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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

"He who made the earth a cradle for you, threaded therein paths for you, and sent down water out of heaven - and then We brought forth thereby many species of diverse plants." (Ta-Ha : 53)

Commentary:

Mawdudi offers an explanation to the change in the form of address: "The Qur'an is full of instances where statements are made about past incidents or about future events. Such statements are followed either by a few sentence of exhortation to piety and righteousness, or by explanation or elaboration of those sentences. The style of the text, on such occasions, indicates whether the statement in question was made by a human being or by God."

"Eat and pasture your cattle. Surely in that are sings for men of understanding". (Ta-Ha 54)

Commentary:

Allah's signs are spread all around. But why is it that the people are not guided by them? There are several reasons. One of them is people's uncaring attitudes to anything serious in life. A sign is a kind of a signpost. You read it and move forward in the direction it shows. But, if you have nowhere to go, no paths to tread, no goals reach, then the signposts are useless (Au.). ●

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

" It is related by Ayesha hat the Apostle of God said: "Good among, you are those who are good to their wives; and I, (on my part), am very good to my wives." (- Tirmizi)

Commentary:

It shows that a special mark of goodness is that a man treated his wife lovingly and well. To make the advice more effective for the Muslims, the Prophet added that, by the grace of God, he was most kind and considerate to his wives himself. The attitude of the sacred Prophet towards his wives was perfect, indeed, at few examples of which are contained in the narratives given below.

Ayesah related to us, saying: "(Once) I was accompanying the Apostle of God in a journey that we ran a race, and I won. Afterwards, when I had grown fat, we, (again), competed (with each-other) in a race, and, this time, he won. Upon it the Apostle of God remarked: 'Now, we are quits.'" (Abu Dawood)

Ayesha related to us, saying: "By God, I have been witness to the spectacle that (one day), the Abyssinians were having a sport of lancing in the Mosque. For showing it to me, the Apostle of God stood at the door of my apartment (which opened in the Mosque), using his mantle as a screen for me, and I watched the game through (the space) between his shoulder and ear. The Apostle of God kept standing for my sake till (I felt I had seen enough of it), (and) retired." (Hazrat Ayesha added) (that "you can imagine, (from it), what was the place of a young and fun-loving girl. ●

(Bukarhi and Muslim)

The Legacy of Islam

After September 11, 2001 when the World Trade Centre buildings were attacked and hundred of lives lost, Islam became as hot as a piece of coal for its followers. Yet it had more followers than ever before and they were spread all over the globe. However, Muslims everywhere appeared to be in turmoil and felt themselves in the dock, accused of belonging to a terrorist, fanatic and extremist religion. Islam it seemed was under siege. The war on terrorism that president George Bush declared after 9/11 threatens to stretch into the century. For many Muslims it appears to be war against Islam. For a Muslim therefore on both a global and personal level this is a time of challenge and despair.

Terrorism in any form does not have the sanction of Islamic ethics. The Holy Quran has repeatedly warned Muslims to live a pious and peaceful life and eschew violence. Even in a few wars, which were fought during the life of the prophet Muslims mostly, remained defensive. The

wars were mainly against the tribes of Mecca and were in retaliation.

The political edge to Islamic expansion made it perforce accretive and adaptive. It is not without significance that Christians and Jews were not forced to convert in the recently acquired Islamic lands since this was not politically expedient. And Islamic law sanctified this. Linguistic conversions, i, e, speaking of Arabic language preceded religious conversions. After the demise of the prophet this spirit of tolerance only intensified. Under the Ummayyad and later the Abbasid Caliphate the first cultural transformations that were noticed had more to do with language than religion. Within one century Arabic became the official language of the state and its bureaucracy. Being Arab in the Islamic Empires implied a linguistic identity more than a religious or ethnic identity.

The spirit of accommodation was more than evident in the flowering of a rich Islamic scientific culture during

the period of the Caliphates. Until the rise of modern science, no other civilization engaged as many scientists, produced as many scientific books, or provided as varied and sustained support for scientific activity as Islam. Religious discourses on science advocated its separateness from religion. As a result a value free or ethically neutral scientific knowledge that is not specific to any particular culture was able to develop. Islamic science inherited all the earlier pre-Islamic and Christian and Iranian scientific traditions and fused them into one new whole. Baghdad was at the center of this scientific activity. Here the Abbasi caliphs Harun al Rashid and Al Mamun patronized scientific activity of higher caliber. The latter started a programme of astronomical observations in Baghdad and Damascus many other centers also emerged. These were located in Shiraz and Isfahan in Iran. Scientists from Muslim Spain Andalusia travelled to these centers for training. And like in astronomy and

mathematics in the realm of medicine as well Baghdad remained the dominant center for the production of the Arabic medical tradition. It was here that many Greek medical treatises were translated into Arabic. A worth mentioning fact here is that most of these centers of learning under the Muslim rulers had non-Muslim scholars and translators. They were given due recognition of their merits.

This narrative of Islamic expansion reveals that Islam carries a rich intellectual legacy of tolerance of other cultures and a spirit of open mindedness to learn and adopt the good points of other civilizations. Moreover, in Islamic states non-Muslims lived quite happily and carried out their religious obligations freely. Even in trade and other commercial activities they enjoyed full liberty. Such a religion can never encourage violence and hatred. We need to remind ourselves of this rich history of our religion and use it to mould us into better human beings.

S.A.

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The Message of 'Id al-Fitr

"Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you. [He wants that] you must complete the same number of days and that you must magnify Allah for having guided you so that may be grateful to Him. And when My slaves ask you [O Prophet] concerning Me, then [tell them] I am indeed near. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So let them Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led alright".

(Al-Baqarah 2:185-186)

This passage relates to the blessed month of Ramadan. The Qur'anic account to fasting marks the opening of this passage which states, that fasting is prescribed as a religious duty for Muslims, as it was for the believers of an earlier date. It is prescribed so that they may become pious. It is further clarified that the Qur'an was sent down during this month and that the Qur'an is guidance for all mankind. Contained in it are signs as guidance and criterion.

In this passage Allah tells Muslims that He intends ease for them. He does not want to put them to any difficulty. Fasting for twenty or thirty days during Ramadan is not an impossible task. Muslims are asked to fast for a limited number of days.

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This is followed by the directive that they should celebrate Allah's praise in that He has guided them. They are obliged to praise Him for having blessed them with His guidance. They are also exhorted to thank Allah and express gratitude to Him.

Allah mentions implicitly 'Id in the above passage. Although the festival of 'Id is not specified, the passage the objective, spirit and function of 'Id. As Allah enables a Muslim to fast during Ramadan and pray at night, he should celebrate Allah's glory. This should be by way of thanks for the bestowal of His guidance. A Muslim stands indebted to Him for blessing him with faith and Islam. Without His leave he could neither fast nor pray. For there are numerous communities besides Muslims in the world. They know well that Muslims celebrate Ramadan in a particular way. Yet it makes no difference to them. Ramadan does not carry any meaning and message for them.

We should be grateful to Allah for having guided us. We should be equally grateful for being blessed with Islam. Moreover, we should be thankful to Him for granting us health which enables us to fast. Above all, Allah grants us the ability and strength to fast. For one may

possess everything yet not receive divine guidance to fast. One may be an adult, with sound physique and other resources yet still not fast. It amounts to disobedience on his part.

That Allah alone grants the ability real thing. It is He Who inspires man to fast during Ramadan and to pray to Him. In sum, He guides us to fast. Yet there are those who possess the facilities and resources to fast but who do not do so. This is because Allah does not inspire such a person to fast. A believer is obliged to celebrate Allah's praise for having provided him with the requisite resources and ability to fast. Since there is nothing to prohibit one from fasting, it is imperative for one to fast. The directive to celebrate Allah's praise is on account of the same - the ability granted by Him to fast.

It is part of the Sunnah that on the day of 'Id al-Fitr one should celebrate Allah's praise on one's way to the mosque. On 'Id al-Adha one should chant such praises aloud: "Allah is great. Allah is great. There is no god besides Allah. Allah is great. All praise is for Allah." It is also part of the Sunnah that one should use two different routes for going to the mosque to offer prayer. This results in circulating Allah's praise throughout the whole town. The inhabitants of the town will hence receive this message. While waiting for the 'Id Prayer to commence, one should keep on praising Him for His guidance and this out of gratitude. For Allah has granted one the ability to fast. One will be

pardoned for missing a fast on account of ill health.

It is common knowledge that festivals are an occasion for expressing joy. One is relieved of one's duties, enabling one to enjoy the festival. Islam is, however, the only faith that obliges its followers to perform extra duty on the day of festival. Nonetheless, this duty is not very burdensome. Rather, it accrues more blessing. It instructs the believers in self-restraint and decency. On 'Id day Muslims are obliged to offer two additional rak'ah of prayer. They are not exempted from discharging their religious duty on this day, as they have to offer extra prayer in between the compulsory Fajr and Juhr Prayers. This is the Islamic way of expressing gratitude to Allah.

The Muslim community is thus consistently instructed in thinking Allah. No other religious community is particular about this. The Muslims alone try to perform this. They discharge their duty and thank Allah for enabling them to do so.

Other religious communities do not offer extra prayers or charity on their festival days. Rather, they enjoy life, engrossed in eating and drinking. In Islam, however, the focus is on giving - charity to the poor, gratitude to Allah and celebrating of Allah's praise. This is done in order to thank Allah for His guidance. It expresses Muslims' gratefulness to Him. ●

Muhammad The Ideal Prophet

S.Sulaiman Nadwi

Man needs the light of his past experience to brighten his present and future. And, as I told you earlier, all the different segments of humanity which have done anything to make this world a better place to live in deserve our gratitude; but, the most deserving of our regard are those whom we call the prophets of God. Each one of them has, in his own time, presented a winsome example of his sublime conduct and moral behaviour. If one was a model of endurance, others were emblems of selflessness, sacrifice, fervour for Truth and Oneness of God, submission to the Will to the Lord, chastity and piety, in short, each of them was a lighthouse of guidance showing the path of exalted behaviour in one or the walk of life everyman has to tread in his sojourn on the earth. Man, however, stood in the need of another guide who could illuminate the entire gamut of human behaviour, in all its manifoldness, by his comprehensive example of goodness and virtue. Man, in other words, needed a perfect and universal exemplar who could place in his hands a guide-book of practical life, so that every wayfarer may reach his destination safely. And, this exemplar did come to the world in the person of the last of the prophets, Muhammad (SAW), on whom be peace and blessing of the Lord.

The Qur'an announced this gospel truth in these words:

"O Prophet! Lo! We have sent thee as a witness and a bringer of good

tidings and a warner. And as a summoner unto Allah by His permission, and, as a lamp that giveth light."

He is the prophet well-informed, the witness to God's commandments, the bringer of glad tidings, the warner unto those who are heedless, the summoner of the erring to the way of God, the resplendent light which dispels the darkness and shows the right path.

Every prophet of God came to this world as a witness, or a harbinger of good tidings, or as a warner, or as a summoner, but never in the past there came a prophet who combined all these qualities. There witnesses to God's majesty and overlordship like Jacob, Isaac and Ishmael. Others like Abraham and Jesus were the heralds of glad tidings. There were also warners like Noah, Moses, Hud and Shu'yeb, the key-note of whose forebodings were terrible punishment awaiting the evildoers. Then, there were the prophets like Joseph and Jonah whose teachings set the tone for summoners to divine guidance. But the messenger par excellence who had all these marks of prophethood - a witness as well as a welcomer, warner as well as a caller - and who was a distinguished Apostle in every respect was none else save Muhammad (SAW). He was sent to the world as the last prophet, the final one after whom no other messenger was to be sent again by

God. This is the reason why he was granted as shariat or the law that was perfect and final requiring no revision in the days to come.

For the teachings of the last Prophet were to be ever-abiding, to remain unchanged to the end of time, he was sent as an acme of perfection with ever-blooming guidance and resplendent light. This is an indisputable fact attested by the pages of history.

A character held out as an ideal or model for humanity needs must fulfil certain conditions before such a claim can be universally accepted. The first and foremost test which the character of such a guide should be put is historicity.

Historicity means that the genuineness of the accounts of life and character of any man put forth as a perfect tale, but from reputed sources and methodical records of that we call as history. Man is never disposed, by his frame of mind, to be deeply impressed by any happening, event or biography which he knows to be fictitious. For a lasting impression of any character, one needs the assurance that every detail of the life, saying and doing of such a personality is perfectly genuine and verifiable. Historical stories have, for that very reason, a greater appeal than the works of fiction. Another reason for the historicity of a character, particularly if it is intended to impart a lesson no others, is that no bed-time fable, told to while away the hours of leisure, can be deemed to hold up a model up a model for emulation or following its example. For nobody can be expected to follow a mythical or imaginary character, it is absolutely

essential that the journal of a life presented as an emblem of virtuous human conduct should be perfectly authentic in accordance with the criterion set for acceptance of any event as historical.

We hold all the prophets of God in reverence and pay homage to them. We also agree that every one of them was a truthful messenger of divine guidance but the Lord has Himself told us that:

“Of these messengers, some of whom We have caused to excel others.”

We believe that this was the honour granted to Muhammad (SAW) since he was the last of the line of prophets, bearer of the final and ever-abiding message of God and, thus, he was sent as a standard of virtue and goodness for the guidance of mankind to the end of time. No other prophet than he was intended to be the seal of the divine messengers; nor were the teachings of any other prophet to last till the Doomsday. They were all sent as models teachers and guides, no doubt; but for a particular age and people, and hence, whatever they had thought gradually vanished from the memory of humanity.

Now, let us think it over gain. How many apostles were sent by God to this world, to all the nations and countries? Their numbers must run into hundreds of thousands. Be that as it may, Islamic traditions put the figure at one hundred and twenty-four thousand although the Qur'an tells us the names of a few only. But, even of those whose names we know, how little of their life and character is known to

the world? Although there are not means to verify it, the Hindus claim that their's was the oldest civilisation of the world. Their sacred writings mention innumerable sages, but is there one to be put forth as a historical personality? There are many amongst these saints and sages about whom nothing except their names are known to us; there are others who can be treated as mythological personalities rather than characters belonging to the realm of history. More detailed knowledge of the noble personages described in the Mahabharata and Ramayana are undoubtedly available, but can their lives be tested on the touchstone of history? Nobody knows the age, or the era, or the century, or the year, or period when they lived. Certain European orientalist have, of late, hazarded their opinion when these sages would have been living, but this is the only evidence available about their historicity. A majority of these experts do not even regard them as historical and deny that the mythological personalities described in these books were ever born on this earth.

Zoroaster, the founder of ancient Iranian faith named after him, is still revered by a large of people, but his historical personlity is also hidden behind the mist of obscurity. Several sceptical orientalist of Europe and America have doubts Zoroaster's historical existence, have succeeded in giving, through guess-work, some paltry details about his life, these accounts are so contradictory that no reasonable of practical human life can be based on them. Where was Zoroaster born, what was the year, what was his

nationality of family, what was the religion he preached, whether the scripture attributed to him is genuine, what was the language spoken by him, when and where he died-each of these questions have elicited a hundred contradictory answers since no authentic and dependable records about him are available to clear the mist of doubt and uncertainty shrouding Zoroaster's personality. The Zoroastrians, or the Parsees, as they are known nowadays, lack acknowledged traditions about their Master and have to depend on the researches of European scholars for answering these questions. Their national sources do not go beyond Firdausi's Shahnama. It is hardly an excuse that the Greek invaders of Iran had destroyed their scriptures; the point is that the teachings of Zoroaster, whatever they had been, were not meant to be ever-abiding. This, by the way, is the reason why orientalist like Kern and Darmeteter refuse to accept Zoroaster as a historical figure.

Another religion of ancient Asia was Buddhism which was once the dominant faith of the people of India, China, the whole of Central Asia, Afghanistan and Turkistan and is still a living faith in Burma, Indo-China, China, Japan and Tibet, It was exterminated in India by Brahmanism and replaced by Islam in the Central Asia, but the power it commanded in South-Asia still sustains its faith and culture. Nervertheless, has its continued existence in several countries succeeded in preserving the dependable annals of Buddha's life and work? The age when the Buddah

lived is calculated with reference to the time of Rajas of Magadh, which, in turn, is fixed by the change discovery of diplomatic relations that these rulers had established with the Greeks. We have even more scant details about the life of Coniucius, the founder of China's Confucianism, although the number of its adherents is still reported to be more than ten millions.

Semites have had hundreds of prophets; nevertheless, history knows hardly anything about most of them except their names. Only a few incidents about the lives of Noah, Abraham, Salih, Ismael, Isaac, Jaccob, Zachariah and John are known to posterity. All the important links transmitting the details of their lives and doings are missing from the chain of history. How, then, the incomplete, disjointed accounts of the lives of these patriarchs can serve as beacons of guidance to humanity today? Barring the description of their morals and conduct given in the Qur'an, all that is told about them in the Jewish Scriptures is held to be spurious by competent scholars. Even if we were to ignore these criticisms, only a dim and incomplete picture of God emerges from the Jewish writing.

Torah is the chief source of information about Moses, but if the experts and authors of Encyclopaedia Britannica are to be believed, the Scripture extant today was written hundreds of years after the death of Moses. Some German scholars even claim to have discovered a two-fold tradition on which the Torah is based for it carries the inconsistencies of its original sources. The learned discourses

on this issue can be seen in the article included the heading "Bible" in the latest addition of the Encyclopaedia. If these criticism of the scholars are deemed to be correct, as they are generally accepted, what historical validity can be claimed for the records of other events prior to Moses?

Gospels are the records of the life of Jesus Christ. The Christian world, however, accepts only four of them and rejects others, like the Gospels of Thomas and Barnabas, as apocryphal. However, not one of the writers of these four 'authentic' Gospels ever saw Jesus. Nothing is known about the sources on which these Gospels are based. Doubts have been raised whether the Gospels bearing the names of their authors were actually written by them. Even the time and language of the original Gospels are uncertain. Biblical scholars hold the view that the four extant Gospels were compiled from various sources from about 60 A.D. Onwards. In regard to these dubious elements as well as the stories of birth and death of Jesus and the doctrine of Trinity, certain critics have several issues- that the story of Christ is purely fictitious, adopted from Greek and Roman myths containing similar stories of birth, death and resurrection of some pagan gods. The researches into the origin of the Gospels show how puzzling and insufficient is the evidence to rediscover the Jesus of history.

That any human being should be set up as a perennial guide for man, it is most essential to have the entire life of that model before us. No

incident, no part of the life of such a shining example should remain in the dark. Like an open book it should be known inside out so that humanity may be able to make out how far that life can serve as an ideal guide and teacher.

Viewed from this angle, none of the preachers and founders of the religions would stand the test of historicity except the Prophet of Islam. The uniqueness of Muhammad (SAW) in this regard furnishes yet another testimony to the fact that he alone was sent down to this world as the seal of prophets. Only three or four of the founders of religions, as earlier stated by us, can at best be put forth as historical characters, but not all of them can claim that everything about their life and character is known to the world. Budhists from today about one-fourth of the world's population, but all that we know of the life of Buddha consists of a mixture of fables and folk-lore. If we were to make a search for the missing links of his life, we would decidedly be unsuccessful in our quest. All that we can glean from the stories known about him is that a certain chieftain in the foothills of the Himalayas, south of Nepal, had a son who was endowed with a thoughtful disposition. After he had grown to manhood and become father of a child, he happened to see certain persons afflicted with misery. He was so shocked by the sufferings and decay manifest in all earthly things around him that he left his hearth and home to discover a higher and more enduring meaning in life and human destiny. He wandered all over the land - Varanasi, Patliputra and Rajgir - sometimes he roamed in the cities, at

others rambled over the mountains and forests, and ultimately reached Gaya, where sitting under a Bodhi-tree, he made the claim of having attained enlightenment. Thereafter, he went about expounding his discovery from Varanasi to Bihar and then left this fleeing world. This is, in fine, the sum total of our knowledge about the Buddha.

Zoroaster was also the founder of a faith. But nothing save surmises and conjectures about his life is the knowledge possessed by the world today. Rather than recounting the fictions about him we would better direct our attention to the resume of findings by an expert given in the Encyclopaedia Britannica in an article bearing his name.

"The person of the Zoroaster whom we meet with in these hymns (of Gathas) differs to -to coelo from the Zoroaster of the younger Avesta. He is the exact opposite of the miraculous personage of a later legend."

After giving a description of the Gatha, the writer continues:

"Yet we must not expect too much from the Gathas in the way of definite details. They give no historical account of the life and teaching of their prophet, but rather are, so to say, versus memoriales, which recapitulate the main points of interest, often again in brief outlines."

Again, as to the birth place of Zoroaster, the writer goes on to say:

"As to his birth place, the testimonies are conflicting."

No consensus of opinion exists about the time of Zoroaster, which is hotly disputed by Greek historians as

well as modern authorities. The writer of the article reaches the conclusion that-

"Agathies remarks (ii-24), with perfect truth, that it is no longer possible to determine with any certainty when he lived and legislated."

All we know about Zoroaster is that he was born somewhere in Azarbaijan, preached his religion around Balkh, converted King Vistaspa to his faith, worked certain miracles, married and a few children, and then died somewhere. Can anybody lay a claim that a person about whom our information is so limited and paltry is a well-known personality, fit to be put forth as a guiding star for humanity?

Moses is the most celebrated among the prophets of old. Let us leave aside the question relating to the authenticity of Torah, as it exists at present, and assume that its five books contain a correct and dependable account of its author. But, what do they tell us? The life story of this great Prophet told by the Torah can be summed up in a few sentences. Moses is brought up by a Egyptian princess in the palace of Pharaoh. After he comes of age, he helps the oppressed Bani Israel on one or two occasions and then he takes flight to Midian, where he marries and returns to Egypt again after a long period of exile. On his way back, mantle of prophethood falls upon him, he goes to the court of Pharaoh, works certain miracles and demands the emancipation of the enslaved Hebrews. He takes the advantage of a dark night to flee with his people from Egypt; Pharaoh leads the hordes of warriors and chariots thundering after Bani Israel; the sea gives way to Moses

and his followers; but the watery walls surge back over the pursuing Egyptians. Moses takes his people to Arabia, and thence to Syria, fights the unbelieving folk living there and ultimately meets his death, on a hill, after he has grown quite old. Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Torah, thus describes the journey end of Moses in the concluding paragraphs.

"So, Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom Lord knew face to face."

All the five books of Torah, the last of which is Duteronomy, are believed to have been written by Moses himself. But, the few sentences cited above suggest, on the first glance, that the book of Deuteronomy, or at least its concluding portion, could have never been written by Moses. Nobody knows the name of Moses' biographer.

Similarly the words: 'no man knows his sepulchre unto this day' and there arose not a prophet since in Israil like unto Moses' clearly indicate that the Book must have been written after a fairly long time when people had lost trace of such an important monument as the grave of their greatest benefactor, or, it could be that the whole nation had forgotten all about in

the glimmerings of a new redeemer expected by them.

“Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died,” says the Deuteronomy, but how little do we know of the events of his long life? Only a few sketchy and disjointed events of Moses’ life, like his birth, migration to Midian, marriage and early period of ministry and exodus have been related by his biographer. He is then seen taking part in a few battles but makes his exit to enter the scene again when he has grown quite old. Let us wean our thoughts from the ups and downs of Moses life for every man has to undergo a chapter of accidents which are peculiar in each case, but we do need to know about the morals and conduct, demeanour and behaviour of a guide and leader of mankind. These very essential details of the life of Moses from the missing links of his story, however. Old Testament is replete with such trivialities as the ancestral lineage of its characters, population of the Hebrews at different periods and places and their rites and customs. Howsoever important these details may be for the study of the Holy Land’s geography and chronology, geneology and sociology, but they are hardly of any practical utility for compilation of the biography of a religious guide like Moses. This deficiency makes the characterisation of Moses incomplete.

The apostle of God nearest in time to the Prophet of Islam was Jesus Christ whose followers today outnumber the votaries of every other religion. Strange though it may seem, but it is a hard fact that the particulars of the life of this Prophet available today

are the most meagre in comparison to the founders of all other religions. The keen interest taken by the Christendom in the study of ancient civilisations, archaeological excavations and deciphering of ancient writings has shed a flood-light on the distant past of Babylon, Assyria, Arabia, Syria, Egypt, Africa, India and Turkistan and succeeded in rewriting not a few lost pages of the ancient history; yet, it has failed anywhere to recover the missing pieces of the eternal landscape of the past, it is the sealed book of its own saviour’s life story. Earnest Renan left no stone unturned to recreate the Vie de Jesus but, as everybody knows, his effort proved fruitless. The New Testament tells us that Jesus Christ died at the age of thirty-three but it records the events of the last three years of his life only. Even this is either not supported by sufficient evidence or has been proved to be dubious by good evidence to the contrary. The only information we have about the historical Jesus is that he was brought to Egypt after his birth, worked a few miracles during his childhood; but then he quits the scene to reappear at the age of thirty, baptising and preaching the gospel to fishermen in the mountains beside the sea of Galilee. He gathers a handful of flowers, has a few discussions about the Law with the priests and elders, is got arrested by the Jews and produced before Pontius Pilate, is ultimately crucified and his sepulchres is found vacant on the third day. Nobody knows where Jesus remained or what he did during the twenty-five years of his life’s duration. And, of the happenings narrated about

his last three years, what else is there except a few parables, miracles and crucifixion?

A biography to be ideal must also be comprehensive. In other words, whatever light and guidance people need in different walks of life-for fulfilment of their duties, redeeming the pledges, being fair and just and virtuous- should be had from the life of the ideal personage. Viewed from this angle, one would have to concede that only the life of the Prophet of Islam conforms to this standard. What is religion after all? It is nothing save a means to unfold the relationship, on the one hand, between man and his Master, and, on the other, between man and man. Religion is, thus, meant to teach us the obligations we owe to God and our rights and duties with reference to our fellow beings; and, hence, it becomes a bounden duty of the follower of every religion to find out what light the life of his prophet or founder of religion sheds on these questions. From this standpoint, however, one would not find complete guidance anywhere save in the life of Muhammad (SAW) the last Prophet of God.

Religions are of two kinds. One, the religions like Buddhism and Jainism which are agnostic, denying the existence of God. It would, therefore, be futile to look for the awareness of God's nature and attributes or the tender regard and adoration for god and His Omnipotence and Unicity in the life of the precursors of these religions. The others are theistic faiths which acknowledge the existence of the Supreme Being in one form or the other, but the lives of their founders breathe

little of their devotion to God. The portraits of lives do not pretend to be shadows of divine perfection, nor do they tell us explicitly about their quest for God or their beliefs and convictions. Go through the Old Testament and you would find quite a few references to the Oneness of God, His commandments and the rules for offering oblations unto God, but hardly a sentence describing the feeling of awe and gratitude to God, spiritual exaltation and a living awareness of the Supreme Being experienced by Moses. Had the religion of Moses been the last and abiding principle of divine guidance, its followers must have preserved the aids to spiritual elevation; but they failed to do so, perhaps, as designed by Providence.

Gospels are the mirrors of Christ's life. They tell us that god is the Father of Jesus, but what obligation the son owed to his Father and how he answered this call of duty? The son declares the great love of the Father for him, but how much did the son love his heavenly Father? How he obeyed His commands, how he paid Him divine honours, how he bowed and humbled himself to show his reverence and whether he asked the Father to grant him anything else save the day's bread? We do not know whether Jesus spent his nights in prayers and vigils except the one before his betrayal and arrest. What spiritual enlightenment and inspiration can we draw from a prophet like him? Had the gospelists clearly portrayed the picture of communion between Jesus Christ and God instead of spinning myths around him, the first Christian Emperor would

not have had to convene the Nicene Council, after 325 years of the birth Christ, to draw up a statement of Christian creed which remains an inexplicable riddle to this day.

Turning to the rights and duties of human beings, we again fail to find any clear exposition of this important matter in the life of any prophet or founder of religion except the life of Muhammad (SAW). Gautama Buddha left his home and family, severing all connections from his living wife and innocent son, to discover the meaning of human destiny in the solitude of the woods. He said good-bye to his friends and abandoned the responsibility of administration in order to find the peace of Nirvana by overcoming the desire arising out of his will-to-live. Now, one can ask what message does the teaching of the Buddha contain for the common man, for the rulers and the ruled; for the rich and the poor, for the master and the servant; and how does it provide guidance in the discharge of one's obligations of the Buddha comprehensive enough to be followed by the ascetics and businessmen alike? His teachings were, in point of fact, never acted upon by the working classes, else the administration in the countries like China, Japan, Siam, Tibet and Burma would have long gone to winds; trade, industry and business would have come to a standstill; and the populous cities would have turned into woodlands.

Moses was an illustrious leader of men; noted for commanding the Hebrew hordes in the battlefields. He could thus be a model in the case of a call to arms, but has he left any

precedent to be followed in the discharge of one's rights and duties and fulfilment of one's obligations to others? How he wanted the wife and the husband, the father and the son, brothers and friends to behave towards one another; what his custom was in making peace with his adversaries; how he spent his wealth for the benefit of the sick and the poor, the orphan and the way-farers? Moses was married, had children as well as a brother, relatives and friends, and we believe, as an Apostle of God, his behaviour towards them would have been exemplary. But we are at a loss to find any guidance in these matters from the boos of Scripture attributed to him!

Jesus Christ had his mother and, as the Bible tells us, he had brothers and sisters and even his earthly father, although he was born of a virgin mother. Nevertheless, the story of his life told in the Gospels keeps mum about his behaviour towards his kith and kin. Social relationship has been, and shall ever remain, the pivot of civilised existence, and hence every religion must seek to regulate it. But what is there in the life of Jesus Christ to offer guidance in these matters? He belonged to a subject race ruled by an alien power. How could he, then, set any example for the rulers and administrators? He did not marry, and hence his life has nothing to guide the spouses whose relationship of love and affection has been spoken of in the very first chapter of the Old Testament. Furthermore, since an overwhelming portion of world's population leads a married life, Jesus' life would come amiss to offer any guidance to them.

Verily, Jesus can never be the ideal guide of humanity for he ever remained indifferent to his relatives, had nothing to do with earning and spending war and peace and friends and foes, had. These very mundane affairs, unfortunately from the hub of our earthly life. Were this world to follow the example of Jesus, all progress will be suspended and the silence of the grave would descend over the world. Christian Europe would, then, die a natural death.

Yet another determinant of an ideal life is its practicality—a decisive test for a founder of religion or law-giver; since, the preacher of a canon and system of belief should be able to lead the way by his personal example of living up to his precepts. His actions, in other words, should demonstrate the feasibility of his teachings.

Anybody can enunciate any number of fanciful notions, attractive concepts and appealing philosophies, but not everyone can live up to them. Innocent and fine maxims are no proof of one's virtuous character: it rather consists of following the narrow, straight path of unblemished rectitude. Were it not so, it would be difficult to distinguish between vice and virtue, good and bad and the world would then abound in agreeable chatterers. Now, let us judge the founders of religions by this acid test.

"But I say unto you which hear," said Jesus Christ, "Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smitteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh

away the cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away the goods ask them not again." Jesus also taught that one should forgive one's brother's misdemeanor not only seven times but "seventy times seven" and that "a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." Many more glamorous sayings of Jesus and other sermonizers can be cited here but none can be treated as a wholesome moral precept unless it is also accompanied by a practical example of the preacher. These would be merely sparkling gifts of the gab rather than examples of practical conduct. How can one forgive his enemies unless he has first subdued them? What does charity, benevolence and philanthropy of a man mean, if he is not blessed with anything to spare? Just as the man who has not married and has no children and relations cannot be held forth as an ideal husband, or a loving father, or a gracious kinsman; how can one be taken as a model of mercy, kindness and forgiveness if one had never had an opportunity to pardon anybody?

Virtues are of two kinds: one is positive and the other negative. Living like an anchorite in the far off cave can, at the most, be reckoned as a negative virtue for the ascetics merely abstain from doing harm to others. But, what about the positive side of their actions? Do they help the poor, feed the hungry, raise the fallen or guide the erring? Forgiveness, zeal to restore truth and justice and fulfilment of one's obligations are some of the cardinal virtues requiring positive action. Virtues

are, of a fact, more often positive than negative.

It would now be clear that there could be no "ideal life" - to be followed by others - unless its positive and practical aspect is also before us. How can we follow the example of any guide, if it is not illustrated? We want precedents for waging war and making peace, for leading, for our communion with God and social relationship with our fellow beings. In victory and defeat, in anger and forbearance, in loneliness and companionship, in short, in every situation of life marked by vicissitudes of our earthly existence we need an exemplar to show us the right path. We require practical exemplar to those who have successfully met these situations and hit upon a solution rather than those who have nothing to offer except sweet words. It is neither the poet's fancy nor the flower of speech, but an indisputable fact of history that no other life save that of Muhammad (SAW), the last Prophet of God, answers the test of practicality.

To recapitulate the essential ingredients of an ideal life, discussed afore, let me repeat that historicity, comprehensiveness, perfection and practicality are necessary for any character to be followed by others. I do not mean to say that other prophets lacked these qualities, but I do assert that the record of their lives and doings preserved by their followers and handed down to us throw no light on these aspects of their character. This was in conformity with the will of God, perhaps, as it constitutes, in itself, an intrinsic evidence that the prophets of your were sent to their own people and for their own times. Their biographies were not preserved because posterity did not

need them. It was only Muhammad (SAW), the last of the prophets who was sent by God for all the nations, as a shining example, to be followed by the entire humanity until the Day of Judgement. His biography, the record of his sayings and doings, had thus to be perdurable and everblooming, and this is the greatest testimony, a practical attestation of the finality of Muhammad's (SAW) prophethood.

"Muhammad (SAW) is not the father of any man among you, but he is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets; and Allah is Aware of all things. ●

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number of cases have been pending in Rashtrapati Bhavan for many years, it is one inherited task that no President would feel happy about. I thought I should get all these cases examined from a normal citizen's point of view in terms of the social and financial status of the individuals who were convicted and awarded capital punishment. This study revealed to my surprise that almost all the cases which were pending had a social and economic bias. This gave me an impression that we were punishing the person who was least involved in the enmity and who did not have a direct motive for committing the crime. Of course there was one case where. I found that the lift operator had in fact committed the crime of raping and killing the girl without doubt. In that case I affirmed the sentence.

We are all the creations of God, I am not sure a human system or a human being is competent to take away a life based on artificial and created evidence. ●

Miracles of the Quran in Zoology

Muhammad Sami
Muhammad Ali

There are chapters of the Quran with titles like:

The Cow, Cattle, The Bee, The Ant, The Spider, The Clot, The Elephant. This is in addition to tens of verses that discuss animals. (1)

They encourage us to study animal life and habits so as to know, by knowing the creation, the Creator. This is the creation of God. Now show me that which those ye worship) beside him have created..." (2)

The Quran was revealed in the midst of a people for whose livelihood animals played a crucial role, for food, trade, impliments, and warfare. Grazing livestock was the primary source of nutrition in providing meat and milk, and a source of clothing and other items made from their wool and hair. The camel, the "ship of the desert" was the primary means of transport that enabled commerce to be carried on with distant lands that could otherwise only be reached with much hardship; it was thus mainstay of the economy.

Of all the facts mentioned in the Quran, not a single one contradicts modern knowledge. On the contrary it mentions facts known only since the start of the twentieth century, (3)

Communities Like Qurs

"There is not an animal in the earth, nor a flying creature flying on two wings, but they are people like unto you. We have neglected nothing in the Book (of Our decrees)..." (4)

In this verse, God describes communities of animals and birds as

"umam" ("peoples") which to some extent resemble human nations, which is to say they have various means of organizing their collective affairs.

This is a fact that modern science acknowledges; it has been shown that members of animal collectivities are bound together by a very strong sense of community. In fact, some of them have a framework resembling that of a well organized and firmly established kingdom such as ants, bees, and others.

Each such community has a language its members understand. Scientists used to consider animals and birds devoid of intelligence, and merely as living creatures that sense and feel pain. Any time they observed what seemed to be the results of thoughtfulness of planning they put it down to instinct. (5) Vance Baker, in his book "The Human Side of Animals" says that in central Africa there is a bird called the "Honey-Scout" which cooperates with animals on the ground in order to find food. When it comes upon a beehive in the forest it gives a very loud distinct and harsh call that brings all the animals in the area running to get some of the honey; and the scout is content with the waxen leftovers.

Seagulls have an amazing way of opening oysters to get at the meat. Picking the oyster up, they fly with it high up into the sky then it onto the rocks below where their shell is shattered (6). Is this the work of a creature the acts on mere instinct, or that act as a result of planning and execution?

The New Zealand garden-bird builds a trelliced tent-like structure, then arranges in front of it a small garden, which it decorates with fresh colourful flowers, and feathers, fruits, and insects. Then it starts to sing. (7)

In Dr. Ya'qub Saruf's book "Articles in Natural History" we learn that a French surgeon residing in Izmir wanted very much to procure a stork, but had been unable to do so. He did eventually find the nest on one couple and stole their eggs, replacing them with chicken eggs. When they hatched and all the chicks were chickens, the male disappeared for three days. He reappeared with many other storks who surrounded the female, and began raising quite a clamour. They then pounced upon her and tore her to pieces. Thus the surgeon had caused the female to be accused of adultery, which resulted in the stork community's carrying out their sentence for such crimes.

Did this happen by mere instinct or chance? Or was it the result of a general sense of law and order? (8)

What does the Quran have to say on this phenomenon?

1- From the verse quoted at the beginning of this section "... But they are peoples like unto you...": meaning like unto you in their social organization, and in the fact that they know and worship God as you also do.

2- "Hast thou not seen that God, He is Whom all who are in the heavens and the earth praise, and the birds in their flight? Of each he knoweth verily the worship and the praise." (9)

God taught them how to praise and worship in a manner appropriate to how He created them.

3- The Quran states that all created things prostrate to God: "Hast

thou not seen that unto God payeth adoration whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth, and the trees, and the beasts, and many of mankind..." (10)

Animal Languages

"And there were gathered unto Solomon his armies of the jinn and humankind, and of the birds, and they were set in battle orders;

Till when they reached the Valley of the Ants, an ant exclaimed: O ants! Enter your dwellings unperceiving." (11)

The Quran mentions the hoopoe bird and how it spoke to Solomon:

"...and he said: I have found out (a thing) that thou apprehendest not, and I come unto thee from Sheba with sure tidings.

Lo! I found a woman ruling over them, and she hath been given (abundance) of all things, and hers is a mighty throne." (12)

...and the hoopoe rejected the worship of other than God:

"So that they worship not God, who bringeth forth the hidden in the heavens and the earth, and knoweth what ye hide and what ye proclaim,

God there is no god save Him, the Lord of the Tremendous throne." (13)

And Solomon was taught by God the language of the birds:

"... And he said: O mankind! Lo! We have been taught the language of the birds..." (14)

Modern science has verified that animals have languages.

The Malaysian forest chicken stays behind the rest of the flock in order to lay her eggs. When she has finished, she clucks loudly. The rooster crows to let her know of the flock's location, so that she can join them. (15)

Birds often warn one another of

danger by clucking or cooing. Mature birds converse with their young through similar sounds, ordering them or warning them. This is not, however, to say that every sound produced by birds constitutes language, as is also the case with humans. (16)

Scientists have been recording and listening to animal communications for years, especially German specialists, and all with the aim of discovering an animal language. Some have claimed to have recorded and isolated "words" from the languages of horses, cats, chickens etc... It is no secret that bees and ants are somehow able to inform one another as to the whereabouts of food. They are usually observed making some sort of body contact with others of their kind after finding food, and perhaps it is in this way that appropriate information is exchanged.

The Bee

"And Thy Lord inspired the bee; saying: Choose thou habitations in the hills and in the trees, and in that which they thatch;

Then eat of all fruits and follow the ways of thy Lord, made smooth (for thee). There cometh from their bellies a drink of divers hues, wherein is healing for mankind. Lo! Herein is indeed a portent for people who reflect. (17)

Scientists have observed that there are certain flowers that open and close at specific times of the day. Swarms of bees have been observed converge on patches specific types of flowers day after day, often at almost the exact time they are opening. How were they so inspired? (18)

Pollen from one flower attaches to the legs of bees so that it can be deposited in other flowers and

fertilization occur. (19)

The cells in a honey-comb are always hexagonal; this shape gives the greatest volume with least amount of building material with what construction equipment do they build these cells so precisely? How were they guided to work in such precise manner in the darkness of a multi-layered hive? How were they guided to choose this hexagonal shape that is so efficient for their work?

The Ant

"...an ant exclaimed: O ants! Enter your dwellings lest Solomon and his armies crush you, unperceiving." (20)

Ants resemble humans in many habits. They build cities, dig roads and tunnels, store up food in special locations. Some species even cultivate gardens, while others keep livestock. Others launch military raids against each other, taking captives.

About 2,000 species of ants are known.

Some raise varieties of grass and hunt certain types of worms. (21)

Army ants (white ants) are the largest variety. Their heads are very large and hard. When they attack another ant colony, they pile on top of one another and form a wall with only their heads showing. Another variety have long beaks which secrete a sticky substance. In attacking other ants, they secrete this on to the enemy's necks. In their attempts to free themselves, the enemy loses morale and surrenders. (22)

How were ants guided to know that a grain of wheat taken as is from the threshing floor will grow and sprout? How do they know that a coriander seed if split in two will sprout, such that they

split it into four?

The Camel

“Will they not regard the camels, how they are created.” (23).

Camels are of two major varieties.

- a) Iranian, with two humps.
- b) Arabian, with one hump.

The Iranian camel is larger than the Arabian camel, but shorter. The Arabian camel is particularly useful to traveling nomads.

Camels are known for their patience and forbearance in carrying out hard tasks, and traveling great distances across deserts facing hunger and thirst. Yet, they will not tolerate severe cold in winter.

It has been calculated that a good camel can carry four to six tones thirty miles in a single day going at about three miles per hour.

The main factors that enable a came to accomplish such tasks include the following.

a) Its body temperature can change, allowing it to tolerate a lack of water. Rather than sweating to control temperature as do most animals (which results in water loss), they take in heat during the day and lose it at night.

b) Its temperature ranges from 93 F to 104 F around noon. It does sweat a little, but this is negligible compared to other animals.

c) A human can lose 10% of his body weight in sweat and moisture during scorching weather, but a camel can lose 20% without any loss of strength.

d) Camels have a special kind of blood so that it loses only a little of its fluidity when the animal does not drink for several days. Its red blood cells are egg shaped and not spherical, and it contains sodium and potassium. (24)

Camel's feet are round and cushion-like, which helps them to walk on sand. There are similar pillows on the front knees, and on the thighs, as well as on the underside of the abdomen.

At the entrance to each of the two stomachs are numerous small pockets which the camel can open and close by flexing special muscles. Here it can store quantities of water and go without drinking for a long while after setting out, eating grains, thorns and grass.

The camel's teeth are strong and its gums as well as the inside of the throat and mouth are lined with a thick mucous substance that protects against sharp or rough foods like thorns and plants with needles.

The Spider

“The likeness of those who choose other patrons than God is as the likeness of the spider when she taketh unto herself a house, and lo! The frailest of all houses is the spider's house, if they but knew.” (25)

The spider's house is the frailest of houses. Spider's silk, on the other hand is four times as strong as thread of steel drawn to the same thickness and length.

The spider's house is a deadly place for its inhabitants. The female kills the male after intercourse if he doesn't beat a hasty retreat. She also eats her young when they hatch if they don't escape. And the children eat one another. The spider's house is the worst example in science of a place of refuge. (26)

Gnats

“Lo! God disaineth not to coin the simillitude even of a gnat...” (27)

This means that God does not refuse to make any comparison to anything big or small, even smaller than

a mosquito, as He did not disdain to create it. (28).

The mosquito's head contains a pair of compound eyes, and a pair of antennae or "feelers", as well as a long tube capable of piercing and sucking. When it pierces an animal's or a human's skin, the tube releases an anticoagulant which makes it easier for the mosquito to suck the blood. (29)

The fly

"O mankind! A similitude is coined, so pay heed to it: Lo! Those on whom ye call beside God will never create a fly though they combine together for the purpose. And if the fly took something from them, they could not rescue it from it. So weak are (both) the seeker and the sought!. (30)

Scientists have learned that the fly is equipped with long and fast acting saliva glands. As soon as fly touches a piece of food a large quantity of saliva is excreted that converts the structure of the food so that it becomes a new substance. Thus if a fly takes something from us, there is no way that we can get it back. (31)

(1) Gharizah aw Taqdir Ilahi, Dr. Shawqi Abu Khalil, p. 10.

(2) Quran XXX: 11 (Surah Luqman).

(3) Al-Qur'an wa-'Ulum al-'Asr al-Hadithah, op. cit., p. 120

(4) Quran VI: 38 (Surah al-An'am (Cattle).

(5) Ruh al-Din al-Islami, op. cit., p. 56.

(6) Sab'un Burhanan..., op. cit., p. 401.

(7) Ibid., p. 402.

(8) Sab'un Burhanan..., op. cit., p. 404.

(9) Quran XXIV: 41 (Surah al-Nur (Light).

(10) Quran XXII: 18 (Surah al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage).

(11) Quran XXVI: 17-18 (Surah al-Naml (The Ant).

(12) Quran XXVI: 22-23 (Surah al-Naml (The Ant)

(13) Quran XXVI: 25-26 (Surah al-Naml (The Ant)

(14) Quran XXVI: 16 (Surah al-Naml (The Ant).

(15) Gharizah aw Taqdir Ilahi, op. cit., p. 33.

(16) Ibid. p. 55.

(17) Quran XVI: 67-68 (Surah al-Nahl (The bee)

(18) Sab'un Burhanan, ... op. cit., p. 415.

(19) Gharizah aw Taqdir Ilahi, op. cit., p. 407.

(20) Quran XXVII: 18 (Surah al-Naml (The Ant)

(21) Al-'Ilm Yad'u li al-Iman, op. cit., p. 131.

(22) Gharizah aw Taqdir Ilahi, op. cit., p. 51.

(23) Quran LXXXVIII: 17 (Surah al-Ghashiya (The Overwhelming).

(24) Al-'Ilm wa al-Iman, no. 33, p. 16.

(25) Quran XXIX: 41 (Surah al-Ankabut (The Spider).

(26) Nahj al-Islam, no. 47, 1992, p. 85. Dr. Shawqi Abu Khalil.

(27) Quran II: 26 (Surah A-Baqara (The Cow).

(28) Safawat al-Tafasir, op. cit., 1: 45.

(29) Al-'Ilm wa al-Iman, nos. 31-32, 1972, p. 21

(30) Quran XXII: 73 (Surah al-Hajj (The pilgrimage)

(31) Al-Tawhid, Abdul-Majeed al-Zandani, p. 172. ●

Environment and Islam

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Since 1973, the environment day on June 5 is observed all over the globe. We in India also observe the World Environment Day (WED) every year with zeal and zest but a scant attention is paid to save the environment from disaster and ruin. No doubt to lead a peaceful life in this world, a sound and healthy environment is incumbent. Hence, it should be our bounden duty to preserve it from devastation in every possible way.

It should be kept in mind that environment is not only the natural world of forests, animals, sea, mountains, land, and plants that are around us but it refers to all things that influence our life. Accordingly to create a good environment, we will have to avoid all sort of those acts and unholy practices which cause damage to it. One has rightly said: "When we say that our environment influences us, do we only talk about the effect of our surrounding on our physical body or on all aspects of our personality such as our emotions, thoughts, moral values and spiritual perceptions? A loving, happy and peaceful home is conducive to our all-round growth and development, The sight of lush, green meadows, colourful flowers, beautiful animals and the company of good natured people cheer our souls and fill us with indescribable pleasure. On the other hand, the unhealthy programmes on T.V, films on sex and violence, immoral posters splashed across billboards all over

towns and cities, bad languages, lack of respect, corruption and crimes drug us down to the depths of wretchedness and pollute the larger environment that envelops us".

Islam lays great stress on preserving the environment. Allah had created all things for the benefit of human beings. Hence, it is imperative to make proper use of them and save them from destruction. It should be noted that Islam always approves the moderate way of life. It does not allow one to enjoy luxurious living at the cost of damaging natural resources. The holy Quran says: "And We created from water every things" (S.21, A.30) "Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Satans. And the Satan is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful" (S.17 A27) "But seek, with the (Wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: who do mischief" (S. 28, A.77) "There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a bird that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the book and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end" (S.6A.38)

"Eat and drink of the sustenance provided on the face of the earth" (S.2A, 60) "Make not mischief on the earth" (S2 A, 11) "Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (The deed) that the

hands of men have earned that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from evil)" (S. 30 A, 41) "Devote your lives single-mindedly to faith, and thus follow the nature designed by Allah, the nature according to which He has fashioned mankind. There is no altering in the creation of Allah" (S.30 A.30) "Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is a greater (matter) than the creation of men: yet most men understand not" (S.40 A, 57)" And the earth we have spread out like a carpet; set there on mountains firm and immovable; and produced there in all kinds of things in due balance. And We have provided there in means of sustenance, for you and for whose sustenance you are not responsible" (S. 15 A 20). "O ye who believe! Enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the Satan for he is to you an avowed enemy" (S.2.A, 298)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "If the Hour is imminent and any one of you has a palm shoot (to plant) in his hand and is able to plant it before the Hour strikes then he should do so and he will be rewarded for that action" (Al-Bayhaqi)

"Whoever plants a tree is rewarded by Allah as much as the produce grown in that tree" (Musnad-e-Ahmad)

"Save yourselves from two things which invite the curse of God." "What those things? Enquired the companions. The Prophet replied: "One is that anyone defected on the road (or any other place) used by the people, and the other that did so at a shady place" (Muslim) He further said: "Removing obstacles from road is

charity".

Besides we should also show mercy towards animals. They are often used by us to cater to the needs of our daily life. The holy prophet (PBUH) was very kind and merciful to animals. Once the holy Prophet (PBUH) saw an ass which had been cauterised on the face, where upon he said: "Allah has cursed one who cauterised it (on the face). If there is necessity to cauterise camels and goats etc., cauterise them on the part not so delicate as the face. Once the prophet saw a camel on the way. There was hardly any difference between its back and belly due to extreme hunger. He said: "Fear Allah concerning this dumb creation." One day a companion came to the Prophet (PBUH). He was holding in his hand the offsprings of some bird which he had covered. The Prophet inquired about them. He said: "I heard the voice in a bush. When I reached there I saw these offsprings I took them out. When the mother bird saw this, she began to hover my head. He said: "Go and put these birds again at the place from where you have taken".

Noted Islamic Scholar Syed Sulaiman Nadwi says: "The Arab of pre-Islamic day were semi-barbarious. They cut off the flesh from the backs of the living camels and the tail of the fat-sheep which they roasted and enjoyed eating. It was also a practice with Arabs to slaughter a fat she-camel pregnant with a young one to have the young one roasted with the fatty hump of the mother. The prophet Muhammad (PBUH) put an end to such practices of the Days of Ignorance". Islam has thus forbidden all those practices and sports

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The Harmain are US Target

S. Ausaf Saied Vasfi

What is the degree of hate against Islam and Muslims, inculcated systematically into the minds and hearts of the American government, civilians and military officials? Does the United States, or, to be exact, did the United States do so officially?

A 300-word story, catelined Washington, May 11, done by the Associated Press, reveals:

"A course for US military officers has been teaching that America's enemy is Islam in general, not just terrorists, and suggesting that the country might ultimately have to obliterate the Islamic holy cites of Mecca and Medina without regard for civilians, following precedents such as of nuclear attack on Hiroshima."

Quintessential question

Before proceeding further, let the plural Bharat, not in undue haste, ask itself: Did any political, central or regional party including the Congress take note of the outrage? Did any Human Rights organisation express *alarm at the things to come*? Did any English, Hindi or regional language prominent paper care to do an editorial on the issue? Did Parliament pass any resolution the US threat not only to Muslims but to the entire one-fifth of mankind? If not, why? Do the Muslims not constitute the principal minority of multi-religious and multi-cultural country? Is the 170-million strong Muslim minority an unknown group,

little know in the country?

The story referred to above is from the proverbial horse's mouth. Reverting to the subject, to quote its other key points by a top military officer:

Possible outcomes

"They hate everything you stand for and will never exist with you, unless you submit." Inspector Army Lt. Col. Matthew Dooley said last July at Join Forces Staff College in Northfolk, Virginia. Dooley also presumed for the purpose of his theoretical war plan that the Geneva Convention was "no longer relevant".

He added: "This would leave open the option once again of taking war to a civilian population whenever necessary (the historical precedents of Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki being applicable)." His war plan suggested possible outcomes such as "Saudi Arabia threatened with starvation..... Islam reduced to cult status" and the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia "destroyed".

A copy of the presentation was posted online by Wired.com's Danger Room blog. A Pentagon spokesman authenticated the documents. Dooley still works for the college, but is no longer teachings, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey said.

Talking points

The course "Perspectives on Islam and Islamic Radicalism" was an elective taught since 2004. It was offered five times a year with about 20 students each time.

For the sake of clarity, we enumerate below the talking points of the story:

1) It is not only the Muslim terrorists but Islam as an ideology or religion that is the enemy of the United States. Therefore, with a view to getting rid of the foe, the erasal of the two holy shrines in Makkah and Madina from the surface of the soil is also necessary. Let the US military should not attach undue importance to the destruction of human life as collateral damages are understandable in a all out war, as the world saw in a Hiroshima-like situation without which the 'menace' of Islam cannot be dealt with effectively.

2) Islam and Christianity or Judaism cannot live amicably, side by side. For the survival of the later liquidation of the former is a must.

3) the international covenants like the Geneva Convention should not bother the conscience of the US military. In such cases they seize to be relevant.

4) If taking war to the civilian populaces becomes necessary, it should be taken confidently. There are precedents to justify the American action, like Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

5) The possible outcomes like starvation deaths of the Saudis, assumption of the cult status of Islam or destruction of Ka'ba or Masjid al-Nabavei should not deter the American bombers.

Like Hitler's final solution' this is America's final solution, which, if you go deeper, smacks of the Zioint thinking and strategy.

That this course has now been suspended is not the news. The news is that the hideous face of Pentagon, representing the anti-Islamic sentiment among the Christian and Jewish brethren has, once again, been unmasked.

Crusades Continue?

Side news is that the Kansas Senate has, not long ago, approved a bill that effectively obliterates the Islamic Shari'ah in the State. The number of yes-votes was 34 while the no-votes were only four. This should not distract our attention from the central point which is that the unipolar United States is and has been, at war with Islam. The logical inference of this belligerent soldier must know that wherever he is fighting or is going to fight in the future he must consider his fight as against Islam. In brief and simple words, it means the crusades continue, and continue unabated. It is clear that in this Christian Zionist jihad, the US, the UK and the entire Europe are united. The difference lies in degree alone.

In this disquieting backdrop let the US Defence secretary, Foreign Secretary and Secretary for Information think coolly what repercussion they expect from the Arab Islamic world for letting out the said secret. Do they think the Muslims in general would take it in stride?

The heady wine of power seems to have totally blinded the already purblind US administration's

egg-headed leadership. Has nobody read history there? Where are the Pharaohs today? Don't go far. Where is Hitler? Did it ever occur to the Fuehrer that one day he could commit suicide in a bunker in St. Helina? Were these insignificant footnotes in history not more powerful in their times than the Pentagon, the US and its partners in crimes against humanity?

The explicit threat to the Harmain painfully compels us, the Indian Muslims in general and their leadership in particular to ask the Guardian of the two Holy Mosques: How does he propose to confront the bellicose America? An onerous responsibility rests on his shoulders. Perhaps the Saudi King knows that the Islamic world as a whole does not feel at ease, much less enthusiastic about the Saudi extraordinary proximity with the United States because of the latter's irrational and unhelpful attitude towards the transplanted Israel. Being what he is, king Abdullah is expected to care for his coreligionists' responsibility.

There is no mechanism in the entire West Asian region as well as North Africa which may provide some semblance of hope or relief. The much touted OIC has been reduced to the status of a debating society, heavily punctuated with verbosity. Our morbid feeling is that all the His Majesties, His Highnesses, and His Excellencies hang together urgently before they are hanged together by the United States of America. ●

(Courtesy: Radiance)

Devotion in Love

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi was on his usual round of the market to get some household needs. He stopped at a shop where a woman customer was engaged in collecting some grocery items. Purchases over, the lady opened the purse to pay for the shopped items. The shopkeeper refused to accept the money and told her: "Go away, no bill, no money. How could I accept money from one whom I love?"

In fact, it was a conversation between the shopkeeper and his beloved. But Rumi fainted and collapsed as the word hit his ear drums. The shopkeeper got worried. He called for a bowl of water and sprinkled at the Maulana's face. Rumi regained consciousness after a while. Meanwhile the lady had left the place.

After Maulana Rumi regained his composure, the shopkeeper asked: "Maulana! Are you all right? What happened to you? Why did you faint? Could I be of any help to you in overcoming your worries?"

Rumi replied: "I extremely guilty. The bonds of love made you do away with accounts of the transaction while dealing with your beloved. But how unfortunate I am that I keep counting on rosary beads every word of tasbeeh (praises of God) I utter? By this reckoning, I am afraid, my affection with Allah is very shallow and I stand no chance of ever gaining his favour. ●

(Translated from Urdu by Maqbool Ahmad Siraj)

Obituary

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Maulana Saeed Murtaza Nadwi passed away on June 15, 2012 at his residence in Lucknow. Born in a respectable family on February 23, 1955 in Lucknow, he was son of late Maulana Syed Muhammad Murtaza Naqvi Bastavi, former Director Allama Shibli Library, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow. He learnt the Holy Quran by heart in Nadwa. After completing Fazilat from Nadwa, he went to Saudi Arabia for higher education. He did his B.A. and M.A. from Jamiatul-Al-Imam Muhammad Bin Saud in Riyadh. He was appointed as teacher of Uloomul Al- Quran in Kulliatul -Al-Tarbiah Lil-Banat. He served there for few years. After returning from Saudi Arabia, he taught in his alma mater Darul Uloom Nadwaatul Ulama, Lucknow. Later on he started holding written competitions on various topics for students pursuing educations in Madrasas to create fervour and curiosity for developing writing skills among them. To a great extent he succeeded in getting his desired ends in this genre.

Besides he worked on late Maulana S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi by various ways. He prepared compendious directory of Maulana's all books. Its one part related to his Arabic books. He made a website named "Nadwi Net". Maulana's personality and his whole publications were introduced in various languages on it. He also set up a particular corner for Maulana in the central library of Nadwatul Ulama. He collected all books on Maulana available in the market.

No doubt, he was a good and sensitive teacher. He always thought for students and their future life. He had passion and sublime sense of feeling as to how they progress and brighten their future. He was an embodiment of all sublime qualities and virtues, necessary for a good teacher. Dr. Saeedur Rahman Nadwi Azami, Principal Darul-Uloom Nadwatul-Ulama, led the funeral prayer. He was buried in the graveyard of Daliganj, Lucknow. May Allah grant peace to his soul and bestow upon him the choicest place in the paradise. Ameen! ●

The Quran: A Healing for All

K.K. Usman

This Quran is a Scripture which We revealed to you (Muhammad) that you may bring men out of the darkness of ignorance to the light of certain knowledge. (14: 1) This is the Book... Confirming the already given revelation (2:2,97)

And if there is any doubt regarding what We have revealed to Our servant (Muhammad), try to bring about the like of one of its chapters... (2: 23)

The Quran is universally known as the Sacred book of Islam, the religion of submission to the Will of God. The name Qur'an is an Arabic word which means 'the Recital' or 'the Reading'. It is the Word of God and is the collection of the essence of all the Scriptures of the past, containing a universal message and guidance to mankind for all time.

The Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad during some twenty three years of his Prophetic mission. It has been preserved in original Arabic language both in *memory* throughout the fourteen hundred years. The Quran contains 114 chapters (surahs). It is considered as the undisputed authority wherefrom springs law, ethics and all other Islamic concepts. Faith in One God, with conviction, and performance of virtuous and righteous deeds are the spring board of the Quran. The Quran categorically lays down that all human beings are born innocent and are accountable for their deeds. The Quran

prohibits the root causes of evils such as: intoxicants, gambling, adultery, oppression, corruption, murder female infanticide and many more. The Quran commands that the followers of other faiths must be respected and treated with kindness.

The ultimate that the Quran proclaims is the concept of the Unity of God: there is no god but God ; and He is the Only One to be worshiped. It is this concept of Oneness of God (Tawhid) that breaks the shackles of particularism, ethnocentrism and racism and opens up the horizon of universalism and brotherhood of man.

One aspect of Islam that is appealing to the secular mind is the harmonious interplay of faith and reason. The Quran does not demand unreasoned belief. Rather, it invites intelligent faith, growing from observation, reflection and contemplation, beginning with nature and everything around us. Accordingly, antagonism between religion and science is foreign to Islam.

The Quran is a mingling of the spiritual and the material, the divine and the mundane; it covers everything from the sun to the moth. It explains a moral in a verse, which might ordinarily take a whole book, it enunciates a principle from several angles and attacks a wrong from a multitude of directions. And yet its main values are put forth not only unambiguously but in a forceful manner. The problems of

philosophy and metaphysics are dealt with a firm and uncommon angles as are historical events and God's Signs in the universe.

The first chapter of the Quran consists seven verses and is called Fathiha, meaning, the opening chapter. These seven verses are compulsorily recited in daily prayers by Muslims.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, Lord of the universe,

The Gracious, the Merciful;
Master of the Day of Judgment.

You alone we worship; You alone we implore for help.

Guide us unto the straight path,

The path of those whom You have blessed,

Those who have not incurred Your displeasure, those who have not gone astray. (1:1-7)

The Quran is not only a spiritual guide, a code of ethics and a handbook of morals, but it also contains rules and regulations for the day-today affairs of the world, covering diverse fields such as: individual and social, political and economical, marriage, divorce, inheritance, usury, theft, adultery and many more. In fact, the Quran gives advice on every matter of daily life, such as how a believer should enter a house, how he should greet someone, how he should dress or talk, walk, eat, worship, handle his wealth etc.

Its verses, at once stirring and soothing, forceful and gentle, tender and terrifying, breathtaking and awe-inspiring, the Quran have moved millions of Muslims through the ages. They continue to do so today, Muhammad was, indeed, the medium

of the divine Will as expressed in the Quran. As for Muslims, the Quran is the Word of God and therefore, immutable and unchangeable, not metaphorically or symbolically but, literally. There is no human participation in the creation of the Quran; it is all of God and what is of God, cannot be changed by man.

The more the Quran is studied with an unprejudiced mind, the more this truth emerges, that the Quran is nothing but a confirmation of all the earlier Scriptures and messages sent by God through His messengers who lived among one people after another.

In the introduction to his book 'The Essential Koran' Thomas Cleary writes:

"The name Quran means the Recital or the Reading. According to its own word, the Quran is a revealed Book in the spiritual tradition of the Torah and Gospel transmitted by Moses and Jesus. Connecting itself and these distinguished predecessors to even earlier dispensations of original religion, the Quran represents its teaching as confirming and clarifying the truth of what was in those messages.

The Quran is undeniably unique in this tradition, and indeed unique in the entire context of classical sacred tradition throughout the world, in having been revealed in the full light of history, through the offices of a Prophet who was well known.

As the last link in a chain of revelation going back to time immemorial, even to the very origin of humankind, the Quran has the special function of recollecting the essential

message of all revealed Books and distinguishing this from the opinions and reactions later interpolated into ancient texts whose original dispensation had taken place in remote and even unknown times.

Therefore the Quran is not only called the Reading or the Recital but also the Criterion; it is called a Reminder and also a Clarification. A modern descendant of the Prophet Muhammad wrote of this comprehensive scope and function of the Book in these terms:

The Quran is nothing but the old Books refine of human alloy, and contains transcendent truths embodied in all sacred scriptures with complete additions, necessary for the development of all human faculties. It repeats truths given in the Holy Vedas, in the Bible, in the words of the Gita, in the sayings of Buddha and all other Prophets, and adds what was not in them, and gives new laws to meet the contingencies of the present time when different members of God's family who lived apart from each other in the days of old revelations had come close one to the other.

Because the Quran synthesizes and perfects earlier revelations, its function as a Criterion to distinguish between truth and falsehood is not carried out in the form of dogmatic assertion or condemnation of one religion or another, but in the form of distinction between human artifice and the essential meaning of religion, between hypocrisy and true faith.

The Quran speaks to humanity as whole, to nations, communities, families and individuals; complete with

both and outer teaching and an inner teaching, it speaks both to persons and to souls, individually and collectively." (The Essential Koran, Thomas Cleary)

The Islamic imperative is two fold: personal and social and it consists of duties to God and duties to man and to the rest of God's creations including the physical environment. Every duty the Quran has enjoined aims at the self as well as at the other selves and it is aimed concomitantly at the service of God as well as of man. None may be exclusively the one or the other. A frequently repeated theme of the Quran is: the people who attain salvation are those who have implicit faith in God and do virtuous acts. The examples in which this expression occurs in the Quran are so many as to obviate any listing of them.

The Quran reiterates the eternal truth about the Unity of God and calls upon His creatures to have unshakable and absolute faith in Him; do good deeds and lead a pious and virtuous life. These are the cardinal principles which it enjoins upon people for salvation and form the bedrock of Islam.

One of the shortest chapters (surah 112), Al-Ikhlās, deals exclusively with the doctrine of Unity of God (Tawhid) and described by the Prophet as equivalent to one-third of the Quran.

Equality and justice are two sides of the same coin and the Quran is champion of both. All human beings are equal in the sight of God, whether male or female, black or white, poor or rich, the ruler or the ruled, the noble or the plebeian... It is the piety, virtue and

good deeds which grant excellence to one person over the other. As for differences in race, colour, language and nationality, the Quran maintains, these are merely for distinguishing and not for division, discrimination and superiority. The ideal vision of brotherhood of man and sense of justice is expressed in the Quran most eloquent terms:

“O mankind! We have created you from a single pair of male and female, constituted into diverse people and nations that you may know and cooperate with one another. The best among you in the sight of God is the most pious, the most virtuous.” (49:13)

“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witness to God, even if it be against yourselves, your parents or your kin and whether it be against rich or poor.” (4:135)

The Quran makes a fervent appeal to the people, loud and clear, to organise themselves in order to invite humanity to all that is good; to enjoin what is right; and to forbid what is wrong:

“O you who believe! Let there arise out of you a band of people, inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity.” (3:104)

The Quran emphasizes the paramount importance of life Here after for mankind. It creates in a person the awareness of his/her duty to God and fellow creatures in the temporary worldly life; and unfolds the realities of the eternal life, the Hereafter which includes the Day of resurrection, the Day of judgment, Paradise and Hell. It

inculcates the concept of accountability both in the private and public life of a person.

“What is this life on this earth, but a play and an amusement? It is the Hereafter that is the best for all who are righteous.” (6:32)

To give, even in outline, various aspects of human life dealt with in the Quran be impossible here. The Quran even instructs Muhammad how to debate and discuss the issues of religion with the people of other faiths and these injunctions stand out as guideline to be copied by his followers.

“Call men unto the path of your Lord through wise argument and fair preaching; and argue with nonbelievers with arguments yet more sound.” (16:125)

“Revile not those whom they call upon besides God, lest in their ignorance, out of spite, they revile God (Allah).” (6:125)

One must keep in mind that the Quran does not treat its subject matters systematically. Fulfilling a requisite of the aesthetic sublime in letters, the Quran is a book in which principles and precepts are strewn like a string of pearls that has become unfurled.

At the very centre of the Quran's edifice of ideas stands God, the Absolute, the One, the Transcendent, the Creator, the Cause and Judge of all. Surrounding this centre of Quranic ideas about the divine being and its relevance to creations is a body of methodological principles governing man's response to divinity. In their sum, these principles establish a worldview constitutes by the following:

1. Rationalism or the subjection

of all knowledge, including religious knowledge, to the dictates of reason and common sense the repudiation of myth, of paradox, of ultimately contradictory positions, acquiescence to proof and evidence, and openness to further evidence and readiness to alter one's knowledge and attitude according to the demands of new evidence.

2. Humanism, or the doctrine, first, that all humans are born innocent, there being neither original sin or guilt; second, that they are free to determine their individual destinies in accordance with the best dictates of their own consciences; third, that they are equal before God and the law since no discriminations is legitimate that bases itself upon race, colour, language, inherited culture, religion or inherited social position; fourth, that they are all by nature capable of making judgements of truth and falsehood, of good and evil, of desirableness and its opposite; fifth, that they are all responsible, certain to be accountable and will receive from their Creator, whether in this world or the next, exactly what their deeds have earned for them.

3. World - and life affirmation, or the doctrine that God created life to be lived and not denied or destroyed, and the world to be enjoyed; that Creation is subservient to man, malleable and transformable by him according to his wishes and design; that both life and the world are to be promoted and developed, culture and civilization to be nurtured and to issue in human self realization in knowledge, in taqwa and ishan (piety and righteousness), and in beauty.

4. Societism, or the doctrine that man's cosmic value lies in his membership in and contribution to human society, that his individual self is certainly an end-in-itself, yet more ennobled, and hence conditioned, by its subjection to humanity as an end-in-itself.

Finally, beyond these methodological principles, the Quranic essence includes the institutions of Islam. These cover all fields of human activity: the religious and the ethical, the political and the economic, the cultural and the educational, the judicial and the administrative. ●

(Continued page from 35)

which cause pain and torture to animals and birds as these practices make one callous and insensitive to pains and worries of living beings. Hard-heartedness, brutality and callousness are the worst qualities in man, according to Islam" (Siratun-Nabi Vol.V p. 273-274)

To sum up the environment is Allah's trust to human beings. Accordingly its abuse is a misuse and a colossal travesty of His trust. The ecological crisis is one of the greatest challenges of our time. All the three spheres of our planet (i.e. Atmosphere) hydrosphere, and lithosphere) have become contaminated by the anthropogenic activities, thus disturbing the natural balance. Islamic teachings and instructions leads us to strive to keep our surroundings neat and clean and to plant more and more saplings around us to save this planet earth. ●

A Difficult Journey, Some Difficult Decisions*

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam**

My visit to Gujarat

One of the pillars of development that I have thought a lot about is that we have to create a nation where poverty has been totally eradicated and illiteracy removed. Alongside, we need to evolve a society where crimes against women and children are absent and none in the society feels alienated. These thoughts were prominent in my mind during my visit to Gujarat in August 2002, which I took up as my first major task immediately after becoming President.

The State had been hit by riots a few months earlier, and their impact had left thousands of lives in disarray. It was an important and sensitive task, because it took place under unique circumstances, in a politically charged atmosphere. I decided that my mission was not to look at what had happened, not to look at what was happening, but to focus on what should be done. What had happened was already a point of discussion by the judiciary and the Parliament and continues to be discussed even now.

As no President had ever visited an area under such circumstances, many questioned the necessity of my visit to the state at this juncture. At the ministry and bureaucratic level, it was suggested that I should not venture into Gujarat at that point of time. One of the main reasons was political. However, I made up my mind that I would go and preparations were in full swing at Rashtrapati Bhavan for my first visit as President.

The Prime Minister, Atal Bihari

Vajpayee, asked me only one question, 'Do you consider going to Gujarat at this time essential?' I told the PM, 'I consider it an important duty so that I can be of some use to remove the pain, and also accelerate the relief activities, and bring about a unity of minds, which is my mission, as I stressed in my address during the swearing-in ceremony'...

I visited twelve areas - three relief camps and nine riot-hit locations where the losses had been high... I remember one scene, when I visited a relief camp. A six-year-old boy came up to me, held both my hands and said, 'Rashtrapatiji, I want my mother and father.' I was speechless. There itself, I held a quick meeting with the District Collector. The chief Minister also assured me that the boy's education and welfare would be taken care of by the government.

All through my visit only one thought occupied my mind... Should not development be our only agenda? Any citizen following any faith has the fundamental right to live happily. No one has the right to endanger the unity of minds, because unity of minds is the lifeline of our country, and makes our country truly unique.

After all what is justice, what is democracy? Every citizen in the country has a right to live with dignity; every citizen has a right to aspire for distinction. To access the large number of opportunities, through just and fair means, in order to attain that dignity and distinction is what democracy is all about. That is what our

*Excerpted from "Turning Points: A Journey Through Challenges."

**Former President of India

Constitution is all about. And that is what makes life whole some and worth living in a true and vibrant democracy, the essence of which is tolerance for people's belief system and lifestyles...

The increasing intolerance for the views of others and increasing contempt for the way of life or religion of others, or the expression of these differences through lawless violence against people cannot be justified in any context. All of us have to work hard and do everything to protect the rights of every individual...

Returning the Office of Profit Bill

Broadly, the Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Act 1959, stipulates that certain offices of profit under the government shall not disqualify the holders thereof for being chosen as, or for being, Members of Parliament. During mid 2006, I received a number of complaints from MPs about certain fellow members holding office of profit. I had to deal with these complaints. I sent these to the Chief Election commissioner to study and conduct an inquiry wherever considered essential... Meanwhile I received the Office of Profit Bill from the Parliament for approval.

I studied the Bill and found that it had many anomalies. In the proposed Office of Profit Bill, I did not find a systematic approach towards deciding the question of what constituted an office of profit. Instead exemption was given to only the existing offices which were occupied by MPs. I also discussed the anomalies and my concerns with three former Chief Justices of the Supreme Court. I prepared a letter in consultation with my team and the three CJIs ...

The Office of Profit Bill was not sent by the Cabinet for my approval but by Parliament. Hence, I returned the Bill to the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for reconsideration by both

the Houses of Parliament. This was the first time in the history of Parliament or Rashtrapati Bhavan that a President returned a Bill for reconsideration...

The Bill was reconsidered and sent back for my approval. The prime Minister met me and he was surprised, as I normally send the approved bill the next day. Why were weeks rolling by with no action taken, he wondered. I said some action is needed from Parliament and I have not heard anything about it. The Prime Minister said the Parliament has already decided on the constitution of a Joint Bill into all aspects of the Office of Profit Bill as per my suggestion...

I was on tour to the North-East and... Received a message that the formation of a JPC on the Office of Profit Bill had been approved by Parliament. Once I got the confirmation about the action by Parliament, I immediately signed the Office of Profit Bill. After a few months, Parliament approved the JPC report which was not complete and did not address the problem which I had suggested. Parliament has to deal with such issues with care, otherwise it would be construed that the highest body of the nation is promoting wrong practices which may set a national trend in different echelons of the government....

Recently, we saw two fasting movements against corruption and many more may get inspired. I was asking myself, why are such movements taking place in our democratic country. This is by Parliament itself....

On the death penalty

One of the more difficult tasks for me as President was to decide on the issue of conforming capital punishment awarded by the courts after exhausting all processes of appeals. As a substantial

Education: A Silent Muslim Revolution

Sudheendra Kulkarni

The India Islamic Cultural Centre (IICC) in New Delhi is nestled in the neighbourhood of more high-brow institutions of intellectual activity such as the India International Centre (IIC) and the India Habitat Centre (IHC). However, some of the more seemingly mundane events it organises are, potentially far more beneficial to India's inclusive development than a seminar at IIC or a talk at IHC. Under the able leadership of its amiable president, Sirajuddin Qureshi, IICC is quietly promoting awareness about the need for Indian Muslims' all-round development, while simultaneously weaving stronger bonds of national integration by proactively engaging with non-Muslim personalities who believe in the same cause.

Last week, I was surprised to get an invitation from my journalist-friend Wadood Sajid to be a guest speaker at a personality development course that he has helped IICC organise. What awaited me was a surprise, as revealing as it was pleasant. For the past five years, IICC (it scores high marks for its aesthetics and facilities) has been hosting this 40-day free-of-charge annual event that trains over 400 bright and aspiring students and young professionals in team-building and leadership development, and so on. Most of them are Muslims. Many are from very poor backgrounds, and some from well-known religious seminaries.

One-third of the packed hall was occupied by women, dressed both traditionally and nontraditional. And the quality of presentations made by both male and female participants was outstanding, a pointer both to their own innate talent and also to the abilities of Munawar Zama, a young Hyderabad-based leadership trainer who conducts the course.

What appealed to me the most was that the course stressed not only on the superficial aspects of personality developments but also on its ethical core. For example, on the day I was invited, the participants were given two topics to speak on? 'Why, and how, not to tell a lie' and 'Why we should respect our parents.'

In my talk, I tried to explain how great personalities in all traditions had convergent views on the importance of education, understood as lifelong learning. Prophet Muhammad urged his followers to "go in quest of knowledge even if you have to go as far as China". The same thought is echoed in Mahatma Gandhi's exhortation: "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever." Referring to the moral as well as modernising focus of IICC's personality development course, I said it would make Swami Vivekananda happy. For hadn't Swamiji said that true education is one that promotes "man-making and nation-building"? I urged the participants to participate in

the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Swamiji, who championed numerous noble ideals, including Hindu-Muslim unity.

What I observed at the IICC programme has reinforced my belief that a silent revolution is taking place in the Indian Muslim community, as far as education is concerned. This, clearly, is a phenomenon that gathered momentum after the mandir-masjid dispute in Ayodhya made the community self-introspective. The thoughts, concerns and aspirations of the new generation of Muslims are pushing it away from the margins and into the mainstream of national life.

I'll never forget an interaction I had in the mid-1980-s, with a Muslim family in Mumbai's Mohammad Ali Road area, a highly congested Muslim enclave. A young male member of the family had been selected to join the Indian Navy, but several members of the community dissuaded him from doing so. Why? "Muslims should not serve in the military of a non-Muslim nation."! Not surprising, since quite a few people in the area were staunch supporters of the Pakistan movement before 1947. Now, in the same neighbourhood, I've seen seeds of new thinking sprout. Schezan and Munaif, the two prodigiously talented sons of my good friends Iqbal and Ayesha, are both exemplars of inclusive India. Schezan, who graduated from the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC) in Pune, is now proudly serving in the Indian Army. His younger brother Munaif has secured admission in the prestigious Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune.

Last week, I received a message from my dear friend Atik Muzaffarpuri, a Delhi-based Urdu journalist. His happiness knew no bounds because his son Mohammed Adil has scored top marks in an all-India entrance exam to secure admission in a coveted medical college to pursue MBBS. I have seen the extremely adverse living environments in which Schezan, Munaif and Adil grew up - and yet succeeded. This year, the highest number of Muslim students, many from very ordinary backgrounds, cracked the IIT entrance exam.

Due to space constraints, I can only make a brief mention here of the godly work that my other dear friend, Urdu writer Feroze Ashraf, and his wife Arifa, have been doing to spread education among girls belonging to the poorest of the poor Muslim families in Mumbai's slums. How the light of hope in hundreds devoted efforts have brought the light of hope in hundreds of gloomy lives is a story at once moving and inspiring.

Indian Muslims have begun to beat the odds because they have realised the importance of education more than ever before. So far, they've been helped mostly by the larger efforts. With understanding and support from the larger society, with effective implementation of the governments' schemes and policies, and with the removal of internal obstacle in the community, this revolution will surely gain momentum. Apart from transforming Muslim lives, this can impart tremendous new energy to India's development. ●

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