

# THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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# The Fragrance of East

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## The Quranic Dictum

**S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi**

The Qur'an lays stress on following the way of the prophets and asks the believers, time and again, to pattern their lives and conduct after the example set by the messengers of God.

"Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the Last Day, and remembereth Allah much."

It directs the Muslims to beseech God always to show them the right path.

"Show us the right path, The path of those whom Thou hast favoured;

Not (the Path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray."

This prayer which forms part of the service repeated several times a day, teaches man to seek the companionship of the prophets, their leaders and guides and God-loved souls. Whoever shall live up to this supplication by coming close to the appearance and behaviour of these pious souls shall undoubtedly be sanctified and redeemed by divine grace. ■

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## Wisdom of Qur'an

These two groups [the believers and the unbelievers] are in dispute about their Lord. As for those that disbelieve, garments of fire have been cut out for them; boiling water shall be poured down over their heads, causing (not only) their skins but all that is in their bellies as well to melt away. There shall be maces of iron to lash them. Whenever they try, in their anguish, to escape from Hell, they will be driven back into it, [and shall be told]: 'Do now taste the torment of burning fire.'

(Al-Qur'an – 22:19-22)

The groups that contend about God are many. Nevertheless, the present verse divides them into two broad categories. One consists of those who accept the teachings of the Prophets and adopt the right attitude in serving God. The other consists of those who do not accept the teachings of the Prophets, reject the truth, and embrace unbelief. The essence of this latter attitude remains one and the same no matter how numerous the disagreements among the exponents of such an attitude are, or the extent to which the different versions of unbelief vary from one to another.

Here, something which is inevitably bound to happen in the future has been described in the past tense. This in order to emphasise its inevitability; to give the impression as if it is something that has already taken place. As for 'garments made out of fire', this seems possibly to refer to the same thing mentioned in Surah Ibrahim (14:49-50). The guilty ones shall be 'secured in chains'. ■

## Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Abu Dharr reported Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) as saying that Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, said: "My servants, I have made oppression unlawful for Me and unlawful for you; so do not commit oppression against one another."

(Sahih Muslim)

This hadith forms part of a long Hadith-e-Qudsi narrated by Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him). Here Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, through His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) forbids believers to commit oppression against one another. To commit oppression against a fellow being is so heinous that Allah first made oppression unlawful for His Exalted Self and then prohibited His servants to commit it. This enhances the enormity of the act and seriousness of the commandment.

The verb zalama, from which the noun zulm is derived, generally means: he did wrong or acted wrongfully, injuriously or tyrannically. These translations are correct in their own way, but in the Qur'an, the word al-zulm signifies the putting of a thing in a place not its own, or putting it in a wrong place, or misplacing it; it may also mean transgressing the proper limit.

Thus, in the light of these meanings of the word zulm, as used in the hadith here, implies that Allah does no wrong; whatever He does is based on justice; even when He punishes His servants He does what is good for them. So far as oppression on the part of human beings is concerned, it means high-handedness against others. ■

## COMING OF THE PROPHET

In Islamic calender month of Rabi-ul-Awal has great significance. The last messenger of God, Prophet Mohammad (PBH) was born on the 12th day of this month in Mecca (Saudi Arabia).

The birth of Prophet Mohammad (PBH) was a prelude to great ideological revolution ahead. The coming of a baby was a matter of great joy in the family of Quraish, a prominent tribe of the society. In his boyhood days and thereafter Prophet Mohammad proved himself an honest, truth-speaking and trustworthy person. He was called 'Amin' (faithful) and people around loved him and held him in high esteem and regard.

An awful situation prevailed in that part of the world. There was no rule of law. Society indulged in hateful practices. Newly born female babies were buried alive. Different tribes fought with each other to gain supremacy. Murder and other heinous crimes were the order of the day. People worshiped self carved stone idols. Prophet Mohammad lost his father almost at his birth. His mother too passed away very early. His grand father who was almost of 100 years old brought him up under his supervision. Since he was the son of his youngest son, Abdullah, he loved him immensely.

Mohammad (PBH) as he grew up accompanied his uncle on trading journeys. This helped the lad to see the world around, the miseries, corruption, mistrust, rivalries among tribes pained him a lot.

There was no system of education in that dessert land so Prophet could not get any formal education. He could not read or write. But he was mentally alert and possessed high sense of intellect from the early age, he had been remarked as a thoughtful man. At the age of forty he went to a cave on a hill called 'Hira' for meditation. It was the month of Ramazan and he was deep in his thought when an angel came and bestowed him as Prophet of God. Angel asked him to say "Al-Iqra". From here starts the revelation of verses of the holy Quran. That by the unspeakably special favour of Heaven he had now found it all out; was in doubt and darkness no longer, but saw it all. That all these idols and Formulas were nothing, miserable bits of wood and stone, that there was one God in and over all; and we must leave all idols and look to Him. That God is great and that there is nothing else great. He is the Reality. Idols are not real. He is real. He made us at first, sustains us yet, we and all things are but the shadow of Him, a transitory garment veiling the Eternal splendour. 'Allah-o-Akbar', God is great and then also 'Islam' that we must submit to God. That our whole strength lies in submission to Him. We observe the birthday of the Prophet year after year to infuse the spirit of Islam and aware the young generation about the life and time of Prophet so that they may get the insight of Islam. ■

S.A.

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## The Obligation to Provide Moral Training

-S.Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

*O Believers! Guard yourselves and your family members against the Fire, of which the fuel is mankind and stones. Over it are angels, stern and strong. They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, and they do what they are commanded.*

(al- Tahrir 66:6)

A dire warning is delivered through this verse. Since man is apt to forget things, it would be in the fitness of things, for the above verse to be displayed in bold letters in mosques and other public places to serve as a reminder.

The verse addressed the believers, those who have already professed faith. That it is not directed at those who designate Muslims themselves is not a matter of chance. Rather, the focus of attention is on those who embrace faith. Yet they too are asked to guard themselves, their family members and those under their care against the Hellfire, of which men and stones are fuel.

This verse was addressed to the Muslims, known as the Prophet's Companions. Apart from these immediate addressees, it is directed at all those who call themselves Muslims until the Last Day. Yet the immediate

addressees were those who had pledged faith at the Prophet's hand. They enjoyed the privilege of being his Companions. Some were the fortunate ones who had pledged their fealty to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) under a tree at the pledge of Rigwan during the Hdaybiyyah Treaty. Regarding them the Qur'an declares: *Allah was assuredly well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you [O Prophet] under the tree. And He knew what was in their hearts. So He sent down on them tranquillity and rewarded them with the imminent victory.* (al-Fath 48:18)

Among those immediate addressees were those who had be told that Allah is pleased with them. Yet even such high-rankin Companions are warned in the verse to guard themselves. Also included among them are the ten fortunate Companions who had been given the glad tiding during their lifetimes of their entry into Paradise. Also included among them were those noble souls who had participated in the battles of Badr and Uhud.

It is pointless asking whether one would throw one's own family members into the Fire. The very thought of it is out of the question. Yet Allah tells

the believers to save themselves from Hellfire. No Companion had ever thought of consigning his children to fire, nor could they be mute spectators should any of their children leap into a fire. Actually they could not reconcile themselves to any situation which posed a threat to their families. Nonetheless, the believers are clearly asked to guard themselves and their family. This, then, was not a real life situation against which they had to be alert.

Rather, the thrust of the verse tells these believers to desist from any deed which could land them and their family members in Hellfire. They are unmistakably warned against Hell. It is natural for parents to defend their children. Accordingly, they are informed here of things which could drive them and their children into Hellfire. There are certain causes which lead to definite results. For example, inducing a poison or fatal substance into someone is bound to kill them, for the perpetrator opted for a method which definitely brings about death. Therefore, such an offender is treated as a killer, a murderer. Employing the same logic, this Qur'anic verse warns against such deeds which are destined to land man in Hellfire.

The situation prevailing today is one whereby we are guilty of driving our children to Hellfire. For there exist no arrangements for the religious education of our children. We have left

them to the mercy of the prevailing milieu, which is godless. The present educational system does not claim that it will impart such education as ensures their deliverance in the Hereafter. These schools do not prescribe the teachings of messengers. If our children are ignorant of divine guidance, their faith is in peril. They are destined to suffer in the Hereafter. Given this, it is hard to justify our attitude. How can we reconcile ourselves to the present situation? The present educational system, at least in India, is not secular; it has a particular goal of infusing Hindu mythology into the supple minds of children. In the British India, education was, no doubt, secular. The syllabus at that time contained inane stories of animals. Those who studied under that system will bear this out. The textbooks in British India did not however interfere with students' faith. They did not evoke holiness for certain creatures, nor did these ascribe divinity to anyone in particular. Children read stories about popular animals. In sum, the syllabus then did not have any bearing on faith.

Today it is an altogether different scenario. Present-day textbooks contain lessons and stories which tamper with children's faith. What is implicit in these is elaborated upon by teachers. Likewise, children participate in certain activities which run counter to the Islamic doctrine of pure, unadulterated monotheism.



If we enroll our children in a school and make no other arrangement for their religious education, we indirectly encourage our children to imbibe an un-Islamic worldview. If our children do not learn Urdu, cannot study religious texts and do not attend an Islamic educational institution in the evenings, we stand guilty of not guarding ourselves and our children against Hellfire. The verse in question here then is directly addressed to us all.

Man is apt to look for escape routes. However, we must realise that Allah is All-Knowing. Being man's Creator Allah is All-Aware. Man is also apt to suffer from the delusion that he does not need to make elaborate preparations for the Hereafter. For he may after all find some other way out. Or he may entertain some miraculous escape, or resort to bribery. Allah being All-Aware, especially of human nature, slams the door on all these, saying that His angels oversee Hell and that they are stern and strong. Thus man has no chance to escape.

No one can defend themselves or their family members in view of the presence of stern and strong angels. The Qur'an employs very strong expressions to describe these angels. Moreover, they are dutiful in the extreme. They do not disobey Allah even in the slightest.

The important point, therefore, is that we should arrange for the Islamic

education and moral training of our children. They should be instructed in matters of faith so that they can be saved from Hellfire. Such arrangements will keep them away from Allah's wrath and will help them lead a life in accordance with divine guidance. They will thus enjoy an enviable life and earn deliverance and success in the Next. ■

#### UN ALARMED BY RISE IN DISAPPEARANCES IN SYRIA

Syrians continue to fall victim to a callous indifference to human life and disregard for safety, exemplified by the increasing trend of abductions and enforced disappearances, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay warned on December 13. "In just the past few months, we have seen a significant and deeply alarming rise in abductions of human rights defenders, activists, journalists, religious figures and others by armed opposition groups, as well as the continuing arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances of individuals by government forces in Syria," Pillay said in a statement. She cited an incident on December 9 when five masked gunmen reportedly stormed into a joint office for two human rights and humanitarian NGOs abducting award-winning Syrian human rights defender Razan Zaitouneh along with her husband, Wa'el Hamada who is a prominent activist and former political prisoner, and two other colleagues, Nazem Hamadi and Samira Khalil. ■

## 780 languages in India

New Delhi: People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI) on Indian languages after Independence has notified in its survey as many as 780 languages in the country which proves that India, in the true sense of the word, is really a multi-lingual country. The PLSI, headed by Prof. G. N. Devy, UNESCO Adviser on diversity of languages, involved about 3000 researchers and was spread over every state and Union territory of India. The full report of PLSI will cover as many as 50 volumes to be published by Orient Black-Swan in English and many other Indian languages by many publishers of Indian languages. Among the languages included in this survey is 'Sign Language' also, which is the medium of communication for deaf people. Documents on this language (sign language) have been compiled by (Ms) Tanmay Bhattacharya, a teacher of Sign Languages in IGNOU who herself carried out researches on this language says that this is the communicative language of deaf people which may be useful for teachers and interpreters also. One of the objectives of this survey is to bring into public domain existence of many languages for common people and government authorities most of which are quite unknown to them, particularly the languages of the people of tribes and communities which are gradually disappearing such as nomadic people and those living in forests, hills, coastal areas, very small islands etc.

It was a laborious job, over about 14 years for Prof. Devy Who set up the Adivasi Academy in Gujarat and PLSI team took about 3.5 years to complete this survey. The survey cost about Rs 2 crores but surprisingly neither central nor any of the state governments rendered any financial assistance for this, though Jamshedji Tata Trust partly financed this project. First volume of this Survey has been presented to the President of India. According to Ms Nandini Rao, Director of Orient Black-Swan Publishing which will publish PLSI's survey reports, this is the second survey of this type in India, first one was carried out by the British government officials about 80 years ago. She said that 3 volumes, including the Sign Language, have been published and the remaining ones will be published in the next one year. ■

## The Department of Crime and Police

-Allama Shibli Nomani

So far as we have been able to inquire, 'Omar did not establish separate departments for the trial of criminal offences. Certain cases like those of adultery and theft were tried by the Qadis, while preliminary proceeding came within the jurisdiction of the police. The Department of Police was put on a permanent footing and was called *Ahdath* at the time, while a chief of the police was called *Sahib-ul-Ahdath*. When Qudamah b. Maz'un and Abu Huraira were appointed to Bahrain, the former was entrusted with the collection of revenues, while the latter was expressly vested with the powers of police. Necessary provision was made and officers were appointed at all places for carrying out the duties of vigilance, for example, the scrutiny of weights and measures, security of freedom of roads from obstruction by building houses thereupon, prevention of overloading of animals, prohibition of the public sale of liquor, etc., etc., but it is not clear whether vigilance formed a separate department or whether those duties were also entrusted to *Sahib-ul-Ahdath*. The *Kanz-ul-Ummal*, where it reproduces the report of Ibn S'ad that 'Omar appointed 'Abdullah b. 'Utbah to supervise the market, also states that the establishment of Jails by 'Omar was

the beginning of the vigilance department.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF JAILS

One of the innovations of 'Omar in connection with the police department was the establishment of jails for, before him there were no jails in Arabia, and this was one of the reasons why punishments were so severe. The first jail established by the Caliph was in the house of Safwan b. Umayyah which he purchased for four thousand dirhams and converted into a jail. Other jails were opened later in the districts. It appears from Baladhuri's statements that the jail of Kufah was built of reeds. Only criminal offenders were sent to jail at the time but later Qadi Shuraih put judgment debtors as well in jail.

On the establishment of jails, some changes were also made in punishments. For instance, Abu Mahjan Tahqfi was repeatedly punished for drinking wine and was at last sent to jail instead of being flogged.

Punishment by deportation was also an innovation of 'Omar. For instance, Abu Mahjan was awarded this punishment once and was deported to an Island. ■

(*Al-Farooq* - p, 257-258)

## The Message of Tauheed for the Entire Humanity

-S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

It was about two and a half or three millennium years before Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) that the very great and important ancestor of his family itself and the favourite Prophet of Allah Almighty, Hazrat Ibrahim (AS), had, having made enormous sacrifices, laid the foundation of the universal movement of *Tauheed*. The innate, unaffected disposition of Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) had comprehended *Tauheed* from the very childhood and had, having discarded the '*shirk*', started calling towards '*Tauheed*'. His anecdote has been described in the holy Quran itself:

(And assuredly We gave rectitude to Ibrahim aforetime, and him We had ever known. Recall when he said to his father and his people: what are these images which you are cleaving to? They said: we found our fathers their worshippers. He said: assuredly you, you and your fathers, have been in error manifest.)

(*Al-Anbiaa*: 51-54)

Thereafter such a benediction he had that plenty of Allah's Prophets kept being raised from amongst the descendants of his son, Hazrat Ishaque. They kept promoting and pushing this message forward. "Because of this very distinction Allah Almighty granted his line of descendants lofty position. But, later this line of descendants of Hazrat Ishaque (AS), which was used to be called 'Banu Israil', kept gradually deviating from the straight path.

Then, lastly, Allah Almighty had Muhammad (SAW), from amongst the descendants of another son of Hazrat

Ibrahim, Hazrat Ismail, raised as the universal Prophet. He told him categorically that the very path pursued by Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) was the path that was to be pursued by him. It was he amongst whose descendants Allah Almighty had raised Prophets and all of them had, in their respective times, called the people towards '*Tauheed*' and kept calling towards compliance with Allah Almighty's dictates as they were instructed and exhorted by Hazrat Ibrahim (AS). The holy Quran states:

(And Ibrahim enjoined the same to his sons and so did Yaqub also saying: O my sons: surely Allah has chosen for you the religion; so die not except you are Muslims.) (*Al-Baqra*: 132)

Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) had all his might and strength that he had at his disposal devoted to the propagation of this very message and to having that put into practice. He had, having suffered great hardships and making sacrifices, built anew the House of Allah on the preordained spot in Makkah Mokarramah in order to have the banner of *Tauheed* raised from there. There he got his first sucking babe, Hazrat Ismail, settled along with his mother. It was this very child of his, Hazrat Ismail, through whom the dissemination of '*Tauheed*' had taken place here. His descendants, getting cut off from each and every one, remained steadfast in worshipping the One Allah. They had taken the pledge that they would call the people towards '*Tauheed*' and tell them the truth.

This practice had consistently been pursued when a man from that place got

impressed, during a journey he had made of Iraq and Syria, by what he saw there of the idol worshipping. He brought the idol here with him. As a result thereof, the practice of idolatry got introduced here. Ultimately, once again Allah Almighty selected a peerless individual of this very clan for the revival of the Ibrahimite message and getting the world back to the same ideology and creed. It was he on whom He had the Prophecy culminated. He had his followers entrusted with the task of promoting, generation after generation, this mission of making mankind bound to worshipping the One God and comprehending that their whimsical and their-own-hand-made gods were spurious. They should have this creed inculcated in minds that the functions and operations of all the worlds was only in the Hands of Allah, the One. It is He who has created each and everyone; and, after having created them, has not left them loose. Instead, He has commanded them to be duty-bound to worship and obey Him. The entire creation has to follow His commands. Whosoever would refuse to obey His commands would have to be accountable in the Hereafter and would get punished.

In the days preceding the manifestation of the Prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the people of Makkah had gone far astray from their path in respect of '*Tauheed*'. It was direly needed to be rectified. This need was fulfilled by Allah by making Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) the Prophet. The primogenitor of the people of Makkah, Hazrat Ibrahim (AS), had already had this supplication made to Allah that the Prophet for the reform, edification and education of these people be sent from amongst these very people. Allah had already granted this supplication of his.

Then, having granted them a long term respite, He chose Muhammad (SAW) from amongst his descendants themselves. He also had this announcement made that after him there will be no other Prophet, nowhere and never at all. He, and he only, is the last Prophet and for all the people and for all times to come. Thus, the Prophecy conferred on Muhammad (SAW) was a sort of resumption of the self-same Prophecy that was conferred on his ancestral father, Hazrat Ibrahim (AS). And both of them were the followers of the same path.

In His Book that He sent down to His Prophet, Allah Almighty had the *Ayats* (verses) conveyed to him, gradually and as per the demands of the situations and requirements, through His angel. And, beside the guidance towards the Faith and deeds of righteousness, He had therein narrated, in very felicitous and impressive style, such events of the previous peoples and Prophets as would make it known in how many varied means and ways Allah Almighty's Wrath had descended on peoples because of their persistence on perpetrating acts of '*shirk*' and other sins.

Hence, if the similar conditions prevailed amidst the Arabs of Makkah and their accomplices from amongst the Arab tribes, Allah Almighty's Wrath, taking the form of Retribution, may descend on them, too. Hence, these people should learn their lessons from these events and remain mindful how much severe punishments were inflicted on previous peoples for their intransigence and irreligiousness. They should, therefore, comply with the Prophet's advice and get back to the right path, the path of truth. They should have their ways mended under the guidance of the Prophet, excellence of whose manners and morals are already well known to them. ■

## Man - Where He Stands

-S.M. Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi

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

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

freedom from different unwillingness; but they have increased, instead. Types of worries and anxieties have changed names and forms only.

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

Armed struggle, cheapness of human blood, violent actions are very common in the world. The hands of big power as well as small powers are covered with blood. An example of it is the flood of refugees, migrating from one country to another, is even increasing. There is an organization of the UNO to handle the problem, the number of staffers of this organizations is, now, equal to the entire population of the ancient world. Capable people,

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learned and genius people are not free in their countries. A great number of them compelled to migrate to other countries. Politicians, thinkers and exministers are afraid for their lives, and insecurity in their home country. The use of lethal weapons and killer gases has become common to main human beings and many large factories are manufacturing them. Attacks on weak people are common in present world. It is demonstrated equally in the political and social fields. Anyone who possesses a slight awareness of history will confirm that whatever means are used to obtain anything legal or illegal, were not known in the ancient world and the common folk are as helpless as they were in olden times.

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

The big powers infiltrate in another country under the pretext that the power balance is changing. And they exert great efforts in making others believe that, in case they go out and leave the country, it is certain to lose balance of power and it is also known that, their political gestures are full of political considerations and internal

trickery. That is the reason that, wherever their help or presence is badly needed, they do not go to, and where they are not needed, they go as undesired guest. An oppressor finds some excuse for doing oppression and injustice and calls his act of oppression, assistance and liberation. The oppressed one keep crying for being wronged and no one comes forward to redress his grievances.

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

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

become tools in hands of big world powers.

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

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

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

### **‘Neem Helps in Combating Cancer’**

Ram Avtar, a retired officer from NABARD, makes it a point to celebrate the first day of Chait as ‘Neem Day’. Avtar feels that plantation of more and more neem trees could change the life in the country. He gave a talk on neem trees and talked about its benefits.

Avtar said that there was no awareness about neem trees and that he wanted to use the occasion to tell everyone that neem trees should not be felled. He said that neem trees had hundred organic compounds which had been tested and which were extremely beneficial for animals and human beings. He added that several latest researchers had shown that neem was extremely good for fighting cancer.

“The latest research which we have carried out shows that it can fight cancer very well because it stops the joining of the cells and when the cells lose the ability to combine, cancer gets fettered”, said Avtar.

He said that neem could help in increasing productivity if used as a coating on the soil. “Chemical fertilizers are spoiling the soil but with the use of neem, the nitrogen quality release increases and the produce of farmers goes up. So much is being spent on agriculture but these things will make far-reaching changes in the lives of farmers”, he added.

Avtar said the latest research was the use of neem in pest control. “Neem has a lot of medicinal values and is beneficial in several ways. I always celebrate the first day of Chait as Neem Day so that I can spread awareness about it”, he added. ■

*(Pioneer, 12-4-2013)*



# Muslim Inventions That Shaped The Modern World

-Olivia Sterns (CNN)

London: Think of the origins of that staple of modern life, the cup of coffee, and Italy often springs to mind. But in fact, Yemen is where the ubiquitous brew has its true origins.

Along with the first university, and even the toothbrush, it is among surprising Muslim inventions that have shaped the world we live in today. The origins of these fundamental ideas and objects — the basis of everything from the bicycle to musical scales — are the focus of “1001 Inventions,” a book celebrating “the forgotten” history of 1,000 years of Muslim heritage.

“There’s a hole in our knowledge, we leap frog from the Renaissance to the Greeks,” professor Salim al-Hassani, Chairman of the Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation, and editor of the book told CNN.

“1001 Inventions” is now an exhibition at London’s Science Museum. Hassani hopes the exhibition will highlight the contributions of non-Western cultures — like the Muslim empire that once covered Spain and Portugal, Southern Italy and stretched as far as parts of China — to present day civilization. Here Hassani shares his top 10 outstanding Muslim inventions:

**1. Surgery:** Around the year 1,000, the celebrated doctor Al Zahrawi published a 1,500 page illustrated encyclopedia of

surgery that was used in Europe as a medical reference for the next 500 years. Among his many inventions, Zahrawi discovered the use of dissolving cat gut to stitch wounds — beforehand a second surgery had to be performed to remove sutures. He also reportedly performed the first caesarean operation and created the first pair of forceps.

**2. Coffee:** Now the Western world’s drink du jour, coffee was first brewed in Yemen around the 9th century. In its earliest days, coffee helped Sufis stay up during late nights of devotion. Later brought to Cairo by a group of students, the coffee buzz soon caught on around the empire. By the 13th century it reached Turkey, but not until the 16th century did the beans start boiling in Europe, brought to Italy by a Venetian trader.

**3. Flying machine:** “Abbas ibn Firnas was the first person to make a real attempt to construct a flying machine and fly,” said Hassani. In the 9th century he designed a winged apparatus, roughly resembling a bird costume. In his most famous trial near Cordoba in Spain, Firnas flew upward for a few moments, before falling to the ground and partially breaking his back. His designs would undoubtedly have been an inspiration for famed Italian artist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci’s hundreds of years later, said Hassani.

**4. University:** In 859 a young princess named Fatima al-Firhi founded the first

degree-granting university in Fez, Morocco. Her sister Miriam founded an adjacent mosque and together the complex became the al-Qarawiyyin Mosque and University. Still operating almost 1,200 years later, Hassani says he hopes the center will remind people that learning is at the core of the Islamic tradition and that the story of the al-Firhi sisters will inspire young Muslim women around the world today.

**5. Algebra:** The word algebra comes from the title of a Persian mathematician's famous 9th century treatise "Kitab al-Jabr Wa l-Mugabala" which translates roughly as "The Book of Reasoning and Balancing." Built on the roots of Greek and Hindu systems, the new algebraic order was a unifying system for rational numbers, irrational numbers and geometrical magnitudes. The same mathematician, Al-Khwarizmi, was also the first to introduce the concept of raising a number to a power.

**6. Optics:** "Many of the most important advances in the study of optics come from the Muslim world," says Hassani. Around the year 1000 Ibn al-Haitham proved that humans see objects by light reflecting off of them and entering the eye, dismissing Euclid and Ptolemy's theories that light was emitted from the eye itself. This great Muslim physicist also discovered the camera obscura phenomenon, which explains how the eye sees images upright due to the connection between the optic nerve and the brain.

**7. Music:** Muslim musicians have had a profound impact on Europe, dating back

to Charlemagne tried to compete with the music of Baghdad and Cordoba, according to Hassani. Among many instruments that arrived in Europe through the Middle East are the lute and the rahab, an ancestor of the violin. Modern musical scales are also said to derive from the Arabic alphabet.

**8. Toothbrush:** According to Hassani, the Prophet Mohammed popularized the use of the first toothbrush in around 600. Using a twig from the Meswak tree, he cleaned his teeth and freshened his breath. Substances similar to Meswak are used in modern toothpaste.

**9. The crank:** Many of the basics of modern automatics were first put to use in the Muslim world, including the revolutionary crank-connecting rod system. By converting rotary motion to linear motion, the crank enables the lifting of heavy objects with relative ease. This technology, discovered by Al-Jazari in the 12th century, exploded across the globe, leading to everything from the bicycle to the internal combustion engine.

**10. Hospitals:** "Hospitals as we know them today, with wards and teaching centers, come from 9th century Egypt," explained Hassani. The first such medical center was the Ahmad ibn Tulun Hospital, founded in 872 in Cairo. Tulun hospital provided free care for anyone who needed it — a policy based on the Muslim tradition of caring for all who are sick. From Cairo, such hospitals spread around the Muslim world. (edition.cnn.com) ♦

## **Pornography: No Gain, Only Pain**

**- Syed Kazim**

While the world continuous to progress technologically, faster than its growth in technology, it is worsening morally and spiritually. For some, pornography is a business, entertainment and pleasure and for others it is filth and a grave sin. But it goes without saying that pornography is one of the biggest immoral and indecent act on the face of the earth. Watching pornography has become so very popular that our politicians watch them during the assembly sessions. Pornography addicts have a more difficult time recovering from their addiction than cocaine addicts, since drug users can get the drug out of their system, but pornographic images stay in the brain for a very long time.

Pornography is a problem. It's a personal problem for many and a cultural problem for all. The shocking size of the pornography industry, its influence on the media and the acceleration of technology, paired with the accessibility and affordability of pornography all contribute to its increasing impact upon the culture.

Before social networking became popular, pornography was the number one activity on the web. Many people start watching porn before marriage to fulfil their sexual desires with an intention to stop it after marriage but they fail to do as they get highly addicted to it. The fantasy of porn has triggered an explosion of interesting pornography, especially on the internet. A study shows that 90% of pornography is

viewed through the Internet. Today pornography has become a part of the popular culture. Thanks to various forms of vulgar and indecent media who has played a significant role to promote it.

The entry of smartphone into the market has drastically contributed for the growth of pornography, where porn has become just a touch away. Pavan Duggal, a Supreme Court lawyer and cyber law expert, says smart technology devices are giving quicker and secretive access to pornography. The very private nature of the mobile phone, combined now with good bandwidth, allows people to surf the net far more than what PCs allowed, given that PCs tend to be family devices. No wonder that, according to some estimates, the consumption of pornographic videos and adult content has gone up by 30% in the last one year. Though no agency tracks the volume of porn consumption in India, cyber experts say it is seeing a phenomenal increase and that most porn sites are hit between 10 pm and 12 midnight.

In the recent Mumbai gang rape, the cops said that three accused used to watch porn regularly. After this incident, one of the officer's said, "Such movies are to a large extent responsible for these youngsters indulging in crime." It is a normal tendency of a human being to do what he sees.

Assam police chief J N Choudhury said that easy accessibility of

pornography is one of the reasons for increasing number of teenaged boys committing sexual crimes like rape. Reacting to a gang rape case in Guwahati, in which the accused are five minor boys, the DGP said, "The accessibility of pornography has changed the mind-set of many young boys. Earlier, there were more instances of women being raped by strangers but nowadays such crimes are often committed by a person or persons known to the victim."

The threat of pornography addiction is rising throughout the world. According to 'Family Safe Media', every second – \$3,075.64 is being spent on pornography, every second – 28,258 Internet users are viewing pornography, every second – 372 Internet users are typing adult search terms into search engines and every 39 minutes, a new pornographic video is being created in the United States. 4.2 million (12% of total websites) deal with pornography. The daily pornographic search requests is 68 million (25% of total search engine requests). Another study claimed that the porn industry generates \$13 million each year. 90% of 8 – 16 years olds have viewed pornography online and American children begin consuming hardcore pornography at an average age of 11. And the numbers are only increasing.

Peer pressure, easy availability through smart phones, explicit vulgar environment through movies and ads, high level of promotion and lack of moral sexual education from parents are a few important causes for the growth of pornography.

An individual gets into a lot of

problems when he starts watching pornography. He gets addicted to it and wants to watch more and more each time, loses money, time, memory, intelligence, reasoning, analyzing and thinking capacity, has an impact on the marital life as it demands unnatural sex from the partner, leads him to stress, sadness, depression, and loss of self-esteem, leads to bad relationship with the close relatives, makes the individual enter into the state of loneliness and boredom, takes him away from his ambitions and goals in life and the addiction, taken the individual to a state of tension that lead to the destruction of the soul, indulges into masturbation and perversion to sex leads the individual to commit sexual crime.

Pamela Paul, in her book *Pornified*, quoting the research of one psychologist who has researched pornography at Texas A&M that, "Softcore pornography has a very negative effect on men as well. The problem with softcore pornography is that its voyeurism teaches men to view women as objects rather than to be in relationships with women as human beings." Teaching which hampers the happy and peaceful living.

There exist a huge mafia behind the pornography industry. People indulge in this business for acting, marketing and selling because of the easy money it offers. Many students in UK indulge themselves in porn movies in order to pay their school/college fees. Promoting playboy T-shirts and stickers, promoting Sunny Leone in *Big Boss* are some of the contributing factors to the growth of pornography in India. Many organisations launch huge campaigns against smoking, gutka, female feticide and alcohol but the

number of organisation who have raised their voice against pornography is very few. It is an act which is committed in private thus many people do not reflect on the negative impact it is creating on the current generation.

In order to overcome the addiction of pornography and to avoid such unhealthy habits one should, 1. Have a good company, 2. Keep himself busy in healthy activities, 3. Get involved in social welfare activities, 4. Make productive use of the internet, 5. Try to get married as early as possible and 6. Last but not the least, increasing spirituality through becoming God conscious; remember the accountability in the hereafter. The Quran addresses this issue by instructing the men and women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts.

The Government should realize the damage which pornography is causing to the individuals and to the society at large and take steps to curb the act as it is killing the nation slowly and steadily. The Supreme Court recently said it wanted immediate steps to block websites with pornographic content, especially those featuring children. India has of late witnessed a rise in cybercrime but the government, despite having the new IT Act in place, has largely been ineffective in tackling the problem. The Information Technology ministry, which safeguards India's cyber space, has done little to take action against porn sites.

A petition filed by advocate Kamlesh Vaswani who pleaded that although watching obscene videos was not an offence, pornographic sites should be banned as they were one of the major causes behind crimes against women.

"The absence of Internet laws encourages people to watch porn videos and over 20 crore videos or clippings are freely available in the market, which have been directly downloaded from the Internet or copied from video CDs," the petition stated.

Some countries have already taken steps to curb this grave problem. More than 60,000 pornographic websites have been shut in China following a massive crackdown. National Office Against Pornographic and Illegal Publications said, nearly 1.785 million websites have been checked since the launch of the campaign in December 2009 and some 2,197 cases of dissemination of online pornography have been dealt with during the crackdown. Now it's high time, the Government of India takes step to stop this business which is spreading and growing rapidly in leaps and bounds.

The million dollar question which we need to ask our self is that, "We would not like to see our loved ones in a Porn film, then how can we see others?" Pornography is seen as a fundamentally destructive force to eradicate from one's life and society. The parents should take up this issue seriously and counsel their children on this aspect. The youth should understand this grave problems and dangers of addiction to pornography and abstain from it. As responsible citizens of the country, we need to address this issue at all levels and try our best to eradicate pornography from minds and our society which is only causing harm and doing no good. Men, who respect women, don't watch Porn. ■

*(Courtesy: Young Muslim Digest)*

## **57 Per cent Kids Under Five Years of Age Stunted: Report**

About 57 per cent children under five years of age are stunted and 42 per cent are underweight. Undernutrition is particularly serious among the young (particularly those in the age group of 15-19), those in the lower wealth category and among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These are the facts and figures of the malnutrition report which was released recently. It was prepared by CRY and VOP (Voice of People).

The report states that 74 per cent of children in the age group of 6-59 months are anaemic, 50 per cent of women in Uttar Pradesh are anaemic and 52 per cent of women who are pregnant and 58 percent of women who are breastfeeding are anaemic. One in three women (34 per cent) received no ante-natal care. Full immunization coverage of children in the age group of 12-13 months is lower (23 per cent) than any other state.

The study was conducted in 11 districts of Uttar Pradesh viz Sonebhadra, Mirzapur, Azamgarh, Kaushambi, Badaun, Ambedkarnagar, Varanasi, Chandauli, Barabanki, Shravasti and Mahoba. These districts were selected as organisations and members of the alliance are working directly with people and especially with their children in these districts.

Secondly some of these regions within these districts have a high rate of malnutrition among children, especially undernutrition.

Some of these areas are also known for low human development indicators in the state.

The compiled report studies data of 112 malnourished children and their families and 44 malnourished children from Mushahar, Baiga, Gond and other backward Muslim castes from 66 gram panchayats in 22 blocks of 10 districts of the state.

Vinika Karoli from VOP said that nearly 40-50 per cent of these families were taking loans for meeting their food expenses.

The study revealed that 80 per cent of these families did not possess job cards for utilising the facilities provided under the scheme.

Out of these 20 per cent who possessed jobcards, 39 percent had not got any work. Even those who had got work, 60 percent had not worked more than 20 days and out of these 17 percent had not got the cost of their labour.

Among the vulnerable communities 56 per cent had not got any work under MNREGA. As such the study revealed that an overwhelming majority i.e. above 80 per cent of these families are not able to get benefits through this employment - generating scheme.

"They are even taking loans to meet their food expenses. Under such circumstances it is imperative to understand whether proper food and other health facilities are being made available to the pregnant and lactating mothers during pre and post-pregnancy periods. This will help in highlighting the plight of women in their society and its resultant effect on malnutrition among them and their children," said Vinika Karoli.

The study revealed that out of the 112 families, 48 per cent did not receive proper nutrition during this period. "The condition of pregnant women becomes acute if they have to do hard physical labour without proper nutrition. The findings clearly indicate the precarious nature of pregnant women's nutritional status. This largely reflects the position of women in the society and their precarious economic condition further worsens their plight. In such a situation there is a high possibility of the child being born with malnutrition, especially to such mothers," she said. ■

*(Courtesy: Pioneer, 6-12-2013)*

## The Prophet Sent As A Mercy

-M. Fethullah Gulen

### THE DARK PERIOD OF IGNORANCE

Every period of history characterized by associating partners with Allah, whether by worshipping idols, deifying individuals, or attributing creativity to nature and material causes, is wholly dark. When belief in Allah's Unity is removed from people's hearts, their minds and souls darken, standards change, and things and the world are judged from false points of view. The Qur'an defines this moral, spiritual, social, and even economic and scientific state as ignorance (*jahiliyya*):

Or like darkness on a deep sea obscure, covered by a wave, above which is a wave, above which is a cloud. Layers of darkness one upon the other. When he holds out his hand, well-nigh he cannot see it. And he for whom Allah has assigned no light, for him there is no light (24:40).

I do not like describing falsehood. Besides, it is wrong to do so where truth may be described. In the words of Allah: *What is there, after truth, but misguidance?* (10:32). However, to clarify the subject, I will say a few words about the pre-Islamic era, known as the Age of Ignorance.

Prophet Muhammad appeared at a time when people had lost their knowledge of the true religion and had reverted to worshipping idols of stones, earth, bread, and even cheese. As stated in the Qur'an:

They were serving, apart from Allah, what hurts them not, neither profits them, and

they say: "These are our intercessors with Allah." (10:18)

They were so degraded in thought and morals that, as reported by Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, may Allah be pleased with him, they would cut their idols into pieces and eat them. The only excuse offered was that they were following in the steps of their forefathers:

When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah has sent down," they say: "No. We follow that wherein we found our fathers." (2:170)

They also buried their daughters alive:

When any of them is given the good tidings of a girl, his face is darkened and he chokes inwardly, as he hides himself from the people because of the evil of the good tidings that have been given to him, whether he shall preserve her in humiliation, or trample her into the dust. (16:58-59)

Women were despised, not only in pre-Islamic Arabia but also in the Roman and Sassanid lands. The Qur'an openly declares that men will be questioned concerning this: *"When the female infant, buried alive, is questioned—for what crime she was killed* (81:8-9).

After the Prophet had declared his mission, a Companion told him what he had done with his daughter:

O Messenger of Allah, I had a daughter. One day I told her mother to dress her, for I was taking her to her uncle. My poor wife knew what this meant, but could do nothing but obey and weep. She dressed the girl,

who was very happy that she was going to see her uncle. I took her near a well, and told her to look down into it. While she was looking into the well, I kicked her into it. While she was rolling down, she was shouting: "Daddy, Daddy!"

As he was recounting this, the Prophet sobbed as if he had lost one of his nearest kinsfolk.

Hearts had become hard. Every day a pit was dug in the desert for an innocent girl to be buried. Human beings were more brutal and cruel than hyenas. The powerful crushed the weak. Brutality was taken for humanity; cruelty received approval, the bloodthirsty were exalted, bloodshed was considered a virtue, and adultery and fornication were more common than legal marriage. The family structure had been destroyed.

This dark period was followed by Islam. In addition to eradicating all other evils, Allah declared in the Qur'an: *Do not slay your children because of the fear of poverty: We provide for you and for them* (6:151).

### **THE PROPHET'S LIFE BEFORE HIS PROPHETHOOD**

Prophet Muhammad was brought up in Allah's sight and care. His father 'Abd Allah died before he was born, which meant that he had to put all his trust in Allah and submit completely to Him. He visited his father's tomb in Madina years later, cried his heart out, and on his return said: "I wept for my father and entreated Allah to forgive him."

With the death of his father, Allah deprived him of all human support and directed him to the realization that there is no deity but Allah, Who has no partners.

His grandfather and uncle protected him to some extent, but he came to perceive that his real guardian was Allah. Behind every phenomenon and every cause and effect, he could discern the hand of the Single Creator of the universe and of causes. The Oneness of Allah would be manifested to him in the light of Divine Unity. That is, he would be tested in this world of wisdom, where material causes and means have a part in every attainment, and so would have to use necessary material causes and means and take all necessary measures to attain anything. He would have to depend wholly on his Lord and ask Him for any help, thereby demonstrating that only Allah creates the result and gives success.

As a result of his father's death, he came to be called the "Matchless Orphan Pearl." In reference to this, Allah addressed him years later:

Your Lord shall give you, and you shall be satisfied. Did He not find you an orphan and shelter you?... Did He not find you needy and suffice you? As for the orphan, do not oppress him, and as for the beggar, scold him not. (93:5-6,8-10)

The Matchless Orphan Pearl also lost his mother, Amina, at an early age. When she died in Abwa at age 25 or 26 on her way back from visiting her husband's tomb in Madina, he was only six years old. Thus, he learned the pain of having no father or mother. Indeed, he would learn and suffer everything, for he was sent to teach everything to humanity and to be an example in every respect.

His grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib, a respected Makkan elder, undertook his



protection. For this reason, Allah saved 'Abd al-Muttalib from misfortune. He embraced his beloved grandson, and always offered him the seat of honor in his house.

He felt that his grandson would grow up to save humanity. He was so noble and well-mannered that his grandfather anticipated his Prophethood. He was not the first of his forefathers to do so, however: Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy, who some consider a Prophet, predicted that the Last Messenger would be raised from his own progeny. He mentioned him by name:

*Suddenly Prophet Muhammad will appear;  
He will give tidings, and is truthful in his  
tidings.*

'Abd al-Muttalib, whom even the great army of Abrahah could not bring to tears, wept bitterly when he took to his deathbed. When his son Abu Talib asked what was wrong, he replied: "I'm weeping because I'll no longer be able to embrace Muhammad and added: "I'm afraid something might happen to my Matchless Pearl. I entrust him to you."

Abu Talib assumed his grandson's protection and, in return, his son 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, would be blessed with being the father of the Prophet's progeny. After Prophethood, the Messenger of Allah said to 'Ali: "Every other Prophet's progeny descended from himself, but my progeny will descend from you." 'Ali would be the father and the greatest saint until the Last Day, as the representative of the Prophet's sainthood. This is Abu Talib's reward for helping the Prophet.

Abu Talib protected his nephew

with great care. Ibn Ishaq, among other historians and biographers, relate that he took his nephew to Syria in a trade caravan when he was 10 or 12 years old. They stopped near Damascus and left him, as he was the youngest, to watch the caravan. From his nearby monastery, the Christian monk Bahira was observing the caravan. He was expecting the arrival of the Last Prophet, so he always studied people. He noticed that a cloud followed the caravan, stopping and starting when it did so, so that one of its members would be shaded. He thought: "This is a special characteristic of Prophets. The expected Prophet must be in that caravan."

When the caravan stopped near his monastery, Bahira invited its members over for a meal. Noticing the cloud still hovering over the caravan, he asked Abu Talib if someone had been left behind. Abu Talib answered that they had left a young boy to watch over their things. The monk asked them to fetch him. When the Prophet came, Bahira took Abu Talib to one side and asked him about his relationship with the boy. "He is my son," Abu Talib answered, but Bahira disputed this, saying: "He can't be your son. According to our books, his father must have died before his birth." Then he added: "Let me give you this advice. Take this boy back immediately. The Jews are envious. If they recognize him, they'll harm him." Abu Talib made an excuse to the other caravan members and returned to Makka with his nephew.

Allah's Messenger made a second journey when he was 25 years old, with the trade caravan of Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, a respected

widow he would later marry. On the journey, he encountered Bahira once more. The monk was very pleased with this second meeting, and told him: "You will be a Prophet, the Last Prophet. I wish that Allah would allow me to live to see you raised as a Prophet. I would follow you, carry your shoes and protect you against your enemies!"

A major event of the Prophet's early life was the *fijar* (sacrilegious) war that occurred during his later teens. This was the fourth war that violated the sanctity of the sacred months (Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Hijjah, Muharram, and Rajab) and the sacred territory of Makka. Its immediate cause was two men's jealousy and animosity. One belonged to the Banu Kinanah (a confederate of the Quraysh tribe) and the other to the Qays-'Aylan (an important clan of the Hawazin tribe). The future Prophet, who would end all injustice and lawlessness, helped his uncle Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, who represented Banu Hashim in the war, gather the arrows shot by the enemy.

Another important event was his presence at the meeting that resulted in the *hifl al-fudul* (the alliance of the virtuous). This league against injustice was sponsored mainly by the Banu Hashim and the Banu al-Muttalib tribes. It was formed to ensure that foreign merchants would no longer be deprived of their rights, as happened when the Qurayshi 'As ibn Wa'il usurped a Yemeni merchant's goods. The Yemeni appealed to the Qurayshi leaders for help, but they ignored him.

When the Banu Hashim, the Prophet's clan, heard of this, they decided

to form the *hifl al-fudul* and force the return of the merchant's money. They also took an oath that whenever someone in Makka, whether citizen or stranger, suffered an injustice, they would offer their support until justice was restored. The Prophet was so impressed with the noble objectives of this alliance that he would say long after: "I attended the conclusion of an agreement at 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'an's house. I would not exchange it for the best material gain. If someone appeals to it in Islam, I would respond."

The Prophet's childhood and youth were a prelude to his Prophethood. Besides his other exalted and laudable characteristics, everyone agreed upon his truthfulness and trustworthiness. He never lied, cheated, broke his word, or participated in pagan rituals. He was called "the Truthful, Trustworthy Man" even by his bitterest enemies. People would say:

If you have to travel and need someone to look after your wife, entrust her to Muhammad without hesitation, for he will not even glance at her face. If you want to entrust your wealth for safeguarding, entrust it to this trustworthy, honest man, for he will never touch it. If you look for someone who never tells a lie and never breaks his word, go directly to Muhammad because whatever he says is true.

Those who knew him from his childhood immediately believed in his Prophethood: Abu Bakr, 'Uthman, Talha, Zubayr, Abu Dharr, and Yasir, may Allah be pleased with them, among others. When 'Ammar told his father that he believed, the latter responded: "If Muhammad says that Allah is One, it is true. He never lies."

In the early days of his Prophethood, the Prophet once summoned the Qurayshis to the foot of Abu Qubays hill. He asked them: "Would you believe me if I told you an enemy host was waiting behind this hill to attack you?" Everyone answered that they would, even his uncle Abu Lahab, who would become his bitterest enemy.

When humanity was in dire need of someone to destroy unbelief and breathe new life into the world, Allah raised Prophet Muhammad to stop all forms of wickedness, In the words of Ahmad Shawkyy:

*The Sun of guidance was born,  
and the entire universe was illumined,  
A smile appeared on the lips of time,  
and his praises were sung.*

When he appeared on the horizon of Madina years later, the pure, innocent children of that illumined city would sing:

*The "full moon" rose upon us from the hills  
of Wada',*

*So it is incumbent upon us to thank Allah  
so long as*

*Those who pray and entreat Him continue  
to do so.*

## **THE AWAITED PROPHET**

The Torah and the Psalms

A Companion once asked Allah's Messenger to talk about himself He said: "I am the one for whose coming Abraham prayed and of whom Jesus gave glad tidings." This alludes to the following Qur'anic verses:

(Abraham prayed): "Our Lord, raise up in their midst a Messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Your signs, and teach them the Book and Wisdom, and

purify them. Verily you are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." (2: 129)

When Jesus, son of Mary, said: "O children of Israel! I am indeed a Messenger of Allah to you, confirming that which was [revealed] before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name is Ahmad [the Praised One]." (61:6)

The Messenger of Allah was expected. All preceding Prophets spoke of and predicted his coming. The Qur'an (3:81) specifically states that Allah made a covenant with the Prophets that they would believe in and help the Messenger who would come after them and confirm the Message that they brought?

The current versions of the Torah, the Gospel, and the Psalms still contain verses alluding to Prophet Muhammad, and even to his Companions. The late Husayn Jisri (1845-1909) found 114 such allusions and quoted them in his *Risalat al-Hamidiya*. We cite a few examples here, beginning with: *The Lord came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran* (Deuteronomy 33:2).

This refers to the Prophethood of Moses, Jesus, peace be upon them, and Muhammad respectively. Sinai is where Prophet Moses spoke to Allah and received the Torah. Seir, a place in Palestine, is where Prophet Jesus, peace be upon him, received Divine Revelation. Paran is where Allah manifested Himself to humanity for the last time through His Revelation to Prophet Muhammad.

Paran is a mountain range in Makka. It is mentioned in the Torah (Genesis 21:19-21) as the desert area

where Hagar was left by her husband Abraham, peace be upon him, to live with her son Ishmael, peace be upon him. The Zamzam well also is located there. As stated in the Qur'an (14:35-37), Abraham left Hagar and Ishmael in the valley of Makka, which was then an uninhabited place between the mountain ranges of Paran.

It is because of such explicit predictions in the Torah that the Jews were expecting the Last Prophet and knew that he would appear in Makka.

The verse of Deuteronomy, according to the Arabic version published in London (1944), continues: *He came with myriads of holy ones; in his right hand was an axe of fire with two edges.* This refers to the promised Prophet, who would have many Companions of the highest degree of sainthood and would be allowed—even ordered—to fight his enemies.

The following verses also promise his coming:

The Lord said to me [Moses]: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in My name, I will Myself call him to account." (Deuteronomy 18:17-19)

It is clear from these verses that a *Prophet like you among their brothers* means a Prophet from Ishmael's line, for Ishmael is the brother of Isaac, the forefather of the Children of Israel. The only Prophet who came after Moses, peace be upon him, and resembled him

in many ways (e.g., bringing a new law and waging war against his enemies) is Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an points to this: *We have sent to you a Messenger as a witness over you, even as we sent to Pharaoh a Messenger* (73: 15).

'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with him, an ascetic warned by the Prophet not to neglect sleeping with his wife and to fast only on alternate days. is reported to have said: "It was common knowledge to the communities of previous religions that Allah would send a Prophet to humanity as a bearer of good tidings and a warner. I personally read in the Torah these verses about him:

We have sent you, O Prophet, to humanity as a bearer of good tidings and a warner, and as a support and refuge for the common folk. You are My servant and Messenger. I have called you Mutawakkil [the one who puts his trust in God]. He is not one rude, repelling and angry, and shouting in the streets. He does not repel evil with evil; instead, he excuses and forgives. God will not make him die before He guides through him the deviatin nation to the right path by declaring there is no deity but God."

This report was confirmed by 'Abd Allah ibn Salam and Ka'b al-Akhbar, may Allah be pleased with them, the most learned scholars of the Jewish community at the time of the Prophet. They later converted to Islam.

We also read about the Prophet in the Psalms of David:

He will rule from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the Earth. The desert tribes will bow before him, and his enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarsish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the kings of Sheba and Seba will present

gifts to him. All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him, for he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy, and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight. Long may he live! May gold from Sheba be given to him. May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long. Let corn abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. May his name endure for ever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed. (Psalms 72:8-17)

### **The Gospels**

More emphatically and frequently than any other Prophet, Jesus, peace be upon him, gave good tidings of the Last Messenger. In the Gospel of John, Jesus promises his arrival using several names:

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. (John, 16: 7-8)

Here, Prophet Muhammad is referred to as the Paraclete. This Greek word means "the Distinguisher between Truth and Falsehood" and "one who is much praised." Christian interpreters have given it various meanings, such as Counselor (New International Version by International Bible Society, placed and distributed by Gideon's International), Helper (American Bible Society), or Comforter (The Company of the Holy Bible), and claim that it refers to the Holy Spirit. But they have

never been able to establish whether the Holy Spirit came down after Jesus, peace be upon him, and did what Jesus said it would do.

Jesus mentioned and predicted the Paraclete with other names but the same function, as seen below:

When Paraclete comes—the Spirit of truth—who comes from the Father, he will testify about me. (John 15:26)

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you. (John 16:12-14)

Who has come after Jesus, peace be upon him, other than Prophet Muhammad, as the Comforter who has comforted human beings against their fear of death, worries of the future, and spiritual ailments of all kinds? As the Helper, who has helped humanity attain real peace and happiness in both worlds? As the Spirit of truth, who testified to Jesus, brought glory to him by declaring his Prophethood against the Jews' denial and the Christians' false deification, and restoring his religion to its pristine purity through the Book revealed to him? As Spirit of truth, the dead hearts found life through the truth he brought. As Paraclete, he distinguished between Truth and Falsehood and strove for the guidance of people to the truth. He is the sun of the two worlds—this and the next—and the Messenger praised by both Allah and creation.

What shortcomings does Prophet Muhammad have in comparison to Moses

and Jesus and all other Prophets, peace be upon them, that those who believe in them persist in denying him?

Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, a great Sufi saint, expresses in the following stanza the good tidings of Prophet Muhammad found in the Gospel:

In the Gospel Mustafa is mentioned with his attributes. In him is the mystery of all the Prophets; he is the bringer of happiness. The Gospel mentions him with his external form and features, and also with his personal virtues and Prophetic qualities.

The Old and New Testaments, despite the questionable authenticity of their current versions, still contain references to the Last Prophet. We have quoted some of these. If, one day, the original copies or the least altered copies of the Torah and the Gospel are discovered, they will contain explicit references to the Last Messenger. This may be deduced from the Traditions that say Christianity will be purified of its borrowed elements.

### **Many Others Awaited the Prophet**

Owing to the numerous predictions of his coming, everyone was waiting for Prophet Muhammad. In that dark era of human history, humanity was waiting for one who would destroy unbelief and breathe new life into the world. Judaism and Christianity, being Allah-revealed religions in origin, had no more to offer. Those who had studied the old books without prejudice, especially the monk Bahira, were waiting for him to come.

Many Makkans also were waiting,

one of the foremost being Zayd ibn 'Amr, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab's uncle. He had rejected idolatry, led a pure life, and used to address people as follows: "There's no good in the idols you worship. I know of a religion that will soon be taught and spread. It will be proclaimed no later than a few years from now, but I don't know whether I'll live long enough to witness it."

According to 'Amr ibn Rabi'a, Zayd, may Allah be pleased with them, gave a detailed description of the expected Prophet:

I am expecting a Prophet who is about to come. He will appear among Ishmael's descendants and 'Abd al-Muttalib's grandsons. He is of middle height, neither too tall nor too short. His hair is neither curly nor straight. His name is Ahmad. His birthplace is Makka. His people will force him to leave Makka, and he will emigrate to Yathrib (Madina), where his religion will spread. I have traveled from place to place searching for Abraham's religion. However, all the Jewish and Christian scholars I spoke to advised me to wait for him. He is the Last Prophet; no Prophet will come after him. I may not live long enough to see him, but I have believed in him.

At the end of his introduction, Zayd told 'Amr ibn Rabi'a: "If you live long enough to see him, greet him for me." Years passed before Prophet Muhammad declared his Prophethood. 'Amr ibn Rabi'a, having declared his faith to the Prophet, explained what Zayd had told him and conveyed his greetings. The Prophet returned his greetings and added: "I saw Zayd in Paradise, trailing his robes."

Among those seeking the truth was Waraqa ibn Nawfal, a Christian scholar and paternal cousin of Khadija, may Allah

be pleased with her, the Prophet's wife. When the first Revelation came, Khadija told Waraqa what had happened. Waraqa replied: "Muhammad is a truthful man. What he saw is that which occurs at the beginning of Prophethood. The being who came to him is Gabriel, who also came to Moses and Jesus, peace be upon them. Muhammad will be a Prophet. If I live long enough to witness his declaration of Prophethood, I will believe in him and support him."

One of those seeking the Last Prophet was the Jew 'Abd Allah ibn Salam. The Jews had such confidence in him that they called him "the lord, son of a lord." His greatness equaled that of even the greatest Companions, such as Abu Bakr and 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with them, and Allah would consider his testimony to the Qur'an equal to the testimony of a people:

Say: "Have you considered? If it be from Allah, and you do not believe in it, and a witness from among the Children of Israel bears witness to its like, and believes, and you wax proud, Allah guides not the people of the evildoers." (46:10)

This great Companion describes how he found the Prophet:

When Allah's Messenger emigrated to Madina, I went to see him, as did everyone else. He was sitting amidst a group of people when I went in, and saying: "Give food to others and greet them." His speech was so sweet and his face so charming that I said to myself: "I swear by Allah that one with such a face cannot lie." Without delay I declared my belief in him.

The Jews and Christians of that time recognized Allah's Messenger. As

stated in the Qur'an, *They recognize him as they recognize their sons* (2:146). After his conversion, 'Umar asked 'Abd Allah ibn Salam, may Allah be pleased with him, if he had recognized Allah's Messenger. "I recognized him," Ibn Salam answered, and added: "I may doubt my children, my wife might have deceived me, but I have no doubt about Allah's Messenger being the Last Prophet."

Although the Jews and Christians recognized him, most envied him and, out of prejudice and envy, did not believe:

When there came to them a Book from Allah confirming what was with them—and they aforetime prayed for victory over the unbelievers—when there came to them what they recognized, they disbelieved in it; and the curse of Allah is on the unbelievers. (2:89)

After his conversion, 'Abd Allah ibn Salam said to Allah's Messenger: "O Messenger of Allah, hide me in a corner and then summon all the Jewish scholars in Madina to ask about me and my father. Their assessment will certainly be positive. Then let me come out to declare my conversion." Allah's Messenger accepted this suggestion.

When the Jewish scholars gathered, Allah's Messenger asked them what they thought of Ibn Salam and his father. All of them answered: "They are among our noblest and most learned people." Upon this, Allah's Messenger asked again: "How would you react if he affirms me?" They responded: "It is impossible that he will affirm you!" Ibn Salam then came out and declared his conversion, whereupon the Jewish

scholars immediately changed their attitude and retorted: "Ibn Salam is the most wicked among us, and the son of the most wicked.

Prophet Muhammad was one who had been sought for centuries. Salman al-Farisi, may Allah be pleased with him, was one of those seekers. Originally a Magian (a tire worshipper), he had left his native Persia due to his burning desire to find the eternal truth. Before embracing Islam, he worked for several Christian monks, the last of whom advised Salman on his deathbed:

Son, there is nobody left to whom I can commend you. But according to what we read in our books, the Last Prophet is about to appear. He will come with the pure creed of Abraham and will appear in the place to which Abraham emigrated. Nevertheless, he will emigrate to another place and settle there. There are explicit signs of his Prophethood. For example, he will not eat of charity but will accept gifts, and the seal of Prophethood will be between his shoulders.

Now, let Salman narrate the rest of his story:

I joined a caravan heading for the place mentioned by the late monk. When we arrived at Wadi al-Qura', they sold me to a Jew as a slave. When I saw gardens of date palms, I thought the Prophet would emigrate to this place. While I was working there, another Jew from the Banu Qurayza bought me and took me to Madina. I began working in his date-palm garden. There was no news yet of Allah's Messenger. However, one day I was harvesting dates when a cousin of my Jewish owner came up hurriedly. He said in great anger: "Damn it! The people are flocking to Quba. A man

from Makka, who claims Prophethood, has come. They think he's a real Prophet."

I began to tremble with excitement. I climbed down from the tree and asked: "What are you talking about?" My owner saw my excitement and slapped my face with the back of his hand, saying: "It doesn't concern you, mind your own business!"

On the same day, as the sun set, I went to him in Quba and gave him as alms the food I had brought with me. Allah's Messenger did not touch it, but said to those around him: "Help yourself to this." I told myself: "This is the first sign." On another occasion I gave him something as a gift. He accepted it and ate it with his Companions. "This is the second sign," I told myself.

Once, I attended the funeral for a deceased Companion. I came close to Allah's Messenger in the cemetery. After greeting him, I stood behind him in the hope of seeing the Seal of Prophethood. His shoulders were bare, and the seal was just as the monk had described it. I couldn't help kissing it in tears, after which I told him my story. He was very pleased and wanted his Companions to hear my story.

People who sincerely sought him found him. Whoever seeks him will find him, whereas those who remain obstinate and ruled by their evil-commanding selves will drown in unbelief and hypocrisy. Mughiraibn Shu'ba narrates:

One day I was with Abu Jahl in Makka. Allah's Messenger came over and invited us to accept Islam. Abu Jahl rebuked him, saying: "If you are doing this so that we will testify before Allah in the other world that you performed your mission of Prophethood, we will do it. Leave us then, O man, to ourselves!"; When Allah's Messenger left us, I asked Abu Jahl if he admitted Muhammad's Prophethood. He



said that he did, and then added: "I know he is truly a Prophet. Nevertheless, we compete with the Hashimites in everything. They have been boasting of providing food and water to the pilgrims. Now if they begin to boast of having a Prophet, I won't be able to endure it at all."

This is typical of the thoughts cherished by the Abu Jahls of the past and the present. Intelligent people who are not prejudiced and whose willpower is not paralyzed cannot help but believe in Islam and Allah's Messenger. In this respect, Allah says to His holy Messenger: *We know well that their talk grieves you; in truth they deny not you, but it is the signs of Allah that the evildoers condemn* (6: 33).

How could they accuse him of lying, for he was known by everybody as al-Amin (the truthful one)? The testimony of one of his bitterest enemies, 'Utba ibn Abi Rabi'a, proves that even his enemies admitted his truthfulness.

The Qurayshi leaders met to discuss how to prevent the spread of Islam. They sent 'Utba in the hope that he could persuade the Messenger to stop. He asked: "Who is better, O Muhammad, you or your father?" Allah's Messenger did not answer, probably because silence is the best answer to such an absurd question. 'Utba continued: "If your father was better than you, he cannot have been following the religion you are now preaching. If, by contrast, you are better than your father, then I am ready to listen to what you have to say."

Allah's Messenger inquired: "Is that all you intend to say?" 'Utba said that it was, and fell silent. Then, Allah's

Messenger knelt and began reciting from *Surat al-Fussilat*. By the time he reached: *But if they turn away then : I warn you of a thunderbolt [as fell in times past upon the tribes] of ;Ad and Thamud "* (41: 13), 'Utba was trembling as if caught by fever. He had to put his hand on the lips of Allah's Messenger and said: "Please stop, for the sake of Allah in whom you believe!" 'Utba returned home bewildered.

The Qurayshi leaders were waiting for him anxiously. Fearing that 'Utba might have accepted Islam, Abu Jahl knocked at his door and, when admitted, angered 'Utba by saying: "I heard Muhammad treated you very generously and feted you, and in return you believed in him. This is what the people are saying." Angrily, 'Utba replied:

You know I don't need to be feted by him. I am richer than all of you. But his words shook me. They weren't poetry, nor did they resemble those of a soothsayer. I don't know how I should respond. He's a truthful person. While I was listening to his recitation, I feared that what happened to 'Ad and Thamud might happen to us.

They had been expecting a Prophet for a long time. Everybody knew al-Amin's character, and no one had ever heard him lie. They were charmed by his personality and the Qur'an's eloquence, but yet could not overcome their pride and arrogance, or the envy and rivalry, and proclaim their belief. Nor could they bring their habits and lifestyle into accord with his Message. Is this not true of all those who, knowing the truth, persist in unbelief? ■

**Dear Brothers,**

***We pray that Allah may grant you a higher status  
in His estimation.***

Under the patronage of Maulana S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi, Rector Nadwatul Ulama, Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama is doing yeoman service in spreading the Islamic education. A large number of students are quenching the thirst of knowledge from this world renowned Islamic seminary.

With the increasing number of students the present space in the mosque of the institution falls short of requirement and poses discomfort in rains and hot summers. The management of Nadwatul Ulama has, therefore, decided for the extension of the mosque trusting Divine's help.

The project provides a basement under the present courtyard and thereafter constructing another floor over it. The estimated cost of this plan is one crore ninety four lakh fifty nine thousand and seven hundred rupees (1,94,59,700).

The fulfillment of this project depends on the generous contributions by philanthropists and well-wishers. In this respect your personal contribution and co-operation is immensely needed. Prophet (PBUH) has promised that ***"Whoever builds a mosque Allah provide a house for him in the paradise"***.

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## Service to Humanity

-Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

India is a pluralistic society, where people of different caste, creed, religion, language and culture live together as one nation. A vast country, India's main plank is its national integration: all initiatives in the country should, therefore, focus on this reality and be done irrespective of any parochial considerations. However, modern man has become selfish, with considerations for little else but self interest, within the ambit of which is included siblings and close relatives. He has scant consideration for his neighbours and others. A sincere act of piety surely means doing something worthwhile for humanity, irrespective of considerations of caste and creed. Self-interest should not be the motive for action. Service to mankind is service to God. Disruptive forces of casteism, communalism, inter-state differences and parochialism keep raising their heads time and again, and pose a threat to communal harmony.

The Islamic motto as enunciated by the Qur'an is -well-being in this world and well-being in the hereafter. The Holy Book also says: "Have you seen him who denies recompense? That is who repulses the orphan (harshly) and urges not the feeding of the poor" (107:1-3). On one occasion the Prophet said: "One who is proactive in the service of the widow and the poor is like one who is engaged in the service of God". Abu Hurayrah reported the Prophet as having said: "When a man dies, his deeds stand severed except in three cases : A running charity, knowledge

*which can be benefited from, and a progeny that supplicated for him."*

Mother Teresa is a great example of such sincere dedication and selfless service to the poor and down trodden. "Once, Mother Teresa, dreamt that she had died, and on reaching the gates of Heaven, St. Peter refused her entry, telling her that she should go back, as there were none poor in Heaven. Angrily she replied that she would instead fill Heaven with her own people." This incident depicts the love she felt for the countless dying lepers and orphans who were sheltered by her. It should also be kept in mind that nothing beneficial to society is possible without justice, peace and tranquility. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has rightly said, "Even so, there is something else which we consider is of greater importance. That is peace. Without peace all our dreams vanish and are reduced to ashes" (India's Foreign Policy). It would be worthwhile to quote here the following couplet by Julia A Carney:

- ♦ Little deeds of Kindness,
- ♦ Little words of love,
- ♦ Help to make the earth happy,
- ♦ Like the Heaven above.

In a nutshell, progress and prosperity, peace and harmony can be brought about by accomplishing social and voluntary service and by perpetuating national integration. We may all be political beings, and that is important. But let us not forget that we must also remain human beings. ♦

## Children of Myanmar

The 10-year-old struggles up the hill, carrying buckets filled with rocks. Though he tries to keep a brave face in front of his friends, his eyes brim with tears. Every inch of his body aches, he says, and he feels sick and dizzy from the weight.

"I hate it," whispers Anwar Sardad. He has to help support his family, but he wishes there was "a way other than working for the government construction agency." He adds, "I wouldn't have to live this life if I wasn't a Muslim."

The lives of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya children like Anwar are growing more hopeless in Myanmar, even as the predominantly Buddhist nation of 60 million wins praise for ending decades of dictatorship. The Muslim ethnic group has long suffered from discrimination that rights groups call among the worst in the world. But here in northern Rakhine state, home to 80% of the country's one million Rohingya, it is more difficult now for children to get adequate education, food or medical care than it had been in the days of the junta. They have few options beyond hard labor, for a dollar a day.

The Associated Press' visit to the area was a first for foreign reporters. Local officials responded with deep suspicion, bristling when Rohingya were interviewed. Police meetings were called, journalists were followed and people were intimidated after being interviewed, including children.

In a country torn by ethnic violence over the last fifteen months, this is the one region where Muslim mobs killed Buddhists, rather than the other way around. And although only ten of the 240 deaths occurred here, this is the only region where an entire population has been punished, through travel restrictions and other exclusionary policies.

Muslim schools known as *madrassas* have been shut down, leading to crowding in government schools, where Rohingya, who make up 90% of the population in this corner of the country, are taught by Buddhist teachers in a language many don't understand.

"Our teachers write a lot of things on the blackboard, but don't teach us how to read them," says 8-year-old Anwar Sjak. "It's very difficult to learn anything in this school."

There are only eleven government-appointed teachers — one for every 114 students. Few kids have chairs or desks. Many are coughing. Others talk among themselves, flipping through empty notebooks. They look up at newcomers with dazed stares.

"If I could be anything, I'd be doctor when I grow up," Anwar says. "Because whenever someone in my family gets sick and we go to the hospital, the staff never takes care of us. I feel so bad about that."

"They don't want to teach us," says Soyed Alum, a 25-year-old from the coastal village of Myinn Hlut who holds private classes in his home for Rohingya kids. "They call us 'kalar' (a derogatory word for Muslim). They say, 'You're not even citizens. . Why do you need an education?'"

Every year, thousands of Rohingya flee northern Rakhine and take perilous sea journeys in hopes of finding refuge in other countries. Because of the recent sectarian violence, in which 250,000 people, mostly Rohingya, were driven from their homes, right workers anticipate that one of the biggest exoduses ever will begin as soon as the monsoon season ends this month and seas in the region calm.

Some historians say Rohingyas have been in northern Rakhine for

centuries, though some living there now migrated from neighboring Bangladesh more recently. All are denied citizenship, rendering them stateless.

"They are all illegal," state advocate-general, Hla Thein, says flatly.

They remain barred from becoming citizens, or from working in civil-service jobs. No Rohingya birth certificates have been handed out since the mid-1990s. Rohingya children are "blacklisted" — denied even basic services — if their parents are not officially married or previously reached a two-child limit that is imposed exclusively on their ethnic group.

The official neglect commonly stretches into hatred.

A government minder assigned by the central government to facilitate the AP's trip asks why they are so eager to interview "dogs."

When young Rohingya girls peer into the open windows of the crew's vehicle, the minder bitterly mumbles crude sexual insults at them.

One thing the government does offer Rohingya kids is work, even if they are as young as 10. The Ministry of Construction, one of the bigger employers, offers them 1,000 kyat — a dollar — for eight hours of collecting and carrying rocks under the tropical sun.

Early in the morning, giant pickup trucks swing by villages to pick up dozens of sleepy-eyed boys — all of them Rohingya — and deliver them to riverbeds.

“See? They want to work,” says U Hla Moe, the administrator of Lay Maing.

From 8 A.M. until dusk, he works alongside his twin brother and five or six other boys from their village, scooping up river rocks and briskly carrying them up a hill. They look more like little men than boys: No smiles. Each step sturdy and determined. Not an ounce of energy wasted.

Anwar is exhausted but works fast. He even stops to help friends when they struggle with their buckets.

Though the work is grueling, it will help the children and their families eat. The region has some of the country’s highest chronic malnutrition rates, according to a report released last year by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department. That deprivation severely affects mental and physical development.

The work of humanitarian organizations has been greatly limited in northern Rakhine. A lack of vaccination coverage in the neglected area means they are exposed to almost

every preventable childhood disease, says Vickie Hawkins, the deputy head of mission in Myanmar for ‘Doctors Without Borders,’ which has worked in the area for fifteen years.

If Rohingya children get critically ill, they might never make it to a hospital, either because their families cannot afford bribes demanded at checkpoints or because of the Sittwe travel ban.

Mohamad Toyoob, a 10-year-old Rohingya, has received medical care, but not the surgery that doctors have recommended. He lifts up his shirt, pressing on the right side of his stomach, where he has felt sharp pain for the past three years. “I don’t know what’s wrong,” he says. “It feels like there is something inside.”

The doctors Mohamad saw at a limited-capacity public hospital are unable to perform the potentially life-saving surgery they recommended. To get it, he would have to go to Sittwe, which is off-limits, or Bangladesh. The latter is possible, if his family pays hefty bribes, but he may not be able to get back home.

To get the money, Mohamad works with other village kids at the riverbank, struggling to lift rocks. Sometimes it makes the pain worse. ■

*(Courtesy: Young Muslim Digest)*

# **Around the World**

## **SESRIC Launches the OIC Health Report 2013**

Jakarta: The OIC Health Report 2013, which has been prepared by SESRIC (Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries) was officially launched during the 4th Session of the Islamic Conference of Health Ministers (ICHM) which was convened in Jakarta, Indonesia, recently. The OIC Health Report 2013 provides a detailed analysis of the trends on major health indicators in the OIC Member Countries at the average OIC group level as well as at the individual country and OIC sub-regional levels. The report also highlights some health related issues in these countries such as health expenditures, the using of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in health sector "e-Health" and the OIC cooperation efforts and initiatives in the domain of health. The report emphasizes the significant improvement in health care coverage across OIC countries. However, it also underscores that, despite the positive trend, OIC member countries are still lagging behind the world and developing countries averages. The report shows that the health care coverage situation remained significantly poor in member countries located in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa region mainly due to the lack of adequate and sustainable financial resource, poor health infrastructure, insufficient trained health workforce and slow progress on health reforms. The report emphasizes that the nature and magnitude of these key challenges facing the health sector in many OIC member countries require a greater commitment from the governments to put health sector higher on their national development agendas and build health infrastructure and train workforce to meet the current and future demands for the health services. ♦

## **Dubai Cares, UNICEF, to Help Educate 7,000 Bosnian Children**

Abu Dhabi: A Dh6.25 million humanitarian scheme funded by Dubai Cares will help to put more than 7,000 Bosnian children into early education over two years, with greater inclusion for disabled children. Increasing Early Learning Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a partnership between the Dubai charity and the UN Children's Fund, seeks to provide a sustainable education framework for children aged between 4 and 6 in the country. Under the initiative, 400 children and 350 youngsters with learning delays or disabilities, aged between 4 and 5, now have access to pre-school education. A delegation from Dubai Cares travelled to Sarajevo and neighboring towns and villages to view the progress of the work. Under current standards in Bosnia, compulsory free education only begins once a child reaches 7, missing out on vital early development. "Education is one of the most powerful tools that can be utilized in the fight against poverty," said Tariq Al Gurg, chief executive of Dubai Cares. "Its significance is amplified in evolving nations like Bosnia and Herzegovina, where educated youth will have to play a key role in the prosperity and growth of this country. The latest statistics from UNICEF show that at most, only 15 per cent of the children across the country are enrolled in pre-school education, regarded as essential for the pupils' future education and employment. The figure drops to just 2 per cent for the country's marginalized and poorer Roma population, estimated to be as many as 100,000 people. The key objectives of the initiative are social inclusion, education for disabled children and more learning hours. ♦

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