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TRAGEDY AT MENA

During Hajj 7th to 12th Zil-hijj are crucial days when million of pilgrims gather together at particular places in Mecca. Hajj is the largest religious annual congregation in the world About two million Muslims from all parts of the world converge on the tiny town of Mecca. Here begins the first stage of Hajj when Muslims enter the Haram-e-Kabah and go round the holy Kabah which is called the "Twaaf", circumambulation of the house of God i.e kabah. Here one can see perfect discipline, humility and posture of subservience inspite of the fact that in a limited space thousands and thousands of devotees circumambulate around the kabah.

On 8th Zilhijj pilgrims reach Mena, a short distance away from Mecca. Form here they proceed to Arafat on 9th of Zilhijj in the morning. The whole day stay at Arafat is the essential and integral part of Hajj. Here Muslims spend their time in a vast field mostly in standing position throughout the day and engage themselves in supplication. Here one can see the devotion, meekness, modesty, servility and submissiveness, of the pilgrim. Saudi government makes elaborate arrangements for tentage and traffic movement. We have in the living memory never heard of any mismanagement or trouble either at Kabah or in Arafat. However, Mena where Hajis are required to spend three days, make sacrifice and perform the symbolic ritual of stoning the Jamrat (Replicas of devil) has become a place of tragedies. Here in 2002 CE about 14 people were trampled to death. In 2001, 35 pilgrims died in a stampede at the bridge leading to Jamrat and 119 were killed in a similar incident in 1998. This year also about 250 Hajis were crushed to death and equal number injured in a human tide during stoning rituals at the climax of the annual pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. Though in such a situation closer home, India's largest congregation is the Kumbh Mela in which number of pilgrims swell into the millions. Last year a stampede resulted in loss of lives when a handful of Sadhus did not abide by the prescribed route and timing. When such tragedies occur blame should

not be put on authorities alone but just as much blame falls on those who flout directions. Managing such large numbers is difficult in itself, but it is even harder when crowds are indisciplined.

On 10th Zil-hijj and upto 12th during their stay in Mena two important rites are performed: animal sacrifice and Rami (stoning of devil). While performing the Rami people often get impatient and that results in stampede. Managing such large numbers is difficult in itself, but it is even harder when crowds are indisciplined. To avoid tragedies on such pious occasions it would be best if pilgrims themselves displayed some civic sense. □

(S.A.)

MERCY FOR THE WORLDS

S.Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

"We sent thee not save as a mercy for the people."⁽¹⁾

I have just recited before you a verse from surah Anbiyah of the holy Quran. In it God addresses the holy Prophet to tell him that he had been sent as a mercy for the whole world and all the peoples that might be born on this planet. This was, indeed, a unique declaration, or, if I could say so, a revolutionary proclamation for the entire humanity. And, this was put about by God in a Scripture, which was destined to be read, after its revelation, in every age, time and clime, by billions of men in every nook and corner of the world. It was to have an unending line of exegetes, commentators and researchers who were to scan every word of it, evaluate its revelations and scrutinise the truth of its contents in the light of past and coming events. Whenever a man makes any statement or a writer comes out with a report in an article to be published in some newspaper or a journal, he has to think a hundred times lest he should be controverted by somebody. If he happens to make any unusual claim, he is extra-cautious for the fear that he might be challenged by another person or proved to be a fibster. As everyone of us knows, books last longer than the journal; they continue to be read for years together and some even live for hundreds of years. Thus, anyone putting forth an annunciation in a book has to be over-cautious; he has to make sure that the reaction of his readers is not adverse and that his claim is accepted. Now, you see, the Knower of all secrets has made this declaration in a book about which He Himself says:

“Falsehood cannot come at it from before it or behind it. (It is) a revelation from the Wise, the Owner of Praise.”⁽²⁾

His edict about this book runs:

“Lo! We, even We, reveal the Reminder, and Lo! We verily are its Guardian.”⁽³⁾

1-XXI : 107

2- XLI : 42

3- XV : 9

Since these declarations cover both time and space, they cannot be taken lightly.

The announcement made by God covers all the ages and the whole of human race that would make its debut in this world after the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) was announced: it encompasses all the periods of history, past and present, that this world may see after the blessed Prophet was raised as the harbinger of peace for all peoples.

This pronouncement does not exclude any corner of the world from its ambit. God did not proclaim Muhammad as a mercy for Arabia, for the East or for the continent of Asia alone. He has made an unequivocal declaration that His Prophet Muhammad is to be a peace unto the whole world till the end of time.

This unique proclamation was, in truth and reality, so marvelously wonderful, so extensive in its scope and so far-reaching in its effect, and so majestic in issuing the Divine command that all the philosophers, thinkers, writers, schoolmen or rather every man should have his eyes in amazement. Of a fact it, would have not at all been surprising if every man of learning had applied himself to explore the veracity of this unprecedented statement. You can scan the history of the world but you would not find such a lucid and clear-cut declaration, so confidently made in such an unconditional language, either in the historical records of the world religions or in the annals of reformatory and revolutionary movements; nay, not even in the histories of the nations and countries and civilisations, nor yet in the entire literature of the human race.

Judaism is one of the oldest world religions. Yet, the concept of God, the Lord of the entire universe and all the nations, is at best a notion of the Lord of the worlds is not to be found in most of the Old Testament books nor is it present in the hagiographical literature of the Hebrews. It would be futile to search for an announcement declaring any boby as the mercy for all nations in the biographies of the great Hebrew Prophets like Moses and Aaron, or, their Kings, such as, David and Solomon. Judaism had never been a world religion in the sense that it has never endeavored to spread the glad tidings of Divine mercy and blessings to the whole of humanity without any distinction of blood and race. It actually never did encourage the conversion

of non-Jewish people to Judaism.⁽¹⁾

Christianity is rightly noted for its evangelism and preaching the message of love and compassion to the whole of human race but we find Jesus Christ telling his disciples: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."⁽²⁾ Nobody has ever upheld the distinctions of blood and race in the healing of the sick but when Jesus Christ was asked to restore an afflicted child to health, his reply was: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs."⁽³⁾ When Jesus Christ sent forth his disciples to preach the Gospel he instructed them thus: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not ye: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."⁽⁴⁾

The attitude of other eastern religions like Hinduism is not different from that of Judaism or Christianity. As a matter of fact, we find it glorifying class distinctions and upholding a heartless caste system forbidding social intercourse between different sections of its own followers. In ancient India the untouchables were deprived of their human rights; they could neither acquire knowledge nor teach others, nor could they apply themselves to the noble pursuit of elevating themselves spiritually. Teaching of the Vedas and performance of the sacred rites before the deities, on their own behalf and on behalf of others, was a privilege enjoyed by the Brahmins alone.⁽⁵⁾ Vedas could be learnt only by the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas besides the Brahmins.⁽⁶⁾ The Sudras had but one duty, according to Manu, and that was to serve the three higher castes.⁽⁷⁾ The people of the ancient India had hardly any concept of the world beyond the Himalayas nor were they interested in the people and countries living outside India. It would be a labour in vain to make a search for any declaration of universal character in respect of any reformer, *Rishi* or a prophet, whose appearance in India cannot be ruled out according to the teachings of the Quran. For there was absolutely no concept of a Lord of the whole universe in the ancient India, it would rather be illogical to

1-For details see Islam versus Ahl Kitab, Past and Present by Maryam Jameelah (formerly Margret Marcus).

2-Mt : 15 : 24

3-Mt : 15-16

4-Mt : 10 : 15-16

5-Manu Shashtra, Chap. I, p.88.

6-Ibid.pp.88-89.

7- Maun Shashtra Chap I p.89.

expect any man of God having been recognised as a mercy for all the nations of the world.

We normally determine the worth and merit, significance and greatness of a thing by its quantity and quality. The first denotes the property of the thing to be judged by some sort of measure while the other reflects its spirit of excellence. The Writ of God revealed in the Quran about the holy Prophet of Islam covers both these aspects. The benefits and blessings this world has had through his prophethood and his teachings, and the lease of new life it got through him are not only manifold in number and excellent in character but also unique and unprecedented in the annals of the world. Mercy is a word commonly used by us for every act of compassion or kindness shown by one man to another, but it has various degrees determining the inter-se value and merit of different merciful acts. It is mercy if a traveller is told about the way he should go or is given some water to quench his thirst. If a man fans another fellow during the hot season, it is mercy; likewise, the affection of a father towards his son and the arrangements made by a man for the education of his ward, teaching of the students by a pedagogue, feeding of the poor and hungry and clothing of the naked are all different aspects of mercy. They all flow from the same noble desire to be compassionate and benevolent to others and each one of these acts deserves to be gratefully acknowledged by the beneficiary.

But, of all these manifestations of mercy, the greatest in merit would be the saving of a human life. Imagine a child on his death-bed, his unfortunate mother wailing and weeping for him and his helpless father running to the physicians who seems to have lost all hope of the child's recovery. Suddenly, a doctor arrives as an angel of mercy. He comforts the parents with his kind words and administers medicine to the ailing child who slowly regains his health and strength. This man would undoubtedly be revered as a God-send benefactor of the child and his parents. All other types of merciful acts I have enumerated earlier would fade into insignificance before this act of supreme mercy. This doctor would be hailed as a saviour not by the parents of the child alone, but by his whole family who would ever remember him as a benefactor. Take another example. A blind man is going on a path which has a deep ditch a few steps ahead.

The blind man is sure to fall into it and lose his life in a couple of seconds. Now, a man rushes up to catch hold of this poor blind man by his waist and thus saves his life. Or, suppose, there is a boy, the lonely child of his parents, being carried away by the swift current of a river. The boy is about to be submerged for ever but a courageous young man saves him by putting his own life at stake. The parents of this boy, nay, all those who have held him dear, would express their heartfelt gratitude to the brave man and remember his kindness throughout their lives.

There is, however, a still higher degree of mercy, and it consists of the saving of entire humanity from death and destruction. But, even the destruction of humanity can be of varying degrees. It may be a temporary debacle or total annihilation. The benevolence of the prophets of God is infinitely superior to the altruism of other human beings inasmuch as the former leave indelible imprints of their mercy to their fellow beings. Time, whose tooth gnaws away everything else, is like turbulent waves of the surging ocean which wipe out not only individuals but nations also. Many a nation, country and civilisation lies buried beneath its dark waters. Its treacherous waves are ever intent to devour an erring people and, therefore, the questions that has ever vexed the mind of human beings is how to cross this roaring sea to reach the shore of safety. Thus any body who could safely pilot the sinking ship of humanity would unquestionably, be the true benefactor of humanity. The entire progeny of Adam is, in very truth, indebted to those savants and servants of humanity who have bequeathed to it the treasures of knowledge and learning and made its life easier and richer. But, at a time when the life itself is in danger, only that man can be called a true saviour, who saves the life of man from the cruel jaws of death and complete annihilation.

What really was this circling wave of death and destruction threatening the existence of man? It was, as it has ever been, the ignorance of the Lord and Master of the world, of His nature and attributes, raising of the partakers of divinity with God, forgetfulness of man's obligations to his Creator, failings of human desire and betaking the path of wickedness and iniquity. For this is the time when man insists on his rights but forgets his obligations to others, closes his eyes towards the dignity of his fellow

beings to behave like a monster who is at perfect liberty to devour those who are weaker than him. When man forgets these fundamental facts, the prop which supports the structure of human life on earth, he becomes a wolf, a scorpion, and snake. Then one does not need panthers and lions for man excels every wild beast in ferocity, cruelty. He becomes a devil, the supreme spirit of evil, the enemy of God and man, a Satan incarnate in the human form. Then his fellow beings are consumed by the fire ignited by their own species. No outside agency is then needed for the extirpation of man from the face of the earth.

Such are the times when the infinite mercy of God is set afoot to succour suffering humanity from the evil of his own doings. For in such times of strain and stress only the teachers of humanity sent by God can rescue man from the destruction wrought by his own hands. Humanity is once more brought back to the path of virtue and goodness through the efforts of these guides of mankind. The world then becomes a place to live for and die for.

Before I tell you about the supreme benevolence of the prophets of God and the extensive scope of the task allotted to them, I would like to put before you a parable which alludes to the nature and significance of the prophet's word. Once a few students on a pleasure trip were enjoying boating in a river with an illiterate old oarsman. The boys, in a jovial mood, thought of making merry with the poor old man, and one of them came out with the question: "Uncle, have you received some education too?"

"No. I have not read anything," replied the boatman. "Plying of boats has been my ancestral profession and this is the only art I know to earn a living for my family."

Another boy promptly rejoined, "But you must have learnt some grammar or read a bit of literature, my dear?"

"It is for the first time," replied the boatman, "that I have heard of these things."

"But," insisted the third boy, "you must be knowing something of geometry for it is essential for propelling boats in a correct manner. Surely, you can't do without it."

The boys continued to make fun of the poor man by asking about each branch of arts and sciences they had been studying

at their college. Ultimately, they asked about the age of the boatman who informed them he had crossed his fortieth year. The boys lost no time in giving their verdict: "Alas! You have wasted half of your precious lifetime for nothing."

The old man had no explanation to offer, but, perhaps, providence intended to teach a lesson to these young chaps. The cool and clear water of the river had been flowing calmly so long but suddenly a violent wind arose, as if from nowhere, causing a stir in the river. The surging waves now threatened the safety of the boat which, it seemed would capsize in a few minutes. All the boys were scared to death, and it was now the turn of the boatman to pose a question to the boys about their knowledge and learning.

"Boys," addressed the boatman inviting their attention, have you also learnt swimming."

Terror stricken, all the boys replied a chorus, "No, we have not learnt it."

"Well", retorted the old man, "I had wasted only half of my life-time, but you have lost the whole of it. If this boat capsizes, all the science you have been talking about would go down to the bottom of the river with you. Would that you had learnt swimming also which would have saved your life as well your knowledge."

The record of human life on this earth tells us that whenever the ship of humanity has capsized owing to his own failings, hardly any thing was left to be salvaged. All the treasures of arts and learning, palatial buildings and developmental work, philosophy and literature, in short, all that had been produced by labour of men over thousands of years was lost with the debacle of an erring people. We also know that no civilisation has ever been destroyed because of the lack of poetic genius of its people, or the poor standard of literature it had produced, nor yet did it go down owing to inadequate number of its educational institutions, low standards of living or lack of capital for its trade and industry. The one cause of its collapse was that man himself wanted to commit suicide. You may believe it or not, but the history of by-gone civilisations tells us that there had been many an occasion when man had directed his efforts to destructive pursuits with such a zest and enthusiasm as if he were performing a construc-

tive task beneficial to humanity. At times he had joyfully insisted on going to the gallows as if he were tired of life and its extinction was a great blessing to be sought for at all costs.

The world was passing through a state of hysterics at the close of the sixth century of the Christian era. The entire human race had, it seems, taken a pledge to commit suicide. God has portrayed, in the Quran, the condition then obtaining in the world so graphically that no artist can draw such a true-to-life picture of the then situation.

“ And remember Allah’s favour unto you: how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became brothers by His grace; and (how) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it.”⁽¹⁾

If our historians and litterateurs have not been able to preserve the heart-rending account of the pagan past, they need not be blamed for it because limitations of human language and forms of expression would not have allowed them to capture in words the dreadful situation of the then world. The shape of things was so horrible, so critical that not the best word painter could have succeeded in its faithful depiction. How could have any historian drawn a picture of that horrible situation? Did the age of Ignorance mean merely moral corruption of the Arabs and a few other nations? Did it pose the problem of idolatry, depravity or decadence or else self-indulgence, inequity and exploitation of the poor or criminal behaviour of the then stronger nations? Was it simply the question of the burial of innocent now-born daughters by their heartless fathers? It was all this and much more. It was as though the mother earth wanted to swallow its entire progeny. I have no words to describe the terrifying conditions through which the whole world was passing in those days. Only those can understand it who had themselves lived in that horrible age.

It was thus not a problem confronting any single nation or country but the destiny of the whole human race was at stake. If any artist capable of converting a vision into eternity were to paint the portrait of a good-looking young man in a fine fettle, a soul shining through its crystal covering, and could somehow show him to be the vicegerent of God on earth who was ready to take a leap in the abyss of fire, then he would perhaps succeed in por-

traying the situation thus depicted in the Quran: “ (How) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, He did save you from it.” The holy prophet has also illustrated this critical situation through a simile. He says: “ The mission and guidance I have been vouchsafed to deliver to his world is like this: A man made a bonfire and when it illuminated the surroundings, insects began to jump over it. You also want to take a leap into the fire in a like manner but I am holding you by your waists to save you from falling into the eternal fire.”⁽¹⁾

The whole problem was how to lead the caravan of humanity to its safe destination. All the social and developmental endeavours, educational and literary efforts were possible only after man had been brought back to a normal, sensible frame of mind. There is the least doubt that the greatest good the prophets have done to the humanity consists of saving it from the unknown, imminent dangers threatening to destroy it for ever. No literature or philosophy, reformatory or constructive effort, not even the survival of man on this planet could have been possible without the merciful endeavours of the prophets of God. But, so ungrateful is man that he has announced with the flourish of trumpets, time and again, that the prophets of God had had their time, and that the world no longer needed them. Its seers and guides have repeatedly declared that the prophets had nothing new to offer, no benefits to confer on humanity. Man has, in this way, really deposed over and over again against his own existence in this world.

When any civilisation becomes over-sophisticated it closes its eyes to the ethical precepts. Man forgets everything save the satisfaction of his desires and replaces his loving, merciful heart by a selfish and ferocious disposition. His covetous greed takes the shape of an aching void which can never be filled in. This is the time when man becomes mad after the world and all that it stands for and, then, providence moves to chasten him and give him his deserts. Poet of the east has given expression to the same truth in one his verses:

Fever of lunacy then overtakes the kings.

Ferule of God are all, Timur and Chinghez.

You can replace the word, ‘kings’ and ‘kingship’ by

1-Mishkat, Bukhari.

civilisation for the insanity of civilisation is nowadays much more dangerous and wider in scope than the madness of the kings of old. A single lunatic can make a hell of the life of all the people around him but, one can very well imagine, what would happen if the whole people were to lose their haead.

During the era we speak of as the Age of Ignorance the entire human race had become so depraved, so cruel-hearted that it took pleasure in the suffering of man. This is not poetry but supported by hard facts of history: man had turned a demon who was most enthusiastic to witness the death and suffering of his own species. He prized the spectacle of the pangs of death suffered by human beings more than the pleasure he derived from merry-making, eating and drinking.

Gladiatorial sports involving combats between men and wild beasts under the Romans displayed more vividly than any other crime against humanity, the abyss for human nature to sink. But this was not an enormity that had captured the imagination of few guilty conscience. Writing about the immense popularity of these shows Lecky says in his *History of European Moral* that the magnificent circus, the gorgeous dresses of the assembled Court, the contagion of a passionate enthusiasm thrilling almost visibly through the mighty throng, the breathless silence of expectation, the wild cheers bursting simultaneously from eighty thousand tongues, and echoing to the farthest outskirts of the city, the rapid alternation of the fray, the deeds of splendid courage that were manifested were all fitted to entrance the imagination,⁽¹⁾ The interest and enthusiasm that attended these games of in-coceivable atrocity was so intense that special laws were found necessary, and sometimes insufficient to check them.

Thus, the beast in man had taken hold of him during the Age Of Ignorance. He had, by his deeds, furnished the proof that he had forfeited the right to live in this world, or, rather, he had himself lost every desire to remain in this world any more. Yet, his Lord and Master, the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful had decided otherwise. He wanted to save the world and the progeny of Adam from death and destruction through a Messenger who was told that:

“ And (O Mohammad) we sent thee not save as a mercy

¹-W.E.H.Lecky; *History of European Morals*, Vol. I,p.119.

for the people.”

It is plain as day that the entire duration of the world's existence since the debut of the holy prophet of Islam stems from his merciful deeds. First of all he removed Sword of Damocles hanging over the head of humanity by giving it a new ideal to live for and a new zest and confidence to work for it. A new age of culture and civilization, arts and learning, material and spiritual progress__ a new brave world__ came into existence through his efforts.

The first and foremost service that he rendered to the humanity consisted of the faith in the Oneness of God. No other creed more revolutionary, more life-giving and more profitable could have been vouchsafed to the humanity. Man had been proud and presumptuous, boastful of his creations like philosophy and poetry and the art of government; he took pride in enslaving other countries and nations; often arrogated himself even to the position of God; but he also demeaned himself by bowing his head before inanimate, lifeless objects, things of his own creation and the mountains, rivers, trees and animals, and harboured credulous beliefs and irrational fear of the demons and devils. He spent his life in the fear of the unknown and the hope from non-existent power which could not but foster mental confusion, cowardice, doubtfulness and indecision in him. The prophet of Islam made him self-reliant, courageous, rational and undoubting by removing the fear of everything else save that of his real master and the Lord. It was because of him that man came to recognise his Creator as the Supreme Power, the Enricher and Destroyer. This new discovery meant a world of change for him as he cut himself adrift from all superstitious beliefs, irrational fears, dubiousness and misgivings. He could now see the unity of cause in the manifoldness of phenomena, was reassured of his pivotal position in the scheme of creation, became aware of his worth and dignity, in short, his acceptance of the serfdom of the One and only God made him the master of every other created being and object. It was, thus, for the first time that man became aware of the exalted position allotted to him by God.

Unity of Godhead came to be recognised, thanks to the last Prophet, as the guiding principle for all school of thought, philosophies and creeds. Even polytheistic religions were so

powerfully influenced by it that their votaries began to fight shy of their creeds and started putting up constructions to explain away their rites and observances demanding devotion to gods and demi-gods. The heathen belief in the worship of numerous deities began to suffer from a sense of inferiority from which it has still not recovered. This was the greatest gift bestowed on humanity by the holy prophet.

The second great favour conferred by the Messenger of God on human beings was the concept of equality and brotherhood of mankind. The world before him was divided by manifold divisions of castes and creeds, tribes and nations, some claiming ranks of nobility for themselves and condemning others to the position of serfs and chattels. It was for the first time that the world heard the revolutionary message of human equality from the prophet of Islam.

“ O Mankind, your God is one and you have but one father. You are all progeny of Adam, and Adam was made of clay. Lo! The noblest among you, in the sight of God, is the best in conduct. No Arab has any preference over non-Arab save his piety.” ⁽¹⁾

The prophet made this declaration on the occasion of his last Haj before a congregation of one lakh and twenty four thousand persons. His announcement put the seal on the twin principles of the Unity of God and the Unity of mankind. These are the two natural foundations for raising any edifice of peace and progress, friendship and cooperation between different peoples and nations. They create a twin relationship between human beings__ that of One Lord and one father for all of them. Oneness of God is the spiritual principle of human equality just as common lineage of the high and the low, the white and the coloured places them on the same plane of humanity.

The world was not in a frame of mind to give ear to the message of equality of human beings when it was first announced by the prophet of Islam. It was then a radical call, making a clean sweep of the then social relationships and economic and political orders. So striking and revolutionary was this call that it had sent the world into jitters. Today we find the principle of human equality enshrined in the constitutions of different countries and being

1-Kinz-ul-Anwar.

proclaimed from the forum of the United Nations Organisation in the shape of the Charter of Human Rights but, it was all due to the pioneering efforts of the followers of Muhammad, Muslim missionaries and reformers, who made indefatigable efforts to establish a truly egalitarian Muslim society. It was this model established through their toil and tears that later on came to be accepted as the standard for human existence in this world. There was a time when numerous clans and families claimed their descent from the sun or moon. Quran quotes the belief then held by the Jews and the Christians in these words: "The Jews and the Christians say : We are the children of God and those whom He loves."⁽¹⁾ The Pharaohs of Egypt claimed themselves to be the incarnation of Sun-god while India had several ruling families which arrogated themselves as the progeny of sun and moon. The Emperors of Iran called themselves Kasra or Chosroes which meant that Divine blood flowed in their veins. The last Iranian Emperor was known as Yazdgard chiefly owing to the Divine respects paid to him by his subjects.

The Chinese rulers deemed themselves to be the sons of Heaven. They believed that the Heaven was their god, who, with his spouse, the, goddess earth, had given birth to the human beings and P'au Ku, the Chinese Emperor, was the first-born son of Heaven enjoying supernatural powers. The Arabs were so proud of their language that every other nation besides their own was an *Ajami* or dumb to them. likewise, the Quraish of Mecca being extremely conscious of maintaining their superiority, claimed a position of privilege even in the performance of Haj. This was the shape of things, all over the world, when the Quran heralded that all human beings were equal.

"O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is knower, Aware."⁽²⁾

In another Surah, which is the opening chapter of the Quran, it was declared that

"Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds."⁽³⁾

The third great gift and a boon to the humanity bestowed

1-V : 18.

2-XLIX : 13.

3-I : 1.

by the prophet of Islam is the Islamic concept of human dignity. During the age of Darkness when Islam made its appearance none was so ignoble and humiliated as man. Without any worth, he had absolutely no sense of human dignity. Oftentimes trees and animals regarded as sacred owing to religious beliefs or traditions, enjoyed a more coveted place than man himself. Human sacrifices at the altar of deities were a common spectacle. It was solely due to Muhammad, the Prophet, that man came to appreciate the fact that human beings, the glorious creation of God, were entitled to much more loving regard, respect and honour than any other creature. The rank holy prophet accorded to man was next only to God, for God had Himself heralded the purpose of man's creation in these words of lasting beauty—

“He it is who created for you all that is in the earth.”⁽¹⁾

Man was declared as the best of creations, the ruler of the world and all that exists in it.

“Verily We have honoured the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good thing for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment.”⁽²⁾

Man had been accustomed to associate nobility with those who claimed themselves to associate nobility with those who claimed themselves to be the progeny of gods and demi-gods. In order that the honour of the common man was not usurped by the selected few, the prophet announced:

“The whole of mankind is the family of God and he amongst His family dearest to Him, who does good to others.”⁽³⁾

A celestial Tradition of the Prophet alludes to the deep concern of God for the welfare of human beings. It says:

“God would ask (someone) on the Day of Judgement. “I was ill but you did not pay a visit to Me.” The man would reply : “How could have I paid a visit to Thee. Thou art the lord of the worlds.” But God would say, “Do you not recollect that one of my slaves was ill. Had you gone to see him, you would have found Me by his side.” Then God would again ask, “O Son of Adam, I asked you to feed Me, but you refused it to Me.” The man would submit, “How could have I fed thee, Thou art the

1-II : 29.

2-XVII : 70.

3-Mishkat.

Lord of the Worlds.” But the reply of God would be, “Do you not remember that one of My slaves had asked you for food. Didn’t you know that if you had given him food, you would have found it with Me!” God would again ask, “O son of Adam, I asked you water to drink but you refused it to Me.” The man would say in reply, “O Lord, How could have I given water to Thee. Thou art the Lord of the worlds.” But the reply given by God would be, “Do you not recollect that one of My slaves asked you for water, but you refused. Did you not know that if you had given him water, you would have found it with Me.”⁽¹⁾

Islam preaches unalloyed and absolute unity of God and rejects every form of anthropomorphism. Still, it employs this similitude to drive home the rank and dignity of man in the eyes of God. Has any other religion or philosophical thought accorded a nobler place to human beings than Islam?

The prophet of Islam taught that the surest way to attract blessings of God was to be kind and considerate to others.

“The Most Compassionate (God) is kind on those who are kind to others. If you would show kindness to those who live on the earth, He who lives in the Heavens, shall shower His blessings on you.”⁽²⁾

You can very well imagine the pitiable condition of man in the days when this powerful voice of human dignity had not been raised in the world. A mere whim of a king or emperor could then cost the life of a thousand men. It was then not unusual for an ambitious adventurer to put to sword the entire population of a conquered land. Alexander converted all the countries from Greece of India into a vast battlefield. Caesar played with the lives of human beings as if they were wild beasts. The two World wars fought only recently had cost the life of millions merely for securing markets for the industrial produce of advanced nations or to establish national or political ascendancy of certain nations over all others. Iqbal has correctly assessed the political ambitions of man this verse.

Man is still possessed by the imperialistic lust,

What a pity! Man prowling after man as yet.

At the time when Muhammad was invested with the mantle of prophethood, a general sense of pessimism springing

1-Sahih Muslim.

2-Abu Da’ud.

from the worthlessness of human nature and hopelessness of Divine succour filled the air. The ancient religions of the East and the mutilated Christianity, specially in the West, had an equal share in producing that mental climate. The philosophy of re-birth, preached by the religions of ancient India which assigned no place to the will and decision of man, meant that the present life was but a form of retribution for one's actions during his previous life with which the Christian doctrine of Original sin and atonement had joined hands to shake the confidence of millions, all over the world, in the responsiveness and amenability of human actions. Mankind had lost faith in the mercy of God whose eternal and immutable decree seemed to have condemned man to a pre-determined destiny without reference to his evil or virtuous behaviour. But Muhammad affirmed that man was born with a clean slate and perfect freedom of action. He was, declared the prophet, the author of his actions, both good and evil, and deserved reward or punishment in accordance with his own decision to shape the course of his actions. Discarding the theory of vicarious atonement, the Quran established once for all that every man was his own redeemer.

“And that for man shall be naught,
Save that where for he maketh effort,
And that his endeavour shall be presently observed.”⁽¹⁾

This was a message of salvation to man which gave him a new confidence in himself and in his ability to chart out his destiny. He applied himself with a renewed vigour, confidence and determination to shape up his own life and brighten the future of humanity.

The prophet of Islam also declared that sins were but temporary deviations from the right path, inherent in the nature of man, and were brought about by ignorance, mistake and the prompting of the man's own sensual desire. But the innate desire of man was to regret his mistakes and seek pardon of God with a contrite heart. To be broken in spirit by a sense of the guilt and to seek the forgiveness God showed the goodness of human nature and attracted mercy of the Lord. This gospel of hope and good tidings was a revolutionary message to the despondent humanity condemned for ever by the guilt of Original Sin and his past

I-LIII : 39-40.

misdoings. What a great change it meant in the prevailing atmosphere of gloom and depression of spirits is illustrated by the fact that the Prophet came to be known as 'Apostle of Repentance'. Repentance, he said, did not involve faint-heartedness, nor did it arise from fear of disapprobation, but was a bold and a daring step of the first man, Adam, who had thus shown the nobility of his innate nature. The prophet of Islam endued repentance with the sacredness attached to the acts of devotion to God. He preached the virtues of seeking pardon so forcefully that even the irredeemable sinners, who had lost all hope of forgiveness, resolved to turn away from the sinful ways and to begin a new life of virtue and uprightness, and many of them attained a sublimity of spirit that was envied by others.

Describing the clemency of God which is ever willing to forgive the sinners, the Quran employs a diction so alluringly charming that one wonders whether God loves them more who seek His forgiveness after deviating from the path of virtue. The Quranic verse quoted here shows how forbearing, how long-suffering and how magnanimous God is to the man who cares to turn towards Him for exoneration of his sins. Says the Quran:

"Say thou : O my bondman who have committed extravagance against themselves, despair not of the mercy of Allah; verily Allah will forgive their sins altogether. Verily He ! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful." (1)

Some other verse of the Quran exhorting the believers to acquire positive merits and to win their way to the everlasting Bliss, address them in these words:

"And vie one with another for forgiveness from your Lord, and toward the Garden as wide as are the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who ward off (evil) :

"And those who spend (of that which Allah hath given them) in ease and in adversity, who control their wrath and are forgiving toward mankind; Allah loveth the good;

"And those who, when they do an evil thing or wrong themselves remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins__Who forgiveth sins save Allah only?__and will not knowingly repeat (the wrong) they did.

"The reward of such will be forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide for ever__a bountiful reward for workers!" (2)

1-XXXIX : 53

2-III : 133-36

Among the characteristics of the true believers, enumerated in another verse, repentance takes precedence of all others.

“ They are who repent, who worship, who praise, who fast constantly, who bow down, who prostrate themselves, who command the reputable and restrain from the disreputable and who keep the ordinances of Allah: and bear thou glad tidings to the believers!” ⁽¹⁾

The place of honour accorded to those who repent of their sins is illustrated by the verses of the Quran revealed on the occasion of the forgiveness of three companions⁽²⁾ of the holy prophet, who had been excluded from other followers for their failure to accompany the prophet in the expedition of Tabuk. Before the verse alludes to the mistake of these companions being condoned by God, it mentions the prophet and the Ansars and Muhajirs in order that no stigma was attached to them after mistakes had been pardoned. The Quran, in this way, teaches all believers, who take the companions of the prophet as models of virtue, that no ignominy attaches to a man after a genuine change of heart. The way these verses explain the consequences of blotting out of the sins and elation of the repentant sinners can hardly be found in the scriptures of other religions or treatises on ethics. These verses read:

“ Allah hath turned in mercy to the Prophet, and to the Muhajirin and the Ansar who followed him in the hour of hardship. After the hearts of a party of them had almost swerved aside, then turned He unto them in mercy. Lo! He is Full of pity, Merciful for them.

“ And to the three also (did He turn in mercy) who were left behind, when the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for them, and their own souls were straitened for them till they bethought them that there is no refuge from Allah save toward Him. Then turned He unto them in mercy that they (too) might turn (repentant unto Him). Lo! Allah ! He is the Relenting, the Merciful.” ⁽³⁾

Remission of sin leads us to one of the chief attributes of the Divine Being, that is, His mercy and compassion. The bounty of God's mercy is the constant theme of the Quran. Says God : “ My mercy embraceth all things;” ⁽⁴⁾ while a celestial Tradition

T-IX : 112.

2-The Companions were Kab ibn Malik, Hilal ibn Ummayya and Mirara ibn Rabi who merely out of lethargy failed to join the expedition. They confessed their weakness openly.

3-IX : 117-118.

4-VII : 156.

of the prophet tells us ; “ Verily My mercy overcomes My anger.” To despair of the God’s mercy was made a cardinal sin. Quoting Jacob and Abraham, two great prophets of God, the Quran announces: “ Verily none despaireth to the comfort of Allah except a people disbelieving”⁽¹⁾ and “ who despaireth of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray?”⁽²⁾

The misery and suffering the human race endured upon earth was, according to the Jewish and Christian doctrines, but a feeble image of the never-ending agony which awaited man in the future world. The monastic orders of the Medieval Ages had taken up this doctrine, which in itself, was sufficiently revolting, but they had developed it with an appalling vividness and minuteness. The humanity scared by these ghastly visions and glimpses of eternal suffering, was relieved by the prophet’s emphasis on God’s all embracing mercy and the efficacy of repentance which could wipe the slate clean of even the most vicious among the castaways of society.

And now we come to yet another gift of the prophethood of Muhammad which is still more far-reaching, more beneficial to the humanity at large. This was the concept of the unity of spirit and matter, the harmony of the sacred and the mundane. He taught that the distinction made between the two was superficial and formal for every action of man, his behaviour and moral, was guided by his motive or mental attitude which, in the terminology of religion, was known as *niyat* or intention. For no religious belief is entirely divorced from the realities of human experience in its manifold practical aspects, the intention or purpose with which any act is done sets the test of its being good or bad. It does not recognise the division between the temporal and ecclesiastical since man’s desire to propitiate God and to follow His commands sincerely permeates into every fibre of human activity, no matter whether it is the art of government or war, availing oneself of one’s earthly possessions or satisfaction of one’s natural desires or earning one’s living or leading a married life. With a noble intention every mundane act is turned into a virtuous deed and a means to attaining propinquity to God. On the contrary, no merit whatsoever attaches to acts like devotion to God of fighting in the path of God if the sincere desire to attain the will and pleasure

1-XII : 87.

2-XV : 56.

of God were absent.

The ancient world had divided life into two compartments, religious and the secular, and the result was that a wedge had been driven between those selected one of these as the pursuit of their life. Oftentimes, the two groups were at loggerheads with one another, for, the 'world' and 'religion' were to them incompatible spheres of human life. Every man had to choose of the two since nobody could be expected to travel in two boats simultaneously. The prevalent view was that the path of salvation lay not through the rough and tumble of life, but away from the social, economic and political problems of worldly pursuits. No concept of religion which bars the gates to material progress and acquisition of power, riches and fame could be of interest to intelligent capable and ambitious persons with the result that a great segment of humanity had delivered itself from the rigorous discipline of asceticism which had come to be associated with religion. By withdrawing themselves from the virtuous energies, these men had prevented the great importance of morals from appearing perceptibly in public affairs. The State had revolted against the Church and made itself free from all obligations to it. This hideous schizophrenia not only divested what was called worldly from the gifts of spiritual beatitude, but also gave birth to the modern faithlessness and agnosticism of Europe which is now threatening to inundate the entire world, if only, because of its political and cultural supremacy. The present wave of gross materialism, loss of faith and moral debasement is but a direct consequence of the division between the spirit and matter invented by the old pagan civilizations.

The prophet of mercy, who was sent to the humanity as a warner as well as a messenger of glad tidings, converted the entire life of man into devotion to God by denying the existence of any cleavage between the spiritual and temporal spheres of human affairs. He demolished the wedge between the men of religion and those of the world and commended all of them to unite their efforts for attaining the pleasure of God and service of humanity. It was because of him that the world could see the ascetics who wore crowns on their heads and the warriors who spent their nights in devotion and prayers.

It would be difficult to conceive a more complete trans-

formation of life than the one brought about by the fusion of the secular and the sacred, which would require several volumes to be explained in detail. Iqbal has very succinctly versified the significance of this concept in one of his immortal poems.

On monastic order was laid foundation of Church,
How could mendacity contain the royalty in its confines?
The conflict was deep, between hermitry and kingship,
One was triumphant, the other subdued.
Politics got rid of religion,
Helpless was the high priest.
When the world and religion parted ways,
Avarice was the ruler, King and Vizier.
Dualism was the doom of mind and matter,
Dualism made the civilization blind.
This is the miracle of the dweller of desert,
Whose warnings reflected the tidings-glad;
That the humanity's only refuge was this,
That (the mystic) Junaid unites with Ardsher (the king)!

Yet another radical change brought about by the Prophet of Islam in the life of man was to make him conscious of the ultimate end of his life. Unaware of his goal and objective, man had his eyes fixed on profane and paltry objects. He directed his whole intelligence and labour to the acquisition of some more wealth or land or fame or power. Virtue having been associated with the pleasurable things, the main object of the vast majority of people was to sublimate their conceptions of happiness and interest with the satisfaction of carnal desires, song and colour, merrymaking fun and amusement. Revelry of the rich and powerful soon brought up a class of parasites whose whole business to tickle the fancy of their patrons. But Muhammad told man that the great business of mankind was to exert himself and strive to attain the perfect knowledge of God; to contemplate on His nature and attributes and lead his wandering soul to divine propinquity through realisation of the Unlimited; to search out the Unity of the cause of all Causes in the sterling diverse phenomena of nature; and to seek his pleasure through being kind and just and virtuous. He told man that these were the objectives whose achievement conferred a rank on him envied by the angels of God.

Thus, the prophethood of Muhammad made a clean sweep of the existing order of things in the world. The longing desire of man was now centered on new objective; love of God overtook possession of his being; the pleasure of God became the immortal thirst of human heart and mercy and kindness to God's creatures was recognised as the greatest virtue which became the sole object of his endeavour. It was then, after the advent of Islam, that the leading feature of all the countries, Arabia and Iran, Syria and Egypt, Turkistan and Iraq, North Africa and Spain became the search for higher and tender virtues, in the pursuit of which we find thousands of love-lorn souls. During this period we find innumerable men of God preaching love of God, kindness and compassion to every sentient being, merits of virtuous living, acquisition of knowledge for attaining the pleasure of God, revulsion to cruelty and indecency and the grace of humanity and modesty. They taught the lesson of human dignity and brotherhood of man and made this earth a kingdom of God.

If you peep into the souls of these elevated souls, you would witness the unbelievable flights of their imagination, purity of their innermost feelings and nimbleness of their perceptions. You would see how they were willing to put their own life at stake for others, made their own children and family suffer for the good of all and sundry, compelled the autocratic kings and potentates to do justice to the weak and the poor and how rightfully just they were even to their enemies. Of a fact, it would have been difficult for us to believe today what a fine specimen of humanity, what a sublime soul, were these men of God if the historians and biographers had not preserved a truthful record of their lives and doings.

This striking change in the manners and morals of the people was indeed a miracle worked by the holy Prophet of Islam. Iqbal mentions these gifts of Prophet Muhammad in some of his inimitable verses.

He slept on a mat of rushes,

But the crown of Chosroes lay beneath the feet of his followers;

He chose the nightly solitude of Mount Hira,

And founded a nation, Law and government;

He passed his nights with sleepless eyes,

That his *Millet* might sleep on Chosroes throne;
In the hour of battle, iron was melted by the flash of his
sword.

At prayer time, tears fell like drops of rain from his eyes.
In his prayer for divine help, his 'Aman' was as sword,
Which extirpated the lineage of kings;
He inaugurated a new Order in the world,
He brought the empires old to an end;
In his sight the high and the low were one,
He sat with slave at one table;
He burnt clear the distinctions of birth and clan,
His fire consumed the trash and rubble.

Another poet, Hali, summed up all these in one verse
wherein he says:

Springtide that now overfills the world,
Is the outgrowth of saplings planted by him.

Verily, God saith in truth; "We have sent thee not save as
a mercy for the people."□□

MUNIFICENCE INCARNATE

S.M.Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi

This is an article written by Syed Mohammad Wazeh Rasheed Nadvi, as a preface to a compilation of articles authored by Maulana Syed Mohammad Rabey Hasani Nadwi, on the subject of pious life and noble character and deeds of the holy Prophet (pbuh).

There were times when the pens of literati engaged in elucidation, propagation of religion, cultural and ethical mores were virtually under a siege by the church. They had, perforce to go by the edicts of the clergy. Their approach continued to be antagonistic towards Islam and the prophet (pbuh) even on loosening of papal clutches. An observer does not fail to espy the negative bias, even if deftly camouflaged in articulate authorship. Even more surprising is the case of acknowledged authoritative researchers and writers falling under Judaic or Jesuit spell, no sooner than taking up the subject of Islam, Quran and the prophet (pbuh), and his traditions. In doing so, they do not desist from violating the norms set by themselves for investigative and literary pursuit and recording of historical evidence. A few, who normally would adhere to rationalism, cannot help betray shades of prejudice, as a legacy of their cultural and family background.

European writers are forever vehement in depicting the prophet (pbuh) of Islam as a warrior-like personality, which is just the opposite of his (pbuh) nature. A rational view and in-depth analysis of the battles in his period would instantly reveal that those who had inflicted severest torture upon the prophet (pbuh) and his followers and were continuously conspiring their annihilation, were completely forgiven and treated with utmost courtesy, when ultimately vanquished.

Those mercenaries who embarked upon missions to eliminate him (pbuh) would invariably return mollified and convinced of his all-endearing nature, just after a brief discussion. The statements delivered in courts of Caesar, Choroos and Negus about the deeds and character of the prophet (pbuh), provide realistic and incontrovertible recorded testimony to the pious status.

Once, when the prophet (pbuh) visited the city of Taif for preaching the divine message, he was not only thwarted by the locals but injured physically. Not heeding even the voice of an Angel, he palacated before God to pardon the people of Taif, expressing a fervent hope that their progeny would embrace Islam.

The most outstanding example, unparalleled in world history of benevolence, is the declaration of general amnesty for all and sundry, upon the conquest of Mecca. The day was earmarked as the Day of Mercy. The houses of those who had exhibited greatest enmity throughout were declared as abodes of peace, that whosoever sought shelter there, stood protected. And, all this affection for those who had made life a virtual hell for the believers, despite acknowledging openly the qualities of righteousness and integrity of Mohammad (pbuh) even long before bestowal of prophethood upon him.

Last sermon of the holy prophet (pbuh) included a declaration:

“All are descended from Adam and Adam is created from clay. None is superior to another. The only criterion for superiority is the fear of God.”

The tall claims of so-called intellectuals, accusing the holy prophet (pbuh) of coercion and aggression, are beaten hollow in the light of the above and many more, facts. Their own works of research and recorded history abound in testimony and undisputed evidence to reality.

The prophet (pbuh) has been bestowed the title of ‘Universal Blessing and Benevolence’ by God the Almighty as follows:

“It is part of the mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: So pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah’s) forgiveness for them, and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou has taken a decision, put thy trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)).....[3: 159]

The ambience prevailing in his (pbuh) meetings, held for preaching and guidance, is described in the words of God”

“It is he who has sent his messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, to make it prevail over all religion: and enough

is Allah for a witness.....[48: 28]

Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other.

Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer), seeking grace from Allah an (It is) good pleasure.

On their faces are their marks (being) the traces of their prostration. This is their similitude in Taurat, and their similitude in the Gospel is: like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong, it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, (filling) the sowers with wonder and delight. As a result, it fills the unbelievers with rage at them. Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness, and a great reward.....[48: 29]

The minds of Muslim intellectuals and their pens went a bit astray. They dwelt, not so much, upon depicting and elucidating the piety of character and benevolent acts of the prophet (pbuh) but devoted their energy and wisdom to describing the battles, ultimately resorted to in the cause of truth and in defence of Muslims and Islam. Prolonged, mostly, futile polemic debates were held about the culmination of prophethood and over the subject of the Message being really the last and ultimate revelation.

The need of the hour is that the real qualities of mercy, blessing, benevolence, humanity and universal enlightenment, embodied in the pious person of the prophet (pbuh) be brought to the knowledge of the world, in an analytical and cogent style. This job is of paramount importance, more so that the west has once again stirred up a virtual storm for projecting an abominable vision of Islam, before the whole world.

Hazrat Maulana Syed Mohammad Raabe Hasani Nadvi, the Rector of Nadwatul Ulama and President Muslim Personal Law Board has penned a few articles, with the above mentioned mission in view. These wise words, it is earnestly hoped, shall be the harbingers of a much-needed trend and correct depiction of the pious character.

An important aspect is presentation of the subject in different languages of the world, which needs to be attended to in right earnest.

Peace be upon the benefactor of humankind Mohammad, the last prophet and upon his kin and contemporary associates.

QURANIC HISTORY OF ISRAELITES AN OBJECT LESSON FOR MUSLIMS

Shaikh Zahoorul Hasan*

Present day plight of the Muslims, especially in India, is a cause for extreme worry, with no tangible relief in sight. Claiming to be believers in God and followers of the holy prophet (pbuh) some exclaim to God in the word of Allama Iqbal:

“Is this abject disgrace a just reward for sacrifice in thy name!”.

The illusion is, that though no longer an exemplary lot, on the whole they are still superior to atheists and infidels. This state of mind is not an outcome of any apostatic trend but that despite all wrong doings, they do not despair God’s mercy. Such mentality infesting the brains of Muslims over the ages, engenders irreverence to an extent:

“Thy munificence is for non-believers” abodes.

Hapless Muslims are targeted by the strokes of lightning.”

The way to rid of this aberration is to go deeply into the nuances of the divine law: any reward is commensurate with the deed. A reminder, about the intention for which Islam descended upon the world and the current status of Muslims, with convoluted beliefs and actions, is needed. History of Israelites holds a clear lesson, with marked parallelism. This history has been repeated in Quran more of ten by far, than that of any other race or tribe.

Israelites are descended from the great prophet Abraham (the blessed one); the race produced, over centuries, hundreds of prophets and all bounties were showered upon them and they were declared superior to all others in the whole world.

No sooner than they went astray from the righteous path and indulged in sinful acts, they were the target of severe exemplary punishment. Nebukednazer, the ruler of Babylon crushed

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and imprisoned them in Babylon, far removed from Jerusalem. Roman pagans over powered and destroyed them, so much so that they could find no national home till as late as 1918 CE. Their most hallowed place of worship built by prophet-king Solomon (God bless him), and where hundreds of prophets including Yohanna and Jesus (God bless them), had offered prayers, was razed to the ground by donkey-driven ploughs.

Of late, Hitler, the German dictator, not only confined them to ghettos as unfit for habitation among humans, but launched a drive for their total annihilation.

Although the Jewish community (Israelites), produced several intellectuals and much moneyed persons, they, on the whole were looked down upon and till as late as 1945 CE, were under siege by one or the other despotic power. The reason is not far to seek. Their sufferings and plight were a chastisement and were commensurate with their dereliction of assigned duty as the exalted race.

Israelites had been directed to worship none but one and the only God. Having lived over a long period among idol-worshipping Egyptians, though not adopting or acclaiming their practices, they were not averse to them. Logic and philosophy as sciences were not known in those days and hence the minds were free of intricacies. When once resorting to worship of a golden calf, and admonished severely by their prophet Moses (the blessed one), they came up with a straight forward excuse of having fallen to the guiles of one of their own folks, by the name of Samiri.

Muslims, mainly over first two centuries made great strides in development and learning of logic, philosophy, Platonic mysticism. This study led to contamination of pure Islamic teachings. Things have come to a pass where overt or covert poly-theism, which to a discerning eye would be akin to paganism and idolatry, took root among a majority. To bolster arguments for such practices, an elaborate rigmarole of theories and terminologies has been designed, that even an educated person fails to unravel. Not only are perpetrators of such systems equipped with dexterously formulated arguments but do not desist from violence if faced with cogent analysis.

A little cool headed instrospection is enough to reveal that the genuine original message of Islam has no place for these

practices. Even educated families adopt names like Ali Bukhsh, Hasan Bukhsh, Husain Bukhsh, which obviously violates Islamic tenets. Neglect of punctuality and regularity in prayers is treated as no sacrilege in comparison to missing a routine incantation prescribed by a *peer*. Multifarious excuses are fabricated to escape performance of *Hajj*, but foregoing an *Urs* is considered unpardonable. Even if the visit to the mausoleum of a holy saint by persons having real spiritual regard for him be treated as acceptable, the practices and activities indulged in by the masses at such shrines are downright obnoxious. The followers of a particular holy person (no doubting here his own piety and greatness), bow in obeisance, regularly before his portrait.

Jews (Israelites) were ordered to desist from learning and practice of magic, but did not obey, and used magic even for undesirable objectives. Among present day Muslims, prescription of amulets or routine recital of holy words, (*vazeefa*) may be just permissible (*mabah*) but there can be no sanction for prescriptions and actions purporting to solicit help from *djins*, evil spirits, for despicable ends, like access to illicit liaison etc. The purveyors of such conjured up practices run organized business for material gains, oblivious of provisions of legitimacy (*hillat*) or illegitimacy (*hurmat*).

There being no evidence in the divine revelation, traditions and life of the holy prophet (pbuh), of his contemporary associates, their second and third stage associates, even till as late as fourth of fifth century AH, for the practices narrated above, these can only be classified as polytheistic.

The edicts for regularity and punctuality in prayers and for doling out a fixed portions of wealth (*zakat*) to the needy were followed by the Israelites more in violation than observance. In India, not even one fifth of the Muslims are regular in prayers and hardly five percent fulfil their liability in respect of *Zakat*. Preponderance of Muslims in cinema halls, racecourse, vulgar music and dance, almost outscored the Jews.

Mutual bloodshed and expulsion of each other from their habitat were made taboo for Israelites. However not only were they at daggers drawn with each other but also bent upon ousting, upon slightest dispute, one or the other of their own folks. On the contrary, if any of their kith and kin were captured by an enemy,

release would be arranged promptly, even on payment of a ransom. Islam strictly prohibits killing of an innocent person and the murder of a Muslim is fraught with eternal condemnation to hell. Incidence of mutual strife and slaughter amongst Muslims, at present is endemic, what with sects like Barelvis, Deobandis, Shias, Sunnis, constantly on course of collision, violent at times. If some other community wreaks havoc against Muslims, campaign for relief and rehabilitation sprouts up from all nooks and corners. Similarity in the two cases is apparent even to a lay observer. Similar is the situations in trade and commercial transactions, where principles of fair play, honesty and integrity are flouted with impunity.

An intriguing phenomenon is the declaration of India as *dar-ul-harb*, ostensibly for liberty to carry on interest bearing transactions with non-Muslims. The other requirements of living in a *dar-ul-harb*, that of abstinence from employment under and friendship with non-Muslims is conveniently overlooked, as it would entail material loss and social ostracisation.

Quran has described how Israelites, with the aim of circumventing the divine commandments, would formulate multifarious interpretations. The case with Muslims, as described earlier in this write-up, is not dissimilar. Of course, some teachers and preachers, who are endowed with a righteous approach, do prewarn and enlighten their tutelage of the subtle, sometimes blatant camouflage and manipulations. They emphasize that the divine law is universal, eternal and un-susceptible to modifications.

“ They who believe in Allah and the doomsday and do good deeds, for them is the reward from Him and they face no fear or sorrow”..... (Quran)

Muslims this day are aghast, wondering openly, as to the reason for their humiliation and subservience at the hands of those whose beliefs and way of life is even more despicable than themselves. Some introspection and methodical analysis is all that is required to unravel the truth. God the Almighty does not descend upon earth to inflict punishment (or proffer a reward) on an individual or community. The entire universe is under His control and He could utilize any worldly power as a means. And this exactly is His way. A person of some high status, even a friend of the Judge, condemned to gallows after trial, would not be executed by the Judge himself. The person carrying out the job can

be one of a far inferior standing than the guilty. Similarly, the nation overpowering another may not necessarily be spiritually or morally superior to the vanquished nation.

History bears ample, clear evidence in support of above surmise. Under a decadent Abbaside Caliphate at Baghdad, Muslims along with the ruling dynasty, were deep into a quagmire of moral depression, leading a life far adrift of divine commandments and prophetic guidance. The territory was stormed over by Mongol marauders who pillaged the city of Baghdad and wrought tremendous havoc. Even optimistic poet Saadi wails in desperation.

"It would be just for the heavens to shower blood upon earth.

"At the downfall of Mustaasam, the lord of Muslims."

In Spain, a glorious rule over centuries by the Muslims, fell into a deep abyss, physically and morally. The conditions were seemingly worse than in case of Baghdad Caliphate. The terror and destruction let loose by Queen Isabella and King Fernanaded upon then out measures the doing of Mongols in Baghdad. Not even a single Muslim remained in Spain.

Obviously, neither the Mongol nor European invaders could be rated as near and dear to the Almighty. They were deployed as a tool to punish the wayward (originally the chosen and exalted) community.

Besides illustrating and expounding the divine system, the aftermath of above mentioned calamities contains an additional study, in contrast. In Spain, Muslims surviving the massacre either embraced Christianity or sought refuge in Morocco, not exhibiting any fortitude nor mending their ways. In Baghdad, the Muslims were steadfast, confronted and preached to the Mongols. This brought the next generation Mongols into the folds of Islam, so much so that Europeans, in their efforts to spread Christianity, were kept at bay, and made peace with the Muslim Mongols, who became a bulwark for the Muslim domains. Poet of the East eulogized them unequivocally:

"Guardians for Ka'aba emerged from the precincts of temples."

The brief narrative and accompanying analysis above, holds a clarion for the present day muslims who with self-examination, fortitude and rectitude can embark upon a voyage for regaining the lost glory.□□

THE ARAB LEGACY IN LATIN EUROPE

M.Sanaullah

We reproduce below the preface of the "Arab legacy in Latin Europe". It helps to have an insight of the book. Pages 254, price RS. 400 Samia Publications, Sir Syed Nagar Aligarh 2002.

This book attempts to synchronize the Arab-Islamic Andalusian conquests, armada of the *reconquista*, philosophical speculation, mystic orientations, scholastic *summae*, scientific augmentation and literary art of the Arab-Muslim Orient and Latin-Christian Occident in the Middle Ages with the Afro-Iberian-Mediterranean geographic bases (minus the specific Arab-Sicilian context) via a definitive portraying: a theme with loads of jargon and substance, pride and prejudice and wiggle and wobble which has generated enormous debate and heat in the philosophical, scientific and literary circles of the world in the recent past, often imbibed with criticism and apology. The debate is still on, but with a point consented upon, that this is no more a subject of oversimplification, outright rejection or chronic skepticism. If it is true that human thought and culture transcend the barriers of history, geography, language, race, faith and nationality, and history has impeccable evidences to anticipate such a blending (Greek to Arabic at Baghdad in the Abbasid period, and Arabic to Latin, Hebrew, etc. in Spain and Sicily), and it is really difficult to disregard the authority of historic impression, then, should not one be at ease in offering *raison d'etre* for any discussions on identifying the scope, degree impact immediate parentage and historicity of such an impression? I think, the answer should be in the affirmative. However in the affirmation I keep myself out of the pure theoretical and experimental sciences __for my own limitations__ except certain scientific historic themes that came under scrutiny, such as translations.

Islam, Arab and Europe had much to do with each other in the middle Ages for about fourteen centuries of co-living side by side. Islam grew fast and had a steady expansion under the

first few generations, and this enabled the Muslims to be at the helm of affairs in most parts of the Hellenistic and Sassanian world. It was an iconoclasm for the Christian West, but never the same for the Sassanides. The Mediterranean area and Iberian Peninsula were the chief grounds of intellectual, literary and cultural *tete a tete* (including matrimonial knots) between Arab-Islamic and Judeo-Christian Hebrew-Latin domains. The Arab military operations, starting from 711AD under Governor Musa's Lieutenant Tariq b.Ziad at Guadalete (*Wadi Bekka or Wadi Lekka*), defeated the last of the Visigothic kings, Don Rodrigo, or Roderich, yielded Arab rule in the whole Iberian Peninsula and Galicia, and under General Abd al-Rahman al-Umawi the inroads reached as far as the French territories. Spanish armada embarked on the re-conquest and with surrender of Granada by Boabdil on January 2nd, 1492 finally drew the curtain on the show. This reversal of correction of the things and in between had its own yields sometimes very harsh (like *Martyrs of Cordova*, *inquisition and Crusades*), which seldom became subject of sincere apathy of redress, and the bogey of which still haunts certain areas of the globe even to day. But what is beyond dispute is that the victors left irresistible impressions on the conquered people that bore tremendous social, philosophical, scholastic and literary offshoots the importance of which can be gauged from the classes of Mozarabes, Muladis, Mudejares, Moricos and the legacy of the schools of Latin Avicennism, Latin Averroism, Mystic Dignitates of Ramond Lull, *mester de juglaria*, *poema del Cid*, *poema del Yucuf*, *Historia del Abencerrajey la hermosa jarifa*, *verse de romance*, etc. This study concentrates itself on the historic inquiry and elaboration of that point with reference to Arab-Islam Latinum and Christendom. The Academia has been very much concerned to the theme as early as the end of XVIII th century, as exhibited by Juan Andres of Spain in his *Dell origine, progressi e stato d'ogni letteratura* (Parma, 1782-1799) and Abate Girolmao Tiraboschi in his *Della influenza degli Arabi sull 'origine della poesia moderna in Europa* (Roma 1791) and in Giovanni Maria (Giamria) Barberi's *Arte del rimare: Dell origine della poesia rimata* (Modena, 1790), to scholars like Gustave LeBon (*La civilisation des Arabes*, Paris, 1884), C. Schiaparelli (*Vocabulista in arabico*, Firenze, 1871), Juan Velera, Francesco Codera, Julian

Ribera y Tarrago, Emilio Lafuente y Alcantara, Gonzalez Palencia, Lerchundi (Crestomitia arabigo-espanola), Simonet, Martin Hartmann, Dimitri K. Petrof, David de Gunzburg, A.R.Nykl, Maurice C.G.E. Renan (Averroes et l'Averroisme), Asin y Palacios, L. Lecrec, Solomon Munk, Haskins, Michud, Campbell, Etienne Gilson, M.T.d' Alverny, Norman Daniel, Steven Runciman, and others in their writings, which provide enormous details of arguments for or against the thesis. This book is a condensed synthesis of the major themes approached and dealt by such an enormous scholarship, with my own inferential backings from the early Arabic sources.

The encountering Arab and Latino-Christian iconoclasm had yielded a drastic sequence of exaggerations and distortions, the victim being Arabia, Islam and their legacy, thanks to *celericia* of the likes of the Mozarab Isidore Pacenis (Baja) with his *Arabum ephemerides*, Archbishop Roderick of Toledo (*Historia Arabum*), *Chanson de Jersualem* and *poeme d Antioche* of Peter the Hermit, *Refutation of Desputatio* (*Refutation of the Quran*) of Ricoldo da Monte Croce, *Gesta Francorum* of Hugu of Fleury, and, in a nutshell, all the crusading literature of Gesta, plus the crusade or post-crusade literature on the life of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) by writers like Gibril of Nogent, Hugu of Fleury, Siger of Gembloux, and poems of Walter of Compiegne, Alexander ud Pont, Embrico de Manes and others (This kind of literature in the early twelfth century, to borrow from Norman Daniel, 'treated crusade, sexuality and the Quranic revelation of the unity of God, all in a frivolous manner!') Of late, serious initiatives aimed at non-clerical critical-evaluative analysis of the topic were taken by scholars like Edward Said, Norman Daniel and others. This initiated a re-thinking, re-evaluating and synthesizing approach the merits of which, however, outsmart the demerits.

Historical judgments always change their tunes, injections and fashions, sometimes harsh, arrogant and malicious, and the other suave, sophisticated and friendly. They do have cliches, nightmares, incarnations, metamorphosis and resurrection, and, therefore, hard to be burnt and immersed into nihilism forever. One does not fail to test the validity of this proposition in the backdrop of a historical subject like the one under scrutiny and study in this book. And a free researcher must be guarded against any bullying vis a vis a particular process, argument and judgment. □ □

ENSURING THE DIGNITY OF MINORITIES IN INDIA

Prakash Louis*

The question of minorities in terms of both their dignity and rights is an ancient as well as contemporary issue. Starting from local, national and international levels. There have been serious discussions about the place and role of minorities in their respective societies and nations. This discourse on minorities has also inspired the United Nations to come out with international instruments like "Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities" which was adopted by the General Assembly Resolution on December 18, 1992. The General Assembly, through this Declaration, not only affirmed the dignity and worth of every human person, human rights and fundamental freedom of all but also called upon the state to protect the existence of national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities and enact appropriate legislations to achieve this end.

At the existential level, it has been observed that the minorities are subjected to deprivation, discrimination and marginalisation in any society and polity where the majority community has dominance and supremacy. Discrimination toward minority is not just in terms of numbers because of which they are usually termed as 'minorities'. Since the minority communities are most often the non-dominant communities, their discrimination is very much rooted in political, social, economic and cultural aspects of that particular society and polity. Within the minority communities themselves there are ample spaces open for polarisation. These polarisations spring from the differences in the ownership of means of resources, placement of different caste-class groups in the economic order, social seclusion experienced by those who were converted from lower caste groups of the Indian social order to Islam, contrast in educational qualifications and security of jobs, place and role of individuals and groups within

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the minority communities in the arena of political participation to name a few.

According to the Webster's New World Dictionary, the term 'dignity' comes from the Latin root *dignitas* meaning worth or merit. In extension it also means the quality of being worthy of esteem, honour, exalt or ennoble. Further, one talks of the state of being dignified. We also talk of dignity of labour, dignity of children, dignity of women, dignity of weaker sections and dignity of every human person. Even in times of war we talk of dignity of those who are taken as prisoners of war. In this context, the dignity of minorities, who are the non-dominant social group in most countries and societies, becomes crucial for upholding the rights of all.

Minorities _____ The conceptual Framework

The term 'minority' has attained different meanings in different contexts. Any attempt to define 'minority' meets with various problems. The central question that continues to colour the discourse on minorities is: Who are the minorities? What are the salient features through which one can identify them as minorities? What could constitute minorities rights? What could be the boundary for a praxis oriented minority rights discourse?

It is often stated that protection of minorities is the hallmark of a civilised nation. According to Gandhi Ji, the claim of a country to civilisation depends upon the treatment it extends to the minorities. Lord Acton added another dimension to the debate—the most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities. In any discussion on minorities, Nehru's remark is often quoted "How shall we promote the unity of India and yet preserve the rich diversity of our inheritance?" In India fifty three years after the enforcement of the Constitution, the issue of minority rights has become all the more a complicated discourse.

One of the descriptions of the concept minority is non-dominant group. Keeping this in mind, the Indian Constitution recognises religious minorities, linguistic minorities, regional minorities, ethnic minorities, cultural minorities and minorities possessing special scripts of their own. While enacting the National Minorities Commission Act 1992, the Central Government

notified the following five communities as “ the Minority Communities” for the purpose of the said Act, namely, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis. With the discussion on who constitutes as minority the debate on what are some of the legal provisions, which need to be worked out in favour of the minorities also, ensued.

Legal Provisions for the Minorities

The UN has presented an inclusive description of the term minority.

The term ‘minority’ included only those non-dominant groups in a population, which possess and wish to preserve stable ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions or characteristics markedly different from the majority population. In addition it has been argued that the use of self-definition which has been identified as a will on the part of the members of the groups in question to preserve their own characteristics and to be accepted as part of that group by the other members, combined with certain specific objective requirements, could provide a viable option.

At the international level under the United Nations the following provisions are available:

Articles 1 and 55 of the United Nations Charter of 1945 ensure provisions for the minorities. Article 55 states:

With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, the United Nations shall promote :a) higher standards of social progress and development: b) solutions of international economic, social , health, and related problem, and international cultural and educational co-operation; c) universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinctions as to race, sex, language, or religion.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 Article 2 states:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no

distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non self-governing or under any other limitation or sovereignty.

Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights spells out the right of the minorities in the following manner:

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion or to use their own language.

At the international level other attempts were also made to ensure minority rights. Based the Minority Rights Group's 21 years of experience it has been decided to avoid violent conflicts by monitoring the achievement of minority rights. It is important for states to provide information on the numbers and locations of minorities living on their territories with a description of state's policy on the rights of minorities and how the policy is being implemented, particularly in relation to:

- ☐ The constitutional recognition of minority rights, laws and customs;
- ☐ The guarantees or seats in governmental organs and access to inter-governmental organisations if the state is a party;
- ☐ The legal protection against incitement to racial, ethnic or religious hatred;
- ☐ The participation__locally, regionally and nationally__in government administration, the judiciary, policing and the army;
- ☐ The democratic representation in society, including participation in political parties and the ability to establish their own political parties;
- ☐ The participation in the educational system at all levels;
- ☐ The encouragement to learn and the ability to practise their mother tongue;
- ☐ The opportunities to become self-reliant and to have equal opportunities in employment, trading, owning, renting and cultivating land;

- ❑ The duty of the government to obtain consent for development programmes to protect traditional hunting places and their environment;
- ❑ The ability to move freely across borders and to meet together;
- ❑ The freedom or expression of their culture, religion and identity including support of cultural centres and activities to support their identity;
- ❑ The establishment of religious institutions with the ability of minorities to choose own leaders;
- ❑ The right to expression of opinions in the mass media.

Thus, it can be stated that affirmation of minority rights is the affirmation of their right to self-determination and this in extension leads to upholding the dignity of the minorities as citizens of a country and members of a society.

Constitution of India Minority Rights

The constitution adopted two methods for protecting the minorities :1) The guarantee of what might be described as negative quality, which protected them from the possibility of discriminatory treatment .2) It also conferred some positive rights or what is known as affirmative actions on members of minority groups, which they shared with other citizens or the country.

Some of the special provisions are presented here :

(1) Right to Equality. Article 14 confers equality before law, while Article 15 talks of prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, caste, sex or place of birth; Article 16 talks of equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. 2) Right to freedom. Article 19 spells out seven rights to freedom. 3) Right against Exploitation. Article 23 speaks about prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour and prohibition of work by children in factories. 4) Right to Freedom of Religion. Under the Freedom of Religion provision Article 25 enumerates rights to freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion; Article 26 relates to freedom to manage religious affairs given to religious denominations or sections thereof; Article 27 ensures that no one should be compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or main-

tenance of any particular religion or religious denominations; Further, Article 28 speaks about freedom of attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions. 5) Cultural and Educational Rights are spelt out in Article 29 and 30. These are once again special rights, that is, minorities have the right to conserve their, distinct language, script or culture and the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. Article 29 declares that "any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same". 6) Right to Constitutional Remedies. Article 32 speaks about remedies for enforcement of rights conferred to move Supreme Court for seeking justice. Thus there are rights given to all the citizens, and there are some rights that are exclusively for the minorities.

Over and above, the Minorities Commission was set up in pursuance of the Government of India Resolution. According to the Resolution, the objective of the Commission is: Despite the safeguards provided in the Constitution and the laws in force, there persists amongst the minorities a feeling of inequality and discrimination. In order to preserve secular traditions and to promote national integration, the Government of India attaches the highest importance to the enforcement of the safeguards provided for the minorities and is of the firm view that effective institutional arrangements are urgently required for the effective enforcement and implementation of all the safeguards provided for the minorities in the Constitution, in Central and State laws, and in government policies and administrative scheme enunciated from time to time.

In the final analysis it needs to be stated that the framers of the Indian Constitution opted for a socialist, secular, democratic republic from of rule of the citizens of this country. By opting for a secular state the architects of the Constitution envisaged that the state will not espouse or establish or practise any religion or be partisan towards any social group and that every citizen of this country will have equal right to freedom of conscience and religion. While these ideals remained in principle, in practice the last fifty years of independent India is ridden with conflicts of religious and community interests bordering on com-

munalism. In a plural society, there is a sense of shared identity and destiny irrespective of many differences that are internal and external. India has been trying to maintain this oneness of purpose, though the ruptures have been witnessed right from the beginning. After the Gujrat pogrom the minorities consider themselves to be second-class citizens.

The minority communities in India as elsewhere want to be part of the development process, want to live as citizens of this country, want their dignity and rights upheld not only by the state but by the members of the majority community. The minority communities in turn also need to engage in rural reconstruction and nation-building. Moreover, every citizen of this country wants development with justice, justice that guarantees her/his dignity. Development with justice ensures people's participation in the planning process and outcome of development. This also ensures self-determination of all the citizens without any distinction. It is here that the interface between the majority and minority communities becomes crucial. Ensuring the dignity of the minority communities in India is the litmus test of the proper functioning of a secular, democratic and socialist state. How to convert this dream into a reality is the task ahead for the over 100 crore population of India. □□

DIALOGUE IS FINE COURT IS BETTER: AIMPLB

K.N.ARUN

“The Dalai Lama’s suggestion that the Ayodhya issue be resolved through consensus is highly welcome, but there is no harm in waiting for the court verdict,” All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) chairman Maulana Mohd Rabey Hasani Nadwi said today.

In an extensive interaction with media, Nadwi pointed out that AIMPLB was never averse to talks. But talks, including two rounds of discussions with the Kanchi Shankaracharya, had not achieved anything, and that was why the Board was relying on court verdict.

“Court mein barson se case chal raha hai. Aur thodi baaki rah gayee hai. Faisle ke liye intezaar karne mein koi harj nahin honi chahiye, (The case has been going on in the court for year. It is only a matter of time. There should be no objections to wait for the court verdict),” he said.

Nadwi pointed out that the matter was taken to court only because the dispute could not be resolved by the two communities. *“Court ne abhi tak jitna bhi mehnat kiya hai, usko kood mein to nahin dal sakte.* (All the efforts of the court cannot be thrown into the dustbin now),” he said.

Pointing out that Islam did not permit construction of mosque on any ordinary site, he said the Board was willing to accept the court verdict irrespective of which way it went.

Reiterating that Muslims in general and the AIMPLB in particular, had never said no to a negotiated resolution of the issue, Nadwi said there was also a question of who represented the Hindu community. “When the Shankaracharya came up with a set of proposals there was such a hue and cry from some sections among Hindus that he withdrew the proposals,” he said. However, the Board, on which all Islamic sects and schools of thought were represented, was willing to talk with any sections if they were conducted on definite and credible proposals.

Admitting that the issue was an emotional one, he said it

needed to be handled tactfully and not politicised. “*Masle ko samajhdari aur thande dimagh se hal karna chahiye. Use aise suljhana chahiye ki poora qaum use kubool kare* (The issue need to be resolved with tact and equanimity. It has to be resolved in such a way that it is accepted by the entire nation),” he said.

On demands for a uniform civil code, Nadwi pointed out that India was a diverse country and that it would not be right to enforce a uniform code. Pointing out that any government would find it difficult to impose uniform dietary habits or dress code, he wondered how a common civil code could be implemented. “*Zabradasti karenge kya? Hukumat koshish karte karte thakjayagi* (Will they try to implement it by force? Government will only get tired trying to do so.)”

Moreover, Muslim personal law was handed down by Allah himself. “*Kisi ko bhi use badal ne ka haq nahin hai, usme kuch tabdili nahin ho sakti* (No one has the right to change that. There can be no amendments to it.)” he said.

Welcoming the thaw in Indo-pak relations, Nadwi said that Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf should take the process forward. If countries in Europe have come together as European Union, there should be no difficulty in the two Asian neighbours coming together.

“*Bhai nahin to sahi, dosti se to jee sakte hain. Bashaq donon mulkon ko zamana majboor karega* (If not as brothers, we can at least live as friends. Without doubt, time will force the two countries to come together),” he said. □□

MORAL VIRTUES

M. Manzoor Nomani

Moral virtues and noble qualities of mind and character, also, occupy a place of crucial importance in the structure of Islamic teachings. The guidance furnished by the Quran in this respect is so perfect and well-balanced and integrated to the needs and urges of the human nature that if any one were to act upon it and to discipline the moral aspect of his life according to the Quranic precepts, he would, doubtlessly, become an angel of mercy on the earth. An ideal specimen and proof of it was the life of the holy prophet himself. We have it on the authority of his beloved wife, Hazrat Ayesha, that “ the morals of the Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) were exactly as taught by the Quran.”

The teachings contained in the holy Quran on morality are so extensive that a whole volume can be written on them. We will, however, deal with them only briefly and under a few selected headings in these pages.

(i)Fortitude

Fortitude is a moral virtue of outstanding importance in the Quranic scheme of things. In Urdu language, the term has come to be used in a very limited sense, implying only this much that when a calamity like death, disease or poverty may befall us we should endure it without a grumble, or in case we are harassed and put to loss or injury by a wicked person or an oppressor we should not retaliate, but bear it patiently. But in the terminology of the Quran, its implications are much greater. To put it briefly, fortitude means to endure with courage and firmness any hardship, loss or suffering that may come one's way in the pursuit of a noble cause or objective (like the earning of Divine good pleasure, the winning of the reward of the Hereafter, the propagation of virtue and eradication of vice, the rendering of service to the poor and the carrying of aid and relief to the needy), to remain steadfast in adversity, and to adhere unflinchingly to the path of truth and moral rectitude in times of trial and stress.

Keeping in mind the true significance of fortitude in Islam, read the following verses from the Quran.

"O ye who believe! Seek help (in suffering and adversity) from perseverance and prayer. Allah, surely, is with those who patiently persevere." (II: 153)

The meaning of "Seeking help from perseverance" becomes clear from the verses of Sura-e-Aaraf in which it is stated that when it was decreed by the Pharaoh that all the sons of the Israelites should be slain and only their daughters spared, the following advice was given by Moses to his people:

"Seek help in Allah and persevere. (That is, make up your minds to remain steadfast in truth and to uphold the faith with all your strength : then see what Allah does). Lo! The earth is Allah's (He is its real Owner). He giveth it for an inheritance to whom He will. (VII: 128)

And the last verse of Sura-e-Aal-e-Imran reads:

"O ye who believe! Endure, outdo all others in endurance, be ready, and observe your duty to Allah, in order that ye may succeed." (III: 200)

It often happens that when a man has to suffer repeated losses and setback, while remaining steadfast and pursuing with sincerity the path of faith and truth, and sees no reward of his labour and sacrifices, he begins to lose hope. For such occasions the counsel of the Quran is :

"And have patience. (O Mohammad), for, verily, Allah loseth not the wages of the good. (Sooner or Later they will surely et their full reward)." (XI: 115)

The same assurance is repeated in Sura-e-Yusuf in these words:

"Surely, he who wardeth off evil and perseveres and remains steadfast (findeth favour) ; for, verily, Allah loseth not the wages of those who do good." (XII: 90)

At the same time, the wealth of patience and perseverance is a Divine gift which can be attained only by the Grace of God.

"Endure thou patiently (O Mohammad), and remember that thine patience and fortitude (also) is only by the help of Allah." (XVI: 127)

But, how is the help to be obtained? The Quran advised us, on the one hand, to draw upon the reserves of courage and determination granted to us by God and to resolve that we will bear the strokes of misfortune with fortitude and waver not from the path of Divine good pleasure however hard the circumstances may be, and, on the other, to pray to Him fervently to make it easy for us to be patient and persevering in adversity.

It is related in Sura-e-Baqara about a company of crusaders

of the olden times that when it was attacked by the powerful hordes of Goliath, the faint-hearted gave way to despair and began to say that they could not stand up against such a ruthless enemy, but those in whom there was the strength of faith remained firm in their resolve and said that victory and defeat did not always depend upon material strength and instances were not unknown in history when, by the grace of Allah, a numerically inferior force had overcome a powerful foe.

"How many a little company hath overcome a mighty host by Allah's leave! Allah is with the steadfast." (II: 249)

The Quran tells that those devout men were not dismayed. They gathered up their courage and prayed to Allah for His help.

"And when they went to the field against Goliath and his hosts, they said: Our Lord! Bestow on us endurance, keep us steadfast, and give us help against the disbelieving folk." (II: 250)

After mentioning this prayer, the Quran informs about the outcome of the battle in these words.

"So they routed them by Allah's leave." (II: 251)

The moral of the above parable is that the way to seek the help of God in terms of fortitude and constancy is that a person should, on his part, remain firm and steadfast in times of pain and peril, and, together with it, pray to God, with humility and earnestness, to favour him with His grace and endue him with the celestial wealth of perseverance when he needed it most. God will help him with patience steadfastness who will act in this way.

Though hints and suggestions of the rich recompense and happy sequel of those who patiently persevere are contained, along with the exhortations to be firm and patient in suffering and adversity, in some of the verses quoted above, we will take up a few verses dealing specifically with it.

In Sura-e-Ra'ad where a mention is made of those for whom paradise has been laid out such people particularly referred to who bear every kind of pain and suffering courage and fortitude in the path of God.

"Such as persevere patiently (through trials and hardships) for the sake of seeking their Lord's good pleasure." (XIII: 22)

And further :

"And there (in the Gardens of Eternity) the angels will come forward to receive them at every gate, saying: Peace be unto you because you persevered and remained steadfast. And how sweet is the sequel of the heavenly Home."

(XIII: 23-24)

In Sura-e-Aal-e-Imran, patience has been given the leading place among the attributes of the inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

"The patient, and the truthful, and the obedient.....(III: 17)

Similarly, in Sura-e-Ahzab, where the good tidings of forgiveness and mercy are given to the devout servants of the Lord and their excellent moral qualities are called into notice, pointed reference is made to the virtue of fortitude.

"And men who persevere, and women who persevere." (XXXIII: 35)

And then, after the enumeration of a few more of their attributes, it is set forth that:

"Allah hath prepared for them for givenness and a vast reward." (XXXII: 35)

But, enough.

(ii) Truthfulness

Truthfulness, too, is one of the moral virtues on which the Quran places the greatest value.

A truthful person, according to the Quran, is not merely one who speaks the truth and does not utter a false word, but he should be truthful in heart and action as well. By truthfulness of the heart it is meant that a person should be free from all manner of deceit and hypocrisy, and by truthfulness of action, that there should be no contradiction between what he says and what he does. In other words, in thought, word and deed a truthful person should be equally honest and unvarying. The Quran, further, demands that a person should not only be truthful himself, but, also, keep company strictly with those that are so.

"O ye who believe! Fear God and be only with those that are true (in word and deed)." (IX: 119)

The significance of truthfulness is again, brought out in Sura-e-Baqara in which it is explained that the righteous are those who believe in Allah, the Angels, and the Last Day, and in other transcendental truths, and as a result of it, spend their wealth on the poor and the needy and keep their promises and are patient in tribulation and adversity and remain steadfast in faith in times of stress, and, then, whole discussion is summed up in these two simple sentences:

"Such are they who are truthful. Such are the God-fearing." (II: 177)

In the same way, in Sura-e-Hujurat, it is set forth that:

"The (true) believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the truthful." (XLIX: 15)

For the very reason that truthfulness includes truthfulness of heart and action as well the term Munafiqeen (hypocrites) has been used in Sura-e-Ahzab as the antonym of Sadiqeen (truthful).

"That Allah may reward the true for their truth and punish the hypocrites if He will." (XXXIII: 24)

It will be evident that those who, along with faith, are distinguished with the virtue of truthfulness are the ideal servants of the Lord and next in nobility and perfection only to the sacred Apostle. In the Quran where the four classes of believers are defined who are closest to the Lord and upon whom there is His special favour and reward, those to be mentioned after the Apostles are the men who are truthful.

"Who so obeyeth Allah and the Messenger, they are with those unto whom Allah hath shown favour, of the Prophet and the truthful and the martyrs and the righteous. The best of company are they." (IV: 69)

The high value attached by the Quran to truthfulness can, also, be imagined from the fact tribute has been paid in it to the memory of Prophet Abraham by saying that he was truthful.

"And make mention (O Mohammad) in the scripture of Abraham. Verily, he was truthful, a Prophet." (XIX: 41)

In the same Chapter, for Prophet Idrees (identified as Enoch), too, the same expression has been used, and the highest laudatory phrase employed for Hazrat Mariam (Mary), also, runs as follows: The Mother of Christ, Mary was a truthful soul. About Hazrat Yusuf (Joseph), again, it is related that in the prison the convict who was so deeply impressed by him that he had become his disciple used to address him as: O Yusuf! The Most Truthful."

What is more, the Quran asserts that truthfulness is a Divine Attribute by proclaiming that God is the Most Truthful.

"Who is more true in statement than Allah?" (IV: 122)

"Who can be truthful than Allah in utterance?" (IV: 87)

From the above, one can conclude for oneself what an immense reward will there be on this moral attribute from God. Yet, we will reproduce a few verses from the Quran bearing specifically upon it. We have already, seen the verses from Sura-e-Aal-e-Imran in which fortitude and truthfulness have been given

preference among the distinguishing qualities of the inheritors of Paradise.

"The patient, and the truthful, and obedient." (III: 17)

In Sura-e-Ahzab where the tidings of Forgiveness and Paradise are given to believing men and women, the first attribute of theirs to find mention, after belief in God and Islam and loyalty to Him, is that they are truthful.

"And men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth." (XXXIII: 35)

These are, we told, the blessed servants of the Lord for whom He has made the decision of Forgiveness and a huge reward.

"Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward." (XXXIII: 35)

Similarly, at the end of Sura-e-Maida, it is revealed in connection with the Last Day that:

"That is the Day on which their truthfulness will profit the truthful, for there are the Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they are secure forever. Allah taking pleasure in them and they in Him, that is, indeed, a great triumph." (V: 119)

(iii) FULFILLING PROMISES

It is a part of truthfulness that when a promise is made it should be fulfilled. In fact, the fulfilment of pledges and other engagements has been referred to as truthfulness at a number of places in the Quran.

"Of the believers are men who are true to that which they covenanted with Allah." (XXXIII: 23)

In the above verse, the expression of being true to one's pledged word has been used to convey the idea of keeping it.

Be that as it may, the observance of one's promises and the carrying out of one's engagements is a special branch of truthfulness, but since in the Quran it has been enjoined as a virtue in its own right we have decided to deal with it separately.

Read the Quran :

"O ye who believe! Fulfil your undertaking. (V: 1)

"And fulfil (every) engagement, for every engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning). (XVII: 34)

In addition to such forthright guidance and clear-cut commands, the Quran also seeks to foster the noble quality of keeping one's word among its followers by holding forth the assur-

ance of divine favour and grace and felicity in the Hereafter. Over and over again, does it emphasis that a special, distinguishing virtue of the bondmen of God is that they fulfil their undertakings.

“And (the righteous are) those who fulfil their engagement when they make one. (II: 177)

“And who are the keepers of their pledge and their covenant. (XXIII: 8)

With the same object the Quran, further, declares the fulfilment of promises to be one of the outstanding Attributes of the Almighty.

“Who fulfileth his covenant better than Allah? (IX: 111)

“It is a promise of Allah, (and) Allah faileth not His promise. (XXX: 6)

“And Allah faileth not His promise. (XXII: 47)

“Verily, Allah faileth not to keep the covenant. (XIII: 31)

The purport of all these verses is that the fulfilment of promises is a Divine Attribute and God never fails to keep His covenants. We should also, therefore, remain true to our word and carry out our engagements faithfully.

(iv) TRUSTWORTHINESS

Closely related to truthfulness is the quality of trustworthiness. It is an important branch of the same. What trustworthiness denotes, in common parlance, is that if something is entrusted to us, or committed to our safe-keeping, we should be scrupulously honest about it and return it, intact and willingly, to the rightful owner when we are required to do so. But from the Quranic point of view, its meanings are much wider and the faithful discharge of one's duties and obligations and the showing of due regard to all the things that call for an upright and conscientious behaviour, also, fall within their range. In the light of those observations read the following verse of the Quran:

“Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due. (IV: 58)

It is, thus, the duty of a Muslim that if a person deposited anything with him, or he held anything in trust, he should restore it honestly to whom it was due. In the same way, he ought to acquit himself conscientiously of all other obligations, whether monetary or otherwise, to the extent that if someone were to seek his advice about something, he should advise him sincerely and were the secret of anyone to come to his knowledge, he should treat it as a trust and desist from disclosing it to others.

The Quran also contains happy tidings of deliverance and Gardens of Paradise to those who are trustworthy and discharge their obligations honestly and faithfully. In the *suras* of *Momineen* and *Ma'arif* it is laid down clearly that one of the lofty attributes of the dwellers Paradise is that they are the shepherds of their trusts and covenants.

"And those who are the shepherds of their trusts and their covenants. (XXIII: 8, and LXX: 32)

The Quran, also, declares trustworthiness to be attributes of the holy Apostles and of the Archangel, Gabriel. For instance in Sura-e-Shua'ra, it is stated about a number of Apostles that they had made it clear to their people that :

"Verily, I am a trustworthy Messenger unto you; so keep your duty to Allah, and obey me. (XXVI: 107-108; 125-26; 143-44; 162-63; 178-79)

And about Archangel Gabriel it is stated in the same Sura that:

"The Quran is a revelation of the Lord of the Worlds) which the True Spirit (i.e. the chief trustworthy Angel. Gabriel) hath brought down. (XXVI: 193)

All said and done, such of us as are desirous of cultivating an affinity with the Apostles and the Angels and having a share in their excellent moral attributes should try their utmost to develop the quality of trustworthiness in themselves and fulfil their duties and obligations with due care and honesty.

(v) JUSTICE

Justice forms an essential part of Islamic ethics. It is, also, a branch of honesty and truthfulness. It means that we should be fair and honest in our dealings with everyone and do by him and say about him only what is just and true.

The entire fabric of our society is held together by the attribute of justice. A group or community which is lacking in it will, in the same measure, be denied the favour of the Lord, and in this world, too, its end will not be happy.

Indicative of the high importance attached by the Quran to justice is the verse reproduced below.

"We verily, sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Criterion, that men may conduct themselves with justice (towards each other). (LVII: 25)

The word Criterion here signifies the commands and directives enjoining justice and equity. The purpose of the above verse is to indicate that God has revealed the edicts and injunctions

of justice through His Apostles in the same way as He has sent down the Scriptures so that His bondmen may pursue the path of devotion and fidelity and observe fairness and justice in their dealings with each other, individually as well as collectively. The manner in which the words Criterion and Scripture have occurred, one after the other, also goes to show what great stress is laid by the Quran on justice and fair play in the economy of human affairs.

"Say (O Mohammad, to those Jews and Christians): I believe in whatever Scripture Allah hath sent down, and I am commanded to be just among you, Allah is our Lord as well as your Lord. (XLII: 15)

Mentioned in this verse, too, is the command to be just side by side with belief in the holy Scripture. And, in *Sura-e-Nahl*, where a number of important moral injunctions have been set forth for the believers, the first is that they should be just.

"God commands justice and doing of good. (XVI: 90)

It occurs, again, in *Sura-e-An'am*:

"And when you are called upon to decide (in a dispute), do justice thereunto, even though it be against a kinsman. (VI: 152)

And, in *Sura-e-Nissa*, it is stated in greater detail that the believers are enjoined to be firm and impartial in justice and to depose truthfully when they are called upon to do so even though it be against themselves or their parents or other relatives.

"O ye who believe! Be ye staunch in justice, and (truthful) witnesses for the sake of Allah, even though it be against yourselves or your parents or your kindred, whether the case be of a rich man or a poorman, for Allah is nearer to both (than you are). So follow not your passion (or desire in the doing of justice), lest ye lapse from truth, and if ye lapse or fall away, then Allah is ever informed of what ye do. (IV: 135)

How candid and comprehensive this verse is with regard to the doing of justice! It commands us to adhere strictly to the path of justice and equity and to speak nothing but the truth when we may appear as a witness. We ought to stick to these principles as a matter of religious duty, however harmful or damaging it may turn out to be for ourselves or our friends and kinsmen. We should not be partial to anyone if we are called upon to judge or to depose in a dispute. We should not take the side of a rich man because of his riches or of a poor man because of his poverty (i.e. out of pity or compassion for him). Truth and justice must prevail over all other considerations, for God knows best. He is better aware of the hardships of the poor man than us. He is the true Friend and Protector of everyone. Moreover, we are called upon

not to fight shy of adjudicating or testifying in a dispute for fear of incurring the displeasure of one or the other party for these things, also, care contrary to the spirit of justice and constitute a sin.

The Quran enjoins justice to those also__ individuals as well as communities__ who may be harbouring enmity or ill-will against us.

“ And let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; that is next to piety. (V: 8)

In the earlier verse it was laid down that affection or prejudice, or considerations of personal gain or loss, or of power and position of anyone, or the sentiments of compassion and sympathy for the underdog and the desire to be helpful to him must, in no case, be allowed to stand in the way of fairness and justice. Justice must be done and nothing but the truth must be spoken in all situations for that is the wish and command of the Lord. Now, in this last verse we are exhorted to be just and fair even to the enemies of our life, property and faith. We are to judge honestly and impartially in respect of them, and to support them and decide in their favour if they are in the right irrespective of their hatred or hostility.

(VI) GENEROSITY

Generosity, too, is a moral virtue of outstanding merit in the Quranic design of living. It means that a man should not keep the fruits of his wealth, power or other worldly attainments to himself, but share them, also, with his fellow men. All the different forms of service to humanity are covered by it, such as the spending of wealth on the indigent and the needy, the rendering of assistance to others through one's knowledge and skill and the taking of pains for the sake of a fellow-man by carrying to him the help and succour he may be in need of. All these forms of service make the different branches of generosity, and the Quran by declaring it to be a fundamental virtue, calls upon its followers to practise it in all its aspects.

In the opening section of *Sura-e-Baqara*, (which may be called introductory part of the Quran), it is stated that among the chief moral attributes of those who attain salvation by following its guidance, one is that they spend of what God has bestowed upon them on others for His sake.

"And who spend of that which We have bestowed upon them (on others).

(II: 3)

The commentators of the Quran are agreed that the phrase what we have bestowed upon them in the above verse embraces, apart from wealth, all the others gifts of God as well, like strength, knowledge and skill which can be employed for the benefit of others. In the same Chapter of *Baqara*, again, it is explicitly set forth that:

"O ye believe! Spend of that where with We have provided you ere a day come when there will be no bargaining, nor friendship, nor intercession.

(II: 254)

And three sections later, while enjoining the expending of one's money, energy and other resources in the way of God, the assurance is given of a rich premium.

"And whatever good thing ye spend (on others), it is for yourselves, and this spending of your should be for no other purpose than the seeking of Allah's good pleasure; and whatever good thing ye spend, it will be repaid to you in full, and ye will not be wronged. (II: 272)

And, further:

"Those who spend (for the sake of God, on others) their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, verily, their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them nor shall they grieve. (II: 274)

Aside of the recompense in the Hereafter, the Quran says that those who spend their earnings in God's way are repaid most liberally by Him in this world, too, and thus, offers another inducement. It characterises such spending as a profitable undertaking from the material point of view also and compares it with agricultural farming in which a person reaps a hundred grains for each grain that he sows.

"The likeness of those who spend their wealth in Allah's way is as the likeness of a grain which groweth seven ears and in every ear there are a hundred grains. Allah giveth increase (even greater than this) to whom He will. Allah is All-embracing. All-knowing. (II: 261)

Furthermore, the Quran asserts that the money spent with the object of earning Divine pleasure is, in truth, a loan lent out to Him.

"And lend unto Allah a goodly loan (i.e. then intent should be good and the thing given to others in God's way should also be good. (LXXIII: 20)

"Who is it that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan so that Allah may repay it with an increase manifold? (II: 245)

"Who is he that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan, that He may double it for him and his may be a rich reward? (LVII: 11)

"And if you lend unto Allah a goodly loan, He will double it for you and forgive you, for Allah is Responsive, Clement. (LXIV: 17)

The allusion to the goodly loan is a gesture of Divine Grace otherwise God is too Exalted and too Sublime to stand in need of such a thing. Is He not Wealthier than the worlds?

Another teaching of the Quran in this connection is that what may be given in charity or spent on others for the sake of God should be good and worthwhile. It should not be that when an article has become useless and is no longer needed by the possessor, it is given away to the poor.

"O ye who believe! Spend of the good things (in the way of God) which ye have earned and of that which Allah brings forth from the earth for you, and do not intentionally spend the bad things from among them in charity—things which ye would not like to use for yourselves, and know that Allah is Absolute, Owner of praise. (II: 267)

"You will not attain unto piety until ye spend of that which ye love; and whatever ye spend (whether good or bad), Allah is aware thereof. (III: 92)

The Quran demands that all acts of generosity should be motivated solely by the desire to seek the countenance of Allah and by no other consideration, such as that of fame or glory.

"And ye spend not save in search of Allah's good pleasure. (II: 272)

Thus, the hall-mark of the believers is that when they spend on others or serve them in any other way it is wholly for seeking Allah's favour and nothing else.

And it is asserted in *Sura-e-Al-Leyl* that the devout servants of the Lord who spend their earnings on others for His sake, and as prescribed by Him, and there is no other desire or motive in their hearts, will attain His good pleasure and the Lord will save them, also, from the agony of the Fire.

"Far removed from the flaming Fire will be the righteous who giveth his wealth that he may grow in goodness and hath in his heart no other favour or reward, except as seeking to fulfill the purpose of His Lord, Most High; he verily, will attain His favour, (XCII: 17-21)

Finally, it is necessary that no obligation is placed on the person to whom help is given nor are deeds of charity followed up with painful reminders thereof or reproach, or their virtue will be lost and they will avail us nothing in terms of Divine recompense.

"O ye who believe! Render not vain your almsgiving by reproach and injury. (II: 264)

(VII) SELF-DENIAL

A more refined form of generosity is that a person subordinated his own needs to the needs of others. It is this state of the

mind which makes it easy for a man to give away from his provision to others while needing it himself and to endure pain and suffering willingly in order to bring solace and comfort to an unfortunate brother.

"And covet not the things in which Allah hath made some of you excel others. (IV: 32)

This, in brief, is what contentment stands for according to the Quran.

(X) RELIANCE ON GOD

The fountainhead of contentment is *Tawakkul*, i.e., reliance on God. A person who has a complete faith in the Providential care of the Lord and is satisfied in his heart that He is sufficient for his needs will instinctively attain the highest degree of contentment. Along with it, trust in God is, in itself, an excellent spiritual attribute. He who is blessed with it habitually thinks and feels that God, and His authority and Power, and Columns and Treasures are always with Him. The Quran has laid a great emphasis on the cultivation of this virtue by its followers. A few of its exhortations are given below.

"If Allah is your helper none can overcome you, and if He withdraws His help from you, who is there who can help you? In Allah let the believers put their sole trust. (III: 160)

"Allah! There is no God save Him. In Allah, therefore, let the believers put their trust. (LXIV: 13)

"And trust thou in the Living One Who dieth not (while all the rest is perishable) (XXV: 58)

"And whosoever putteth his trust in Allah, He will suffice him, Lo! Allah bringeth His command to fulfilment. (LXV: 3)

(XI) HUMILITY

Humility is a most important virtue in the Quranic design of social and moral behaviour. It is the reverse of haughtiness and vainglory and denotes that a person should never think too highly of himself. He should regard himself a lowly servant of the Lord and practise meekness in his dealings with others.

Humility expresses itself through all the aspects of a man's personality, even in such minor things as his manner of walking, sitting, rising and speaking.

In the words of the Quran:

"And the servants of God, the Most Gracious, are those who walk on the earth in humility. (XXV: 63)

"And walk not on the earth with haughtiness. Verily, thou canst not tear up the earth nor canst thou stretch to the height of the Hills. (XVII: 37)

The Quran relates about Prophet Luqman that while exhorting his son, he gave him this advise concerning humility.

"Turn not thy cheek in scorn toward folk (do not behave with vanity), nor walk with pertness on the earth; verily, God loveth not the braggart boaster. But modest in thy bearing and subdue thy voice. Lo! The harshest of all voices is the voice of the ass. (XXXI: 18-19)

The afore-mentioned verses contain a complete sermon on meekness. But, at some places, the Quran address itself directly to the holy Prophet and tells him to be meek and humble in order to emphasise that however great or distinguished a person may be, he should not give himself airs but behave with modesty towards his fellowmen.

"Lower thy arms (in modesty) for the believers. (XV: 88)

"And lower thy arms (in modesty) unto those believers who follow thee. (XXVI: 215)

It is, also, evident from the two verses quoted above that meekness is to be shown only to the believers. They, alone, are worthy of it. In case of the unbelievers, the infidels and the heretics, if they are not at war with us or bent upon causing us harm or injury in any other way, our attitude towards them should be one of politeness and forbearance, and proper kindness and magnanimity should be shown to them, as the occasion may demand. But on account of their infidelity and polytheism, they are not deserving of meekness and modesty. To behave with them with humility will not be consistent with religious self-respect. Hence, the command to be modest is given in the Quran only in relation to those who believe.

(XI) VANITY AND SELF-CONCEIT

Vanity and self-conceit, as we have indicated already, is the very antithesis of modesty and humbleness. It is, therefore, as much repugnant to God as humility is pleasing to Him.

"Asuredly Allah knoweth that which they keep hidden and that which they make known. Lo! He loveth not the proud. (XVI: 23)

"Lo! Allah loveth not such as are proud and boastful. (IV: 36)

Only those will find a place in the Gardens of Eternity who shun pride and are meek and humble.

"As for that abode of the Hereafter We assign unto them who seek not arrogance in the world, nor spread corruption. (XXVII: 83)

We, further, learn from the above verse, and it is also verified by experience, that the root cause of all mischief in the world is vanity and self-conceit.

Vanity, also, is the thing which, generally, holds back a person from the acceptance of truth it is narrated about many a Prophet in the Quran that he was rejected by the leaders of his community merely out of pride and arrogance. Thus, of pharaoh and his people it is stated that though when they saw the signs of Allah Moses had brought, they were satisfied in their hearts that those were truly from Him, and Moses, who had brought them, was His chosen Apostle, they declined to accept them on account of vanity and stuck to their paganish beliefs. In the end, they were visited by a dreadful punishment.

" And they denied them, though their souls acknowledged them, for spite and arrogance. Then see the nature of the consequence for the wrong-doers. (XXVII: 14)

And about another community of 'out-castes' who were condemned to the eternal chastisement of Hell it is narrated that the main cause of their misfortune, also, was haughtiness.

" For when it was said to them: There is no God save One Allah, they were scornful (out of pride) and said: shall we forsake our gods for a mad poet? (XXXVII: 35-36)

The eternal damnation of the Devil, too, was due to his incorrigible arrogance. The Quran relates that when God bade the Devil to prostrate himself before Adam and the Devil refused to carry it out, God enquired from him:

" What hindered thee that thou didst not fall prostrate when We bade thee? (VII: 12)

And the Devil replied:

" I am better than him. (VII: 12)

In any case, it was pride which led the Devil to insubordination and revolt.

" He (the Devil) demurred through pride, and so became a disbeliever. (II: 34)

(XII) FORGIVENESS AND SELF-RESTRAINT

Forgiveness and self-restraint imply that the provocation offered by the other man and his mischief and viciousness should be borne with good grace and although we may be in a position to punish him for his wickedness, we should refrain from taking our revenge and be ready to forgive and forget his mean, stupid and hurtful acts. This, evidently, is a moral virtue of the highest

order on which the Quran has laid due stress. It has been described by it as one of the special qualities of the devout servants of the Lord.

"Those who spend of that which Allah hath given them, in ease and in adversity, in His way, and those who control their anger and are forgiving towards fellow-men. Allah loveth such good-doing servants. (III: 134)

In *Sura-e-Shura* while it is acknowledged that everyone is legally entitled to have due revenge of a wrong or injury done to him, it is pointed out that a more honourable and praiseworthy course would be that he bore it with patience and forgave.

"And, verily, whosoever is patient and forgiveth. Lo! That, verily, is an act of courage and high-mindedness. (XLII: 43)

In the same chapter, a few verses earlier, it is set forth that an exceptional quality of the believers on whom there will be the special favour of the Lord on the Day of judgement is that they suppress their anger and are forgiving.

"When they are aroused (over some affront or injury) in anger, they forgive. (XLII: 37)

In *Sura-e-Noor*, people are exhorted to be patient and forgiving in these fascinating words:

"Let (the believers) forgive and show indulgence (to those who transgress against them). Do you! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (XXIV: 22)

Anyone who wants kindness and indulgence to be shown to him by God should himself be ready to forgive those who sin against him. God will, also, then be forgiving and merciful towards him and the Divine Mercy and Forgiveness will, naturally, be in keeping with His High Splendour and Glory. Another aspect of the uplifting incentive contained in the above verse is that God proclaims about the course of conduct He is prescribing for His slaves that it is His own practice as well, and this is what He Himself does towards his erring servants. Since God is Benevolent and Merciful to His defaulting slaves, His slaves, too, should be indulgent and forgiving towards their transgressing brethren and, thus, forge a qualitative closeness and identity with Him.

"And if ye forbear, and overlook, and forgive, then Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (LXIV: 14)

These verse were of a general character. Now, read one which is addressed directly to the sacred Prophet.

"Keep to forgiveness (O Mohammed), and enjoin kindness and bear patiently with the ignorant. (VII: 199)

Here are two more in the praise of those who show for-

givenness to their opponents and enemies.

"(Those will be given reward twice over) who when they hear an evil talk (from the wicked and the ignorant) they withdraw from it and say: Unto us are our works and unto you are your works. Peace be unto you! We desire not to have an argument with the ignorant. (XXVIII: 55)

"(The faithful salves of the Beneficent are they who) when the foolish talk to them they do not enter into an argument with them) but say: peace. (XXV: 63)

It is worthy of note that the Quranic teachings on forgiveness and self-restraint we have discussed here were related only to personal sphere. If someone did a wrong to us, or sinned against us in any other way, in the matter of our individual rights or interests, it would be best for us to forgive. The Quran expects us to do so. But should a person or community seek to spread mischief and corruption on the earth, or to pervert its social or moral climate, by flagrantly violating the limits laid down by God, our duty would lie in dealing firmly with him or it. To show compassion and forgiveness to such a person or group would amount to a betrayal of humanity. It would be an act of infringement against the Divine Law. The Quran, therefore, calls upon us to put down all such movements, persons or activities with a heavy hand and when it enjoins that the wrong-doers and mischief-mongers ought to be dealt with sternly it is manifestly in respect of these situations and circumstances. This distinction must be borne in mind while studying the guidance of the Quran on what our attitude should be towards the evil-doers and transgressors.

(XIII) COURAGE

Side by side with its teachings on meekness, humility and tolerance, the Quran, also, sets great store by the qualities of boldness, courage and determination and the display and employment of force and firmness on the proper occasion. For instance, when faith or justice be at stake, or there may ensue a war between truth and falsehood, the Quran enjoins upon its followers not to shirk their duty but give the fullest proof of gallantry and steadfastness in the defence of what they cherish.

"O ye who believe! When ye meet those who desbelieve in battle, turn not your backs to them. (VIII: 15)

"Lo! Allah loveth those who battle for His cause in ranks, as if they were a wall of granite (or a solid structure) (LXI: 4)

In another Chapter the courage and religious enthusiasm of the Companions of the holy Prophet have been alluded to in

glowing terms who refused to be discouraged when, with a view to frighten them, they were told that the enemy had made enormous preparations against them had collected a huge quantity of arms. On the contrary, these reports only helped to steel their hearts and intensify their religious spirit and they declared that they would see what came; God was sufficient for them.

"Those unto whom men said: Lo! The people have gathered against you and made great preparations for your destruction: Therefore, fear them, the threat of the anger only increased the faith of them and they cried: Allah is sufficient for us. Most Excellent is He unto whom we put our trust. (III: 173)

In the same way, the unparalleled heroism and religious fervour displayed by the believers in the Battle of Ahzab against an enemy, a hundred times stronger, has been commended in these words:

"And when the true believers saw the clans of the enemy, they said: This is that which Allah and His Messenger promised us. Allah and His Messenger are true. It did but confirm them in their faith and resoluteness. (XXXIII: 22)

In the final analysis, it is the fear of death or some other loss or injury which makes a man a coward. There is no greater impediment to courage than this. The Quran, as such, has taken good care to set it at nought by asserting that the time of death is fixed: if one's appointed hour has come, no one can avert it, and if it has not, no one can bring it nearer. It cannot be altered even by the fraction of a second. Likewise, whether a disaster overtakes us or not is dependent solely on the Will of God. No misfortune can touch us, or be warded off except by Allah's leave. It is all in His Hands. There can be no running away from what He has decreed.

"No soul can ever die except by Allah's leave and at a term appointed. (III: 145)

"When the appointed time (of their death) cometh, then they cannot put it off an hour, nor hasten it. (X: 49)

"No calamity befalleth (anyone) save by Allah's leave. (LXIV: 11)

"Say (O Mohammed): Naught befalleth us save that which Allah hath decreed for us. He is our Protecting Friend. In Allah let believers put their trust. (IX: 51)

Can there be any room for timidity or cowardice in the hearts into which these truths have made their way?

(XIII) DIGNITY AND SELF-RESPECT

Allied to courage is the sense of dignity and self-respect. The Quran wants its followers to be self-respecting and avoid

things that may degrade them in the eyes of others. As for example, its advice to them is that they should refrain from disclosing their state, as far as possible, to others even if they may be forced by poverty to starvation. Of such persons it says:

"The unthinking will account them well-to-do because of their restraint. Thou shalt know them by the expression on their faces. (II: 273)

Further, a distinctive quality of the chosen servants of the Lord has been said to be that they conduct themselves with dignity in situation that are lacking in decency and refinement.

"And when they pass near disgraceful things, they pass by with dignity. (XXV: 72)

In fine, the advice of the Quran to the believers is that they should always act up to a standard of worthy conduct.

(XV) MODESTY

Modesty is another virtue which the Quran prescribes to its followers. As a logical corollary to it, they are enjoined to shun the opposite habits of shamelessness and perversity (for which it uses the comprehensive term of *Fahisha* or *Fuhasha*, meaning lewdness). In fact, lewdness and immodesty are often given the leading place in the Quran among the things that are forbidden to the believers as in the undermentioned verse of Sura-e-Nahl which in spite of its brevity is regarded to be a self-contained directive on morality (and for which reason is generally recited at the end of the sermon at the Friday congregational prayers). It is, first, set forth in this verse that Allah enjoineth justice and kindness and charity and generosity, and then, it is added:

"He forbiddeth lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He exhorteth you so that ye may take heed. (XVI: 90)

Likewise, in Sura-e-A'raf, where the things that are fundamentally prohibited to Muslims are mentioned, lewdness has received the foremost notice.

"(O Prophet) say: My Allah forbiddeth all lewdness and indecencies, apparent as well as hidden (i.e. whether performed openly or secretly), and sin and wrongful oppression, and that ye associate with Allah that for which no warrant hath been revealed, and that ye tell concerning Allah that which ye know not. (VII: 33)

The prohibition of lewdness and immodesty in these and other verses is actually another way of sanctioning and enjoining modesty and purity.

The Quran, also, disallows deeds, customs and practices which though, in themselves, do not constitute lewdness, are capable of leading upto it. As for instance, it requires that when men and women who are not intimately related to one another happen to be together, they should lower their gaze and not look at each other directly.

"(O Prophet)! Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (in the company of women who are not closely related to them) and be modest. That is purer for them. verily, Allah is Aware of what they do. And tell believing women to lower their gaze (in the company of men who are not closely related to them) and be modest. (XXIV: 30-31)

From the wording of afore-mentioned verses it is clear that the restriction on the eyes has been placed solely for the promotion of modesty. The same is the object behind all the injunctions concerning purdah.

In Sura-e-Ahzab, the believers are advised that if they have to ask for anything from the holy Prophet's wives, they should do so from behind a curtain and the wisdom of it is explained in these words:

"It is purer for your hearts and for their hearts ⁽¹⁾ (XXXIII: 53)

In the same Chapter it is explicitly mentioned about men and women to whom joyful tidings of Forgiveness and a vast Reward are given that they guarded their modesty.

"And men who guard their modesty and women who guard their modesty, and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Allah much__ for them Allah hath prepared forgiveness and a vast reward. (XXXIII: 35)

In the same context, in the *suras* of *Mominoon* and *Ma'arif*, we read:

"And those who preserve their chastity (these will dwell in Gardens, honoured). (XXIII: 5 and LXX:29)

In conclusion, modesty is among the moral virtue with which the question of salvation is closely related.

(XVI) CLEANLINESS

The Quran makes it religiously binding upon its followers, as a part of its teachings on good manners and noble qualities, to observe cleanliness and keep themselves free from filth and squalor.

"And keep they raiment clean and shun all filth and pollution. (LXXIV: 4-5)

"Allah loveth those who are neat and clean and take good care of it. (IX:

108)

*“ Truly, Allah loveth those who turn unto Him, and loveth those who care
for cleanness (II: 222)*

Cleanliness, thus, makes a man worthy of the love of God.

Our Lord! Make us among those who repent, and among
those who care for cleanliness!□□

(1) Although this verse is in respect of the Prophet's wives, its application is general.

AN AMERICAN PRISONER'S JOURNEY TO ISLAM

AN-NAJEE JONES

You hear many times about men entering prison and accepting the religion of Islam. Some say that it is a unique phenomenon particular to the black inmate population, male as well as female. The truth of the matter is that many prisoners of diverse backgrounds make the reversion to Islam. My story is only one of many. It is written as a testimony to what faith in Allah can do to a person physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I pray that my story inspires others to study the signs of the Creator so that they may recognise the Truth and live in accordance with it.

I was first introduced to Islam in 1984. At that time, I was only a boy of 11 years and did not understand what exactly I was hearing. I was told that Muslims pray to only one God and do not eat pork. I was also told that Islam is a religion truly for the black race and that any other race could never really be Muslim. All of this was strange to me. I was raised in a Baptist family and was taught that the only way that I could be saved was to believe in Jesus while also recognising that the only way that I could talk to God was by praying to Jesus. I was told that I was a sinful person by nature and that the only way that I could be purified was through the "blood of Chirst." These contradictory philosophies only served to confuse my young mind even more. So in response to this mental onslaught, I chose to ignore both.

During my teenage years I attended neither church or mosque nor any other type of religious institution. Instead, I devoted myself to preparing for my worldly future. I dedicated myself to my country. I entered the ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) programme at my high school and excelled. I was told that there was no greater calling than to stand up and fight for one's country. To this ideal, I put forth all of my efforts. It was also during this time that I started to fall prey to street life. I soon gained a reputation as a tough guy, and while it earned me a lot of respect from others on the streets, it also led to my downfall.

On August 26, 1990 I was arrested and charged with “aggravated assault with a deadly weapon” as well as “accessory to murder.” Being highly publicised, my case sent shockwaves through the community. Most of my co-defendants were good students who were expected to succeed in whatever they chose to do. Thus, many people were baffled as to how all of this happened. In September of that year, our charges were upgraded to “organised crime conspiracy to commit murder” and “organised crime murder.” I was then placed in solitary confinement because I was considered a threat to the security of the institution. In April 1991, I was formally sentenced to 20 years in prison for the part I played in those crimes. I would like to think that I was man at that time; but in reality, I was still a boy trying to act like a man. And so in this self-deluded state, I was thrust into an environment that I was totally unprepared to deal with.

On July 21, 1991, I arrived at my first unit of assignment, the Clemens Unit in Brazoria, Texas. This unit was nicknamed the “Burning Hell.” My first cell partner called himself Mac-T. He attempted to lay down the rules of the cell immediately: 1- take off your shoes before entering the cell, 2- clean the floor before you leave the cell, and 3- no noise when he is praying. Thinking that I was tough, I really did not try to listen to what he was saying. So needless to say, we did not stay in the cell together longer than a day. Only in later years did I learn that he was a Muslim. Soon after that, I started to assimilate into the prison culture: fighting, stealing, gangbanging, and getting drunk at every chance. Anything to try to forget my wasted life and shattered dreams. I left Clemens in December of 1991 so that I could attend college at the Hughes Unit in Gatesville, Texas. My journey was just beginning.

Upon my arrival at the Hughes Unit, I immediately recognised the complete difference in the environment, where as in Clemens everyone was about the same age as me, in this new unit most people were 15 to 20 years older than I was. My reputation preceded me to Hughes, so I was forced to live up to it. A few of the older men saw what I was doing and tried to warn me that against it. Nonetheless, the cycle that I had started in Clemens came back in full swing. I fought a lot, drank a lot, and did everything I could do to break the rules of an establishment that I saw

as corrupt.

In 1993 when my father died, my life spiralled completely out of control. In my eyes, I had nothing to live for-my one source of stability was gone. It was during this time that I met three brothers who would have a huge impact on my life. One was named Yaqub, another Kareem, and the third Wadi. These were three of the most disciplined people I had ever met. They were devout Muslims whose sole purpose in life was to please God. They would often invite me to the Islamic services, but with my gangster persona and corrupted mentality, I would decline and go on about my mischief. By this time, I considered myself an atheist. The only thing I worshipped was power; the only thing I believed in was myself. It was in that state that I was to meet a young man who would inspire me to return to the one thing that had been missing from my life for years: God.

It was 1995, and I was working in the kitchen as a diet cook. My job was to ensure that the food was up to dietary standards and that each person on the approved list received his tray during mealtime. My assistant was a young man named Haywood. He was a Muslim and went by the name Mustafa. We were good friends and would talk about everything: politics, education, and even religion. And so one day, while he was studying, I asked him what he was reading. He replied, "This does not have anything to do with drinking or killing__ you wouldn't be interested." I bothered him until he finally let me see what he was studying: he was learning Arabic. When he asked if I knew what it was and I said yes, he didn't believe me. I told him that I had seen it when I was introduced to Islam in 1984. I told him that I could even learn it if he taught me the letters. He said, "No way!" So I tried to bet him that I could learn it, but he told me that Muslims do not gamble.

I resolved to learn Arabic just to prove to him that I could. He taught me the letters and around 20 minutes later, I had them memorised. The feeling of accomplishment was incredible! When he saw that I had committed them to memory, he gave me a short list of words to learn, thinking that I could do nothing with it. I really do not blame him for feeling that way__ I know that I would have felt the same way about me. After learning those words, I needed another way to study Arabic. Little did I know that my

next decision would change my life forever.

On a whim (or perhaps by inspiration), I decided to ask a Muslim named Faheem for a copy of the Quran to aid me in my study of the Arabic language. He gave me one saying, "God-willing, you will become a Muslim." I did not think so but I thanked him anyway. My next step was to start trying to read the Arabic in the Quran.

As I was reading, some of the injunctions and stories in the scripture caught my attention. They touched me in a way that is hard to describe, and after a few months of studying, I told Faheem that I was thinking about becoming a Muslim. He encouraged me and gave me a lot of advice. In my studies, I reflected upon the actions of Yaqub, Wadi, and Kareem. These were three brothers who had endured the brutality and hopelessness of prison life for decades and still held their heads up high with the knowledge that all things are in the hands of Allah. No matter what man tried to do to them, they maintained their faith in the doctrine that there is no might or power except the Power of the One True God, Allah. And so it was, with these thoughts in my head, that I continued my journey.

The final piece fell in place on a Friday night. The next morning I was supposed to pick up a package of illegal contraband that I had been waiting for. As I sat in my housing area that night, I decided that I would read from the Quran. As I opened the Book, the words of a particular verse jumped out at me: Surah 3, verse 103, which reads, "And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it, thus does Allah make clear to you His communications that you may follow the right way." These words shook my very soul such that I decided not to go to my meeting the next morning. The next day, I found out that the person whom I was supposed to meet had been apprehended. I was so taken aback by this that I did something that I had not done since my youth: I prayed. I prayed for forgiveness of my sins and bad conduct; I prayed for guidance and mercy from the God I had turned my back on. I decided then and there that I wanted to dedicate my life to doing good and pleasing God.

When I took this good news to Faheem he sat me down and asked me if I was resolved on my decision. When I told him yes, he began to educate me on the basic beliefs and teachings of

Islam. When other Muslims saw this, some encouraged me while others, familiar with my ways, told the brothers that they were wasting their time. I would not be denied, however. As I learned the Prayer, a whole world opened up to me that I had never seen before. In this world was peace, contentment, and most importantly, a sense of completeness. The lessons that I was learning about *Tawheed* (Unity and Oneness of God) touched my soul. By the Grace of Allah, and with the help of the Muslims that were in the cellblock with me, I learned very quickly.

I was ready to take my *Shahadah* (public declaration of faith), but I still had one piece of unfinished business: I needed to disassociate myself from my gang. By that time, I had a lot of rank and influence in my organisation so I thought that there would be no problem with me walking away. I thought wrong. They say that with knowledge comes responsibility, and with responsibility comes accountability. As such, people wanted me to be held accountable for my actions, so they came up with a plan to take me out. I had decided to call a meeting of the other leaders of my organisation to let them know what it was that I was doing and why. I owed no one an explanation, but I wanted to be up front with them in order to make a clean break. I was oblivious to their plotting against me, thus I naively went to the recreation yard to meet them. Allah says in the Quran in Surah 3, verse 55: “ And they planned and Allah (also) planned, and Allah is the best of planners.”

During the meeting, certain inmates who were trying to get rank within the organization proposed that I should be beaten and/or killed. This was all discussed while I was present! I was outraged but not shocked. Many people in prison look at Islam as if it were just another gang. Thus, to the spiritually-blinded eyes of many of my former gang mates, I was changing my loyalty from one gang to another. There was one man, however, who understood the difference. His name was Willie, and he was as wild as they come. Thus, imagine my shock when he said the following words: “How can we even sit here talking about doing something to this brother just because he wants to give his life to God.” He went on to remind the members of the meeting about all of the things that I had done to help many of my fellow gang members. In the end, they recognised the truth of his words and

decided to leave me unharmed.

Years later, some of the same brothers would embrace Islam in much the same way that I did. Allah touches the hearts of men in ways that we do not perceive. It is only later that we comprehend and recognise the wonderful plan of the Creator. The next night, I declared my *Shahadah* in front of all of the community that was present at the Islamic teaching service. I cannot express the feelings of love and joy that I felt when I publicly declared my belief. While I had been saying my *Shahadah* in my ritual prayer for weeks, it was not the same. It felt like a massive burden had been lifted off my back. For the first time in my life, I was truly free. It was like I had been born again__ returned to the natural state of my early childhood. This was a new beginning. I had little idea of where my journey was taking me, but I was nevertheless glad to be going.

The next few months were spent in intense studying. I wanted to learn everything at my disposal about Islam. My studies were aided by four brothers who helped me greatly: Faheem, Shaf;yq, Malk'ilm, and Ismaiyl Shareef. These four were instrumental to my intellectual and spiritual growth as a Muslim, and I thank Allah every day that He allowed me to cross paths with them. Malk'ilm and Shareef were concerned with studying Arabic. Shafiyq was into *hadeeth* (Prophetic traditions), and he never passed up the chance to share something with me. Faheem was my partner, my confidant, and my biggest supporter. I started using an Arabic/English dictionary to understand the Arabic text of the Quran. I had been misled and duped by the translators of the Bible my whole life, so I was highly skeptical of someone else's translation of the Holy Quran. My goal became to not only read and write Arabic, but also to be able to understand and translate the Book on my own. I had no instructor, but I did have determination, faith in Allah's Power, and a will to succeed. I would spend up to 10 hours a day learning the words of Surah 2. As I familiarised myself with the words, I would commit the verses to memory. It was a hard and long process that defininitely took its toll on me physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I would often pray to Allah to lighten the load of my intensive studies. I did this until I came across the verse in which Allah tells the believers that He has imposed no difficulty upon them in

their religion (22:78). This greatly lifted my spirit and gave me the strength to carry on. So, within six months after taking my Sahahdah, I was teaching the beginning Arabic class. *Al-Hamdu lillah li dhalik* (Parise be to Allah for that).

As I became more spiritually aware, I began to see the value of true Islamic knowledge. It is reported in a Tradition: " Seek knowledge even as far as China." Thus, my immediate task became to acquire all of the Islamic knowledge that I could obtain through my limited resources. I started studying the books of Hadeeth. I became familiar with the different authors of the major canonical books of Traditions. Next, I sought out a deeper and better understanding of the fundamentals of faith. I strove to recognise the spiritual meanings of the physical acts of worship that we perform everyday. I also turned my attention to the science of Quranic exegesis. I studied the works of Ibn Kathir and Jafar As-Saddiq in order to get a richer understanding of the different schools.

I next turned my attention to Islamic history, while trying not to confine myself to a particular author or school of thought. I read the works of Ibne Katheer, Muhammad Hykal, al-Ameen al-Amilee, and Ameer Ali. The more that I learned about the "Golden Age" of Islamic history, the more my faith in the future of humanity grew. Allah, the Most High, tells us in His Book that we must reflect on the generations that passed away before us. By studying the actions of the Ummah (Islamic nation) of the past, we see what sincerity of faith and dependence on Allah can accomplish. Similarly, I recongised what disunity can do to the Ummah. Petty hatreds and grudges can destroy the oneness of the Muslims. With this knowledge, I then sought to inspire others to open their minds to the Truth.

Soon after, I was asked to start giving lectures at our teaching services. I tried to stay away from frivolous topics and discussions so as to give a clear and correct view of Islam. My objective was to establish the basics and stay away from the different ideologies and fractionalisation. Once I began to speak, Allah opened up for me many doors of knowledge and understanding. I still continued to focus on perfecting my knowledge of the Arabic language and the Islamic sciences.

In July 1999, I was transferred to the Beto Unit in Palestine.

Texas to attend another college. As I settled in, I began to teach Arabic once again but this time at the advanced level. The regional Islamic Chaplain, Imam Abdullah Rasheed, asked me to participate in handling the Islamic affairs, so I was appointed to the Majlis-Al-Shura (decision-making council) and acted in that capacity for two years. The experience and knowledge that I gained working under Imam Rasheed and his successor, Imam Omar Rakeeb, helped me grow not only mentally, but it also made me aware of my moral duty as a Muslim.

On June 17, 2003, I was released from prison after almost 13 years of incarceration. While some say that my time in prison was a waste of life and potential, I look back on it as a blessing from the Most Merciful God. I used to ask myself, "What would have happened if I had never come to prison?" This was something that bothered me all of the time until I read in Surah 64, verse 11: "No affliction comes about but by Allah's permission; and whoever believes in Allah, He guides aright his heart; and Allah is Cognizant of all things."

This helped me understand that my going to prison was only a trial from Allah. It helped me recognise my error and amend my life. And while I missed out on a portion of the life of this world, *insha Allah* (God willing) I gained a much greater portion of the Hereafter.□□

(Courtesy : New York Times)

BREAK THE BARRIERS

Nilofar Suhrawardy

Sadly, the very concept of banning headscarves has given rise to yet another wall against the Arab world. This comes at a time when greater importance should be given to breaking the barriers raised on stereotyped images about the Arab world and Islam. The logic behind imposing a ban on headscarves and other religious symbols in France, in an attempt to encourage greater interaction among people without religion acting as a barrier, is incomprehensible. A Jew, Christian and a Muslim will not lose his/her religious identity by abandoning the skullcap, cross or the headscarf respectively. Rather, if he/she is forced to do so, prospects of it creating a religious schism to the point of communalism is likely to surface. Many may choose to form and attend their own religious schools, which is bound to lead to greater polarisation along religious lines.

Besides, to what extent can the French government encourage people to interact more without religion acting as a barrier? The very impression that religion is a hindrance to interaction is wrong. By being religious and/or using a religious symbol, one does not become an extremist. If this logic were supported, every Indian Hindu lady wearing sindoor and/or a bindi would be regarded as an extremist.

If the French government's logic is guided by the notion that removal of the headscarf would remove an ethnic barrier, then shouldn't all ethnic symbols be targeted to remove prejudices resting on the same? Can prejudices/discriminations resting on colour differences be removed? This is impossible. And this, in itself, suggests that rather than targeting people and the values they uphold, the French government needs to pay greater attention to breaking the stereotyped images that it harbours.

The French stand against the headscarf is a symbolic indicator of the prejudiced notions held in the West against Muslims and Islam. It is high time the West paid a little attention to breaking the wall that exists within their own mindset.

Muslims and Islam are linked with terrorism simply because a few of them have exploited religion for these purposes. While Muslims and, at time, Hindus have not been spared from being labelled as terrorists, why isn't the same logic applied to Christians and Jews? If they were all angels or great humanitarians, the concept of suicide bombing wouldn't even have arisen.

Terrorists are not the only ones to have exploited religion. Politicians fall in the same line. Prior to actually initiating the strikes against Iraq, President George W. Bush used the church to make speeches to justify his stand. Shouldn't he be projected as a religious extremist? What about the Hindu and Muslim leaders making a noise about their religious claim to the site where the demolished Babri Masjid stood? When compared to these extremists, the religious stature of those supporting the headscarves appears to be only symbolic.

Undeniably a definite revolution has begun in the Arab world that questions and opposes the stereotyped images propagated against them. The 'United States' strikes against Iraq has brought the Arabs face to face with one hard fact__ that it is time to stop turning to the West, and in particular to the US, for a solution to their problems. Even though several Arab governments are still viewed as US-satellites, the change is visible in the criticism being lashed out in the Arab media. And this necessitates the need to break yet another wall prevailing in the non Arab world.

Despite West Asia being the epicentre of news regarding the US war against Iraq and other Arab issues, it is amazing how little importance has been given to the Arab media's approach towards the same.

Only greater communication can break barriers between the two worlds. The western tendency to uphold and support only what is practised in the culture and entertain a biased approach towards what is valued in other areas needs to change. It is imperative for the West to question its own attitude first, to be its own critics first, before it questions that of others. It is equally vital for them to understand Arab notions and values before raising their voice, law and guns against them.

Perhaps, to understand other cultures and religions, the West needs to learn from Indian Constitution, where secularism

is associated with respect for all religions and democracy stands for the force of vote and people's voices and not guns.

The new importance given to people's voice in the media in several Arab nations is perhaps a symbolic indicator of real democracy gradually making inroads. Yes, they have a long way to go. So does the West, for which it has to understand that banning headscarves or using gun-power will not break barriers. □

(Courtesy : Hindustan Times)

FLASH IN THE PAN?

Praful Bidwai

Two years after independent India's goriest episode of organised violence against a religious minority, the possibility of bringing the culprits to justice seems more remote than ever. Indeed, distressing new facts suggest that the institutions and agencies responsible for investigating and punishing Gujarat's crimes themselves colluded in their commission and cover-up.

The CBI has just exhumed human remains and clothing from a mass grave in Dahod district where 14 Muslims were raped and butchered as Bilkis Yakooob Rasool, then five months pregnant, watched. (She too was raped). The culprits included a VHP functionary and an aide of former BJP minister Jasawant Bhabhor. The Gujarat police reported the 14 untraceable.

It now turns out the police buried the bodies and poured salt over them so they would decompose quickly. The evidence the CBI has gathered clearly points to attempts to cover one monstrous act by committing yet another. The police in Narendra Modi's Gujarat aided and abetted, and further compounded serious crimes, including murders.

The Bilkies case is the only matter in which the Supreme Court ordered a CBI investigation. There were many other ghastly massacres. But the CBI's findings confirm one's worst suspicions about the impossibility of justice in Modi's Gujarat. When crimes are not recorded, when ministers direct rioting mobs, when state agencies suppress evidence, when the police participate in arson and rape, when witnesses are terrorised, and when the courts hand out obnoxious verdicts, the subversion of justice becomes complete.

If further proof was at all needed of this, the Gujarat High Court has furnished it in the Best Bakery case by dismissing the plea for retrial. Its verdict not only ignores the intimidation of key witnesses, it even conjures up "a definite design and conspiracy" by human rights lawyers to "malign" Gujarat and "create a rift between two communities..." There can be no stronger argument for trying all the major cases of communal violence out-

side Gujarat than this judgment and the CBI's findings. Regrettably, the Supreme Court is still reluctant to follow its own logic in the Jayalalitha case, and order this.

Meanwhile, we citizens are being asked to erase our memory of what happened after the gory Godhra killings. Beginning February 28, over 2,000 people were speared, torched and hacked to death in systematically planned, coordinated and executed violence. Erasure was the central message from Atal Bihari Vajpayee's latest appearance in Gujarat, when he praised Modi and appealed to Gujaratis to "forget the past". The captains of our industry too abjectly genuflected before Modi after some initial __ very welcome __ criticism.

The middle-class is being told that the Gujarat pogrom, although horrendous, was a mere 'aberration'; it wasn't essential to the BJP's ideology and politics, nor connected to Hindutva. They must 'forget' Gujarat and vote for the BJP in Shining India'.

The BJP's minus Gujarat idea is like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. The essential character of Gujarat's violence cannot be understood except by reference to Hindutva's overall project. This wasn't just another communal riot abetted by the police, nor a series of discreet hate-crimes. The violence was calculated to subjugate and humiliate a whole community.

Its perpetrators, namely, the state and various Hindutva organisations, knew that their acts were part of a larger, concerted attack. The mobs and BJP, VHP/RSS leaders were fired by a peculiar 'nationalist' frenzy as they committed rape, especially gangrape, and defiled and mutilated female bodies. Sexual aggression and bestiality were central to Gujarat's violence.

Thousands of Muslim women were raped to the shouts of 'Har Har Mahadev' and 'Go to Pakistan' why are you in Hindustan? Their breasts were cut off, their bellies split open, their foetuses speared and burned. Historian and feminist analyst Tanika Sarkar says: "The pattern of cruelty suggests three things. One, the woman's body was a site of almost inexhaustible violence, with infinitely plural and innovative form of torture. Second, their sexual and reproductive organs were attacked with a special savagery. Third, their children born and unborn, shared the attacks and were killed before their eyes."

The pattern of violence is inseparable from Hindutva's core project of cleansing India of, and disenfranchising, non-Hindus. As Golwalkar, the RSS's *param puja* ideologue, put it." Hindus alone are the legal citizens of Bharat.... And the non-Hindus....may stay in this country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privilege, far less any preferential treatment__ not even citizen's rights..."

The hysterical 'nationalism' whipped up by invoking Mian Musharraf, the ISI 'Hum Do Hamare Pachees' legitimated the violence and gave it a malign edge: "Go to Pakistan or be our slaves!

The International Initiative for Justice in Gujarat has incisively analysed the pogrom in its report, *Threatened Existence*, released last December. The IJG team consisted of feminist jurists and scholar- activists drawn from six countries and known for writings on women and conflict__ including in Bosnia and Rwanda. This report, based on visit to Gujarat and interviews with 180 women and 136 men from seven districts, comes on top of numerous independent inquiries by citizens groups and the National Human Rights Commission.

Its great value lies in its rigorous analysis of the pogrom as genocide and as a 'crime against humanity'. *Threatened Existence* shows that the violence fits the criteria of Article 2 of the convention on Genocide, 1948, which defines it as "...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group"__ like "killing [its] members..... causing serious bodily or mental harm to [them]..... deliberately inflicting on [it] conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;.... imposing measures intended to prevent births....." etc.

Gujarat's Muslims were targeted solely on the basis of religion. The attackers caused serious bodily and mental harm to them and inflicted 'conditions of life' to cause their destruction. They used "rape as a means to change the identity of a group, and impart to the children an identity that is different from the one acquired at birth". The intent to destroy a group, 'in whole or in part' is fully established.

The Gujarat violence hasn't ended. There is a continuing climate of intimidation, related to 'fear generated both by threat

of violence and actual attacks, displacement and non-rehabilitation, continuing economic violence, including economic boycott....., long term impact on [Muslim women's].... physical, reproductive and psycho-social health, and long-term impact on children.”

Scores of Muslims remain detained under POTA for the Godhra killings__ largely without proof. But not one person has been charged under POTA for the greater massacre that followed. The state pays Hindus twice as much compensation as it does to Muslims. Blatant discrimination has turned a whole community into second-class citizens.

There can be no free and fair trial in Gujarat. As a signatory to the Genocide Convention, India is obligated to enact legislation to prevent/punish genocide. Our judicial system faces an unprecedented challenge from Gujarat. So far, there are no signs it will meet it.□□

(Courtesy : Hindustan Times)

ATTAINMENT OF PEACE IN ISLAM

*Obaidur Rahman Nadwi**

Spiritual wisdom has a status and grandeur in our society. It enables all mankind to achieve at least a fraction of the synthesis of east and west. It fosters in man aesthetics, afabilities, sublime attributes including the moral values and norms.

It is needless to say that the spiritual wisdom may save the nation from the impending catastrophe and sudden disaster and to steer it towards a value based happy and healthy society. The Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi says; "He who is far away from his origin, Seeks again to be with it." God is pure, you should also remain pure; God does not harass anyone, you should also refrain from injuring anyone. etc., etc.

It should, be kept in mind that our body develops by the continuous circulation of blood day and night, so does remembrance of God contributes to the development of soul. The Holy Quran says; "Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." (13-28). It is obvious that if a mirror is dirty it can not reflect a true image, so how can the mirror of the heart which is enshrouded by the darkness of sins, i.e. violation of spiritual laws, and is hidden by a cloud of wordly desires and mundane indulgences, reflect the reality to Divine attributes?

The great Prophet Jesus Christ probably refers to this stage in the spiritual evolution when he says that "The vision of God is for the pure in heart."

Mystics rec-ommend four practices, eat less, sleep less, speak less and frequent people less. "Less does not mean complete abnegation. Which is sometimes even impossible (such as in eating and sleeping), and always undesirable, there must always be a moderation. One should eat to live, and not live to eat. To eat for the purpose to having the energy to accomplish the will and the commandments of God, is an act of devotion; and to diminishing the spiritual productivity is sin. Sleep is necessary for health, and is a duty imposed on man; but laziness, which

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makes us remain in bed for long, affects our spiritual progress and mental advancement.

Swami Vivekananda says 'Bhakti is intense love to God. When a man gets it he loves all, hates none, he becomes satisfied forever. This love cannot be reduced to any selfish benefit, because so long as worldly desires last that kind of love does not come.' He further says "The one great advantage of Bhakti is that it is the easiest, and the most natural way to reach the great divine and in view its great disadvantage is that in its lower forms it grew in Hinduism, or Muhammadanism, or Christianity, have always been almost exclusively recruited from these worshippers on the lower planes of Bhakti."

By spiritualizing the temporal duties, Islam has no other motive but strengthening the spiritual side of man, who, in this manner, far from seeking the material advantage, aspires therein solely to obtain the pleasure of God.

The great mystic Al-Ghazali did not exaggerate when he said; "If somebody worships or fasts for ostentation, it is *shirk* (polytheism), a worship to one's self, not of God Almighty, on the contrary if one even cohabits with one's own life-not for casual desire, but for performing the duty imposed by God that is an act of piety and devotion meriting the pleasure of and reward from God."

Now, we should think rationally and ask ourselves whether we should lead carefree life or a sorrowful one.□□

SAYINGS OF THE HOLY PROPHET

- ☐ It is not rightful for any Muslim to be angry with another Muslim for more than three day; better of the two is the one who greets the other first. A person, who is angry with his Muslim brother for one year and does not reconcile is like his murderer. **(Bukari, Muslim)**
- ☐ Do not get angry; a strong man (wrestler) is not be who defeats opponents, but strong is the one who controls his anger. **(Bukari, Muslim)**
- ☐ The best among you is he who gets angry and then calms down quickly; the worst is a person who gets angry quickly and then calms down slowly. **(Tirmizi)**
- ☐ A beloved of Allah is he who forgives people inspite of having power (to revenge). **(Baheeqi)**
- ☐ Anger spoils faith like aloe spoils honey. **(Miskat)**
- ☐ “He who believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement shall maintain the bond of relationship with his kindred”. **(Bukari)**
- ☐ “A person whose neighbour is not safe from his acts of misdemeanor shall not enter Paradise.” **(Muslim)**

HASAN AND HUSAIN

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Hasan b. Ali

Hasan b. Ali b. Abi Talib, the eldest son of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, closely resembled his grand-father. He was born, according to authentic reports, in mid-Sh'aban, 31/ end of January, 625, although others claim his birth to have taken place after a day or two in the month succeeding Ramadhan.

The Prophet was very much attached to him. When he was an infant the Prophet used to kiss his cheeks and lips and often took his tongue in his mouth. He sometimes took Hasan on his lap or seated him on his chest or back. He sometimes, climbed on the back of the Prophet while he was prostrating and on such occasions the Prophet prolonged his prostration. Often the Prophet seated Hasan besides him on the pulpit of the mosque.

Zuhari relates from Anas that Hasan b. 'Ali looked very much like the Prophet. Hani relates that 'Ali told him: 'Hasan bears a resemblance to the Prophet from chest to head while Husain looks like his grand-father chest to feet.

Ali also adored Hasan and held him in great regard. Once 'Ali expressed the wish to hear Hasan making a speech, but Hasan showed diffidence to harangue before him. One day when Hasan had taken the floor, " Ali sat at a place where Hasan could not see him. When Hasan finished his speech ' Ali remarked: The same lineage after all. One is the son of the other.

Hasan mostly kept quiet and spoke little, but when he came to speaking, others were silenced. He seldom attended a banquet; avoided all disputes and never interfered in the affairs of others; but settled the dispute with sound argument if it was referred to him.

Hasan thrice gave away all of his possessions in the way of God: on two occasions he kept absolutely nothing with him. He performed pilgrimage 25 times on foot with his sacrificial animals driven ahead of him. Whenever 'Abdullah b. Abbas saw either Hasan or Husain riding a horse, he always took hold of the

bridle as a mark of honour to him. The people finding either of the two circumambulating the Ka'ba, surged ahead and crowded around them in a way that one feared that they might get hurt.

Hudhayfa reports the Prophet as saying : ' Hasan and Husain are the leader of the dwellers in Paradise.' Many others including "Ali, Jabir, Buraida and Abu Sa'eed have narrated similar sayings of the Prophet.

Bukhari relates from Abu Bakr : " I saw the Prophet sitting on the pulpit with Hasan b. Ali besides him. He addressed the people and then turned his attention to Hasan, saying, " This child of mine is a Chieftain I hope that God will cause him to restore peace among two factions of the Muslims." There are other reports too narrated by others to the same effect.

Ibn Abbas relates that once the Prophet was carrying Hasan on his back. Someone who saw them remarked: " Young man, what a fine conveyance you have!" The Prophet promptly replied, " And the rider is also excellent."

Hasan and Husain both were expert riders.

Abu Nuaym reports that Abu Huraira told him : " Whenever I see Hasan my eyes brim over with tears for I have seen that once he came running and sat on the lap of the Prophet. (Then holding his beard he continued) he took hold of the Prophet's beard who put his saliva in Husain's mouth and at the same time supplicated: ' O Allah, I love him, may Thou also hold him dear'. The Prophet repeated it thrice."

Ibn 'Asakir narrates an incident about Hasan :

" Once Hasan was passing through an enclosed grove where he saw a young slave sitting with a bread in his hand and a dog before him. The slave took a morsel alternately and fed the dog with the other. In this way he took only half of the bread. Hasan asked him why he had fed half of the bread to the dog and did not himself more of it. The slave replied, Seeing the dog hungry I felt ashamed of myself taking more of the bread." Hasan then asked. Whose slave are you and to whom this grove belongs?" He replied, I am slave of Aban b. Uthman who is the owner of this grove." Hasan then said to him. " I put you under oath not to move from here until I return." He went away and purchased both the slave and the grove and returned to tell him of it. The slave got up to say, " I am obedient to you after God and

His Apostle.” Hasan replied “ I emancipate thee and also gift this grove to thee.”

Prediction about Hasan

The Prophet’s prediction about Hasan that he would bring about harmony between two parties among the Muslims was not just a forecast meant to be heard and assented to by other Muslims. For Hasan it must have been a sign and a guiding light to pattern his life and conduct in conformity with the intimation given by the Prophet. It must have sunk deep into his heart and shaped his mental attitude and inclinations. He would have taken it as a directive from the Prophet of God, his own grandfather, of whose love and affection he would have rightly been proud of. He would have surely noticed the radiant face of the Prophet and eyes beaming with satisfaction while making that forecast. He would have surely made up his mind to fulfil the expectation and trust reposed in him by the Apostle of God.

The prediction made by the Prophet was consistent with the mild and pacific disposition of Hasan. He was a worthy and dutiful son who enjoyed affection and confidence of his father, but when “ Uthman was assassinated he submitted to ‘Ali: “Now let these people alone and go any where you like, until the Arabs regain their senses and realise their mistake. Then they will search you out even if you are hidden in the hole of a lizard. They will then swear allegiance to you without your asking for it and come importuning to you.” Similarly, when ‘ Ali made up his mind to fight the syrians and made preparations to set forth from Medina with an army, Hasan appealed to him : “ O my father, desist from it for this will cause a great bloodshed of the Muslims and set in motion an unending dispute and conflict amongst them.” This conciliatory attitude of Hasan in a matter in which his own father was involved unmistakably points to the prognostication and prayers of the Prophet.

Ali, however, did not accept the advice tendered by Hasan since he did not want the people to be left in a state of uncertainty : he deemed it his duty to unite the people under one caliphate, to do what he considered to be right and to rule out that which he deemed to be unjust and wrong. He considered himself duty-bound to act on the Quranic dictum : *For every one is a goal witherward*

he turns.

Hasan's Election as Caliph

As stated earlier Ali had declined to nominate anyone as a Caliph to succeed him and preferred to follow the Prophet in leaving the matter to the People. His reply to the people requesting to nominate his successor was : No. I leave you in the way the Prophet had left you. If God desires well of you, He would bring consensus among you on the man best suited for it just as you agreed on the man after the Prophet.' But the people took the oath of fealty to Hasan on the very day 'Ali was fatally wounded. It was Friday, the 17th of Ramadhan, 40/24th January, 661.

Ibn Kathir has narrated the incident in greater detail. He writes:

“ After 'Ali had died (and Hasan had been elected as Caliph), Qays b. S'ad b. Ibadah stated pressing Hasan to give battle to the Syrians. Hasan was disinclined to take up arms but the people persisted on their demand and gathered round him in numbers larger than they had assembled ever before. At last, he ordered a vanguard of 12,000 troops under Qays b. S'ad to march ahead, himself leading the main force to take the field against Mu'awiyah and his Syrian army. On reaching Mada'in, he encamped with his men, asking the vanguard to bivouac in the front.

“ While he was camping at Mada'in someone raised a false cry that Qays has been killed. This excited a mutiny in his troops which started plundering each other; they even dismantled Hasan's tent and in an attempt to snatch away the carpet he was sitting on, injured a number of persons. Hasan also sustained an injury which was fortunately not serious. Hasan got up and made his way to the palace in Mad'in. One, Mukhtar b. Ubayda, whose uncle S'ad b. Mas'ud happened to be th governor of Mada'in, said to his uncle; “ Should I tell you how to achieve wealth and honour?” What do you mean? Asked S'ad. Arrest Hasan,' said Mukhtar, and hand him over to Mu'awiyah.' But S'ad replied, May God confound thee and make thee come to naught. Should I be treacherous to the grandson of the Prophet?

Ibn Kathir Continues:

“ The Iraqis had elected Hasan with the hope that he would continue hostilities with the Syrians, but their expectation was

not fulfilled for which they were themselves responsible. They evaded fighting and disobeyed their leaders. Had they been prudent they would have taken advantage of the great blessing God had bestowed on them through the oath of allegiance taken by them to a son of the Prophet who was an eminent companion, wise, learned and courageous.”

‘ When Hasan noticed that his army was disunited and refractory, he got annoyed and dejected. He wrote a letter to Mu’awiyah b. Abi Sufran (who had advanced with his Syrian army to a place known as Maskan) in which he proposed peace on certain conditions. He offered to abdicate in favour of Mu’aywiyah, if the latter accepted those conditions, which would bring the bloodshed among the Muslims to an end. When people came to know of this letter, they agreed to have Muawiyah as their Caliph.

Ibn Kathir also says :

“ The Prophet (peace be upon him) had said that the caliphate would continue for thirty years after him. Hasan abdicated in favour of Mu’awiyah in Rabi-ul-Awwal 41/July, 661 which marks the end of thirty years after the death of the Prophet.”

Mu’awiyah requested Hasan to address the people after his abdication. In his valedictory speech Hasan said after praising God and benediction for the Prophet.

“ O men, Allah first granted you guidance through our ancestors and saved you from bloodshed through their descendants. Allah had fixed a period of time for it, the world is naught but vicissitudes; fluctuation of fortunes, up for one and down for the other, Remember that Allah told His Prophet to tell you : “I do not know haply it may be a trial for you, and an enjoyment for a season.

“ This concise yet meaningful speech was taken seriously by Mu’awiyah who could not dismiss it from his mind for a long time.”

Once a man, Abu Amir by name, addressed Hasan, saying, “ Peace be on you, O abaser of Muslims.” Since he had not continued the hostilities with the Syrians. Hasan replied, “ Not at all, Abu Amir, I did not debase Muslims. I just disliked that their blood should be shed for the sake of my rule.”

After his abdication Hasan retired with his brother Husain

and other members of his family to Medina. Whenever he passed by the quarters of those who had been his followers and supporters, they made caustic remarks against him for abdicating in favour of Mu'awiyah. But being a man of noble disposition, magnanimous and august never answered back, nor felt sorry for what he had done. He rather felt satisfied about the correct decision taken by him which had, however, displeased several members of his own family and admirers, and which continues to be a cause of irritation to some to this day. But the fact is that his approach was appropriate and still furnishes an example to be followed by those who may be placed in similar circumstances. He deserves to be paid tribute for preventing further bloodshed of the Muslims as already predicted by the Prophet.

Some of his devoted supporters often used to hail him by saying : " O Disgrace for the faithful!" Hasan always replied them : ' Disgrace is better than Hellfire."

Abu Dawud Al-Tiyalsi relates from Zuhayr b. Nufayr al-Hadhrami, who heard his father as saying : " I said to Hasan b. Ali that the people think that you still want to become Caliph." He answered : " I had the Arabs in my hand. They would have made peace or war with whom I made peace or war but I forsook that authority for seeking the pleasure of God. Would I again like to set the neighbourhood of Hijaz on fire!" On another occasion he said : " I was afraid that seventy or eighty thousand men, or near about that number, might be brought before me on the Day of Judgement, with blood flowing from their veins, and they might complain to God against me."

Death of Hasan

Hasan was given poison which caused his death. 'Umayr b. Is'haq says that he along with another man of Quraish called upon Hasan who told him: " I was poisoned several times; each time it was deadlier than the earlier one." He was then in the throes of death.

Husain came to Hasan and sat down on his bed near his head. He asked Hasan, 'Brother, who poisoned you?' Do you want to slay him?' demanded Hasan. On Husain's replying in affirmative, Hasan said, " If he is the man whom I suspect, than God is more severe in taking revenge. But if he is not guilty, then

I do not want you to slay an innocent man.”

Hasan's funeral was thronged by people in such numbers that the graveyard of Al-Baqi could hardly accommodate them all. Waqidi relates from Tha'ulab b. Malik : “ I was present on the day Hasan died and was buried in the Al-Baqi. The crowd was so huge that if a needle was to be dropped it would have fallen on somebody's head rather than on the ground.”

Hasan was 47 years of age when he died.

He was elected Caliph in place of his father in 41/661. He concluded a treaty of peace with Mu'awiyah in Rabi-ul-Awwal 41/July 661 _____ the year being known 'Am al-Jam'ah His caliphate lasted for six months; the right-guided caliphate came to an end with it after completing 30 years.”

The Stand Taken By Hasan

The decision taken by Hasan to make peace with Mu'awiyah and surrender the caliphate to him was as much timely and correct as the stand subsequently taken by Husain against Yazid b. Mu'awiyah. Any incident or happening is the product of peculiar circumstances, time and space which have all to be taken into account in arriving at a correct decision or the manner and means to be adopted to any situation properly. The same type of approach in all situation and circumstances can never be deemed as appropriate. There was a great difference in the character and morals of Mu'awiyah and Yazid particularly if we also keep in view the opportunity the former had in enjoying the guidance of the Prophet and the services he rendered to Islam.

Continued warfare with Mu'awiyah would have meant endless hostilities and bloodshed of the Muslims. The Muslim society, during his time, rent by internal dissensions and threatened by external threats, was passing through a crisis. These conditions would have bore probably incited a section of the people to raise an insurrection or take resort to intrigue and double-dealing. Hasan knew the people of Iraq better than others. They had backed his father but being impetuous and utterly wanting in perseverance and steadiness, taken flight more than once just before taking the field. The indiscipline, impulsiveness and treachery of these people had many a time deprived Hasan's father from the fruits of his victories and caused him distress which can be seen

from his sermons and letters included in the Nahjul Balagha. Hasan had been a witness to all these painful events.

Husain b. Ali

Husain b. Ali was born on 5th Shah'an 4/10 January, 626. The Prophet got him lick honey with own hand. Passed his own tongue in his mouth, blessed him and gave him the name Husain. As stated earlier Hasan resembled the Prophet in his facial features while Husain bore a similarity to his grandfather in physique. Husain was of about six and a half years when the Prophet bid farewell to the world on 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal 11 A.H.

Abu Ayyub Ansari relates : "One day I went to the Prophet. Hasan and Husain were both sitting on the Prophet's chest. I said, 'O Apostle of Allah, they are so dear to you.' The Prophet replied, 'Why not. These are the flowers I have in this world.' Harith has reported 'Ali as saying that the Prophet once remarked, 'Hasan and Husain are the leaders of youngmen in Paradise.' Yazid b. Abi Ziyad has narrated that once the Prophet heard Husain crying. He said to Husain's mother, 'Do you not know that I am distressed to hear him cry?'

Husain had joined the army sent in 51/671 to invade Constantinople. Yazid b. Mu'awiyah was also with him. Very particular, as he was, about performance of religious observances like the prayers and fasting, Husain had gone twenty times on pilgrimage to Makkah on foot. He was also very modest. Once when he was going somewhere on a horse, he saw a party of 20 people, all very poor, sitting on the ground and taking bread. He saluted them. they replied him and requested him to have food with them, Husain alighted from his horse, joined in the meal and recited the Quranic verse : "Verily, Allah loveth not the proud." Having finished the meal with them, Husain said to them, Brothers, you invited me and I accepted. Now have food with me.' He brought all of them to his house asked his servant Rubah to bring for them whatever was available in the house.

Ibn Yuaina relates that Abdullah b. Abi Yazid said to him : "I saw Husain b. Ali when the hair on his head and his beard was black except for a few on the upper side of the beard, 'Umar b. Ata has reported that he had seen Husain dying his hair with Wasma (a kind of hair dye). The hair on his head and beard looked

completely black.

Accession of Yazid b. Mu'awiyah to Kingship

Mu'awiyah had first nominated Hasan for the caliphate after him although some of his counsellors had suggested him to designate Yazid as his successor. However, with the death of Hasan, the situation was altered and he began thinking of Yazid succeeding him. He once suggested the matter to Abdullah b. Umar, saying : " I am afraid of leaving my subjects uncared for like the flock of sheep and goats in the rain but without any shepherd. But he found that the proposal was received unfavourably by the people since Yazid was known to be fond of wasting his time in hunting and similar other diversions. Both Yazid and Mu'awiyah thus at first desisted from pursuing the matter because of the adverse reaction of the people. However, in the beginning of year 56/765 Mu'awiyah started making arrangements for obtaining that oath of fealty for Yazid. He communicated his intention to provincial governors who persuaded the people to accept the proposal. Mu'awiyah went on lesser pilgrimage to Makkah and while passing through Medina on his return journey, asked the people in a speech to accept Yazid as his successor. Most of the people were brow-beaten into swearing fidelity to Yazid, but 'Abdur Rahman b. Abi Bakr, Ahdullah b. Umar, Husain b. Ali, 'Abullah b. Zubayr and Ahdullah b. Abbas, who were sitting near the pulpit, kept quiet; neither they took the oath nor opposed it. Thus, with the general acceptance of Yazid's nomination, deputations from different parts of the realm made haste to congratulate him.

Character of Yazid

Tabrani says that Yazid was a drunkard in his youthful days and irresponsible young man.

Ibn Kathir reports : " Yazid had certain virtues also. He was magnanimous and considerate a fluent speaker and a poet, brave and shrewd and handsome and courteous. At the same time, he was inclined to laxity and enjoyments. He was irregular in offering prayers or missed them altogether.' What people found most objectionable and which brought him into disrepute was the stigma of being a drunkard, immoral behaviour and certain

actions deemed infringing the Shar'ah. He was not accused of being apostate or heretic but his manner and morals were regarded as profane and impious. It is alleged that he had earned a bad name for his being fond of singing and dancing, drinking, enchantment and hunting. He is also reported to be fond of keeping company with boys and dancing girls, had hounds and took pleasure in the fights of rams, monkeys and bears. Mu'awiyah had got the people to swear allegiance to Yazid in his life-time to ensure that Yazid succeeded him. Therefore, when Mu'awiyah died in Rajab, 60 April 680 the oath for him was renewed. He was then about 35 years of age as he is said to have been born sometimes between 25 to 27 A.H.

Umar b. Al-Khattab, the second Caliph had once said: "By the Lord of K'aba, I know when the Arabs will meet their doom. It will be when a man will become their leader, who had neither seen the days of pagan past nor occupied any place of eminence in Islam.

At a time, following the right-guided caliphate, when a number of distinguished companions of Prophet and many more virtuous successors of the first generations of Muslims were still alive, a man of Yazid's character and morals came to hold the reigns of government. Many of them were worthy of leading the Muslim community on the path chalked out by Islam. It was the path clearly indicated by the Quran and constituted the purpose for which the office of caliphate had been established by Islam. All these factors made the change look abrupt and unsufferable. Had this transformation come about after a pretty long period of time, it would have rendered it less agonising and the people would not have reacted so sharply as they did at that time. That the response of the people in later times, when the situation during the reign of some of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs were no better than that of Yazid, was not so intense and excruciating proves the point.

Tragedy of Karbala

Would that it had been possible for me to omit the description of this appalling occurrence which is disgraceful enough to put every believer to shame. But the history has to record every event and casualty and no historian can leave out the narra-

tion of any mischance and misfortune, howsoever painful it may be for him. Such events become a part of history: their exclusion would render history incomplete and deform evaluation of the course of events. We have therefore no alternative but to narrate these painful happenings with apology to those who are aware of the reverence every believer owes to the holy Prophet's household and his family.

Husain b. Ali refused to swear allegiance to Yazid and remained adamant on his decision, but the state officials regarded his refusal to be more significant than the rejection of the oath by Abdullah b. Umar, Abdur Rahman b. Abi Bakr, Abdullah b. Zubayr and a few others, since they were fully cognizant of the prestige and influence Husain commanded owing to his kinship with the holy Prophet. It was also regarded as a equal to the unfortunate events during the reign of his illustrious father. Husain, too, was firm on his stand and not prepared to deviate from what he considered to be correct and right.□□

(Extract from the " Life of Caliph Ali"
by S.Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi)

BOOK-REVIEW

O.R.Nadwi

Maulana Abdus Salam Nadwi-His contribution to Islamic studies by Ghazanfar Ali Khan pages 115 price Rs. 60/—Khuda Bux oriental Library, Patna.

Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow a premier institution of Islamic studies has produced a number of scholars, intellectuals thinkers and philosophers, Maulana Abdus Salam Nadwi is one of them. Ghazanfar Ali Khan of the department of Islamic studies, Aligarh Muslim University has made a useful contribution in penning down "Maulana Abdus Salam Nadwi and His contribution to Islamic studies." This book besides giving an authentic biographical sketch of Maulana Nadwi from his childhood till he breathed his last details his contribution in the academic field. The book is spread in four chapters. Every chapter has its own merit.

Maulana's versatile genius and his scholarship are reflected in each chapter. Maulana earned good reputation not only in India but abroad as well.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad realizing his journalistic worth had appointed him as his assistant in "Al-Hilal". He also helped Maulana Shibli Nomani as his literary assistant when he was writing his mognum opus, "The Siratun Nabi."

No doubt, the book is an addition to the archives of literary treasure and provide a good source material for research scholars. Readers in general may be benefitted to know how a learned man cultivated qualities and framed norms of writing and thus brightened his career. Ghazanfar Ali Khan deserves appreciation for consolidating the achievements of Maulana Nadwi.