-Bukhari 5987-5989). It also declares that those who sunder their relations with their relatives will have no place in heaven (Sahih Muslim, 2556). Kindness towards and reconciliation with relatives applies to all relatives, Muslim as well as non-Muslim. It is their right. Islam seeks to cement relations, not to destroy them.

Thus, non-Muslim relatives have all the rights over a Muslim, so much so that the Quran lays down that if a Muslim's parents are not Muslim themselves, and even if they seek to pressurize their Muslim son or daughter to abandon Islam, they must be treated well under all conditions, although one should not yield to their pressure. As the Quran puts it: "And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command) "Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal. "But if they strive to make the join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge obey them not; Yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration) and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love): in the End the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that ye did."(Quran 31:14-15). The mother of Abu Hurairah, a companion of the Prophet, used to say bad things about the Prophet, but Abu Hurairah tolerated this. When he complained about her behavior to the Prophet, the latter prayed for her, rather than expressing hatred for her. Because of this, she was guided (Sahih al-Muslim, 2491). The mother of Hazrat Asma bint Abu Bakr was a polytheist. In the wake of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah between the Muslims, led by the Prophet, and the Meccan pagans, relatives from both sides

were able to meet each other. At this time, Hazrat Asma's mother came to Medina to meet her, bringing along with her some gifts. Hazrat Asma thought of reciprocating this gesture by giving her mother some presents when she was returning. However, she hesitated for a bit, not sure if Islam allowed for Muslims to resent gifts to their non-Muslim relatives. Accordingly, she approached the Prophet and asked him if she should seek to strengthen her ties (silah rahmi) with her mother. In reply, the Prophet said she must, and instructed her to give her gifts. (Sahih al-Bukhari 2602; Fath al-Bari). Some commentators have claimed that Hazrat Asma's mother had come to Medina because she was in need of help. But, the fact is that she was a well-off woman, and Hafiz Ibn Hajar and other scholars have written that she herself had brought gifts for her daughter:

Thus, it could be that she wanted to restore her bonds with her daughter that had been earlier sundered. In other words, Hazrat Asma's giving of gifts to her mother appears not to have been an expression of help to a needy mother, but rather, a way of expressing and fulfilling her duty of familial love. Other Social Relations Between Muslims and Others While Muslims have been forbidden to engage in such relations with non-Muslims that might undermine or destroy their religious distinctiveness, Islam stresses that Muslims must relate with concern, and a high standard of morality with non-Muslims in order to create a better society. Treating neighbours kindly is such an important Islamic teaching that in the corpus of Hadith, narrations relating to the Prophet, it has been said that not abiding by this teaching can sometimes even lead to the danger of one's own faith being taken away. The Prophet thrice proclaimed that he who is a source of discomfort to his neighbour is not a true believer (momin) (Sahih al-Bukhari, 6016). One's neighbour, who deserves exemplary treatment, can be a Muslim or a non-

Muslim, and the above-mentioned principle applies in both cases. This is well-illustrated in the following story. One day, a goat was slaughtered in the home of Hazrat Abdullah Ibn Umar. When he returned home, the first thing he did was to ask if some of the meat had been sent to the house of his Jewish neighbour. 'I have heard the Prophet stressing the importance of kindness towards neighbours', he said (Abu Daud, 5152). One aspect of the life of the Prophet, which serves as a model for Muslims to emulate, is that even if an enemy is in great trouble one should supplicate for him with God. On the one hand, the Prophet would beseech God to punish bloody oppressors, but, on the other hand, we see the Prophet helping the Qureish of Mecca, who stiffly opposed him, when they were faced with a severe famine. In that critical situation, Abu Sufiyan, the Qureish leader who had stridently opposed the Prophet, came to him. Invoking their relationship, he said that the Quraish, the tribe that the Prophet himself belonged to, were dying, and requested him to beseech God. The Prophet prayed to God, and because of his prayer the situation was cured (Sahih Bukhari, 4824).

It is said that if a Jew present in the Prophet's congregation would sneeze, the Prophet would do the same dua, 'May God give you guidance and improve your condition', for him as he would for a Muslim (Sunan Abu Daud 5040). Because they were so fond of this dua, some Jews would pretend to sneeze, but the Prophet still do this dua for them. In the Masannaf Ibn Abi Shiba, the Masannaf Abdur Razzak and the Sahih of al-Bukhari, there are numerous narrations about the Prophet making dua for non-Muslims. This clearly shows that Islam exhorts its followers to deal kindly with people of other faiths. Commensality or eating together has great importance in building relationships. The Prophet used to invite non-Muslims for meals. Expressing concern for the oppressed and distressed, irrespective of

religion, is something basic for good social ties, and the Prophet Muhammad also abided by this. He would visit the homes of non-Muslims when they were sick, to enquire about their health (Sahih al-Bukhari 5657). The Prophet also gave gifts to non-Muslims, and courteously accepted the gifts that they presented him with, as has been recorded in the books of Hadith. It is said that a non-Muslim ruler sent the Prophet a beautiful silken cloak, which the Prophet accepted (Sahih al-Bukhari 2616). He gave it to Ja'afar bin Abi Talib, saying that he should send it to his 'brother', Najashi, the Christian ruler of Abyssinia, who had helped the Muslims (Masnad Ahmad 13214). The Caliph Umar sent a valuable cloth as a gift to a 'polytheist brother' of his, and the Prophet knew about this (Muslim 2068). The ruler of Aila sent the Prophet cloth and a mount, which were put to use (Sahih Bukhari 3161). At the time, when the Prophet was departing from this world, he instructed Muslims, especially their leaders, that delegations of guests (who were generally non-Muslims) that would come to them should be given presents while departing, as he himself had done (Sahih al-Bukhari 3053, Sahih al-Muslim 1637).

From these references to the shariah and the Sunnah, the practice of the Prophet Muhammad, it is clear that Islam stands for humanitarianism, love, concern, compassion, large-heartedness and good behaviour with people of other faiths, in general. That is to say, if a person who follows another faith is not an oppressor or an enemy of Islam or a conspirator or is not waging war against Muslims, Islam considers him or her worthy of help and solidarity and stresses respect for his or her humanity.

Homosexuality- An Offence

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Recent Delhi High Court judgement legalising homosexuality will prove disastrous for the society and harm the family structure. Delhi High Court succumbed to the contention of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) activists. If a handful of people indulge in homosexuality, majority of them decry it and their sentiments too must be honoured.

Lord Macaulay in 1860 had drafted the I.P.C. and Section 377 provided punishment for homosexuality as the most hateful, unnatural offence. It is against the order of nature. Lord Macaulay's contention stood the test of time and for more than a century it protected the society from pollution. The culture and life values in India are different from other countries. The diversity of India is tremendous. It has its own distinctive features and norms. To examine the issue from religious point of view it is considered a great sin to indulge in unnatural acts.

It is crude, vulgar and immoral act. Well-known yoga guru Swami Ramdev has rightly remarked: "Homosexuals are mentally ill and need hospitalization, not legal validation. The judgment will increase the sickness and harm the society".

Dominic Emmanuel, spokesperson of the Delhi Catholic Archdiocese said: "We strongly believe that sex between same sex partners is immoral, unnatural and objectionable. We also fears that such activities will result in the spread of HIV/ AIDS."

Maulana Syed Jalaluddin Umri of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind said: "Homosexuality is a punishable offence in the Shariat (Muslim religious Law).

Dr Gourdas Choudhury, Professor and Head of Gastroenterology at Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences said: "Homosexuality poses a hazard to health. During a study on 5,406 homosexual men in Canada, Dr Robert Hogg noted that their life expectancy was reduced by 8 to 20 years.

Through another recent study, researchers from Center for Disease Control, USA, reconfirmed that gays die around 10-20 years younger than those who engage in normal sexual practice.

According to report the common health problems among homosexual men are:

- ☐ Increase in infections, especially HIV / AIDS, syphilis, gonorrhea, public lice, Hepatitis B, papilloma and warts.
- ☐ Increase in cancers, especially of large intestine (colon), prostate, and testes.
- ☐ Increased incidence of eating disorders such as bulimia, anorexia nervosa and obesity.
- ☐ More psychological problems, such as anxiety and depression, Suicides are six times more common among homosexuals than straight people.

As regards Islam, it vehemently prohibits homosexuality. Warning the nation living at the time of Prophet Lut when people deeply indulged in homosexuality the Holy Quran says: "We also sent Lut as a messenger: behold, he said to his people, do ye do what is indecent though ye see its iniquity?" "Would ye really approach men in your lusts rather than women? Nay, ye are a people grossly ignorant!" (S.27,A 54-55)

Explaining above mentioned verses of the Quran eminent scholar and commentator of the Holy Quran Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi said: "Observe and compare the increasingly complacent attitude of the modern civilization towards sexual inverts and perverts and the growing tendency among contemporary physicians and legislators to condone and make light of even the most atrocious homosexual practices'.

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

Above all homosexuality has no place in the religion of Islam, To satisfy sexual desire, Islam has made the institution of marriage. It is only way through which one repress one's sexual keenness. The holy Prophet said: "You should marry, for that is the best way of saving yourself from casting evil-eyes, and of safeguarding yourself against sexual immorality". That is why the Prophet said: "This is my way (marriage), and whosoever shuns my way does not belong to me".

Elaborating the significance of marriage, S.Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi says: "In Islam marriage is not regarded as merely a fulfillment of a natural human need; it is considered an act of worship which, if performed with an understanding of higher religious and spiritual values involved, wins to a person a state of closeness to Allah. The Prophet of Allah, blessings and peace be upon him, set a practical example of the noblest possible married life. He also said, "He is the best among you who is the best for his family, and I am the best for my family". The respect for women engendering sincere consideration for their emotion and sensitivity that was Prophet Muhammad's natural disposition is not found in the practical lives of even the acclaimed champions of women's cause or famous spiritual leaders and saints; in fact, it is difficult to find it even in the

lives of other Prophets, blessings and peace be on them. Prophet Muhammad's respectful treatment of his pious wives, participation in their recreations (which were Islamically permissible), thoughtfulness for their emotions, and justice in dealing with them are qualities that remain unparalleled."

Needless to add that homosexuality is such a menace if it is legalised, the institution of marriage which is a sacred union between a man and a woman will be ludicrous, ridiculous and meaningless. While right from the advent of Adam and Eve till date this custom is in vogue in the society.

Anita Bryant, the famous American singer and gay rights opponent, had rightly said: "If homosexuality was the normal way, God would have made Adam and Steve".

It is unfortunate that both print and electronic media are doing disservice to our society by highlighting gay parades and subtly endorsing homosexuality.

In this context recent meeting of leaders of various faiths assumes great significance. Clerics of all religions unanimously expressed their concern over Delhi High court's verdict of legalizing homosexuality. Criticizing the Judgment, they urged the Supreme court, central government, and all the state governments to intervene and ask for the review of this verdict to prevent the youth from going astray.

In short, raising voice against oppressions, atrocities, and other anti-social activities and unholy acts should be a bounden duty of all and sundry. Hence Apex court should overrule the Delhi High court's verdict and criminalize homosexuality. For the Section 377 does not infringe the fundamental rights of any citizen.

Babri Finale

Khushwant Singh

It was an open secret, but Liberhan took 17 years to inform the world what they had seen on TV was for real.

I was on leave when Justice Liberhan's findings on the destruction of the Babri Masjid were handed over to the government. I may be somewhat late in pronouncing my verdict on Liberhan but I am so pent up on my emotions that I can not hold back; better late than never.

First a sarcastic thanks to Liberhan for letting millions of people who watched the sordid episode on the TV sets know what they already knew 17 years ago and at the price of eight crore rupees. We know Advani had fouled the atmosphere by his rath yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya. We know that the collection of bricks from all over India was designed to build a Ram Mandir on the very site that the Masjid stood and would require its demolition to do so. We knew Kalyan Singh was the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and had assured Prime Minister Narasimha Rao that the mosque would not be touched.

He had lied then, he is lying now when he says the destruction of the mosque was the act of God. It was not. It was the act of Satan in human forms. They had come prepared with scythes and hammers to demolish the mosque. They were members of the RSS, Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. The so-called police force present on the scene did not raise a lathi to stop them. We saw Uma Bharati embrace Murli Manohar Joshi to celebrate the foul deed. While all this was taking place, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao who, most of the times believed in the wisdom of doing nothing, did not nothing more than sack Kalyan Singh.

What now? Future action on the report has to be recommended by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Home Minister P.Chidambaram and the Congress Party in power. If justice is to take its course, the perpetrators of the crime deserve to be put in jail. However, that would be politically unwise as in our country that is one sure way of making villains into heroes. The best course would be to pass a resolution in Parliament expressing deep regret for what happened in Ayodhya with the undertaking that such things will never again be repeated.

(HindustanTimes, 19-07-2009)

Around the World

Israeli army committed war crimes: Amnesty

Amnesty International accused Israel of committing war crimes in the Gaza Strip through the reckless use of weapons and wanton destruction during its three-week war on Palestinians early this year. In a 105-page report entitled "Operation Cast Lead: 22 Days of Death and Destruction," the British rights organisation also accused Hamas of committing war crimes by firing rockets at Israeli civilian population. Both Israel and Hamas denounced the report as unbalanced.

Releasing the report, Donatella Rovera, Amnesty's chief researcher for Israel and the Palestinian territories, said that although the Gaza war was not an illegal operation per se, many of the attacks carried out by the Israeli forces during the operation violated international law.

According to the report, 1,400 Palestinians were killed during the offensive, which lasted from December 27, 2008 to January 18, 2009. Of them, 300 were children, more than 115 women and 85 men over the age of 50 were unarmed civilians who were not combatants. Some 5,000 Palestinians were wounded during the fighting. Amnesty International also found that more than 3,000 Palestinian homes and hundreds of other properties were destroyed during the fighting and more than 20,000 structures damaged. In addition to private homes, the Israeli forces destroyed factories, workshops, animal farms, orchards, government buildings, police stations and prisons.

Arab Invasion at American Publishing Event

For the first time in its history, America's biggest publishing event has dedicated its effort to promoting Arab literature. Book Expo America (BEA) 2009, recently held in New York, featured more than 600 representatives from the

Muslim world, and also introduced more than 300 Arab-language children's books to the North American market.

Amr Moussa, General Secretary of the Arab League, was in attendance to launch the event, which featured publishers from 8 Arab countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the UAE showcasing their portfolio of novels and children's books. The show programme included a series of debates and discussions about Arabian book culture and publishing challenges. The event also featured the global educational initiative "1001 Inventions", which celebrates the exceptional advances in sciences, technology and culture made by Muslim civilisation during the European "dark ages".

Professor Salim Al-Hssani is Chief Editor of the 1001 Inventions book and chairman of the Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation, UK. He explained: "We are a non-political and non-religious initiative dedicated to increasing awareness of the scientific advancements made during the 1000 year period inaccurately labelled 'the Dark Ages of Europe.' We're here to share with the American people the cultural roots of modern science as a vital tool for resolving problems of social cohesion and world diplomacy. Recognising and appreciating the early contributions and inventions by pioneers from all over the world including from Arabia, North Africa, Turkey, China and India will increase understanding and cross-cultural appreciation between societies' 'New York', he says, 'is the perfect place to create a new space for dialogue using the diverse cultural roots of science as one of the instruments for social cohesion and world peace". •

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