

# THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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# **The Fragrance of East**

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## Wisdom of Qur'an

*Commeth Allah's command, so seek not to hasten it. Glorified is He above that which they associate (with Him).*

(Surah-Al-Nahal -1)

### Commentary:

Jalaluddin Suyuti has said: Consider how the previous chapter is connected with this one. The previous chapter ended with the word, "And worship your Lord until death comes to you," while this one starts with, "Commeth Allah's commandment" (Alusi).

As regards immediate context, this verse addressed the Makkans who often demanded to know when the Hour would strike. Nadr b. al-Harith in fact said (8:32) "O Allah, If this be true from You, then rain down stones upon us" (Au.). In Yusuf Ali's tender words, "This is an answer to the taunts of the pagans, who said, 'If there is a god the One true God, as you say, with unified control, control, why does He not punish the wrong doers at once? ' The answer is: ' The decree of Allah will inevitably come to pass; it will come soon enough; when it comes, you will wish it were delayed; how foolish of you to wish even to cut off your last hope of forgiveness?'"

. According to some of the Salaf, the "amr" of the text alludes to " the two events being so close, also to the raising of the Final Messenger. Ibn ' Abbas said that when Jibril was sent with the first message to the prophet, he remarked, " Allah is Great, The Hour has arrived" (Qurtubi).

Mawdudi has an opinion worth consideration; Since this chapter was revealed during the last days of the prophet's stay at Makka, few days before his migration to Madinah, and since the pith of the Makkan argument against him was, ' Muhammad (peace be on him) claims that we have deviated from the truth. He also claims to be a Prophet designated by God. If both these statements are true, we should by now have been seized by God's scourge'... in view of above ' the judgement'(command in our rendering: (Au) refers to prophet's Muhammad's migration from Makkah.

## Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (S)

Abu Huraira narrates that the Prophet of Allah blessings and peace be upon him – said ,” There are two sentences that are easy to utter but are very weighty in the scale of deeds and very dear to the Lord. These are: *Subhanallahi abihamdih Subhanallahi azim.*

One can easily understand why these two sentences are easy to utter and why they are also so dear to the implication of their being so heavy in the scale of deeds. The truth is that like material objects, non- material things are also light or heavy in weight which is indicated by instruments specially designed for the purpose. Heat and cold, for example, are states of things and their degree is measured by thermometer. Similarly, Names of Allah, words of God- remembrance, recitation of the Quran, Prayers (salat) fear and love for Allah, and other virtuous deeds – each will have weight on the Day of Judgment.

It will be evident on that day how some very brief utterances of a believer would carry so much weight. It is stated in another Tradition that the Prophet of Allah – blessings and peace be upon him – said, "Nothing weighs as heavy as the Name of Allah.

The general meaning of *Subhanallah wa bihamdih Subhanallahil 'azim* is. "Glorify the perfection and purity of Allah Who is Magnificent."

## Nation under Siege

In spite of all possible safeguards terrorists struck with impunity in the country's financial capital, Mumbai in the night of November 26. It has plunged the whole nation in grief. Whosoever, has planned and got this heinous crime executed deserves severe punishment. The law and order machinery may take time to unearth the conspiracy but in the meantime government must work hard to instill confidence in people and ensure their safety.

It is unfortunate that ever since the terrorism has raised its head in 1980's instead of pondering over the causes of its germination and making efforts of rooting it out communal colour is given to it. To some extent it helped certain religio-political parties in grabbing the power in states as well as at the Centre. Time and again efforts are being made to give the terrorism a communal colour and reap its harvest.

The most satisfying thing is that still there are persons who refuse to buy the theory of "communal" terrorism (say Muslim terrorism and Hindu terrorism). Two world known Islamic seminaries, Darul Uloom Deoband and Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema and so also many other Muslim clerics have severely condemned the acts of terrorism have firmly asserted that it has nothing to do with religion. A prominent columnist Neelabh Mishra writing in the weekly 'Outlook' says:

"In questioning the credibility of the police action against Sadhvi Pragma Singh Thakur, Mahant Amritanand, a self claimed Shankeracharya, Lt. Col. Srikant Prasad Purohit and others accused in the Malegaon blast case, the BJP and the Sangh Parivar are ironically echoing the same arguments they decried so vehemently when they were used by critics of indiscriminate police action against Muslims in the name of investigating bomb blasts in other cities.

These arguments may be summarized as follows: the police are torturing the accused to make them confess to crime they have not committed; the police make insinuations, without any hard evidence, which are then played up by the media and this results in an unfair media trial; it is wrong to profile a whole section of people as terrorists; it is wrong to equate terrorism with a particular religion, and so on so forth.

Hearing all this, is it not hard to believe that it is the same party that advocated making confession-s before the police in courts as evidence under stringent anti-terror laws; used the term Islamic terrorism with abandon (there by equating with particular religion); maintained that all the police actions in the name of combating terrorism was unquestionable; was ready to believe and propagate all inspired police leaks against Muslim accused in terror cases that were sensation-alised by the media, and relished profiling of educated Muslim youths as suspected terrorists and their sympathizers.

Mr. Mishra further argues that if the BJP and the Sangh Parivar sound hypocritical in this yet unfolding saga, the Congress and the UPA too have to answer for their lapse. After all, it was the police machinery of Maharashtra state ruled by them, that had ignored the clues of the involvement of Hindutvadis in Naded, Parbhani and the earlier Melegaon bombing cases.

In Andhra too in Mecca Masjid blasts instead of locating the real culprits, on assumed suspicion Muslim youths were picked up and tortured. Now they are being released as no evidence was found against them and Malegaon suspects are believed to be involved in that episode also.

The time has come when criminal acts should be viewed putting off the tainted glasses. Suspicions, surmises and prejudiced thinkings have no place in fair and judicious actions.

SA

We solicit articles for publication in The Fragrance of East. Suitable remuneration will be paid to writers. We prefer receipt of articles on e-mail: [shariq\\_alavi@yahoo.com](mailto:shariq_alavi@yahoo.com)

# Issues for Every Patriot to Ponder\*

S. Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi

It is a common practice that if any body tries to say, or do any thing which is a bit unusual, every body raises an eyebrow. Still, we have come to your city for convening a meeting without any formal platform or president or to support any movement; nor we propose to pass any resolution. The introductory speech delivered here was also a bit different form the customary inaugural addresses. We do not claim to be doing anything of exceptional nature, worth and merit. Many within our own country and outside it have engaged themselves in the service of humanity, sometimes even anonymously without forming any association or society for the purpose. But nowadays one wonders, thanks to Europe, how any useful work can be done without any formal platform with all its concomitants like a president and secretary. But we have decided to come here and contact you relying solely on God.

Friends, the world is today on the verge of destruction: a place where a shattering explosion can take place any moment. You are listening me here because you do not fear any imminent catastrophe. We give ears to any talk whether it pertains to religion or wisdom or justice in normal conditions only. But if the conditions are abnormal there is thunder and rain, then you would hardly be able to pay attention to the most eloquent speaker spreading pearls of wisdom . This is human nature, Man can employ his powers of attention only danger, not seriously ill or hungry. But if he is mentally agitated or perturbed by his circumstances. he would not yield to anyone whatever be the inducement.

I want to emphasize that we should have normal and peaceful condition in India as well as in the world at large so that people may be able to devote themselves to their tasks whole- heartedly; the teachers may enrich literature and poets may celebrate in poetry, artists may apply their skill to paintings and architecture and scholars may devote

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\* The address delivered at the Seminar of Intellectuals on Communal Harmony held at Pune on 2th February, 1987

themselves to study and research. All the masterpieces of arts and literature we have today were produced under normal conditions. A man with severe pain in his abdomen would not be able to write anything or even express himself coherently . He would not be able to listen and appreciate even the most charming verses.

Friends, our country has been endowed with everything it needs but we cannot have our affairs settled in the normal course. One needs to grease the palms even for meeting one's legitimate needs. God has not left us wanting in anything ; He has made the world complete and blessed it with everything we require to lead a contented life with ease and comfort provided we have love for our neighbours, have peace of mind and are free from anxiety of being swindled by anybody . Science and technology have reached the stage where they can control the climate and eradicate the diseases. They have even conquered the space. But what all this means to us ? We are not free from want and fear!

Now, what is the reason for it? Machines and goods have been fashioned but not the man. Man was to operate those machines but he was left unattended. The world was perhaps happier when there were no machines. We had no public call system to magnify the voice, nor we had radios and televisions, but we had a receptive mind and heart. Now we can communicate our ideas to far distant places, but there is nobody to listen and accept them. Man is now after money, wants to get rich quickly and have honour and power. If man has not changed, what is the use of these inventions? He can rather use them to dupe others on a much larger scale.

What I want to say is that the guarantees for goodness to spread and sustain itself are the right atmosphere and virtuous and God-fearing men who love all the human beings. Take the instance of universities. We have hundreds of them in India but a new *dispute* or problem crops up every day. The students do not want to learn anything and the teachers are not interested in teaching. One wants the degrees and diplomas and the other his emoluments. If you enquire the higher-ups they will come out with a lengthy story. They will tell you that the students do not want to study, they want only their degrees. They do not want even to attend their classes and desire to have their degrees without appearing at the examinations. Some are clamouring to scrap the system of examinations altogether.



Friends, goods and material means are nothing in comparison to the skill and spirit of man. If man is righthinking and the conscience his judge, and he learns to make right use of the most slender resources available to him, he will be able to achieve what he intends. The prophets of God have accomplished great tasks with the least amount of goods and means available to them. But we are today unable to achieve anything with all these conveniences. The fact is that today we are dominated by the things created or produced by us to serve our needs. Man has now become slave of his own creations. He is now after them and wants to have them at any cost, even if he has to trample to death his fellow beings. He might not be crushing others literally he is surely treading humanity underfoot and degrading it. I urge you to inculcate human qualities and improve the moral atmosphere otherwise nobody will be safe and nobody will gain anything. In the confusion and muddle created by, say, an earthquake or war even parents forget their children. Keep peace and learn to respect and love your fellow beings.

One of the greatest weaknesses we suffer from these days is that everybody wants to have his way irrespective of what happens to others. This is one of the chief causes of present ills. Look, what is happening around you; government offices are not working properly, letters are delayed in the post, telephones have become a mess and trains are not running on time. Nobody seems to have any sense of duty nor feels his responsibility to others. How long things will continue in this way?

Man has become his own enemy today. I ask those who will kill another man without any feeling of compunction whether they have ever destroyed any scorpion or snake or a wolf? I am sure they would never have dared it. Is man the easiest game for them? Why they do not fear God? Do they want to flourish their valour by killing human beings? Is man of little worth than scorpions and snakes and wolves? Why they do not kill the rats which cause so much damage to the crops? Is it not a matter of shame for man? Let such a man go and pluck a flower from any garden or break a pitcher of the potter. He will not go unpunished for it. But he is smashing the flowers made by God. Man is the master-creation of God: His Taj Mahal. But even Taj Mahal cannot be compared to man for it was built by a man created by God. If he cannot destroy any monument created by man, how he deems himself

justified in demolishing its Creator. Is man so worthless because he is the creation of God? Is everybody free to pull man down at his sweet will?

Let us be clear about it . This country will not prosper by these killings, illegal gratifications and dereliction of duty even if America or Russia were to back it . If we will destroy our own house nobody will build it for us.

It is not that evil dispositions clash with each other. Units also collide when they are not grounded properly. The units not based on equality and brotherhood of mankind and divinity of God, not striking a proper balance between rights and duties and ignoring the inviolability of human life and property are extremely dangerous. A bead not threaded in a rosary is surely to go astray and clash with others. That is why the prophets of God always tried to thread the beads on a string while Satan endeavoured to disperse them . The prophets taught the lesson of humanism to man; they told man that it was not for him to swim like the fishes, or prey like the wolves. He had to walk humbly on earth.

The destiny of every man is linked with that of the other. We can easily imagine what will happen if every man became indifferent to the ills of the society or country or even remained unconcerned with the killings and disorders in other parts of the country. I have not come across of this state of affairs depicted more meaningfully in any piece of literature than the way it has been alluded to in a parable handed down from the prophet of Islam.

" A boat has a number of passengers on board on its two decks, the upper and lower. (So far as I know seafaring had not developed by that time to a stage where the ships had several decks. In any case Arabia had no navigable river) . Some passengers occupy the upper deck who can be called upper class passengers, while those on the lower deck are the poor and lowly. Drinking water is stored on the upper deck. The people on the lower deck go to fetch water from the upper one which sometimes spills causing inconvenience to the passengers on the upper deck. As this happens every now and then, the passengers on the upper deck lose their patience and forbid those on the lower deck to come there for fetching water. They ask the people on the lower deck to make their own arrangement of drinking water for themselves. The

people on the lower deck think over the matter and decide that they should better make a hole in the bottom of the boat and thus arrange to meet their needs. The holy prophet then says: If the people on the upper deck have not lost their head, they will beg the people on the lower deck not to go ahead with their decision. They will ask them to come to the upper deck and have the water but desist from making a hole in the bottom of the boat. If the boat sinks, nobody will be safe, neither the people on the upper deck nor those on the lower deck".

How many holes are being bored in the ship of our country today. Nobody seems to care what will be the repercussions of the limited, self-centered policies pursued by each individual. This is happening on a large scale in India, in fact, all over the world. Every class and caste and every section of Indian society is in competition with the other in nepotism and petty-mindedness. Prophets of God had, on the other hand, taught us the lesson of peace and unity of all races and nations. If you give a deeper thought to the matter you would find that whatever of humanism, love of fellow beings, human dignity and awe of God is still felt by us is the residue of their teachings. A sufi saint of Delhi Khwaja Nizamuddin is related to have said: " If somebody throws a thorn in your way and you too do the same, the entire path will bristle with them. But if you put a flower in place of the thorn, others will also place flowers there. Thorn is not the remedy for thorn, its remedy lies in flowers." Another time he said, " The principle followed by others is to be crooked with a crooked . But my code says that one should be soft with both the gentle and the crooked" If you go through their biographies of those of their followers you would find them always preaching love and compassion and assuaging the feelings of the broken-hearted. They learnt it from their prophet and disseminated it through their personal behaviour. This was the reason why they conquered the hearts though conquer is not the correct word to convey the feelings of affection and attachment created by them in the hearts of others. The kings and victors conquered the enemy to subdue them by force but these saintly souls softened the hearts of their adversaries through their kindness and compassion.

Another story relating to Khwaja Fariduddin Shakar Ganj is related by his biographers. Once some one presented him with a pair of scissors. The man had brought it since the place he came from was

known for the quality of scissors. When the Khwaja saw it he remarked, "It is not my business to separate or divide the people; my task is to join and cement the severed hearts. A needle would have been more appropriate for me than the scissors."

Friends, history is a witness to the fact that moral degradation precedes the decline of a nation. The decline and fall of Greece, Roman Empire, Sassanids, ancient India and different Islamic kingdoms illustrate this point. Our political leaders, intellectuals and those who can would public opinion should assess the present situation in complete detachment in an objective manner. They should shudder at the erosion of moral values in the country. It is now clear as day that wealth, power and position, casteism and political manoeuvring are the stark realities today while philosophies and religious discourses are simply veneers to camouflage them.

But a thing still more serious is that in this country extending from Raskumari to Srinagar there is none to ask the people to improve their morals. We hear people calling us to be humanist and save the country. We hear people calling us to one party or the other or to accept the every one of them wants that whatever is to be done, right or wrong, should be done by his party and under his flag. Nobody points out the wrong itself. Today we do not have a single individual like Gandhiji who is above his party and community, who speaks only what is truth and points out where the weakness lies. All those who point out the mistakes and errors of others may be good and able advocates of their own parties and communities or else public prosecutors of others, but this is not the need of the hour, nay, dangerous for a country where all castes and communities have to live with complete freedom, peace and dignity.

Friends, you might have grown weary of my plain speaking. Now I will relate a story which has a lesson for you. Once a marriage procession was proceeding ahead in a city with the usual pomp and show. A man watching the show asked, "Where is the bridegroom?" Those standing near him replied incisively, "What a foolish question? Can't you see the procession and enjoy it?" The man was, however a realist and he again persisted, "The procession is magnificent, no doubt, but there is no bridegroom," His remark sent the people searching for the bridegroom who ultimately found out that the poor bridegroom riding a horse had been thrown into a pit by the charger but nobody noticed it in the din and bustle of the charger but nobody noticed it in the bustle of the procession. I

fear that the present procession of modernism extending from the West to the East, and which has captured our minds and hearts, may turn out to be a marriage procession without the bridegroom, Man is the bridegroom of this procession.

There is nobody to shed tears on this marriage procession sans bridegroom. How many persons are there in this city who are truly men, the bridegrooms of the procession of humanity? Where is that man who is impatient for betterment of humanity; who takes pleasure in giving rather than taking anything? Everybody is anxious today to fill his coffers, to give a lift to his party, or, at the most, to his community or country. Be it a group or nation, these are but households, big and small. The larger the country, the bigger is the household.

But, the real thing is humanity of which all nations are mere segments. How many individuals and parties are striving today for the welfare of humanity, for saving it from the impending doom?

Civilization and culture, politics and government, arts and literature and philosophy and science are all dependent on humanity. They can prosper if man remains in existence, but without him they will be nowhere. And you know what efforts are being made to root out humanism. Every one is trying to outdo others in this unholy task.

Brothers, if you love humanity, if you have any regard for humanism, the conditions today should be an spur to move you to action. Those who have greater influence in the country should say good-bye to their positions and offices and try to save the country. If the country goes down, they shall have neither the prominence, nor the positions, nor offices. We are human beings first and then we belong to any caste, community or country. This was the task to be attended to by those who enjoyed power and *prestige*, but none of them seems to pay any attention to it. We have therefore deemed it our duty to call you to humanism. It is not seldom in the history of nations that a weak and faint voice of reform and regeneration is raised by an individual which finds a place in every heart. We hope to awaken you, since an awareness of the danger is the best defence.

I am a man of religious convictions. My study of history tells me that sins and wrongdoings invite the form of God in the form of natural calamities. God warns us through these disasters. He tells us that He has greater power to destroy us than we have. When I hear of any cruelty and oppression, I shudder at the thought of divine punishment visiting the people. I make no exception for anybody in this matter. Wherever acts of savagery and brutality occur, God is sure to visit upon the wrongdoers in a way unimaginable and

unpredictable by the most learned astrologer. The problems relating to social and economic reconstruction get complicated, law and order situation deteriorates, administrative apparatus becomes loose and ineffective, intellectual and political leadership is rendered incapable of solving myriad issues facing the country which becomes weak internally and loses prestige in the international forums. These are the consequences of violence and injustice foreseen by those who have an insight into the history of nations and civilizations. They get crazy about sounding an alarm to those who would listen to them. That is why their tone becomes bitter at times and they have to say:

Excuse me, Ghalib, for the irritating talk,  
My heart-ache today is a bit more severe.

Thanks God that our country is still not dead; it has just fallen asleep many a time in its long history but whenever it has been alerted, it has moved heavens and earth. I am confident that whenever my country will wake up, it will make amends for all the unintentional wrongs committed by it.

I consider all those people who indulge in rioting not as devils but as the people heavy with sleep. The man within them has become dormant and the brute without has been aroused. They just need to put the brute to bed and awaken the man within them.

Friends, I may remind you before concluding my speech that it has been the history as well as destiny of India that it will remain the home of people with different languages, cultures, religions and personal laws. Nobody can change its history, or the destiny. Its long history bears witness to its toleration, nay, the regard its inhabitants had for each other. The only guarantee for its safety and progress lies in peaceful co-existence and joint endeavour for the common, national good. A secular and democratic form of government which is completely impartial and just to all, can only be acceptable to such a country. It is necessary that all sections of the people including minorities should harbour no fear in regard to their culture and creed, language and customs and religion and family laws. This will enable them to go all lengths for the reconstruction and progress of the country and defend its integrity and solidarity instead of wasting their energies in the conservation of their cultural and religious identities.

I thank all of you who have taken the trouble of coming here on behalf as well as on behalf of my friends and colleagues who have organised this gathering. ●

# The Facts about Hajj

S. Sulaiman Nadwi

The whole ceremony of Hajj is commemorative of Hadrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and his family's devotion to God, the Almighty. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not introduce it as a new institution but purged it of all evil practices and made it an obligatory act of piety by which one can develop God-consciousness.

It is rightly said that Hajj is the perfection of faith since it combines in itself all the distinctive qualities of other obligatory acts. It represents the quality of Salat since a pilgrim offers prayers in the Ka'bah. It encourages the spending of material wealth for the sake of the Lord, the chief characteristic of Zakat. When a pilgrim sets out for Hajj he disassociates himself from his hearth and home, from his dear and near ones to please his Lord. He suffers privation and undertakes the hardships of journey—a lesson we learn from fasting and I'tikaf. In Hajj one is trained to be completely forgetful of material comforts and pomp and show of worldly life. One has to sleep on stony ground, circumambulate the Ka'bah, run between Safe' and Marwa, and spend his night and day clad in simple pilgrim's dress. He is required to avoid the use of oil or scent or any other perfume. He is not even allowed to get his hair cut or trim his beard. In short, he is commanded to abandon all sorts of comforts for the sake of Allah and submit himself before his Lord, the ultimate aim of the life of a Muslim.

Just as Hadrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him) had come running to the House of Allah in response to Allah's call, a pilgrim visits the Ka'bah reciting these words loudly:

Here I am at Thy service, O Allah, here I am at Thy service,

Here I am at Thy service, O Allah, here I am at Thy service, here I am at Thy service. There is no associate with Thee; here I am at Thy service. Verily all praise and grace is due to Thee, and the Sovereignty (too). There is no associate with Thee.

For the Muslim, visiting the Ka'bah, whether it is for the first or the tenth time, is a profound awe-inspiring experience. The worshipper enters the sacred Mosque with a supplication of God's peace and blessing. Looking beyond the throng of pilgrims and the patterns of columns and arches into the vast open courtyard, he catches a glimpse, with a tremor of awe and excitement, of the solitary black-draped ka'bah which is the center of every Muslim world. After performing a brief Salat of "greeting" of the mosque, he makes his way toward the Ka'bah through the vast array of Muslims of

every place and race on earth in order to perform the first of the pilgrim's rites, that of tawaf or circumambulation.

The worshipper is to start the circumambulation from the corner of the ka'bah in which the Black Stone is embedded. He joins the host of Muslims circling the House and pouring out their hearts in supplication to Him. Moving in that sea of worshippers, a deep sense of his smallness and insignificance comes to him. He realizes that God alone is Great. Here, under the blazing sun of Makkah, making his circuits around God's Holy House as he repeats the solemn, fervent supplications of the pilgrim, he has a sense of realization of his own nothingness, his utter dependence on his Creator in face of God's ineffable glory and majesty, and that one day he will come before Him to receive His judgement and the recompense for all he did. While circumambulating the Ka'bah a pilgrim kisses the Black Stone as the Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) kissed it on the Farewell pilgrimage. It is revered as the only remnant of Ibrahim's (peace be upon him) building but just as the Ka'bah is an object of reverence but not of worship so too is the Black Stone and because the Prophet's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) lips touched it, all pilgrims do the same. After completing seven circuits of the Sacred House he may spend as much time as he wishes in making supplications to God in the immediate vicinity of the Ka'bah, and before he leaves he prays two Rak'ahs of Salat. He will then go to the spring of Zamzam, situated underground within the compound of the Sacred Mosque very close to the Ka'bah to refresh himself with water. He then goes to a nearby area within the compound of the Sacred Mosque to perform the next rite of Hajj. This is known as Sa'i, that is hastening between two hillocks of Safa' and Marwa separated now by a long marble lined corridor, in commemoration of Hajira's (Hagar's) hurried search for water at this site. The worshipper walks and during part of the way may break into a run, seven times between the two rock-mounds, situated about a quarter of a mile apart, glorifying and supplicating God. Between the marble arches he catches glimpses of the adjacent courtyard of the Sacred Mosque. At the centre of it stands the black draped Ka'bah around which like an endless river flowing on and on day and night since remote antiquity supplicants from every corner of the world, clad in the simple pilgrim's dress moves in utter absorption with god, hymning His praises and calling on His name. One who has visited the Sacred House leaves it with an intense longing to rerun to it again and again and with a vivid understanding of why the Ka'bah is indeed the focal point of the earth



for the worship of Allah, the praised and Exalted, and the centre of love in the life of the Muslim individual and community.

Pilgrims may arrive in Makkah to perform their tawaf or sa'i either immediately before the days of Hajj or earlier. However, the climax of Hajj occurs on the ninth day of Dhul Hijjah, the day of Arafat. The prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) stressed the essential nature of this day's observance saying that one who had been present at 'Arafat would have performed Hajj. 'Arafat is the name of a vast plain some miles outside Makkah; it is treeless and barren without any shelter from the blazing desert sun and encircled by stark jagged purple black rocks. Millions of pilgrims move there during the morning of the 9th of Dhul-Hijjah. After the noon and afternoon prayers have been performed together in the shortened form recommended for travelers, the people have had a chance to eat and rest. During the afternoon up to sundown, all these human beings who assemble here, from every land and belonging to countless races and cultures, are completely absorbed in supplications to God, Most High, glorifying Him, affirming their utter helplessness and dependence on Him, yearning for His forgiveness, enduring all the fatigues and difficulties of the travel and the pilgrimage itself with its severe climate and hard conditions. The vast, otherwise empty plain is filled with tents and millions of pilgrims, tired and dishevelled and totally humble before their Creator standing with hands raised in supplication, many weeping in the intensity of their awe and devotion to Him. Near the Mount of Mercy, a hill in the middle of the plain the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) delivered his Farewell pilgrimage address to his people.

As soon as the sun sets the exodus of the pilgrims from 'Arafat begins. Their next station is Muzdalifa, a barren rock wasteland, a few miles closer to Makkah, where they perform the sunset and night prayers together, spending part of the night resting after the fatigues of the day and engaged in supplications to God. Here they also gather a number of pebbles to be used for stoning three stone columns representing Satan which have stood since ancient times in the village of Mina, to which all the pilgrims go after their brief halt in Muzdalifah, to live for the next two and half or three days, in a vast tent city before they complete their pilgrims rites and disperse.

These stone pillars stand at the sites where the Satan appeared to Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be upon them) in remote antiquity, tempting them to disobey Allah when Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was taking his son to be sacrificed at God's command. On each of the three days of sojourn in Mina,

countless numbers of pilgrims go to the columns; stoning them with the pebbles they have collected to symbolize their rejection of Satan in the endless human struggle against evil promptings and temptations.

After the first stoning following the Prophet's (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) example and injunction, the pilgrims slaughter an animal in commemoration of Ibrahim's sacrifice a sheep in the place of Ismail (peace be upon both of them); part of meat is used to feed themselves and their group, and the rest is distributed among the poor. During this period the pilgrims also return briefly to Makkah to perform their final circumambulation of the Ka'bah. The pilgrim's home during the Mina is a tent shared with other pilgrims, he spends the time in making daily trips for stoning, praying and reading the Qur'an and listening to talks about various aspects of Islam, visiting his fellow pilgrims or resting. Before sunset on the third day or the following morning he leaves Mina and his pilgrimage is now complete.

In addition its unique spiritual aspects, Hajj is also remarkable, as we have seen that it brings together from every part of earth such an immense diversity of human beings, who in spite of vast difference of culture and language, form one community (Ummah), all of them professing and living by the same faith and all devoted to the worship of the same Creator. "Down to the ages," says Professor Hike "this institution has continued to serve as the major unifying influence in Islam and the most effective common bond among the diverse believers. It renders almost every capable Moslem perform a traveller for once in his lifetime. The socializing influence of such a gathering of the brotherhood of believers from the far quarters of the earth is hard to overestimate. It afforded opportunity for Negroes, Berbers-Chinese, Persians, Syrians, Turks-rich and poor, high and low to fraternize and meet together on the common ground of faith" (History of the Arabs p. 136).

## **Reforms in Hajj**

The obligatory nature of Hajj is quite distinct from other Ibadat (acts of devotion). The Arabs were practically ignorant of the times and articles of prayer and did not know how it was to be observed. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught them gradually to pray. There was no concept of Zakat among the Arabs. Therefore, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) first impressed upon the minds of the people to do good charitable acts and exhorted them to charity, Sadaqa and spend for the sake of Allah to help the poor and the needy before

Zakat was made obligatory on them. There had been various changes in the nature of fast since the Day of Ashura till Ramadan. But the rites and formalies of Hajj were already long in vogue in Arabia. There was, however, a change in the concept and the way of performance of Hajj. In other words, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) purged it of all polytheistic and evil practices which had creeped into it and made it an act of piety by which one can develop God consciousness.

The detail of these reforms is given below:

1. The real purpose of worship is remember Allah, seek forgiveness from Him and to glorify Him. But the custom of the pre-Islamic Arabs was to gather themselves in large number at Mina after the performance of Hajj and extol the greatness of their tribes and the greatness of their ancestors. As the whole Hajj rites were purified of all un-Islamic practices, the aftermath of the pilgrimage was completely spiritualized and the pilgrims were instructed to hymn the glory of Allah.

And when you have performed your holy rites (of Hajj remember Allah, like your remembrance of your forefathers-even with a yet keener remembrance. (2:200)

2. When they offered the sacrifice of an animal, they rubbed the blood of that animal on the walls of the ka'bah to please God. It was also the practice of the Jews that when they offered the sacrifice, they sprinkled the blood of the animal on the altar and burnt the flesh of the animal. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) put an end to both these practices. It was ordained by Allah, the Exalted, in the Holy Qur'an:

Their flesh and their blood reach not Allah, but the devotion from you reacheth Him. Thus have we made them subject unto you that ye magnify Allah that He hath guided you. (22:37)

Explaining the aim and object of sacrifice on this day of commemoration of the amazing sacrifice of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) it was said that it is to feed the poor and the needy.

3. It was the custom of the people of Yaman that when they used to come for Hajj, they did not bring enough provision for the journey. They said that they depend on God. On their arrival in Makkah they used to beg the people. So the following verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed:

And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best provision is to be dutiful to Allah. (2:197)

4. Excepting the Quraish, who had their standard of distinction over the tribes of Arabia, all other tribes performed the Tawaf of the Ka'bah naked. For this purpose a wooden plank was placed in the ka'bah where all the peoples put their clothes after taking them off. The only thing which could cover their nakedness depended upon the generosity of the Quraish, that is, some cloth was given by the Quraish specially for the purpose of Tawaf but those who could not get the benefit had to perform the Tawaf in a naked state. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) absolutely forbade this evil practice.

Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported: On the Day of Nahr (10th of Dhul-Hijjah) in the year prior to the last Hajj of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) was the leader of the pilgrims in the Hajj he sent me along with other announcers to Mina to make public announcement. No pagan is allowed to perform Hajj after this year and no naked person is allowed to perform the Tawaf around the Ka'bah. Then Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent 'Ali (Allah be pleased with him) to read out the surah Bara'a (At-Tauba) to the people; so he made the announcement along with us on the day of Nahr in Mina: No pagan is allowed to perform Hajj after this year and no naked person is allowed to perform the Tawaf around Ka'ba.

5. The haughty and the self-conceited Quraish who took pride on their being the custodians of the Ka'bah. Stayed at Muzdalifa and thought it below their dignity to proceed on to 'Arafat along with other pilgrims. The Qur'an strikes at the basis of their pride by telling them that they must seek Allah's pardon for this sin of theirs and proceed on to the place where all the pilgrims are required to proceed and stay and consider themselves at par with other Muslims without any distinction of race or social status. It has been said the Holy Qur'an:

Then press on from where the people press on, and seek forgiveness from Allah, verily Allah is All-forgiving and All-merciful. (2:199)

In the pre-Islamic days Hajj had lost its religious and spiritual significance. It was nothing short of a big fair or festival in which all categories of people participated in every kind of indecency, for instance, indulging in foul talk or foul pursuits, in wrangling and quarreling etc.. Islam ordained that Hajj, being a sublime act of devotion, should be performed

with a keen sense of piety and fear of Allah. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an:

“The pilgrimage is (to be performed in) the months well known, so whosoever undertakes the duty of pilgrimage in them, should not indulge in lewd talk, nor in ungodliness nor in wrangling during the pilgrimage and whatsoever good ye do Allah knows that.”  
(2:197)

There were two groups of people among the pilgrims: the one said those who returned from Mina performing the Hajj in the three days of Tashriq, following 'Id-ul-Adha committed a sin, the latter said that those who delayed their stay in Mina were sinful. The Holy Qur'an said:

“And remember Allah during the appointed number of days and whosoever hastens on in two days he is involved in no sin, and he who delays, there is no sin for him either; this is for him who is God fearing and fear Allah know (for certain) that verily unto Him you shall be gathered.” (2:203)

Some persons had innovated Hajj of silence. After assuming Daram they did not speak to anyone. 'Umar (Allah be pleased with him) met such a woman who was keeping silence. On questioning the cause of her silence he was told that she was in a state of Hajj of silence. He forbade her to do so saying: This is an act of ignorance.

Abu Hurairah (Allah be pleased with him) reported: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) found an old man walking between his two sons supported by them, whereupon Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: What is the matter with him? He (narrator) said: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) they are his sons and there is upon him the fulfillment of the vow (to walk on foot to the ka'bah) said: Ride, old man, for Allah is not in need of you and your vow.

'Uqba bin 'Amir reported: My sister took a vow that she would walk bare-foot to the House of Allah (Ka'bah). She asked me to inquire from Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about it and he said: She should walk on foot and ride also.

Abu Huraria (Allah be pleased with him) reported: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw a man driving sacrificial camel. He (the Holy Prophet) said: Ride on it. The man said: it is a sacrificial camel. The Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) said: Ride on it. And on the second or third time the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) added: woe to you.

When the Ansar returned after Hajj they did not enter the doors through which they went out for Hajj. The idea behind it was that they were not fit entrances for them being burdened with heavy sins. So they entered the houses from the back of the houses and thought it to be the act of great piety. The Qur'an points out their mistaken notion and says that it is through real piety and fear of Allah that a man becomes virtuous and devoted servant of Allah:

“And it is not virtue that you enter the houses from the fear but the virtue is of him who guards against evil. Hence enter the house from their from their doors and fear Allah so that you may prosper.” (2:189)

While performing the Tawaf (circumambulation) it was a practice that a person to show himself sinful and guilty, put a string in his nose, which was held and drawn by the other person. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw a person performing Tawaf in this way. He got his nose string cut.

Ibn'Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) reported: While the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was performing the Tawaf of the Ka'bah tied with a string or something else. So the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cut the string.

In the earlier days the Muslims were under the impression that since pilgrimage was an act of religious devotion, it was, therefore, not proper to do anything worldly during this sacred journey. The Qur'an removes this wrong notion from the minds by telling them that it is no sin if they do some trading during the Hajj season.

There is no fault on your part if you seek bounty from your Lord: (2:198)

There were two groups, those who used to refrain from Tawaf between Safa and Marwa in the pre-Islamic Period and those used to perform the Tawaf. The Ansar used to assume Ihram for worshipping an idol called Manat before they embraced Islam, and whoever assumed Ihram (for the idol) did not consider it right to perform the Tawaf between Safa and Marwa. When they embraced Islam, they asked the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) regarding it, saying: O Allah's Messenger! We used to refrain from Tawaf between Safa and Marwa. So Allah revealed:

Verily (the mountains) As-Safa and Al Marwa are among the symbols of Allah, and whoever performs the Hajj to the Ka'bah or performs Umra it is not harmful for him to perform the Tawaf between Safa and Marwa. (2:158) ●

## An Appeal Mixed with Worry

Sayyid Quth

The position of the attitude of the children of Israel towards Allah's Messenger sent to them. Moses (peace be on him), is given in this surah. Moses was their savior who led them out of Egypt towards the holy land Allah had assigned to them, The surah also exposes their attitude to the covenant they made with their Lord and how they violated it and were punished for that violation.

This is only one episode of the story of the children of Israel which is related in the Qur'an in extensive detail to serve several purposes. One purpose relates to the fact that the children of Israel were the first to confront the Islamic message with wicked designs, plots and open war in Madinah and the whole of Arabia. Their hostile attitude goes back to the very early days of the Islamic message. It was they who encouraged and nurtured hypocrisy and the hypocrites in Madinah, providing them with the means to scheme against Islam and Muslims. They also incite the polytheists to fight the Muslim community and gave them active support. It was they who started the war of false rumours against the Muslim community raising among the doubts and suspicion in the Muslim leadership and circulating distortions of the Islamic faith before they confronted the Muslim community in open warfare. It was necessary, therefore, to expose them to the Muslim community so that it knew its enemies, their nature, history, methods and means as well as the nature of the battle it had to fight against them.

Another purpose can be seen in the fact that the Israelites were followers of the last divine faith to be revealed before the final faith of Islam. They had a long history before Islam during which distortions crept into their faith and they repeatedly violated their agreement and covenant with Allah. The practical consequences of these violations and deviations were seen in their lives, their moral values and their traditions. As the Muslim nation is the heir to all divine messages and the custodian of the

monotheistic divine messages and the custodian of the monotheistic divine faith as a whole, it is necessary that it be made fully aware of the history of the Israelites with all its ups and downs. That gives the Muslim community an accurate knowledge of the way it should follow, what slips lie in it and the consequences as reflected in the Jews. This enables the Muslim community to add the experience of the Jews to the total sum of its own experience and to benefit by it in future. It can thus avoid the slips and deal effectively with deviation right at the start before it develops.

Yet another purpose relates to the fact over their long history, the experience of the Jews was highly varies. Allah is aware that with the passage of time, people may change, and certain generations may deviate from the right path. As the Muslim nation will continue until the end of life, it is bound to go through certain periods which are not dissimilar to what the Jews have gone through. Allah has, therefore, chosen to make available to the leaders of the Muslim community and its reformers in different generations, clear examples of what could befall nations so that they may be able to diagnose the disease of their particular generation and administer the proper cure. It is a fact of life that those who deviate after having known the truth are the most resistant to calls and appeals to follow right guidance. Those without any prior knowledge of the truth are more responsive because they find something new which appeals to them and helps them shake off the burden of ignorance. They are highly impressed by what makes its appeal to them for the first time. Those with an earlier experience require a much strenuous effort and a great deal of perseverance on the part of advocates of the divine faith to win them over.

There are other purposes for relating the story of the Jews in such detail, but it is sufficient to make only these brief references here and go back to our commentary.



“ So Moses said to his people : My people, remember the favour which Allah has bestowed upon you when he raised up prophets among you, made you kings and granted you what he has granted to no other Nation. My people, enter the holy land which Allah has assigned to you. Do not turn back, or you shall be ruined.”

The words of Moses (peace be on him) give us the impression that he may have worried lest his people disobey. He had tried them before on several occasions. He had led them out of Egypt, liberated them from subjugation with Allah's help who parted the sea for them and caused Pharaoh and his soldiers to drown. Nevertheless, when they came by a community engaged in pagan worship, they said to him;” Moses make a deity for us as those people have deities.” On another occasion, he had hardly left them for his appointment with his Lord, when the Samaritan used the jewellery stolen from Egyptian women to make them an effigy of the calf which made a lowing sound. They started to worship the calf and claimed that it was the god Moses went to meet. Another experience which Moses remembered well was when Allah made springs of water gush out for them in the desert and sent down to them Manna and quail, a very wholesome food to eat. Nevertheless, they wanted to have the types of food which were familiar to them in Egypt, the land where they were humiliated. They asked Moses to pray to Allah to bring forth for them herbs, cucumber, carrot, lentils and onion. They would not sacrifice their familiar food for a life of dignity and liberation and word for a noble code. He also tried them when he conveyed to them Allah's order to slaughter a cow, but they kept postponing the implementation of the order. When they finally slaughtered it. They did it most reluctantly.

When he returned from his appointment with his Lord carrying the tablets which outlined the covenant they should make with Allah, they refused to make that covenant and fulfill their pledges to their Lord. Despite what Allah had bestowed on them

and the forgiveness of their sins which he granted them, they did not give their pledges until they saw with their own eyes the mountains raised over their heads, and felt that it was about to fall over them.

Moses had tried them on several occasions and now they were close to the holy land which was their destination. Allah had promised them to be the rulers in this land and to raise up among them prophets so that they remain in Allah's care. Moses however was worried lest they should disobey. He therefore, coupled his last appeal with a reminder of the happiest memories, best incentives and strongest warnings. My people, remember the favors which Allah has bestowed upon you when he raised up prophets among you, made you kings and granted you what he granted to no other nation. My people, enter the holy land which Allah has assigned to you. Do not turn back, or you shall be ruined."

Allah's promise never fails He promises them here to raise up prophets among them and to make them kings. The fulfillment of this promise brought them what Allah granted to no other nation until that period in time. The holy land which they were approaching was assigned to them by Allah's promise which meant that they were certain to have it. They had already known from experience that Allah always fulfils His promises. Now, they were called upon to meet the conditions for yet another promise of His. To turn back was sure to bring them to ruin. But the Jews never change their characteristics of cowardice, arguments and breaching pledges were sure to surface. ● (Islamic Voice)

It is related on the authority of 'Aisha that she asked {the Prophet-blessings and peace be upon him}, "O Prophet of Allah! If I find the Night of Power (Lailatul Qadr), what should I pray for? He answered, "Say, O Allah! You are the Most Forgiving and you like to forgive. So forgive me."

# Islamic Finance Panacea for Global Crisis

Umer Chapra\*

The Islamic finance system, which introduces greater discipline into the economy and links credit expansion to the growth of the real economy, is capable of minimizing the severity and frequency of financial crisis, says Umer Chapra, a well-known Saudi economist and winner of the King Faisal International Prize for Islamic Studies, as reported by P.K. Abdul Ghafour in Arab News.

Islamic finance can also reduce the problem of subprime borrowers by providing them loans at affordable terms. This will save billions of dollars that are spent to bail out the rich bankers," said Chapra, who at present works as adviser at the Islamic Research and Training Institute of the Islamic Development Bank.

Chapra estimated the derivatives market at \$600 trillion, more than 10 times the size of the world economy.

" No wonder George Soros described derivatives as hydrogen bombs while Warren Buffett called them financial weapons of mass destruction," he pointed out. The derivatives include credit default swaps (CDS) worth \$54.6 trillion.

The Islamic economist described the present global financial crisis as the worst in four decades. "There is a lurking fear that this might be only the tip of the iceberg. A lot more may come if the crisis spreads further and leads to a failure of credit card institutions, corporations, and derivatives dealers," he warned.

Chapra urged Muslims to establish a genuine Islamic finance system with proper checks and controls, adding that such a move would encourage others to embrace it.

The Islamic system does not allow the creation of debt through direct lending and borrowing. It rather requires the creation of debt through the sale of lease of real assets by means of its sales- and lease-based modes of financing such as murabaha, ijara, salam, istisna and sukuk.

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\* The writer is the winner of king Faisal International Prize for Islamic Studies.

- Spelling out the regulatory regimes in the Islamic system, Chapra said: "The asset which is being sold or leased must be real, and not imaginary or notional; the seller must own and possess the goods being sold or leased; the transaction must be genuine with the full intention of giving and taking delivery; and the debt cannot be sold and thus the risk associated with it cannot be transferred to someone else."

He said the conditions set by the Islamic system would help eliminate most of speculative transactions. "Financing extended through the Islamic products can expand only in step with the rise of the real economy and thereby help curb excessive credit expansion," he said.

Chapra emphasized the significance of the condition that prevents a creditor from transferring the risk to someone else by selling the debt. "This will help eliminate a great deal of speculative and derivative transactions where there is no intention of giving or taking delivery. It will also help prevent an unnecessary explosion in the volume and value of transactions and the debt from rising far above the size of the real economy," he added.

It will also release a greater volume of financial resources for the real economic sectors and, thereby, help expand employment and self employment opportunities and the production of need fulfilling goods and services.

The discipline that Islam wishes to introduce in the financial system may not materialise unless the governments reduce their borrowing from the central bank to a level that is in harmony with the goal of price and financial stability, Chapra said.

In the Islamic system, credit is primarily for the purchase of real goods and services which the seller owns and possesses and the buyer wishes to take delivery. It also requires the creditor to bear the risk of default by prohibiting the sale of debt, thereby ensuring that he evaluates the risk more carefully," he explained.

He said excessive and imprudent lending by banks was the main cause of the current global crisis.

"There are three factors that make this possible: inadequate market discipline in the financial system resulting from the absence of profit and loss sharing (PLS); the mindboggling expansion in the size of derivatives, particularly CDSs; and too big to fail concept of banks who believe that the central bank would come for their rescues."

The false sense of immunity from losses introduces a fault line in the system as banks do not undertake a careful evaluation of their loan projects. This leads to an unhealthy expansion in the overall volume of credit, to excessive leverage, and to an unsustainable rise in asset prices, living beyond means, and speculative investment. Unwinding later on gives rise to steep decline in asset prices, and to financial fragility and debt crisis, particularly if there is overindulgences.

Chapra said the subprime mortgage crisis in the Us was also the result of excessive and imprudent lending. "Securitization or the originate-to-distribute model of financing has played a crucial role in this. Mortgage originators collateralized the debt by mixing prime and subprime debt. By selling the collateralized debt obligations(CODs), therefore, less incentive to undertake careful underwriting."

Consequently a number of banks have either failed or have had to be bailed out or nationalized by governments in the US, the UK, Europe and a number of other countries.

"This has created uncertainty in the market and led to a credit crunch, which has made it hard for even healthy banks to find financing," he said.

"When there is excessive and imprudent lending and lenders are not confident of repayment, there is an excessive urge for resorting to derivatives like CDOs to seek protection against. The buyer of the swap (creditor) pays a premium to the seller (a hedge fund) for compensation he will receive in case the debtor defaults," he added. ●

It is related on the authority of 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud that the Prophet of Allah-blessings and peace be upon him-used to say this supplication:

"O Allah! I seek of Your guidance, piety, chastity, and {my} independence of the creation."

*-Muslim*

The occupation is costing the US at least \$10 billion depreciation, \$67 billion replacement costs for equipment, and billions for medical care of wounded and veterans benefits. By the end of 2008, the supposed "cake walk" in Iraq will have cost US taxpayers \$1 trillion, a good part of its borrowed from Japan and China, making it America's second most expensive war in history.

Half the US Army is bogged down in Iraq. This war and Afghanistan have led the US ground and air forces "to the breaking point," in the words of senior American commanders. History shows that all occupation armies become brutalized, corrupted and demoralized.

At least 30,000 Iraqi prisoners are held by the US and routinely tortured or executed without trial. They should be considered political prisoners. Saddam Hussein's prisons held less inmates. The brutality of the US occupation of Iraq has enraged the Muslim world against America and, according to US intelligence agencies, has created whole new generation of anti-American militants.

The Bush administration's torrent of lies about Iraq and ongoing occupation are seen around the globe as crude imperialism worthy of the 19th-century British Raj or old Soviet Union. Sen. Obama was at least right in the debate when he noted that America's image is an important factor in national security. Today, America is hated around the globe, thank you George Bush and Dick Cheney.

Washington's current plans to continue ruling Iraq by means of a puppet government and mercenary army backed by US air power are an attempt to copy the way the British Empire ruled Iraq and exploited its oil. But once most of the US forces are with-Iraq may dissolve once again into violence and chaos, or complete its process of splintering into three mini-states, inviting intervention from its covetous neighbors. Iran has already become the dominant power in eastern Iraq, and Turkey, hungry for Iraq's oil, is watching menacingly.

I wish Obama had riposted: "Senator McCain, one more victory like this and America is ruined. You had better think about this as you and your neocon alter ego Joe Lieberman urge confrontation against Iran, Hezbollah, Pakistan, Taliban, al-Qaida, insubordinate Arabs, Russia and China." PS: And don't forget Venezuela, Cuba, Somalia, and Sudan. ●

# The fifth Pillar of Islam - Hajj

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Hajj is the culminating tenet of Islam. "The word Hajj means, literally, repairing to a place for the sake of visit (al-qasd liziyarah), and in the terminology of the Islamic Shariah, it implies repairing to Bait-Allah (the House of Allah) to observe the necessary devotions (iqamat-anli-nusuk) in the sacred places in the Holy Makkah." (Sirat-un-Nabi-vol-5 page-117)

Hajj is such a worship by which one exhibits one's servitude and slavery and shows humility, meekness' and condescension before Allah like that of a beggar stretching his begging bowl before a philanthropist.

It should be kept in mind that Hajj surpasses in merits and excellences as compared to other tenets of Islam. For sacrifice of body and sacrifice of wealth both are required in the trip of Hajj. Apart from it pilgrims (Hajees) get absorbed in prayer and worship till they return home from this auspicious journey. Hajj is obligatory once in his or her life-time, if he or she can afford to undertake a journey to Makkah" The Holy Quran says: "pilgrimage to the House (of Allah) is a duty men owe to God - those who can afford the journey." (111:97) Abdullah bin Omar narrates that a person came to the Apostle of Allah and asked: "what makes the Hajj obligatory?" "the wherewithal of Journey and the conveyance" replied the prophet. Hence if one does not perform Hajj despite one's means, is not a true Muslim but an imposter.

It is related by Caliph Ali that the Apostle of Allah said: "Any one whom Allah has given enough to perform the Hajj, and he, also, has a conveyance which can take him to the House of Allah, if he still fails to do so then it does not matter, whether he dies a Jew or a Christian and it is so because Allah has said: "pilgrimage to the House (of Allah) is a duty men owe to God those who can afford the journey" (Tirmizi).

Needless to add that the whole trip of Hajj is a paragon of devotion. It is celebrated in commemoration of the sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim and Hazrat Ismail. One may guess from the trip of Hajj that what does Almighty Allah ask from us? It tells us the importance and significance of obedience and submission. Allah was so pleased with the

deeds and doings of Hazrat Ibrahim and Hazrat Ismail that it was made obligatory for Muslims to remember the sacrifice by including it in the five fundamental tenets of Islam.

In Hajj, pilgrims exhibit complete submission and dedication to their Creator and Sustainer. After wearing Ihram (the unsewn towels wrapped round the body during Hajj) they surrender themselves on the threshold of Allah reciting the Talbia "*Allahumma labbaik; labbaik laa shreeka laka labbaik; innal-hamda wan nai mata lak wal mulk; laa shareek lak.* (O God! here I am! Here I am in Thy presence! Thou hast no partner! all praise is for Thee and from Thee are all blessings! To Thee alone belongs Power and Rule! Thou art without a partner!)

It should be borne in mind that the Hajj fosters unity, integrity, brotherhood, fraternity and equality. "Down to the ages" says professor Hike "this institution has continued to serve as the major unifying influence in Islam and the most effective common bond among the diverse believers. It renders almost every capable Moslem perforce a traveler for once in his life time. The socializing influence of such a gathering of the brotherhood of believers from the far quarters of the earth is hard to over estimate. It afforded opportunity for Negroes, Berbers - Chinese, Persians, Syrians, Turks - rich and poor, high and low to fraternize and meet together on the common ground of faith" (History of the Arabs p. 136)

We further comprehend the significance and importance of the Hajj through the Harvard Study. A study of Hajj pilgrims by Harvard Kennedy school in the US has found that the Hajj promotes tolerance among pilgrims and does not lead to an increase in negative attitude toward the west. The study - entitled "Estimating the Impact of the Hajj: Religion and Tolerance in Islam's Global Gathering" said that the annual pilgrimage develops a tolerant attitude among pilgrims toward other religions and cultures. Evidence suggests that the Hajj increase tolerance, which seems to apply not just within the Islamic world but also beyond it", adding that increased unity does not lead to antipathy toward non-Muslims.

Moreover the Hajj makes the pilgrims pure, sinless and spotless. The holy prophet says: "Whoever performs the Hajj and commits no lustful act during it nor disobeys God (in any other way) shall return from it as pure and sinless as he was at the time of his birth" It is related



by Abdullah bin Masud that the Apostle of Allah said: "perform the Hajj and Umra again and again for both, the Hajj and Umra, remove poverty and sins in the same way as the furnace removes the impurities of gold, silver, and iron and there is no lesser recompense on a pure and sincere Hajj than paradise". Narrated Abu Hurairah: the prophet Muhammad was asked, "which is the best deed?" He said: "To believe in Allah and His Apostle". He was then asked: "which is the next (in goodness)?" he said: "to participate in Jihad in Allah's cause" He was then asked: "which is the next?" he said, "To perform Hajj-Mabrur".

It is imperative that we must prepare for this pious journey and avail blessings of Allah from it. Besides we should do our best to gain the pleasure of God. It is the greatest phenomenon to attain nearness to God. It Keeps us away from obnoxious acts and unholy activities. The Hajj teaches us the same message and rejuvenate our faith and belief. May God give us strength to undertake this sacred journey. ●

## Return for Deeds

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (may Allah bless and greet him) said: "A person who calls people towards doing good deeds will get the same reward as those who follow him and do good; and nothing will be diminished from the requital of the latter. Similarly, those who call the people towards vice will have the same punishment as those who follow him without any diminution in the punishment of the perpetrators." (*Muslim*)

## Saffron has a go at history

Kushwant Singh

I wasn't aware that the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS had set up many schools across the country, known as Saraswati Shishu Mandirs and Vidya Bharati Schools. The number of teachers employed runs into thousands; the number of students into hundreds of thousands. They also have a publishing house to print their own text books. I was happy to learn this as our country needs more schools – the more the better – as well as more text-books. However, when I discovered what they teach in these schools, I was sorely disappointed. It is make-believe historical fiction to boost our morale and foster suspicion and hatred against Indian-born minorities who don't share the same kind of pride in our past, notably Muslims and Christians.

To start with, it is assumed that Bharat Varsha is co-terminous with Aryavarta: Dravidians, who were Indians before the Aryans came to inhabit the southern half of our country, are ignored. Their role model is Adolf Hitler who purged Aryan Germany of semitic races by gassing millions of Jews and Gypsies, while Germans of today regard Hitler as the devil-incarnate and are ashamed of him, RSS & Sena leaders hero-worship him.

Buddhism and its great propagator, Emperor Ashoka, who preached ahimsa (non-violence) were, according to them, unmitigated disasters as they robbed us of our martial qualities, made us cowardly and unable to resist marauding Muslim armies wielding swords in one hand and Koran in the other. They were, according to K.B.Hedgewar, founder of the RSS, "hissing Yavana snakes". A few examples from these textbooks are pertinent: Muslims' greatest wish to have a darshan of the black stone, shivalinga, installed in Mecca. The Qutub Minar of Delhi was built by Emperor Samudragupta and known as the Vishnu Stambha. (The fact that it is festooned with verses from the Koran is not mentioned). It is asserted that the Babri Masjid was never a Masjid because namaaz was never performed in it, (photographs of the building before wall facing Mecca). An outrageous statement was made by the present head of the RSS, K.S. Sudarshan, in November 2001 in which he dismissed eminent historians as 'anti-Hindu' Euro-Indians.

He claimed that "in ancient India, we knew about nuclear energy and sage Bharadwaja and Raja Bhoj not only described the construction of aeroplanes, but also discussed details like what types of aeroplanes would fly and at what height." It is not surprising that all this so-called history fabricated earlier was given respectability during the tenure of Murli Manohar Joshi as education minister in the Vajpayee-led BJP government. Joshiji also initiated astrology as a subject in universities. However, while his horoscope assured him victory, he lost the election to the Lok Sabha.

A significant outcome of the kind of history being taught in these schools is down-grading the role of Mahatma Gandhi in the freedom movement and exalting that of Veer Savarkar. Though Savarkar was acquitted on technical grounds of the charge of conspiracy to kill Gandhi, the Justice Kapur Commission later squarely implicated him as the man who inspired the foul deed. His portrait was installed in Parliament House during the rule of the BJP. Before you accuse me of anti-RSS and BJP bias, take a look at a booklet - RSS, School Texts and the Murder of Mahatma Gandhi (Sage). It is compiled by three distinguished professors of history at JNU (Aditya Mukherjee, Mridula Mukherjee and Sucheta Mahajan). The source of every quotation is given to prove its authenticity. The basic text is barely 80 pages.

Finally, ask yourself, is this kind of brain-washing of young minds and filling them with hate good for the country? It will turn our sweet dreams of a hate-free Hindustan into a nightmare of vicious civil strife. ●  
(Hindustan Times, 08-11-08)

Imran bin Husain relates, "The Prophet of Allah - blessings and peace be upon him - taught me this supplication: "O Allah! Put that in my heart which is good for me against the evil of my self {Nafs}.

-Tirmidhi

# The Making of a Terror Module

Sagnik Chowdhury  
Smita Nair

The story goes back to Nanded town, 650 km from Mumbai, where an explosion took place on the night of April 5, 2006, in the house of a retired PWD executive engineer. Laxman Gundayya Rajkondwar. Rajkondwar's son Naresh and a friend, Himanshu Panse, died on the spot. Four accomplices-Maroti Keshav Wagh, Yogesh Deshpande (alias Vidulkar) , Gururaj Jairam Tuptewar and Rahul Manohar Pande- were seriously injured.

The initial FIR stated that the cause was a lit cigarette accidentally falling on firecrackers by the police later said it was a pipe- bomb that exploded. Subsequent investigations revealed that the dead and the injured were workers of the Bajrang Dal, and that they had executed blasts in mosques at different places in central Maharashtra.

"We had collected undeniable evidence that showed that the men we had arrested were associated with the Bajrang Dal," says Additional Director General (Railways) K.P. Raghuvanshi, who was then the state ATS chief. Sixteen men were arrested. Laxman Rajkondwar was found to be an RSS activist.

According to the ATS chargesheet in the case, those involved in assembling the bomb at Nanded had executed three earlier blasts-at the Mohammadiya Masjid in Parbhani (November 2003), at the Quadriya Masjid in Jalna(August 2004) and at the Meraj-ul-Uloom Madrasa/Masjid in Purna, Parbhani district (August 2004).

The bomb being assembled in Nanded was to have been planted at a mosque in Aurangabad.

In the Parbhani case, a report by the ATS to the magistrate stated that the accused were 'kattar Hindutvavaadi' who recruited young Hindu men to support their cause by citing cow slaughter, attacks on Hindu temples and the murder of Kashmiri Hindu Pandits.

While trials in these blasts continued, extremist Hindus were once again arrested for terror earlier this year. On June 16, the ATS arrested Ramesh.

Hanumant Gadkari (50) and Mangesh Dinkar Nikam (34), both members of a Hindu revivalist organization called the Sanatan Sanstha and its associated organization, the Hindu Janjagruti Samiti, in connection with Janjagruti Samiti, in connection with crude bombs planted at performance venues in Vashi and Thane, on Mumbai's outskirts.

On September 29, the Malegaon and Modasa blasts took place, Investigation into these blasts have now thrown up unlikely names and unusual suspects-the sadhvi, a student group member and a retired army official.

The remand applications produced in court showing the arrests of Shivnarayansingh Kalsangram (36), Shyam Bhavarlal Sahu (42), and Sadhvi Pragya Thakur mention as evidence a blike and 400 minutes of recorded conversation between the Sadhvi and Sahu immediately after the Malegaon blast.

The link between Retired Army Major Ramesh Upadhyay and ABVP member Sameer Kulkarni is a pune-based group founded by Upadhyay, named Abhinav Bharat. Upadhyay is believed to have met the sadhvi and Kulkarni in a series of meetings, one of them the Bhonsale School.

While organizations like the Hindu Jagran Manch and the Sanatan Sanstha Have been propagating 'self-defence' to Hindus, officers say training in arms are common among some groups. ●

(The Indian Express, 02-11-08)

Aisha relates this supplication from the Prophet of Allah-blessings and peace be upon him:

"Lord! Grant to my self {Nafs} piety and make it virtuous. You are the best Purifier {from evils}. You {alone} are the Guardian and Lord of the Self."

-Ahmad

# Cost of Iraq War

Eric Margolis

Those Wall Street financial alchemists who turned garbage into gold must have helped Johan McCain prepare for his debate with Senator McCain's insistent claims that the US is winning the war in Iraq thanks to his "surge" strategy are the military-political equivalent of the junk securities that Wall Street's shady financiers have been selling around the globe.

McCain Successfully peddled this latest untruth about Iraq on Friday night with skill and verve. Sen. Barack Obama mostly let him get away with it. Obama should have skewered McCain over Iraq and all the lies he supported to ignite this unnecessary conflict. There is enough criminal behavior over the Iraq War to fill a phone book. Two out of three America's think it was a terrible mistake.

But Obama's gentle, professorial criticism of the Iraq war was tepid and ineffective, leaving McCain to capture the flag of patriotism with his reheated Cold War rhetoric.

Why didn't Obama tell Americans that the ill-begotten Iraq War has played a key role in the nation's current financial near-death experience?

Obama should also have riposted to McCain's bombast riposted over Georgia: "Senator McCain, are you ready to go to war with Russia over Georgia? That's where your plans could lead."

The two candidates did reasonably well in the debates, and both emerged looking presidential. But McCain seized the jingoistic high ground by using carefully selected slogans like "victory" and "free world," and lambasting America's favorite hobbyhorses, Iran's Ahmadinejad and Russia's Putin. The two vied over who could more fulsomely support Israel.

McCain's claims that the US is heading toward victory in Iraq thanks to his inspired military leadership immediately recalled the epic words of pyrrhus, King of Epirus. In 281 BC, after defeating a Roman army at Heraclea in an extremely bloody, hard-fought battle in which his forces suffered grave losses, Pyrrhus famously exclaimed, "one more such victory and we are ruined!"

The Red King of Epirus (modern Albania) might as well have been speaking of Iraq. Far from the victory described by McCain, the Roman historian Tacitus's words are appropriate: "they make a desert and call it peace."

That is precisely what the US has so far done in Iraq, a small, devastated nation of only 25 million. After five years of war, over four thousand American GI's are dead, and 30,000 seriously wounded (some figures say 75,000), many with incurable head injuries.

No one knows how many Iraqis have died, but estimates run as high as one million - and this does not include the 500,000 who died from hunger and

disease as a result of the draconian US-led embargo of Iraq and the destruction of its national water purification and sewage system by the US Air Force in 1991.

The "surge," and addition of over 30,000 US troops to the Iraq conflict, was not the primary cause of the sharp drop in violence there over the past 12 months, as McCain claims, though it did play a supporting role.

The real reason for the drop in violence and attacks on US occupation forces lies in three other areas. First, ethnic cleansing. The US occupation quietly abetted the ethnic cleansing. The US occupation quietly abetted the ethnic cleansing by Shia militias of millions of Sunni Iraqis. The US took yet another page from Israel's West Bank occupation copybook by segregating off entire neighborhoods of Iraqi cities with high, concrete walls, and conducting round-the-clock house search operations.

Today, between four and five million Iraqis are either refugees in neighboring nations or internally displaced, one of the world's biggest number of refugees. Most are Sunni Muslims. The United States is wholly responsible for this human disaster.

The US has been done what it vowed to oppose: the partition of Iraq into three weak parts: Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish. There are now three Iraqi de facto mini-states. Breaking up Iraq and US-approved ethnic cleansing by Shia death squads - just the type of criminal behavior the US condemned in Bosnia and Kosovo - has put the damper on the Sunni-Shia conflict. But it has left Iraq a ruined state, with the Sunni region a no-man's land, the Shia region dominated by Iran, and the Kurds under US and Israel tutelage.

Second, US occupation forces finally got smart and smart and realized it's cheaper to buy off your foes than try to kill them all. So the US now pays 80,000 Sunni gunmen, called Awakening Councils, to fight resistance forces. Attacks by al-Qaida fanatics in Iraq against fellow Sunnis opposing US occupation drove the more moderate resistance groups into the arms of the US.

But now, the US is handing control of these Sunni gunmen, which were patterned on death squads in El Salvador, over to Shia control. The US-armed Sunni militias who sought protection against Shia government force by siding with the Americans are now likely to become a major new problem.

Third, the firebrand Shia militia leader, Muktaba al-Sadr, whose ragtag Mehdi Army used to fight US forces, has gone to ground and ordered his gunmen to stack their arms. His volte-face reflects changes in internal Shia politics but also pressure from Iran which, attacked by the US, ordered Muktada to stop his attacks.

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