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The Fragrance of East

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The Quranic Dictum

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Equality and Brotherhood

Socially, a most epoch-making change was brought about by the Islamic notion of human equality and brother-hood. There was no division of society into permanent classes and no such community as the untouchables among the Muslims. Their belief was that no one was born unclean into the world nor predeterminately ignorant and debarred by the very fact of his birth in a certain class from the acquirement of knowledge. No trade or occupation was reserved for any particular section of humanity. On the other hand, they fraternised freely with each-other at all levels, the rich strove with the poor in the pursuit of learning and there was freedom of profession for all. The idea of brotherhood was for the Indian mind and the Indian society a novel experience and a call to renewed thinking which did a lot of good to the country. The bonds of the then existing class-ridden society were relaxed to a considerable extent and thus was witnessed a widespread recoil from the excessive rigidity of the caste-system. The advent of Islam acted as a challenge to social reformers in other fields also. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

"Do you think that most of them hear or understand? For they are merely like cattle; nay, even worse than them. Have you not seen how your Lord spreads the shade? If He will, He could have made it stationary; instead We have made the sun its pilot. So (as the sun rises), We gradually roll up that shade unto Us."

(Al-Quran 25:44-46)

Cattle do not know whether they are being driven towards a pasture or a slaughter house. The same is true of most people: they continue moving ahead under the influence of the satan within them - the satan of desire - and under the influence of their leaders who are wont to misguide them so that they do not know whether they are being driven towards their success or destruction. Woe to such people, for unlike the cattle, they have been endowed with reason and the ability to think and judge for themselves. Hence, their state is worse than that of cattle.

This *ayat* is not meant for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be to him), for if it were, it would mean that the Blessed Prophet was being asked to desist in his efforts to convey his Message to the unbelievers. Rather, the *ayat* is meant for the unbelievers. It asks the unbelievers to wake from their state of negligence and heedlessness and to change their ways which are like those of dumb driven cattle. This they should do for they have been endowed with the ability to think and to reason. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Jabir bin Abdullah relates that the Holy Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said: "Avoid cruelty and injustice, for on the Day of Judgement, the same will turn into several darknesses; and guard yourselves against miserliness; for this has ruined nations that lived before you. Miserliness led them to bloodshed and to treat the unlawful as lawful."

(Muslim)

The hadīth under study makes one aware that injustice and cruelty towards fellow beings and God's creations are despised and analogised as darkness on the Day of Judgement. It also reminds us that miserliness is against generosity, leads to bloodshed and has ruined the nations before. A miser does not hesitate in making a prohibited thing permissible for himself!

Cruelty and injustice assume different forms. The Holy Messenger once said that Allah has decreed the fire of Hell for a person who usurps the property of a Muslim through false oath. On another occasion, he warned that "your blood, your belongings and your honour are sacred to each other."

The Holy Messenger has admonished the believers against cruelty not only upon human beings but also animals, birds and even plants! After all they too have life.

Miserliness is the manifestation of greed, pretty-mindedness and stone-heartedness. This inevitably leads one to envy, hatred, illegal means of amassing wealth and not looking after the needy, the poor and the destitute.

The have-nots develop a grudge against the haves and wage a class war. The miser becomes a bane of society and when the disease spreads, hatred and enmity results in bloodshed. ■

IRAQ IS BURNING

The recent crisis in Iraq sparked by sectarian militancy is unlikely to end soon. Mishandling of the local issues by Noori Almaiki, President of Iraq has caused such a fierce situation that it is likely to assume a global crisis. Beginning with Israel's conflict with Lebanon in early this century in escalating a situation which may engulf the whole West Asia. Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon were once peaceful nations but now their soils are soaked with human blood.

Tracing back the history we find that Saddam Husain to a great extent is responsible for the whole trouble. True it was necessary for Saddam Husain to rule with an iron hand to suppress the sectarian problem. As a dictator he exceeded his powers. His conflict with Iran for seven years caused loss of lakhs of human lives and resulted in economic crisis. Saddam's attack of Kuwait was infact the beginning of his fall. U.S.A's intervention saved Kuwait

but brought Saddam and U.S.A. in direct confrontation. It ultimately resulted in the dethroning of Saddam and finally his hanging.

Now two great powers U.S.A. and Russia are accusing each other for the present crisis in Iraq. It is said that U.S.A. wants to build a New Middle East by getting the borders of West Asian States changed. How far this scheme will succeed only time will tell us.

The present crisis in Iraq is being galvanised by interested parties as a Shia - Sunni strife. But there is no reason to disagree with a Shia cleric that it is infact a conflict between Islam and terrorism.

Iraq's present crisis is of great concern to India as well. 70 percent oil is imported from Iraq any hindrance or short supply may cause havoc. ■

S.A.

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From Adulthood To Death

-S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

FROM ADULTHOOD TO DEATH

Marriage is not only a social necessity and a commendable act in the eyes of the religious can on (*Shari'at*), it is also one of the landmarks of major significance in the life of a Muslim attaining manhood. Islam does not view with favour any undue delay, unless there are some cogent reasons for it, in the marriage of a Muslim after attaining the marriageable age. It wants to plug the door to immorality and dissoluteness. The religious law of Islam does not prescribe any particular age for contracting marriage, the marriageable age depends on the general physique of a man, his upbringing and circumstances as well as the climatic conditions and customs obtaining in a particular country. It only enjoins that one should enter into wedlock soon after attaining puberty.

Indian Customs adopted by the Muslims

The democratic structure of the Islamic social order still in vogue in other Islamic countries, particularly in the Arabic-speaking lands, has been gradually given up by the Indian Muslims who are guided in establishing matrimonial relationship by the considerations of the caste and family. Preference is given here to the spouse

belonging to one's own caste, and within the same caste to a consort of the same family. This bespeaks of a leaning for racial or blood relationship which is sometimes absurdly insisted upon in the matrimonial union. This obviously owes its origin to the Indian caste system or social stratification among the sister community, which has so long been scrupulously adhered to by them. In comparison to the Indian Muslims, whose social structure has become a victim of caste discrimination their co-religionists in other countries would appear to be more broadminded and un-fettered by the shackles of customs and rituals. In establishing matrimonial relationships the Muslims of other countries do take into account the social, economic and educational status of the spouses—any marked disparity being looked with *disfavor*, but the Indian Muslim communities arrogating themselves as *ashraf* or *shurfa* consider it absolutely essential to unite in marriage only with those who descend from a common progenitor. They overlook the social and moral evils which are produced by such a strict adherence to the social stratification, and have sometimes to pay dearly for that. The changing social order, economic pressures and the wide diffusion of education among the

masses are slowly bringing about a change in the outlook of the people; now greater preference is being given to the economic status, education and the good looks of the couple. This is, of course; a novel experience for the Muslim community as a whole, which is sometimes successful and at times ends in a failure; but, be as it may, the considerations of caste and consanguine relationship are increasingly being relegated to a lower priority.

Marriages within the Family Circle

Contrary to the Hindu custom of solemnising marriages outside the family circle, the Indian Muslims prefer to intermarry within the family, barring, of course, the prohibited degrees of relationships. In certain families the marriages between the cousins i. e. the sons or daughters of an uncle or aunt are given preference over other matches, although the practice is now losing ground owing to a variety of reasons.

The Marriage Proposal

There is not much difference between the way marriage proposals are finalised and various other rites in vogue connected with the formal declaration of such an engagement amongst the Hindus and Muslims. These rites also differ from place to place but the observance of the local customs and rituals amongst the Muslims, particularly in the educated

and well-to-do families, is not as punctilious as amongst the majority community. On the whole, these observances are on the decline owing to the influence of modern education.

The Islamic Way of Marriage

Islam looks upon the *nikah* (the contract of marriage) and the connected functions generally known as *shadi* as an austere and simple affair. It is, in its view, a social necessity which should be solemnly observed like an act of worship. The Muslim law lays down no specific religious ceremony, nor any religious rituals necessary for the contraction of a valid marriage. Legally, a marriage contracted between two persons possessing the capacity to enter into the contract, is valid and binding, if entered into by mutual consent in the presence of two witnesses. Its only aim is to declare that the couples are not being united in the wed-lock secretly or surreptitiously but with the knowledge of all concerned. Islam also enjoins the husband to pay the *mehr* or the dower-money to his wife, treat her with kindness and undertake to support and maintain her in a way suitable to his own means and position in the society. These stipulations cover the injunctions laid down by Islam for contraction of marriage: no more rites or customs were considered necessary or were in vogue in the early Muslim society. Numerous examples of frugal simplicity

in marriages can be cited from the life of early precursors of Islam. Madina had a slender population of Muslims after their migration from Mecca but we find a companion of the Prophet, who was closely related to him and had migrated with him from his ancestral city, contracting marriage without inviting the Prophet to attend the ceremony. The Prophet came to know of the marriage only later on.

Ostentatious Celebration of Marriages

In India, as also in other Muslim countries, the marriages have become the occasions of festive rejoicing marked with rigid and costly ceremonial functions, and a means of ostentatious display of one's pride and pomp. The simplicity of the Islamic form of marriage has not been the only victim of these vain pretensions, it has also often brought in its train untold miseries to the families parading their grandiose nobility. The modern education and economic regeneration of these countries has too been unable to change the current attitude or bring about any reform in these customs. Even in well-educated and religious-minded families elaborate arrangements are made for marriages, guests are entertained lavishly and the houses decorated colourfully. It is not unoften that entirely novel methods are adopted to flaunt the nobility and stateliness of the family and to make a

show of its intimate connections with the ruling elite. The marriage is followed by a grand feast to celebrate the alliance, which again provides an occasion for the lavish entertainment of quite a large number of guests. The affair has become too costly, often requiring people to incur heavy debts in order to keep up the appearances. These vain pretensions have given rise, not unexpectedly, to a contest in prodigal spending and pompous show of the false vanity and opulence. The Indian Muslims have left their co-religionists in other countries far behind in the festive celebration of marriages.

Music and Dancing

Except in the families which strictly follow the rules of *Shari'at* or are indoctrinated by the religiously-oriented reformatory movements, the marriage celebrations are invariably accompanied by musical sittings and dancing and amusements meant to amuse and entertain the guests. In such families the marriage is followed and preceded by festive rejoicings; nautch girls and professional dancers belonging to servile classes are invited a few days before the function. In the performances held for the diversion of women the girls of the family also participate along with the dancing troupe. The bride is secluded, a few days before the marriage, in a closet and tradition demands her to observe *purdah* even from her nearest kins. The

musical sittings are now giving place to the playing of recorded music. The dancing performances too, which were earlier considered an essential part of all festive rejoicings by the feudal lords and grandees are gradually being given up owing partly to economic pressures and partly because of modern education and corrective influence of the reformatory movements.

Local customs in Muslim Marriages

Indian Muslims have adopted numerous rites and customs of the soil which are not to be found among Muslims elsewhere. One of these customs relates to the demand known as *tilak*, made by the bridegroom or his guardian, which has to be fulfilled by the parents of the bride. The custom is not prevalent everywhere in India, nor among the Arabs or the Turks who would even find it difficult to understand its implications or the sense or spirit behind this seemingly senseless custom. It is not easy to describe the insurmountable difficulties and untold miseries caused by this custom and the obstacles placed by it in the way of finding a suitable match for the marriageable girls in certain places. Similarly, the extensive and lavish arrangements made for marriage feasts are peculiar to Indian Muslims. The exhibition of *jahez*, the clothings and the utensils and the furniture given as dowry to the bride by her parents, which are taken out in a procession, the rites

of *ru-numai* i.e. showing of the face of the bride to the bridegroom after marriage, the *salam* by the bridegroom, contributions by way of *neuta* by the relatives, corny jokes exchanged by the in-laws, and the custom of ceremonial visits paid by the bride and the bridegroom to the house of the other, a ceremony known as *chauthi*, are some of the rites of indigenous origin unknown to the Muslims of other countries. All these rites and customs were perhaps the product of the concept commonly held that marriage is a festive occasion providing a temporary diversion from the cares and worries of daily life, when it is permissible to take leave from moral bindings and other serious pursuits in order to enjoy and amuse oneself. The idea, suited to the local genius, also finds expression in the fairs and festivals of India, which have presented, from the times immemorial, a fascinating spectacle of colourful celebration and an occasion for the reunion of friends and relatives.

The Performance of Nikah

Before the marital contract of *nikah* is solemnised the bridegroom is dressed up in a new attire provided by the parents of the bride, and made to sit at a distinguished place in the gathering. In certain places there is also the custom of dressing up the bridegroom with a flowerly veil (*sehra*) and brocade bracelets (*kangna*) which are, however, disliked by those who

prefer to follow the precepts of religion. The *nikah* can be solemnised by any educated Muslim: it is not necessary that the person performing the ceremony should be a *Qazi*. In the bygone days of Muslim rule in India, the magistrates charged with the administration of justice or the Muslim legists, known as *Qazis*, performed this function also. It is, however, preferable under the Islamic law that the father or the *Wali* (guardian) of the bride should himself perform the ceremony as the Prophet of Islam had himself solemnised the marriage of his daughter Fatima with 'Ali. Before the ceremony of *nikah* is performed, an attorney and two witnesses who are more often near kins or members of the bride's family, repair to the girl to inform her of the marriage to be contracted in lieu of a stipulated dower and to seek her consent. In India the bride usually keeps silent which is taken as her tacit approval of the proposal made to her. The *Qazi* or the person performing the *nikah* then recites the *khutba* in Arabic, consisting of a few verses of the Quran and Traditions of the Prophet, and closes the discourse with an invocation of Divine blessings for the couple. Thereafter follows what is called *ijab* and *qabool* or the offer and acceptance. Normally this consists of the proposal of marriage made to the bridegroom and his acceptance in these words: "Such an one's daughter, whose name is this, is given by me in marriage to you in lieu of such a dower settled on her;

do you consent to it?" To this the bridegroom replies in a low but audible voice, "I consent". After it, the *Qazi* and all those who are pre-sent there raise their hands to offer prayers for mutual love and a successful married life of the couple. This invocation is also made in Arabic.

The Address of Nikah

The address delivered on the occasion of *nikah* is normally in Arabic but now-a-days it is made up of the Quranic verses recited in Arabic followed by a speech in Urdu delineating the duties and obligations of the married couple. The *khutba* is thus employed to instil a sense of responsibility in the bridegroom and to emphasise the moral-spiritual character of the *nikah* performed with the sanction of religion, for the benefit of the audience.

Here we are giving a *khutba* delivered on the occasion of a marriage for the benefit of our readers. After repeating the supplications offered on such occasions by the holy Prophet, the *Qazi* continues:

"I betake myself to Allah for refuge from the accursed Satan.

(I, begin) in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

O mankind; Be careful of your duty to your Lord.

Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be

careful of your duty toward Allah in Whom ye claim (your rights) of one another, and toward the wombs (that bare you).

Lo: Allah hath been a Watcher over you.

O ye who believe; Observe your duty to Allah with right observance, and die not save as those who have surrendered (unto Him).

O ye who believe; Guard your duty to Allah and speak words straight to the point; He will adjust your works for you and will forgive you your sins. Whosoever obeyth Allah and His messenger, he verily hath gained a signal victory.

"Gentlemen, the *nikah* does not mean going through a ritual nor is it simply an act of worship or something having the concurrence of the Prophet alone. It is in fact an embodiment of several devotions, acts of worship: not one, but numerous acts of oblation and offering, recognised as virtuous and holy flow from it. It is a subject consecrated enough to be mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an and the Traditions of the holy Prophet; the Islamic jurisprudence devotes a separate chapter to it; but, alas, it is neglected by the people as no other *sunnah* of the Prophet has ever been ignored. What to speak of the following of these precepts, the *nikah* has become a means to flout the commandments of God, to obey the

sneaking whispers of Satan and one's own longings and base desires; a lifeless ritual has it verily become. In truth, the *nikah* shows us the way how to lead a virtuous life. As you would have marked from the Qur'anic verses I have just recited-and these were recited on similar occasions by the Prophet too-that the most appropriate and propitious thing worth mentioning on this occasion is the genesis of human race on this earth. It was the single soul of Adam from whom his mate was created, and then they filled this earth with their progeny. Does not the whole of human race furnish a testimony to the mutual love and affection, attachment and devotion of Adam and his spouse? Verily, it is not at all difficult for God to bless the mates who are being united today in a holy wedlock to become one day the head of a large family, the progenitor of a happy and prosperous people.

"The sacred Scripture then asks you to remain conscious of God, in whose name you demand your rights from one another.

"The whole of human existence, the entire gamut of human activity is nothing more than a continuous demand made of one another. Whether it be government or business, education or industry, it is always a demand made by one man from the other; everyone asks the other for something and is in turn demanded to fulfil his own obligations. We are

obliged to ask for one thing or the other from the lowest of the low in order to maintain the social existence; for, every man has certain rights as well as obligations to others. This is, in reality, the sum and substance of a civilized social existence. And what is the inner content of this *nikah*, the nuptial tie? It is also a demand, nobly made and answered in a dignified way: a respectable family asks for the hand of the daughter of another equally worthy household to complete and consummate the life of its own son which had so long been imperfect and incomplete. They agree and unite the mates in the name of God. Now, two persons who had so long been complete strangers to one another, become a loving couple, admiring and adoring each other, as could be the supreme wish of any two mates. Their interests, their longings, their desires, nay, their destiny becomes one. This is all because of Allah, Holy is Whose name and Who turns that which is prohibited into permissible, tabooed into warranted, vice and sinfulness into virtue and righteousness and enables the couple to turn over a new leaf of their lives. It is on account of these divine blessings that God enjoins you to be careful of your duty toward Him. There could be no act of greater ingratitude to Him than forgetting His name and your duties to Him after achieving your ends. You have to keep up His remembrance throughout your

life, fulfil your duties unto Him in future and, as He has ordained, you have to be careful of the wombs that bare you, the ties of kinship that bind you.

"You are today entering into kinships that are entirely new to you. It would, therefore, be in fitness of things to remind you of the old bonds of kinship, which have by no means been weakened by the new one, nor the duties and obligations owed unto them have been rendered ineffectual. Therefore, you should never forget your duties to your mother in your zeal to fulfil your obligations as a husband nor forget your own father in your eagerness to please your father-in-law. Now, some of you may think: who cares for these empty sermons and who can fulfil all these dual and onerous responsibilities? But God is All-Aware, All-Knowing! He reminds you that Allah hath been a Watcher over you. He alone is the Guardian, the Witness and the Watcher who shall ever be with you, and Who is nearer to you than your jugular vein.

"The next verse recited by me calls your attention to an unplatable yet unavoidable fact. It is a prophet alone who has the courage to awaken the memory of an unpleasant thing like death on such a joyous occasion. But it is necessary that man should never forget, not for a moment, his ultimate end and guard the treasure which he would surely need in the after-life. This

is the treasure of faith, the belief in God and unquestioning submission to His will. Howsoever prosperous, happy and long the life of a man may be, he has always to safeguard his faith and breathe his last in the submission and servitude of the Lord and Master. This was in fact the key to the greatness of a man whom God had blessed with a wholesome countenance, wealth and power, glory and wisdom. Remember the prayer offered when he was at the very top of the worldly success one can aspire. Said he : *"Oh my Lord! Thou hast given me (something) of sovereignty and hast taught me (something) of the interpretation of events-- Creator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art my Protecting Friend in the World and the Hereafter. Make me to die submissive (un,o thee), and join me to the righteous"*

"Now, before you hear the bridegroom say, "I consent." for which you have all gathered here you should listen to the Qur'an which says, *"Oh ye who believe, Guard your duty to Allah, and speak words straight to the point."* It means that the bridegroom should only say that which is right, with full consciousness of the far-reaching consequences and the responsibilities devolving on him by his own words and that he should give his consent after realising the grave impact of his affirmation. The Qur'an then proceeds further to tell you that if

somebody inculcates the habit of speaking with a sense of responsibility, he would soon become trust-worthy and reliable, truthful and righteous, his life would become a beacon of light for others, a shining example, and worthy of redemption and blessings of God. Finally, this solemn verse of the Qur'an emphasises that the real success lies with God alone: it depends on the submission to the Master and His Messenger and not on following one's desires, nor on the performance of rites and customs."

The offer and acceptance of the *nikah* follows the *khutba*, after which dates are distributed or showered. This is also to emulate the *sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet which is still followed by the Muslims of India and elsewhere.

Misuse of Mahr

The *mahr* or the dower-money paid by the husband to his wife is an essential feature of the Muslim marriages, but the prevalent custom among Indian Muslims is peculiar to them and reflects the airiness of their manners. The more the amount of *mahr*, the more it is prideful for the parties and a surer guarantee for the stability and continuity of the marital tie. Sometimes the *mahr* fixed, according to this usage, is an imaginary figure which is, of course, never paid. Departing from the old conventions, people now tend to have a more realistic *mahr*. The

religious law of Islam has not fixed any particular amount of the *mahr* but has left it to be determined in accordance with the social and economic position of the husband. Nevertheless, Islam favours a moderate *mahr* which should be paid outright before the marriage or at least promised to be paid later on, otherwise the *nikah* would be void *ab initio*, reducing itself to promiscuous relationship. This can obviously be possible in case the *mahr* is moderate enough that can be paid by the husband.

Other Manners and Customs

After describing the customs relating to marriage of Indian Muslims, it appears necessary to mention briefly certain other features of their social life.

Everybody falls ill at one time or the other for no one is immune from it. The prayer five times a day or the *namaz*, as it is called, is an obligatory duty to be performed even during the period of illness. The *shari'at*, however, allows certain concessions to such persons. If he is unable to walk down to the mosque for offering his prayer with the congregation, he can perform it alone at his house. Similarly, if he cannot stand up, he can offer it sitting or lying as may be convenient to him. He can even offer it up through gestures if he is too seriously ill to perform it in any other manner. If he cannot use water for ablution, he may take resort to *tayammum* but he has to be careful of the rules of purification, as far as

possible for him.

Paying a visit to the sick and afflicted is a meritorious act in the eyes of Islam. One is, however, forbidden to remain longer with a sick person than it is absolutely necessary unless the patient himself desires a prolonged sitting. The rules of etiquette prescribed by the Traditions of the holy Prophet require that one should always keep in view the inconvenience caused to the patient or his attendants by a longer sitting during such courtesy calls.

Death and Burial

Everyman born on this earth has to die one day. The inevitable last journey everybody has to undertake is attended everywhere with rituals prescribed by usage or the canons of religion. The Indian Muslims have, likewise, their own customs and conventions, of which some are prescribed by their religion, and others, evolved or borrowed from other people of the land.

The Last Wish

Every Musalman, high or low, pious or unorthodox, aspires to die with *kalma-i-shahadat*, the article of Muslim affirmation, on his lips. This is because his greatest desire is to live and die with his faith intact in the Unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammad. In a Muslim society, everywhere, provided it is permeated with the religious teachings, even to the least extent, there is a standing convention that the people ask the learned and pious souls to pray

that they should join the great majority in the state of *iman*. Such an invocation by a pious person is highly valued by every Muslim, no matter whether he is an illiterate or a sinner for he sincerely desires to emulate a man who dies professing the name of God and affirming His overlordship and praise.

As soon as the family foresees the patient at the portals of death, all those who are present at the time exhort him to recite the *Kalima* or to keep himself busy in the remembrance of God. However if he is too seriously ill to speak or even utter these words, the friends and relatives around him begin to recite the *Kalima* or engage themselves in the recollection of God. If it is felt that the patient's throat is choked with thirst, the water from the well of *Zamzam*, or if that is not available, some fruit juice or sweet-drink is dropped in his mouth to provide relief from that agony. It is also recommended that the persons present at the time of someone's death should recite *Surah Yasin* of the Qur'an, The face of the patient at the fag end of his life or when he has given up the ghost is turned towards the *qibla*.

Burial Ceremony

Soon after a Muslim dies, preparations start for the washing (*ghusl*) of his dead body and the provision of a shroud (*kafan*) for him. The shroud is always of a new white cotton cloth undefiled by any impurity and consists of a sea'mless shirt, a

tahband or wrapping and a covering sheet. In the case of women, a head-cloth and a breast cover are the additional items of the shroud. The dead body is washed ceremoniously in the manner prescribed in the canon books. Although the dead body can be washed by any Muslim, it is considered preferable to entrust the job to those who are conversant with the rules of the *ghusl*. The near kins and friends of the deceased prefer to perform this last service to the departed soul themselves. However, in some places the family barbers wash the corpse while in certain communities professional washers (*gassals*) are engaged for the job.

After washing the dead body thoroughly with soap and water, sousing it over and over again with copious douches of water, and drying it well, it is dressed in the shroud. Campher is placed under each armpit and on the orifices of the body, and the arms are folded across his or her chest. Those who have already performed the *hajj* usually bring back their shrouds dipped in the water of *Zamzam*.

Funeral Service

The dead body, washed and shrouded, is then brought out of the house. It is also customary to show the face of the deceased to the relatives and neighbours before it is finally covered. Now, it is the time for the funeral service, which is an act of the highest

merit not only for the deceased but also for all those participating in it. The number of participants in the funeral service, however, depends on the social status and contacts of the deceased, as well as religious sense of his neighbours. The funeral service or *namaz-i-janazah*, as it is known in India, is offered in congregation but unlike the other prayers, it has no genuflection and prostration. The worshippers stand in rows of odd numbers, three, five, seven, depending on the number of participants, with the right hand of the worshippers placed on the left below navel, and led by a pious or learned person who stands a few paces ahead of the front line. The corpse is placed in front of the *imam* leading the prayer, who begins it after obtaining permission of the legal heir or the nearest kin present at the time. The funeral prayer, recited silently, has four takbirs which intervene between the initial *du'a'* and *darud* (recited with or without *Surah Fatiha*) and the benediction for the invocation of divine blessings on the soul of the dead person. This, being the chief supplication for the departed soul, is given here to acquaint the readers with the type of prayer made for him.

“O Allah! Pardon our living and our dead, the present and the absent, the young and the old, the male and the female. O Allah! he (or she) to whom Thou accorded life, cause him to live on the (path of) Islam, and he to whom

Thou givest death, cause him to die in (the state of) *Iman*.”

If however, the deceased is a minor, then the *dua* recited is as follows:

“O Allah! make him (or her) our forerunner and make him (or her), for us, a reward and a treasure and make him (or her) for us a pleader and accept his (or her) pleading.”

After the fourth *takbir*, the prayer is terminated with the *salam*. The dead body is thereafter taken out to the burial place in a bier, or a cot, and carried by constantly changing relays of four men. The Traditions of the Prophet recommend the accompaniment and carrying of the dead body as well as remaining in the cemetery until the dead body is buried as pious acts to be rewarded in the hereafter. Every Muslim, deems it his duty to carry the bier whether the dead man was known to him or not and, in consequence, there is never any difficulty in taking the dead body to the cemetery no matter how long a distance is to be covered or how unfavourable the weather is. Nowadays the dead body is also taken in bigger cities on vehicular transport owing to the long distances to be covered. Although there is no harm in it, yet the better way of carrying the corpse and also in consonance with the practice followed by the Prophet is to carry it on shoulders. This practice is still preferred as far as possible.

The Grave

The grave is got ready by the time dead body reaches the cemetery. The corpse is then taken on hand and placed in it, the face of the deceased pointing to the *qibla*, and then the grave is closed with wooden planks and mud in a way that earth will not enter therein. All those who are present at the time help in filling up the grave with mud with the following Quranic supplication on their lips:

"Thereof We created you, and thereunto We return you, and thence We bring you forth a second time." Having covered the grave with mud in the shape of a rounded mound, everyone leaves the place but those who have been close to the deceased normally stay there for a while reciting the Qur'an and praying for the redemption of the dead soul.

The Rites performed after Death

The family which suffers the bereavement is normally provided food by the relatives and friends for three days or three times. This is a custom having the sanction of the practice followed during the life-time of the Prophet, since, it is considered that the members of the deceased's family would be too grief-stricken to make culinary arrangements themselves.

Prayers for the Dead Soul

Indian Muslims have adopted several rites relating to the prayer for the dead and funeral banquet, repeated on various dates after the death occurs,

which seem to have been derived from the local customs, and are not to be found in any other Islamic country. Some of the special rites performed after death are called *tija*, *chaliswan* and *qull* which are performed on certain specified dates with set customary rituals. There is also the custom of celebrating the *Urs*, resembling a fair held on the birth or death anniversary, normally on the latter occasion, of the pious and holy persons. The name of the last mentioned celebration is derived from the Arabic term for wedding, and has the connotation of the mystic union of the saint with God. Muslims of other countries are not conversant with such celebrations. On these occasions, the followers of the saint come to the grave of the saint, often from far off places, for recitation of the Qur'an and invocation of divine blessings for the departed mentor. Public banquets known as *langar* are arranged on these occasions in which everyone, the poor and the rich, partake their meals. Muslims of some other countries too organise certain functions for the commemoration of the memory of their saints, propagation of their teachings and offering supplications for them, but these differ from the customs followed by the Indian Muslims. These are also not known by the name of *Urs*. ■

Maulana Azad's Message to Indian Muslims

-Zifa-ul-Hasan Farooq

It is needless to recount the intellectual merits and personal qualities of Maulana Azad who is well known to all Indians as a national leader and as a peerless writer of Urdu. But I would like to draw attention to the composite personality of Maulana Azad, which, whenever it became active, opened new vistas for life and mind and thus paved the way for a better change. Such a man tries to fulfil the healthy demands of life; and his enthusiasm for action is always guided by wisdom and maturity of thought. On the whole he moves to a positive goal with a certitude that never fails. I wish you to keep this specific quality of Maulana Azad in mind while reading these lines.

The second quality of Maulana Azad was his deep studies in religion, philosophy, literature and world history, which created a historical sense in him and it dawned on him that higher moral and cultural values had never been the monopoly of one nation (or group of people) but every civilized nation of the world had contributed to their furtherance, as much as it could. And he believed that this legacy is still continuing. As a result of this historical sense a sort of humanism had developed in him, which reminded us of the great humanists of the period of the Renaissance in Europe.

An Indian and a Muslim

Maulana Azad was an Indian Muslim. That is, he was an Indian as well as a Muslim. He thought, spoke and wrote a great deal. Here the writer would like to present and interpret his views only on two aspects:

1. His ideas which run round the Indian nation composed of men of different faiths, cultures and languages. Their continuous local intimacy with each other has evolved a common culture and thus the concept of one nation has become meaningful.
2. His views which are apparently related to Islam and its followers but have its underlying threads connected with the nation and the country. Because, if one community adopts a rigid and indecisive attitude to religious matters or falls victim to separatism and obscurantism, there would always be an imbalance in national progress.

The question of Nationalism and Patriotism has always been a debatable subject among the Muslims. The views of the majority of Muslims during the days when this question had occupied the minds of their leaders were epitomized in the following line by Iqbal.

"Jo peerahan iska hai voh Mazhab-ka Kafan hai" "Its shirt is the shroud of religion" (Islam)

The stand which the Maulana took in this regard during the glamorous days of the League's leadership was totally opposed to that of the Muslim majority. We must keep in mind that the terrorist movement in Bengal had played a significant role in the formation of Maulana Azad's political attitude.

With revolutionaries

He has described his association with the revolutionaries of Bengal in his book, *India Wins Freedom*. I would like to bring in certain relevant extracts from it.

"In those days the revolutionary groups were recruited exclusively from the Hindu middle classes. In fact all the revolutionary groups were then actively anti-Muslim. They saw that the British Government was using the Muslims against India's political struggle and the Muslims were playing the Government's game.

"The revolutionaries felt that the Muslims were an obstacle to the attainment of India's freedom and must like other obstacles be removed. When Shyam Sunder Chakravarty introduced me to other revolutionaries and my new friends found that I was willing to join them, they were greatly surprised. At first they did not fully trust me and tried to keep me outside their inner councils. In course of time, they realised their mistake and I gained their confidence. I began to argue with them that they were wrong in thinking that Muslims as a community were their

enemies. I told them that they should not generalise from their experience of a few Muslim officers in Bengal. In Egypt, Iran and Turkey the Muslims were engaged in revolutionary activities for the achievement of democracy and freedom. The Muslims of India would also join in the political struggle if we worked among them and tried to win them as our friends. I also pointed out that active hostility, or even the indifference of Muslims would make the struggle for political liberty much more difficult. We must, therefore, make every effort to win the support and friendship of the community.

"I would not at first convince my revolutionary friends about the correctness of my diagnosis. But in course of time some of them came round to my point of view. During this period I had also started to work among Muslims and found that there was a group of young men ready to take up new political tasks".

Nationalism in Islam

This incident took place before he went abroad for the first time. It is evident from this extract that Maulana Azad was strongly opposing the friendly policy of the Aligarh Party towards the Government. He knew it well that the task of liberating India would be more difficult without the help and co-operation of the Muslims. We are all aware of the fact that the task of preserving freedom is harder than that of its achievement. Hence one can appeal today, in the name of Maulana Azad, to the Hindu Revivalist Movements to keep the

Muslim community along with them in the task of national development, provided they want to make the freedom of the country more useful and meaningful. It is not possible to ignore the feeling of a community of more than sixty millions. If it is done, it will be done at the cost of our national honour.

I am afraid I have drifted away from the subject. The problem which we are supposed to discuss is that of nationalism in Islam. Maulana Azad went on a tour of Islamic countries in 1908. There he was introduced to the revolutionaries who acquainted him with the political and the cultural movements of their lands. He met several revolutionary leaders of these Islamic countries and exchanged his views with them. He returned to India with a firm political belief that the Indian Muslims should not only support their co-patriots but they must organise their resources to liberate their country. We know that he brought out *Al Hilal* soon after his return from abroad. His basic aim was to bring political awakening among the Muslims and prepare them to fight against the imperialists. It is obvious that in those days this object could be achieved only through religious and cultural revival. It was the time of his youth and one finds that sometimes his thoughts were infested with romantic fervour. Even then, his religious refrain was more persuasive and convincing than those of others, "that Islam does not tolerate slavery at any cost. The Muslims were not only called upon to fight

against the imperialists as Indians, it was their religious duty also to cut off the shackles of slavery and declare themselves free". The force of this argument lasted till the life of the Khilafat Movement and the Non-Cooperation Movement.

As these movements stopped and people were diverted from the active roles, the question of nationalism arose again and various views started pouring into the press. Maulana Azad wrote, "As the period of active role is over the time of nullifying the action has set in. The same action which had enjoyed the popular support a few days ago has become a controversial subject. Imagination and fancy started dealing with it as they liked. When thousands of people were going to prison so that justice might be done to Turkey, no one thought for a moment whether such a deep involvement was inharmonious with Indian nationalism. But this question has occupied every mind now. On the one side, there are people who are adversely criticising this phenomenon. On the other side there are Muslim writers who are also confused because the facts are not clear to them. There are others who had seen in the pages of the past issues of *Al-Hilal* such controversies, as Islam does not tolerate the narrow concept of nationalism. As they are blind to the context and occasion, they think that Islam is opposed to nationalism and no Muslim should become a nationalist. But this is not the meaning of

Islam's broad vision that it does not harmonize with nationalism, nor is it necessary for nationalists to contract the width of Islamic mind. Both are exceeding the one or the other limit. As in all other matters, we must try to find the solution in the middle, not on the sides".

In 1940, he strongly expressed himself on this issue in a very strong and resounding tone; he said, "I am a Muslim and I am proud to feel that I am a Muslim, and have inherited the glorious traditions of the last thirteen hundred years of Islam. I am not ready to allow even the smallest part of it to become dead: its education, its history, its arts and sciences and its culture is my wealth; it is my duty to safeguard it. As a Muslim I possess a special entity within the limits of my religion and culture and cannot tolerate any interference in this regard. But along with all these feelings I have one more feeling which the spirit of Islam allows me to have, and more than this, it shows me light in this respect: I proudly feel that I am an Indian; and I am a part of the indivisible composite nationalism of India; I am a significant element of this composite nationalism without which the structure of the greatness of India remains incomplete; I am an inevitable element of its constitution and I can never renounce this claim of mine",

Home of diversities

In the present circumstances I believe that a patriot Muslim should take

the same stand which Maulana Azad held. Apart from Muslims, religious minorities, specially Christians, should also take this stand firmly and the Hindu majority should consolidate the unity of India by accepting this real sentiment as a historical truth. In the words of Maulana Azad, "Nature had decreed that this land shall be the home of different races, religions and cultures". The revivalist movements cannot change this will of Nature, but their activities can damage the unity of India and frustrate the efforts of national integration. The Muslims should also accept this decree of Nature wholeheartedly and should not dream of that past which cannot be revived. Common living with the Hindu majority has become their fate; the structure which has emerged cannot be destroyed. Now, their interest lies with secular democratic and socialistic forces. They must come forward with determination to strengthen such groups of people who are fighting for democracy and socialism. Such a step from their side will strengthen the theory of one composite nation. They will have to give up their separatist tendency and they should come forward to fight all the forces which are driving the nation to decay.

One thousand years have passed since Muslims came to establish a relation with India and, in course of time, they settled down and became a part of the nation. But there is hardly any example to show that during the past Hindus or Muslims, as groups, had ever made any sincere effort to understand the religion of

each other. It pains me to say this, but this I genuinely feel.

[Social and cultural exchanges have taken place between the Hindus and Muslims and a common pattern of life has been emerging and vanishing. But no conscious effort was ever made for mutual reconciliation and adjustment exclusively on an intellectual level. This is the reason they could not agree to the resolutions and decisions taken by each other at crucial moments. The new generation of both the communities, which has grown up after independence is mentally cut off from each other more than its precursor. They don't feel any necessity to understand each other due to various historical and political reasons. This is a challenging situation for our united nationalism as it has been before independence. At present it has become more intense, hence more harmful.

Hindu-Muslim unity

We get light from Maulana Azad in this regard, too. He says, "Hindu Muslim unity has definitely become stronger than what I had expected in 1911, but it has not yet achieved the dependable level. I am afraid that in the minds of Hindus and Muslims their present unity is governed by political expediency. "But I believe that no genuine barrier lies in this way provided they remove misunderstanding about each other's point of view. It pains me a great deal when I find an Indian trying to memorise the history and literature of

England and America, but he never cares to understand the religion and the community which has been living for centuries next to his door".

Unfortunately, during the days of political dependence, the foreign rulers succeeded in creating misunderstanding among Hindus and Muslims; they distorted historical facts to achieve their goal. The success of their design created many writers in both the communities who wrote articles and books in the name of language and culture which gave strength to revivalist tendency. They presented their own history in a romantic manner. The result was, a wider gulf between these two communities and even today much acrimony has poured in the name of language and culture. The text-books of Indian history prescribed for our students are written with certain-bias and they present historical facts in such a manner that their study creates misunderstanding and our school children gather that there is nothing as a multi-culture in India.

On Indian history

Maulana Azad had always warned against the danger of such a situation. He had written a pamphlet in 1939 called *National Tahreek* but it could not be published. Abid Raza Bedar's recent book, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, contains some extracts from it. Before reproducing those extracts here I would like to reiterate the views of Maulana Azad on Indian history which is very simple. He thought that our history should be rewritten with complete

impartiality. During the sessions of the Historical Records Commission he used to remind the historians of their duty. And, probably, in 1951, he had said, "The history written during the English period cannot be considered reliable. The historians whether they were supporters of the foreigners or they were patriots they have never been impartial. Therefore, it is the duty of the historians of free India to discharge these responsibilities as sincerely as they can". Here is an excerpt from the manuscript of *National Taheek* which contains his view on culture. He says, "If Sampooranandji, while addressing the U.P. assembly, has said that he does not want any distinction between the Hindu and the Muslim education, nor he would like to see any cultural distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims, he has definitely presented a policy which can never be acceptable to Muslims. This is neither the aim of the Congress nor the Muslims will ever agree to the policy that the distinctive quality of Muslim education and culture should be completely eliminated from India.

"The resolution giving protection to minorities, which was passed in Karachi Session in 1931 assures to protect the distinctive status of the Muslims.

"For further confirmation of this Karachi resolution, the resolution which was passed in the Calcutta Session of A. I.C.C. was drafted by me. Later Pandit Nehru made certain amendments in it. Moving a step forward, it has been said

therein that we not only want to protect the scripts, the languages and the cultures of minorities but we will encourage their development. This resolution makes it clear that the Congress does not aim at the absorption of the distinctive characteristics of the Muslims community into the composite nationalism. The Muslims must declare boldly that they are not prepared to be absorbed into Hinduism even for a moment. They will not only protect their characteristics as Muslims but will try for their development".

Not hostages

One can say that these views are outdated; conditions have changed; Muslims have been divided and they have got their rights. But, this sort of thinking goes rightly against the ideals of democracy, socialism and secularism. Our National constitution itself stands against such ideas. The position of Muslims in India and of Hindus in Pakistan is not that of hostages. They must get their rights in a democracy. The policy of keeping hostages was the outcome of the selfish and the narrow-minded leadership of the League. How can one accept such a savage and inhuman policy?

Taking the views of Maulana Azad, regarding the religious reforms among Muslims into consideration, we must find out the factors which obliged him to take a path which was markedly different from traditional ways. In my opinion it was his inquisitive nature which impelled him, in

the beginning, to question the validity of his hereditary belief. Being dissatisfied with the situation, his mind became restless and thus he started his search for truth. In the last pages of his book, *Tazkirah* and also in his *Ghubari-Khatir* he has mentioned it very clearly, His truth loving mind got some satisfaction in Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's rational and independent thinking. But its impacts did not last long. He reached such an intellectual height in his search for truth that Sir Syed could not lead him further. Ultimately, he succeeded in finding a clear and definite road leading to the desired end of faith and conviction. One who finds the key to the true understanding of religion after resolving the most confounding puzzles of his intellectual and spiritual strivings, will never follow the beaten track. He cannot tolerate inaction even for a moment; he sees life meaningful only in its continuous natural growth.

Role of Ulema

There are indications, and sometimes it is mentioned also, that Maulana Azad has been influenced by the *Salafi* movement of the Arab world, particularly in the days when the *Al-Manar* group of Rashid Rida in Egypt had infused a new life into the intellectual atmosphere of the Islamic World. The deep reverence which he has shown to Ibn Taimiya in his *Tazkerah* speaks of his disdain for the archaic and cumbersome, legal and scholastic arguments, and of his disgust for following the Islamic tenets without

finding their relevance to times. He was a lover of the simplicity and dynamism of Islam in its early period. He wanted the Ulema who were holding the responsibility of moral and spiritual education of Muslims to realise that real Islam was not what they had thought it to be. He told them that Nizamiya pattern of Muslim education had lost its relevance in modern times. He was also dissatisfied with the moral conditions of the Ulema.

He believed that the Ulema of Nadwah appeared to be enlightened but a close contact with them deeply disappointed him. He maintained his convictions until his death that the syllabii of Arabic madrasahs must be changed as to fulfil the demands of the new age. The Ulema accepted his views individually because they had no counter argument to assert their views, but when they sat together to ponder over the consequences of such a change they realised that it would prove ruinous to the interest of their families and their class. This compelled them to turn a deaf ear to any suggestion for change. Those who were sincere, they had no courage to renounce the traditional path. It can be well understood how much harm this attitude of the Ulema has done and will continue to do to the Muslim community. This painful thought remained with him till he died.

Evolutionary concept

I agree that no nation and community can cut itself away from its history and its past, but an undue respect

for the past hampers its natural growth. The holy Qur'an presents an evolutionary concept of life. Thus we can say that the medieval system was against the very spirit of the Qur'an. It could not face the challenges of modern times, therefore it gradually disappeared from the Islamic states. The genius of Maulana Azad had rightly understood this reality and this is the reason why he devoted a considerable part of his life to the understanding of the teachings of the Qur'an and then in his particular manner transferred these teachings to the minds of thousands of people. There has been a controversy in regard to his ideas about the unity of din. The Maulana, however, claimed that he had never said anything on his own. He had only presented the simple and convincing teachings of the Qur'an according to his understanding. Truth is one but different religions show different ways to realise this truth.

Therefore, it is clear that conflict and contradictions are not inherent in religions but they are the product of the minds of their dogmatic followers. If people understand the spirit of religion they would become true worshippers of God and aspire for righteousness. When the value of moral good is more or less equally stressed in all religions, then where lies the cause of dissension. Whether it was a question of photographs or statues or of the evil which he called the 'devil of graves', he always took a reasonable stand in conformity with the true teachings of Islam.

From this stand, according to him, the Muslim society could face the challenges of all times provided it kept itself alive to the changing circumstances from time to time. He believed that if the Muslims accepted this reality they could play a distinguished role in the reconstruction and development of the countries to which they belong. This would bring in them self-confidence and would protect them from doubt, fear and indecision which are deadlier than the double-edged sword. Thus, they would be able to perform such prominent and epoch-marking events as their forefathers had done before. In one of his letters to the Late Sardar M. Akbar Khan he writes, "In this world communal rights and interests are protected by the strength of self-confidence and not by the fear and losing courage".

Determination and faith

In another letter he writes, "In fact from the beginning the disagreement between the time-servers and myself is not in the form but in the substance. The basic question before us is whether the case of the Indian Muslims should be based on determination and faith or on fear and doubt. I insist on determination and they on fear and doubt; the main point of disagreement lies herein. What is working beneath the surface is not merely political, but something more. The principles and beliefs which, from the beginning I have kept before me, are based on the spirit of the teachings of the Quran. I do not build up my arguments only on logical grounds

but on my religious faith and conviction. I cannot admit for a moment that Muslims can move ahead in any direction, carrying the gloom of fear and skepticism in their minds. The light of religious faith and conviction is always available to them. But some time-servers are not aware of these fundamental beliefs: owing to this it is very difficult for them to agree with me on any point”.

The harm which has been done to the Muslims of this sub-continent by these time-servers is before us. It is said that the great and dignified Muslim minority of this sub-continent is divided into three parts: in two parts Islam is in danger, and in one part the Muslims. But the field is not lost. The Muslims can play a historical role by joining the hands of enlightened and progressive elements of the country provided they are not short of determination and faith, and these qualities can be cultivated.

Stand up

Maulana Azad was neither happy to see Muslims becoming slave to the will of the ruler in the days of dependence, nor did he ever like to see them degraded to the level of beggars in a free India; and there can be no death for a community more painful than falling to this level. He wanted to see the Muslims very active. He wanted them to create an honorable place for them in future as the Muslims of the past had earned by adding glorious chapters to the history of India. Many years ago what

Maulana Azad had written in the pages of his *Al-Hilal*, can be presented, after making minor changes in words and meanings, as his message to the Indian Muslims today. “What is to happen no nation can stop it from happening by force of its misfortune. Certainly, a day would come and all would have taken place what was necessary. Suppose, a history of national development is written at that time, do you know what will be written there about the Muslims?

“It will be written that there was a wretched and doomed community that always stood as an impediment to the progress of the country, a misfortune for the prosperity of nation, a plaything in the hands of their masters and a deep wound on the forehead of India”.

God's will

It is a better reality. But it is there. I ask the Muslims to rise with self-confidence, faith and determination and ask them to give up the habit of withdrawing themselves into their ego-shells. I ask them not to pride on and be contented with the glory and grandeur of their past. I ask them to run to the fields where life is entangled with death, where truth is fighting against falsehood, where human and democratic values are surrounded by innumerable enemies. In this way they can work for the fulfilment of God's will. And this is the only way they can earn an honorable place for themselves in their homeland. ■

The Islamic Commands Cover All Their Aspects

-Syed Sulaiman Nadwi

The outstanding feature of the commands of Islam is that no aspect thereof has been left untouched and none can find the way to escape them, for instance, no religion is in favour of drinking wine, but none has declared it unlawful and put a ban on it in unequivocal words. Islam is the first religion of the world which has given a definite and final decision about its prohibition as against the uncertain and hesitant attitude of other religions of the world about it. Although some pious men abstained from it even before Islam but their number was limited and the people of the world at large could not remain immune from the evil and unhealthy effects of wine, for example, a person does not himself drink, but he buys and sells wine or that he abstains from both but uses the utensils in which wine is prepared etc. Islam has banned all those things and blocked all such avenues as lead to this evil and vice.

Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Verily, Allah, the Exalted, has forbidden wine. So who hears this verse and has anything of it with him, he should neither drink it nor sell it. He (the narrator) said: The people then brought whatever they had of it with them on the streets of Madinah and spilt that.

The verse banning wine is given below:

O believers! Surely wine and games of chance, and statues, and the divining

arrows, are an abomination of Satan's work! Avoid them, that ye may prosper. Only would Satan sow hatred and strife among you, by wine, and game of chance and turn you aside from the remembrance of God, and from prayer; will ye not, therefore, abstain from them? Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and be on your guard; but if ye turn back, know that our Messenger is only bound to deliver a plain announcement.

Islam forbids anything which causes intoxication whether its quantity is large or small. It is the intoxicant which is unlawful, no matter what its quantity is. The *haram* is *haram*. Should a person say that since the liquor does not intoxicate him, he is justified in using that, does not mean that in the case of a habitual drunkard, it ceases to be something forbidden.

As already stated, the rules of moral conduct and behaviour are definite and applicable to all, for instance, all those who are involved in the illegal transaction of usury shall be given over to the Hell-fire. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Cursed be the taker of usury, the giver of usury, the writer of usury, and the witness of usury, for they are all equal.

Similarly it has been said about illegal gratification.

Curse be on the giver of bribe with the receiver of bribe. Islam has given such

a balanced system of moral which is excellent and applicable to every individual and nation at all the time.

Tauhid (monotheism) is the fundamental principle of many religions of the world but no religion has explained its true significance and reality in details with the result that polytheism has crept into it in some form or other. Islam is the religion which taught the lesson of pure *Tauhid* and fully explained the causes and reasons of polytheism and its consequences and severeness of punishment prescribed for this unpardonable sin in the Hereafter. Polytheism was a form of idol-worship and the simple way of eradicating this evil practice could be that people were called to affirm their faith in *Tauhid* (Oneness of God) and all the idols of Arabia were pulled down; but Islam did not consider this adequate to curb this evil and declared all those things unlawful which lead to polytheism. Portrait or picture was itself not a bad thing but since it was a common symbol of idol-worship, it was declared as unlawful in Islam; exaggeration in praise and reverence of anyone sometime lead to hero-worship and attribution of extraordinary, supernatural, divine powers to a human being and the people of the past had begun to worship their great men as deities. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Do not exaggerate in my praise as the Christians exaggerated in the praise of the son of Maryam (Mary) Verily, I am His (Allah's) servant, so say: The servant of Allah and His Messenger.

Islam and Moral Excellence

The goal or ideal of a Muslim and his thinking should always be high and sublime. He should repose complete trust in Allah and should keep his spirit high in difficult situations.

Patience, Gratefulness, Reliance and Contentment, Fate

It has been said in the Holy Qur'an: and when you are resolved, put trust in Allah. Allah loves those who trust (in Him). (3:160)

If Allah helps you, none can overcome you. If He abandons You, who then can help you? Therefore, in Allah, let the faithful put their trust. (3:160)

No misfortune can befall the earth, or your own persons, but is recorded in a book before We bring it into being. That is easy for Allah, so that you may not grieve for the good things you miss or be overjoyed at that you gain. Allah does not love the haughty, the vainglorious. (57:23)

Lord, fill our hearts with steadfastness. Make us firm of foot and help us against the unbelievers. (2:250)

Many a prophet has fought side by side with many devoted men. They never lost heart on account of what befell them in the path of Allah: they were neither weakened nor brought low. Allah loves the steadfast. Their only words were; Lord: Forgive us our sins and our excesses; make us firm of foot and give us victory over the disbelievers. (3:146-147)

Kind Treatment with the Enemies

There are many practical examples of the Prophet's kind and magnanimous treatment with his enemies. Here we give only a few examples of the world's greatest preacher of Islam.

The most suitable occasion for taking revenge on his enemies was the conquest of Makkah when he entered the city as a victor and not as a vanquished and his blood thirsty enemies were standing before him, but he granted them general amnesty.

On the day of migration, Suraraqah mounted a swift horse in pursuit of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) so that he could seize him and get the reward one hundred camels but repeated stumbling of his horse gave him a warning to desist from this evil design. He asked forgiveness and Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forgave him.

A Jewess put poison in the food of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He felt the effect of the poison and called the Jews who made the confession of guilt; but he did not say anything. He forgave the savage who had killed Hamza, his uncle.

He forgave Hinda, the wife of Abu Sufyan who tore out the heart and liver of his (the Holy Prophet's) loving uncle.

He forgave Habbar b. Al. Aswad who had inflicted severe injury to the Prophet's loving daughter Zainab (may Allah be pleased with her).

During the Treaty of Hudaibiya, a band of sixty men descended the mount of Tanim at dawn with an intention to kill the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). They were arrested; but the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) let them off.

A person intended to kill him. The companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) caught hold of him and brought him to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He trembled out of fear. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him: Do not be afraid, even if you intended to kill me, you could not do so.

The people of Ta'if hooted him through the streets listening to the call of Islam and refused to give him shelter. They pelted him with stones and blood flowed down upon his legs. The angel said to him: If he desired we cause the mountain to fall upon them. He said: No, perhaps any believer of Allah may be born from their progeny.

Once a person asked him to invoke curse, he said: I have not been sent to curse; but I have been sent as a mercy unto the worlds. Once he was returning from the battle. He passed by a plain. The sun was hot and the people were resting under the shades of the trees. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went to sleep under the shade of a tree hanging his sword to a branch. A bedouin came there and took off his sword intending to kill him (the Holy Prophet). The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was

startled to see a bedouin standing on the side of his head with an unsheathed sword in his hand. He (the bedouin) said: Tell me, who can save you now from me? He said: (It is) Allah. This impressive reply had its effect and he put the sword back into its sheath.

The Quraish confined him (the Holy Prophet) and his family in Shi'b Abi Talib so that wheat and corn could not reach them. The children cried of hunger but the callous Quraish did not listen to their cries. As against this what was the treatment which the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) accorded to the Quraish? Makkah used to receive corn from Yamama. Thumama b. Uthal, the chief of Yamama had embraced Islam. He said to the Quraish: By Allah, you will not get a single grain of wheat from Yamama until it is permitted by the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). At last the Quraish came to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and requested him to ask the chief to continue the supply. He (the Holy Prophet) sent a message and its supply was restored as usual.

It must be remembered that when there is a fight between the believers and disbelievers and the latter are bent upon striking at the very root of Islam, that alliance and friendship with the infidels is prohibited which might jeopardise the interests of the Muslims or by which Islam is humiliated or the Muslims have to suffer loss or their prestige is lowered it has been stated in the Holy Qur'an:

Let not the believers take unto themselves the infidels as their friends

beside the believers and whosoever does that Allah has nothing to do with him—except that you guard your-self fully against them.

(3: 28)

O ye who believe chose not your fathers nor your brethren nor friends if they take pleasure in disbelief. Whoso taketh them for friends, such are wrong-doers.

(9 : 23)

Love for Allah and Enmity for Allah

One may question here as to why the sentiments of hatred and enmity could not be ended? But it is contrary to the laws of nature as love and hatred, accord and discord, pleasure and anger are ingrained in the very nature of man and all the activities, struggles and endeavours in this world are due to these two sentiments of opposite nature. If the people were deprived of these sentiments there would have no activities good or bad. It is a flame or fuel which motivates a man to action. All the hustle and bustle of this world depends upon them. It is, therefore, neither proper nor possible to curb or throw out these natural instincts and sentiments. The only rational way which has been adopted by Islam is as to how and when these sentiments would be overcome or given vent to and that one's love and hatred, friendship and enmity, pleasure and anger should not be for any selfish cause or motive or personal benefit; but it should be to help and assist the cause of truth and to seek the pleasure of Allah. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an: Say (O Muhammad, to mankind) If you love Allah, follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. ■

Three Phases of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Life

-S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

According to the lunar calendar, Prophet Muhammad lived 63 year. These 63 years of his life had three phases.

First phase is from his birth to the age of forty, second phase is from forty-one to fifty three and third phase is from fifty -four to sixty three. First phase is of pre prophet hood, in which prophet lived along with his family with bright and clear character and nobility, through which they knew his good character and loved him. In this phase prophet married at the age of twenty-five. After marriage prophet went on accomplishing his responsibilities towards his family. He got a gentle wife, whose mind matched with the mind of prophet. Thus, they both lived together with love and healthy relationship. Prophet had many children from her and nurtured their children good.

When he was at the age of forty, the first message descended from Allah and then it continued. He had been guided how to preach the divine message among the people and how to lead them. Thus, it is kept, on his shoulder the duty of following the truth himself and preaching it among the people. It was the second phase of his age from forty-one to fifty-three in which

he was ordered to advise people to leave in justice and sin. Prophet continuously spread his message among the people, but people got angry of him for preventing them from forbidden and unlawful things. Their claim was that how could we leave whatever we have seen our predecessors doing. Therefore they began to oppose him. They started to put obstacles in his way. They tortured people who loved prophet's message and followed him. Prophet is ordered to have patience on the opposition and all the torture and to continue his work until people planned to kill him and prepared the strategy to slay him. Meanwhile, some eminent personalities from Madinah came to Makkah to perform Hajj and they heard about the prophet, they met him, listened to his message, embraced it and called him to migrate to Madinah. They promised him that they would provide protection to him and whatever he will need, watching the entire status, prophet decided to migrate to the Madinah when prophet reached Madinah, people of Madinah supported him in all, which he needed. They chose him their spiritual, social and political leader. Thus, they accomplished their promises. It was the third phase of his life. ■

The Real Story of How Israel Was Created

-Alison Weir

To better understand the Palestinian bid for membership in the United Nations, it is important to understand the original 1947 U.N. action on Israel-Palestine. The common representation of Israel's birth is that the U.N. created Israel, that the world was in favor of this move, and that the U.S. governmental establishment supported it. All these assumptions are demonstrably incorrect.

In reality, while the U.N. General Assembly recommended the creation of a Jewish state in part of Palestine, that recommendation was non-binding and never implemented by the Security Council. Second, the General Assembly passed that recommendation only after Israel proponents threatened and bribed numerous countries in order to gain a required two-thirds of votes. Third, the U.S. administration supported the recommendation out of domestic electoral considerations and took this position over the strenuous objections of the State Department, the CIA, and the Pentagon.

The passage of the General Assembly recommendation sparked increased violence in the region. Over the following months the armed wing of the pro-Israel movement, which had long been preparing for war, perpetrated a series of massacres and expulsions throughout Palestine, implementing a plan to clear the way for a majority-Jewish state. It was this armed aggression, and the ethnic cleansing of at least three-quarters of a

million indigenous Palestinians, that created the Jewish state on land that had been 95% non-Jewish prior to Zionist immigration and that even after years of immigration remained 70% non-Jewish. And despite the shallow patina of legality its partisans extracted from the General Assembly, Israel was born over the opposition of American experts and of governments around the world, who opposed it on both pragmatic and moral grounds.

Let us look at the specifics.

Background of the U.N. Partition Recommendation

In 1947 the U.N. took up the question of Palestine, a territory that was then administered by the British. Approximately 50 years before, a movement called political Zionism had begun in Europe. Its intention was to create a Jewish state in Palestine through pushing out the Christian and Muslim inhabitants who made up over 95 percent of its population and replacing them with Jewish immigrants. As this colonial project grew through subsequent years, the indigenous Palestinians reacted with occasional bouts of violence; Zionists had anticipated this since people usually resist being expelled from their land. In various written documents cited by numerous Palestinian and Israeli historians, they discussed their strategy: They would either buy up the land until all the previous inhabitants had emigrated or, failing this, use violence to force them out.

When the buy-out effort was able to obtain only a few percent of the land, Zionists created a number of terrorist groups to fight against both the Palestinians and the British. Terrorist and future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin later bragged that Zionists had brought terrorism both to the Middle East and to the world at large. Finally, in 1947 the British announced that they would be ending their control of Palestine, which had been created through the League of Nations following World War I, and turned the question of Palestine over to the United Nations.

At this time, the Zionist immigration and buyout project had increased the Jewish population of Palestine to 30 percent and land ownership from 1% to approximately 6%. Since a founding principle of the U.N. was "self-determination of peoples," one would have expected to the U.N. to support fair, democratic elections in which inhabitants could create their own independent country. Instead, Zionists pushed for a General Assembly resolution in which they would be given a disproportionate 55% of Palestine. (While they rarely announced this publicly, their stated plan was to later take the rest of Palestine.)

U.S. Officials Oppose Partition Plan

The U.S. State Department opposed this partition plan strenuously, considering Zionism contrary to both fundamental American principles and U.S. interests. Author Donald Neff reports that Loy Henderson, Director of the State Department's Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, wrote a memo to the secretary of state warning:

"[S]upport by the Government of the United States of a policy favoring the setting up of a Jewish State in Palestine would be contrary to the wishes of a large majority of the local inhabitants with respect to their form of government. Furthermore, it would have a strongly adverse effect upon American interests throughout the Near and Middle East"

Henderson went on to emphasize:

"At the present time the United States has a moral prestige in the Near and Middle East unequaled by that of any other great power. We would lose that prestige and would be likely for many years to be considered as a betrayer of the high principles which we ourselves have enunciated during the period of the war."

When Zionists began pushing for a partition plan through the U.N., Henderson recommended strongly against supporting their proposal. He warned that such a partition would have to be implemented by force and emphasized that it was "not based on any principle." He went on to write:

"[Partition] would guarantee that the Palestine problem would be permanent and still more complicated in the future..."

Henderson continued:

"[Proposals for partition] are in definite contravention to various principles laid down in the [U.N.] Charter as well as to principles on which American concepts of Government are based. These proposals, for instance, ignore such principles as self-determination and majority rule. They recognize the principle of a theocratic racial state and even go so far in several

instances as to discriminate on grounds of religion and race..."

Henderson was far from alone in making his recommendations. He wrote that his views were not only those of the entire Near East Division but were shared by "nearly every member of the Foreign Service or of the Department who has worked to any appreciable extent on Near Eastern problems." Henderson wasn't exaggerating. Official after official and agency after agency opposed Zionism. In 1947, the CIA reported that Zionist leadership was pursuing objectives that would endanger both Jews and "the strategic interests of the Western powers in the Near and Middle East."

Truman Accedes to Pro-Israel Lobby

President Harry Truman, however, ignored this advice. Truman's political adviser, Clark Clifford, believed that the Jewish vote and contributions were essential to winning the upcoming presidential election and that supporting the partition plan would garner that support. (Truman's opponent, Dewey, took similar stands for similar reasons.)

Secretary of State George Marshall, the renowned World War II general and author of the Marshall Plan, was furious to see electoral considerations taking precedence over policies based on national interest. He condemned what he called a "transparent dodge to win a few votes," which would cause "[t]he great dignity of the office of president [to be] seriously diminished." Marshall wrote that the counsel offered by Clifford "was based on domestic political considerations, while the

problem which confronted us was international. I said bluntly that if the president were to follow Mr. Clifford's advice and if in the elections I were to vote, I would vote against the president..."

Henry F. Grady, who has been called "America's top diplomatic soldier for a critical period of the Cold War," headed a 1946 commission aimed at coming up with a solution for Palestine. Grady later wrote about the Zionist lobby and its damaging effect on U.S. national interests. Grady argued that without Zionist pressure, the U.S. would not have had "the ill-will with the Arab states, which are of such strategic importance in our 'cold war' with the Soviets." He also described the decisive power of the lobby:

"I have had a good deal of experience with lobbies but this group started where those of my experience had ended... I have headed a number of government missions but in no other have I ever experienced so much disloyalty... [I]n the United States, since there is no political force to counterbalance Zionism, its campaigns are apt to be decisive."

Former Undersecretary of State, Dean Acheson, also opposed Zionism. Acheson's biographer writes that Acheson "worried that the West would pay a high price for Israel." Another Author, John Mulhall, records Acheson's warning:

"[T]o transform [Palestine] into a Jewish State capable of receiving a million or more immigrants would vastly exacerbate the political problem and imperil not only American but all Western interests in the Near East."

Secretary of Defense James Forrestal also tried, unsuccessfully, to oppose the Zionists. He was outraged that Truman's Mideast policy was based on what he called "squalid political purposes," asserting that "United States policy should be based on United States national interests and not on domestic political considerations." Forrestal represented the general Pentagon view when he said that "no group in this country should be permitted to influence our policy to the point where it could endanger our national security." A report by the National Security Council warned that the Palestine turmoil was acutely endangering the security of the United States. A CIA report stressed the strategic importance of the Middle East and its oil resources.

Similarly, George F. Kennan, the State Department's director of policy planning, issued a top-secret document on 19th January, 1947, that outlined the enormous damage done to the U.S. by the partition plan ("Report by the Policy Planning Staff on Position of the United States with Respect to Palestine"). Kennan cautioned that "important U.S. oil concessions and air base rights" could be lost through U.S. support for partition and warned that the USSR stood to gain by the partition plan. Kermit Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt's nephew and a legendary intelligence agent, was another who was deeply disturbed by events. He noted:

"The process by which Zionist Jews have been able to promote American support for the partition of Palestine demonstrates the vital need of a foreign policy based on national rather than partisan interests... Only when the national interests of the

United States, in their highest terms, take precedence over all other considerations, can a logical, farseeing foreign policy be evolved. No American political leader has the right to compromise American interests to gain partisan votes..."

He went on:

"The present course of world crisis will increasingly force upon Americans the realization that their national interests and those of the proposed Jewish state in Palestine are going to conflict. It is to be hoped that American Zionists and non-Zionists alike will come to grips with the realities of the problem."

The head of the State Department's Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Gordon P. Merriam, warned against the partition plan on moral grounds:

"U.S. support for partition of Palestine as a solution to that problem can be justified only on the basis of Arab and Jewish consent. Otherwise we should violate the principle of self-determination which has been written into the Atlantic Charter, the declaration of the United Nations, and the United Nations Charter — a principle that is deeply embedded in our foreign policy. Even a United Nations determination in favor of partition would be, in the absence of such consent, a stultification and violation of U.N.'s own charter."

Merriam added that without consent, "bloodshed and chaos" would follow, a tragically accurate prediction. An internal State Department memorandum accurately predicted how Israel would be born through armed aggression masked as defense:

"[T]he Jews will be the actual aggressors against the Arabs. However, the Jews will claim that they are merely defending the boundaries of a state which were traced by the U.N.... In the event of such Arab outside aid the Jews will come running to the Security Council with the claim that their state is the object of armed aggression and will use every means to obscure the fact that it is their own armed aggression against the Arabs inside which is the cause of Arab counter-attack."

And American Vice Consul William J. Porter foresaw another outcome of the partition plan: that no Arab State would actually ever come to be in Palestine.

Pro-Israel Pressure on General Assembly Members

When it was clear that the partition recommendation did not have the required two-thirds of the U.N. General Assembly to pass, Zionists pushed through a delay in the vote. They then used this period to pressure numerous nations into voting for the recommendation. A number of people later described this campaign.

Robert Nathan, a Zionist who had worked for the U.S. government and who was particularly active in the Jewish Agency, wrote afterward, "We used any tools at hand," such as telling certain delegations that the Zionists would use their influence to block economic aid to any countries that did not vote the right way. Another Zionist proudly stated:

"Every clue was meticulously checked and pursued. Not the smallest or the remotest of nations, but was contacted and wooed. Nothing was left

to chance."

Financier and longtime presidential adviser Bernard Baruch told France it would lose U.S. aid if it voted against partition. Top White House executive assistant David Niles organized pressure on Liberia through rubber magnate Harvey Firestone, who told the Liberian president that if Liberia did not vote in favor of partition, Firestone would revoke his planned expansion in the country. Liberia voted yes.

Latin American delegates were told that the pan-American highway construction project would be more likely if they voted yes. Delegates' wives received mink coats (the wife of the Cuban delegate returned hers); Costa Rica's President Jose Figueres reportedly received a blank checkbook. Haiti was promised economic aid if it would change its original vote opposing partition. Longtime Zionist Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, along with ten senators and Truman domestic adviser Clark Clifford, threatened the Philippines (seven bills were pending on the Philippines in Congress).

Before the vote on the plan, the Philippine delegate had given a passionate speech against partition, defending the inviolable "primordial rights of a people to determine their political future and to preserve the territorial integrity of their native land." He went on to say that he could not believe that the General Assembly would sanction a move that would place the world "back on the road to the dangerous principles of racial exclusiveness and to the archaic documents of theocratic governments." Twenty-four hours later, after intense Zionist pressure, the delegate

voted in favor of partition. The U.S. delegation to the U.N. was so outraged when Truman insisted that they support partition that the State Department director of U.N. affairs was sent to New York to prevent the delegates from resigning *en masse*.

On 29th November 1947, the partition resolution, 181, passed. While this resolution is frequently cited, it was of limited (if any) legal impact. General Assembly resolutions, unlike Security Council resolutions, are not binding on member states. For this reason, the resolution requested that "[t]he Security Council take the necessary measures as provided for in the plan for its implementation," which the Security Council never did. Legally, the General Assembly Resolution was a "recommendation" and did not create any states.

What it did do, however, was increase the fighting in Palestine. Within months (and before Israel dates the beginning of its founding war) the Zionists had forced out 413,794 people. Zionist military units had stealthily been preparing for war before the U.N. vote and had acquired massive weaponry, some of it through a widespread network of illicit gunrunning operations in the U.S. under a number of front groups.

The U.N. eventually managed to create a temporary and very partial cease-fire. A Swedish U.N. mediator who had previously rescued thousands of Jews from the Nazis was dispatched to negotiate an end to the violence. Israeli assassins killed him, and Israel continued what it was to call its "war of independence." At the end of this war, through a larger military force than that of its adversaries and the ruthless

implementation of plans to push out as many non-Jews as possible, Israel came into existence on 78% of Palestine.

At least 33 massacres of Palestinian civilians were perpetrated, half of them before a single Arab army had entered the conflict, hundreds of villages were depopulated and razed, and a team of cartographers was sent out to give every town, village, river, and hillock a new Hebrew name. All vestiges of Palestinian habitation, history, and culture were to be erased from history, an effort that almost succeeded.

Israel, which claims to be the "only democracy in the Middle East," decided not to declare official borders or to write a constitution, a situation which continues to this day. In 1967, it took still more Palestinian and Syrian land, which is now illegally occupied territory, since the annexation of land through military conquest is outlawed by modern international law. It has continued this campaign of growth through armed acquisition and illegal confiscation of land ever since.

Individual Israelis, like Palestinians and all people, are legally and morally entitled to an array of human rights.

On the other hand, the state of Israel's vaunted "right to exist" is based on an alleged "right" derived from might, an outmoded concept that international legal conventions do not recognize and in fact specifically prohibit. ■

[Courtesy: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article29364.htm>]

(Courtesy: YMD)

Around the World

Zionist Massacres in Gaza Won't Weaken Palestinians' Resolve: MB

The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, in a statement on 21 July, expressed solidarity with the Palestinians and hoped that the ongoing massacres of Gazans will not weaken the resolve of Palestinians. The statement runs *inter alia*:

"A new bloody massacre is added to the Zionists' bloody record as they launch a barbaric military attack on Gaza's Shujayya neighbourhood killing dozens of civilians and wounding hundreds, mostly women, children and elderly people. Thus far, inhuman Zionist crimes on Gaza have claimed the lives of hundreds of unarmed civilians and injured thousands more, amid shameful silence and treacherous conspiracy from the Arab world and the international community at large.

"This criminal Zionist aggression is being instigated by Arab governments that coordinate and participate in the blockade illegally imposed on the Gaza Strip. Those same governments prevent any medical aid or food supplies from entering Gaza in this difficult time. They even launch false information campaigns to demonize the most honourable phenomenon the world has ever known - the brave resistance in occupied Palestine. But the worst these governments and their Zionist friends can do will not extinguish the flame of the resistance until Palestine, all of Palestine, is completely liberated.

"The heroes of the resistance, who fought back Zionist forces and caused them heavy casualties in every confrontation, are perfectly capable (God willing) of responding to this brutal attack, and forcing Zionists to withdraw. A nation

will not kneel when Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) is the people's true leader. The resistance will not give up when its men seek martyrdom more than Zionists seek life.

"We call on all Arab and Muslim peoples and all free nations of the world to rise up against these atrocities, to stop inhuman Zionist aggressions, lift the siege on Gaza and support the Palestinian people's resistance.

"Indeed... 'God has full control of all affairs, but most people do not know'. The unjust oppressors will soon see what destiny they will ultimately meet." ■

BRAZIL WITHDRAWS AMBASSADOR FROM TEL AVIV

Brazil's Ministry of External Affairs, the Itamaraty, on 23 July issued a note saying it viewed the "escalation of violence between Israel and Palestine" as "unacceptable," and that Brazil "strongly condemns the disproportionate use of force by Israel in the Gaza Strip."

The note said Brazil's ambassador in Tel Aviv, Henrique Pinto, had been recalled, a move that Brazil's Globo News website labelled "exceptional," adding that such a tactic was "taken when the government wants to show its discontent and believes that the situation in [the] other country is extremely grave." Brazil has also summoned the Israeli Ambassador to Brazil, Rafael Eldad.

Brazil was one of 29 countries in the UN Human Rights Council that voted on 23 July to investigate Israel over its military offensive in Gaza. The United States voted against the inquiry and 17 countries abstained. ■

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