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Value of Love

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The excellence of man lies in his love and mercy for others: one person is pricked with a thorn but another person feels the pain. Man is gifted with tears which fall from his eyes when he sees a widow's head uncovered in helplessness, a poor man's kitchen unlit, and a sick man in distress. If such a drop of tear is put in a sea of transgression, it will cleanse it. If it falls on a forest of sins, it will burn it and fill the space again with the effulgence of virtue. The angels can bring forward anything, but they cannot present this drop of tear. The angels do not sleep due to their cognizance of Allah's being and attributes, but their vigil does not have the excellence of man's inability to sleep due to the sufferings of others.

The quality of love permeating through the human heart is a very precious gift of God. When something stirs it, it assumes a strange power. It rises above the considerations of religion, community, nation, and motherland. It then only sees another man's heart and feels its suffering and is drawn to it by nature as is pulled an iron chip toward a magnet. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

“O people! Shall I tell you on whom it is that satans descend? They descend on every forgerer steeped in sin, on those who whisper hearsay in the ears of people; and most of them are liars.”

(Al Qur'ân – 26:221-23)

The people meant by the expression “on whom it is that satans descend” here are sorcerers, soothsayers, fortune-tellers, geomancers and false claimants to special supra-sensory powers who pretended, on that basis, to know the secrets of the unseen world and, hence, claimed that they could tell peoples' fortunes, or that they had control over *jinn* and spirits and, thus, the power to make or mar people's lives.

The expression that ‘most of them are liars’ means that sometimes satans are able to get wind of things that happen. This they pass on to their agents who, in turn, mix much falsehood with it. This expression also means that deceitful and unscrupulous soothsayers hear something from satans, mix it with falsehood, and then go whispering it into people's ears. This is elucidated by a tradition from the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him). Aisha says that some people asked the Messenger about soothsayers. He said: “They are nothing.” Those people then said to the Messenger: “O Messenger of God, sometimes they do tell the correct thing.” The Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) replied: “The correct thing is overheard by the *jinn* who whisper it into their friends' ears, then mix a great deal of falsehood with it, and make it up into a whole story.” ■

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Nu'man ibn Bashir relates that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said: “Listen carefully, there is a lump of flesh in the body. If it is set right and made good, the entire body becomes good and healthy; but if it becomes diseased, the entire body becomes diseased. Remember well: it is the Heart.”

(Bukhari, Muslim)

In this hadith, the Holy Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) highlights the importance of setting our hearts right. Though the heart is a simple lump of flesh, it is in fact pivotal of the entire human body. The health of the heart matters so much to each and every physical organ that if the lump of flesh is set right, the entire body becomes healthy. And, if it is diseased, the entire body gets affected.

The question is how it falls sick and, if so happens, how to set it right. In another hadith, the Holy Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said when a person commits a mistake, a black spot occurs in the heart and gradually the whole heart becomes strained; but, when he regrets and seeks forgiveness from Allah, the black spot is removed. The Blessed Messenger also advised the believers to recite the Holy Qur'ân and remember death profusely in order to keep the heart healthy.

In yet another hadith the Holy Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said thrice: “Remember, piety lies here!” as he pointed his fingers to the heart. ■

Post Ramzan Duties

While Muslims were celebrating Idd after month long fast one Kalyan Mitra played mischief by circulating on internet the following distorted extract, said to have been taken from Chapter 9, Verse 5 of the Holy Quran:

“Then when the sacred months have passed, kill the disbelievers wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them and prepare for each and every ambush.

But if they repent and observe the Islamic lifestyle, leave their way. Verily Allah is oft forgiving, Most Merciful.”

To mislead the recipients of this mail it was captioned “Post Ramzan Duties”. Some Non-Muslims (say Hindus) could not relish it and enquired from us “Is this true? We can't believe it”. We explained to them circumstances and situation in which the verse referred to above was revealed. The correct version as reproduced below from the Holy Quran was also communicated to them.

“But when the forbidden months are past then fight and slay the Pagans wherever Ye find them. And seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them. In every stratagic (of war) or of covenant! It is they who had transgressed all bounds.” (Chapter 9 Verse 5)

After six years of 'Hijra' (migration) from Mecca to Medina when Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) attained some strength he

thought of conquering the holy 'Ka'ba' and get it released in favour of Muslims. Therefore, he returned to Mecca with his followers to capture the holy place. A fierce fighting ensued between Muslims and non-believers of Mecca. It may be noted that most of the non-believers were closely related to the prophet and belonged to the same 'qabila' (Tribe). Here prophet entered into a 10-year treaty with people of Mecca and Muslims were allowed to enter Mecca and visit "Ka'ba", of course with certain restrictions. However, after two years Pagans (non-believers) broke the Peace Treaty and so Prophet (peace be on him) along with his followers had to attack Mecca again and won the battle. A four month period was given to Meccan to either accept Islam or clear of the place. On this occasion the verse referred to above was revealed to the Prophet.

There is no question of the 'end of Ramzan' or general instructions for killing and capturing non-believers anywhere else. This verse was revealed in the context of war at Mecca and carries instructions which normally a winning party adopts against their enemies.

It may be reemphasised that people in Mecca against whom this verdict was given were the kin of Muslims. Most of them were related to each other but had refused to embrace Islam. ■

S.A.

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The Message of Idul Fitr

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

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

(al-Baqarah 2:185-186)

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

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

celebrate Allah's praise in that He has guided them. They are obliged to praise Him for having blessed them with His guidance. They are also exhorted to thank Allah and express gratitude to Him.

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

We should be grateful to Allah for having guided us. We should be equally grateful for being blessed with Islam. Moreover, we should be thankful to Him for granting us health which enables us to fast. Above all, Allah grants us the ability and strength to fast. For one may possess everything yet not receive divine guidance to fast. One may be an

adult, with sound physique and other resources yet still not fast. It amounts to disobedience on his part.

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

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

be pardoned for missing a fast on account of ill health.

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

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

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

Islamic Art of North Karnataka

- Rehaman Patel

Royal patronage played an important role in the making of Islamic art, as it has in the arts of other culture. The glory of the great towns of northern Karnataka waned with the decline of Bahmani dynasty, although the Barid Shahi and Adil Shahi kings kept up their splendour, for a time, during their chequered rule, writes REHAMAN PATEL.

During the five hundred years after the death of Prophet Muhammad (saws) in 632CE, Islam spread far beyond its place of origin in the Arabian Peninsula. As Islam spread, a distinctive style of Islamic art gradually developed. It was used mainly for religious architecture, book illustrations, and the decoration of pottery, metal-ware, and other useful objects. Islamic art was influenced by different artistic styles that included late Roman, Byzantine and Persian art.

This new chapter, which was thus opened in the Islamic period, led to the creation of remarkable buildings of religious import. Iranian arts such as calligraphy, wall paintings, stucco (Plaster-cut), mirror work, tile work and metal art became closely tied together in this new era. Islamic architecture and building decoration are among the most beautiful means of expression. Decoration does not play such an important role in any other type of architecture.

Islamic art not only describes the art created specially in the service of the Muslim faith, but also characterizes the art and architecture historically produced in lands where Muslims artists flourished.

Calligraphy is the most important and pervasive element in Islamic art. A striking example of this influence is seen in northern Karnataka, for e.g., at Gulbarga, Bidar and Bijapur where there still exists the most beautiful wall paintings and stone engravings inside tombs and on the outer portions of the extant architecture.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of the Christian calendar, a magnificent style of architecture was in vogue (fashion) in the Deccan, some specimens of which, in the form of religious shrines, are still preserved.

The history of Islamic art in the sub-continent starts in south India from the first Muslim ruler, Sultan Alauddin Hasan Bahmani (c.1347CE), who made Gulbarga, in Karnataka, his capital. Later, Bidar was made the capital of Bahmani kingdom in 1429CE by Sultan Ahmed Shah al-Wali. The 'Palmyra of the Deccan' as Bijapur is often referred to, was the capital of the Adil Shahi dynasty founded by Yousuf Khan, younger brother of the Sultan of Turkey, Muhammad, in 1490CE.

In the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Deccan was flooded with

scores of eminent men from Delhi, including apparently architects, engineers, tile-manufacturers, metal engravers, painters and calligraphists.

Gulbarga: The largest collection of Islamic art is seen only at the domed ceiling and walls are adorned with painting containing calligraphy designs and floral, flower and plants and geometric patterns inside the tomb of Sufi saint Syed Shah Qhabulullah Husayni with natural colours. By religious restrictions, the artist was prohibited from depicting living beings in the interior of the tomb, and his imagination was, therefore, employed either in inventing new designs for religious texts or in adding further delicacy and subtleness to the geometric and floral devices by making the drawings more and more intricate. A small tomb situated beside the said Sufi's tomb also has an excellent work painted flower plants on its ceiling. There is yet another deserted Shore Gumbaz on the outskirts of the city which, too, has superb, delicate designs on its domed ceiling.

The walls and ceiling of the tomb of Sultan Firuz Shah Bahmani can be appreciated which, although in monotone, represents, faithfully, the various creepers and floral patterns, the numerous geometric devices, and several calligraphic styles. The most notable building, however, of this period is the Jama Masjid of Gulbarga fort, built by a Persian architect named Rafi in 1367CE, during the reign of Muhammad Shah Bahmani I.

Bidar: The city is well-known for its metal art i.e., Bidriware, the black items engraved

with silver or gold wires or sheets. The two most important buildings of Sultan Ali Barid's reign are Rangeen Mahal and a tomb which he built during his lifetime. Rangeen Mahal literally means the 'Coloured Palace' and this name was apparently given to it on account of its wall-paintings richly decorated with colours, lovely wood-carvings and mother-of-pearls and tiles of different hues, traces of which still exist on the facade of the eastern halls inside the fort.

The Ahmed Shah al-Wali Bahman tomb's interior, although somewhat dark, is artistically relieved by splashes of the most brilliant colours which have been used in the paintings on the walls and the vault.

The written work exhibits art of high order and, as in tile-decoration, the painters and the calligraphist seem to have worked it out jointly at the Mahmud Gawan *Madrassa*. The design is very simple, but, at the same time, most effective, and shows the ingenuity of the artist in placing it near an elaborate pattern for the purpose of contrast. The tiny squares are shown in white, yellow, light green, light blue and deep blue, thus producing a kaleidoscopic effect.

Other outstanding monuments – in terms of artistic work – are the Hall of Audience, the Long Gun, Chaaubara, Chaukhandi, Tarkash Mahal, Gagan Mahal, Takht Mahal, and the tomb of Alauddin Bahmani II.

Bijapur: Bijapuris strewn with monuments of historical significance as well as religious interest. Most of the

monuments of the period, credited to the Adil Shahi rulers, are representations of Islamic art. They are single-handedly responsible for the cultural legacy of Bijapur and the various works of paintings, plaster embossing, engraving and architecture that abound in the city.

The most dominant architectural constructions are the various palaces or *Mahals*. Of notable significance is the fact that all these palaces are huge, lofty structures with paintings, intricate carvings and pillars. All the palaces have beautiful ceilings which are remarkably constructed and adorned. A few of the most noted *Mahals* include the Asar Mahal, Gagan Mahal, Anand Mahal, Saat Manzil, Chini Mahal etc. Other kinds of historical monuments are also to be found here, such as the remains of the fort built by the Adil Shahis, Landa Kasab, Hathi Khana, Mehtar Mahal etc.

Mehtar Mahal, which dates to 1620CE is one of the most elegant structures in the fort; the entry gate, in particular, has been built in Indo-Saracenic style. The façade has three arches, which depict an exquisite 'cornice supported on carved corbels.' A gateway leads to the Mehtar mosque, which is a three-storey building. It has two slender minarets that are covered with delicately carved birds and rows of swans. The carvings are in Hindu architectural style, in the form of brackets supporting the balconies and stone trellis work. The building has a flat roof and the minarets have a rounded top.

The Jama Masjid has a large west-centric *Mihrab* arch with beautiful

calligraphy and which is wall-painted in geometric patterns in ultramarine-blue. There is also an embossing of original gold leaf on plaster at the place where the *Imam* takes his position to lead the prayer congregation. Mehtar Mahal, especially carved in black stone and with freehand designs, is among the several beautiful monuments built by the then-ruler of northern Karnataka. Its flat stone roof, supported by delicately carved stone brackets of birds, has long-puzzled engineers of succeeding generations. The other notable tombs in Bijapur are the Gol Gumbaz and the Ibrahim Rauza.

Conclusion

The glory of the great towns of northern Karnataka waned with the decline of Bahmani dynasty, although the Barid Shahi and Adil Shahi kings kept up their splendour, for a time, during their chequered rule.

Royal patronage played an important role in the making of Islamic art, as it has in the arts of other culture. From the fourteenth century onwards, especially in the eastern lands of the subcontinent, it has been the books of art which provided the best documentation of this courtly patronage for this delicate art in architecture.

Today, the finest traditional arts in architecture are found in India, Turkey, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, Egypt and Morocco, where the legacy of Islamic art remains alive and vibrant. ■

(YMD)

Ethics and Human Values in Islam

-Mohd. Azgar Ali

Ethics encompasses right conduct and good life. It is significantly broader than the common conception of analysing right and wrong. A central aspect of ethics is "the good life", the life worth living or life that is simply satisfying, which is held by many philosophers to be more important than traditional moral conduct.

Human values are the need of the hour. Truth, right conduct, love, peace and non-violence are the basics for a golden age on earth.

What are human values? Milton Rokeach in his book *The Nature of Human Values* defines value as an enduring belief that a specific way of behaving or a specific life goal is personally or socially preferable to any other.

Values are universal. While definitions will differ, all people everywhere possess common values. The origin of human values can be traced to culture, society, its institutions and organisations and to individual personality and life experience. Values are a complex set of standards that guide or conduct our lives in a variety of ways.

ISLAM MEANS PEACE

There were a lot of misconceptions, and misunderstandings about Islam and

Muslims in the minds of the people generally. So there is need to expel those doubts and misconceptions about Islam from the minds of people.

In Arabic Islam means Peace, so it is a religion of Peace. Islam is the second largest religion in the world with over 1 billion followers. The word *Islam* means 'submission to the will of God'. Islam is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion articulated by the Qur'ân. An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim.

Muslims believe that God is one and incomparable and the purpose of existence is to love and serve God. Muslims also believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith. Islam is a perfect code of life. It touches every aspect of life.

HUMAN VALUES IN ISLAM

There are 20 recommended qualities, which one must supplant within himself. They are as follows:

1. Belief in the Oneness of Allah;
2. Sincerity;
3. Well-wishing for all;
4. Abstinence;
5. Contentment;
6. Firm committed Faith;
7. Knowledge;
8. Assigning oneself to Allah;
9. To place all reliance and assurance to none but Allah;
10. The intention of the ultimate goal i.e. The Straight Path to Allah, the Friend, The Protector, The Glorious;
- 11.

Patience; 12. Remembrance of death; 13. Generosity; 14. Repentance; 15. Humility; 16. Fear; 17. Hope in none but Allah; 18. To endure hunger; 19. Sound and pleasant thoughts relating to any occurring matter; and 20. The Remembrance of and Love for Allah.

ETHICS IN ISLAM

Islamic Ethics can be defined as "good character". Islamic ethics teaches that humans, regardless of their environment, are believed to have a moral responsibility to submit to God's will and to follow Islam (as demonstrated in the Qur'an and the Sunnah) [Qur'ân 7:172). The motive force in Islamic ethics is the notion that every human being is called to "command the good and forbid the evil" in all spheres of life.

Islamic ethics can be applied by important verses in the Qur'ân. The most fundamental characteristics of a Muslim are piety and humility. A Muslim must be humble with God and with other people:

"And turn not your face away from people (with pride), nor walk in insolence through the earth. Verily, God likes not each arrogant boaster. And be moderate (or show no insolence) in your walking, and lower your voice. Verily, the harshest of all voices is the voice (braying) of the ass." (Qur'ân 31:18-19)

A Muslim should not be attached to the ephemeral pleasures of this world. Morality in Islam addresses every aspect of a Muslim's life, from greetings

to international relations. It is universal in its scope and in its applicability. It reigns in selfish desires, vanity and bad habits. Muslims must not only be virtuous, but they must also enjoin virtue. They must not only refrain from evil and vice, but they must also forbid them. In other words, they must not only be morally healthy, but they must also contribute to the moral health of society as a whole.

"You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in God; and if the followers of the Book had believed it would have been better for them; of them (some) are believers and most of them are transgressors." (Qur'ân: 3:110)

The Qur'ân defines and sets the standards of social and moral values for Muslims.

The Qur'ân [17:22] provides a set of moral stipulations which are "among the (precepts of) wisdom, which thy Lord has revealed to thee" that can be reasonably categorised as 10 in number.

1. Worship only God: (Qur'ân 17:22)
2. Be kind, honourable and humble to one's parents: (Qur'ân 17:23 (Qur'ân 17:24)
3. Be neither miserly nor wasteful in one's expenditure: (Qur'ân 17:26-29)
4. Do not kill your children for fear of want. (Qur'ân 17:31)

5. Do not commit adultery: (Qur'ân 17:32)
6. Do not kill unjustly (Qur'ân 17:33)
7. Care for orphaned children. (Qur'ân 17:34)
8. Keep one's promises: (Qur'ân 17:34)
9. Be honest and fair in one's interactions: (Qur'ân 17:35)
10. Do not be arrogant in one's claims or beliefs: (Qur'ân 17:36-37)

According to S. A. Nigosian, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Toronto, these resemble the Ten Commandments in the Bible and "represents the fullest statement of the code of behaviour every Muslim must follow".

- Protection of Environment: Islam gave much importance to the protection of Environment.
- 'Consultation of the People': Islam believes in Shoora loosely translated as 'consultation of the people'.
- The importance of this is premised by the following verses of the Qur'an: "...those who answer the call of their Lord and establish the prayer, and who conduct their affairs by Shoora are loved by God" [42:38].
- "Consult them (the people) in their affairs. Then when you have taken a decision (from them), put your trust in Allah" [3:159]
- Islam accepts Religious Pluralism: Religious minorities were also free to do whatever they wished in their own

homes provided they did not publicly engage in illicit sexual activity.

- Islam grants Freedom of Expression to all.
- Islam has given men and women equal rights in every aspect of life.
- In Islam it is not permissible to oppress women, children, old people, the sick or the wounded. Women's honour and chastity are to be respected under all circumstances.
- The hungry must be fed, the naked clothed and the wounded or diseased treated medically irrespective of their faith or creed.
- Right of Revolution: There are several points regarding the right of revolution in Islam: Two dicta attributed to the Prophet and universally accepted as authentic are indicative. One says, "There is no obedience in sin. The other pronouncement, "do not obey a creature against his creator".
- Medical Ethics: Islamic medical ethics view the patient as a whole. Classical texts speak more about "health" than "illness", showing an emphasis on prevention rather than cure.
- Use of Drugs: Drugs and Alcohol were prohibited in Islam.
- "Neurotics": Islamic neurotics and neuro-theology hold a sympathetic attitude towards the mentally ill, as exemplified in Sura 4:5 of the Qur'an [63] "Do not give your property which God assigned you to manage to the

insane: but feed and clothe the insane with this property and tell splendid words to him.”

Military Ethics: A number of military ethics were followed in Islam regarding law of treaties; the treatment of diplomats, hostages, refugees and prisoners of war; the right of asylum; conduct on the battlefield; protection of women, children and non-combatant civilians; contracts across the lines of battle; the use of poisonous weapons; and devastation of enemy territory.

The most important of these were summarised by Caliph Abu Bakr, in the form of 10 rules for the Muslim army:

Stop, O people, that I may give you ten rules for your guidance in the battlefield. Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone.

Prisoners of war were fairly treated in Islam by providing free food and were showered with kindness. They were offered to be released if they agreed to impart education to the Muslims.

Peace and justice: peace is a basic concept of Islam. The Arabic term

“Islam” itself is usually translated as “submission”; submission of desires to the will of God. The greeting “As Salaam alaykum”, favoured by Muslims, has the literal meaning “Peace be to you.”

Welfare: The concepts of welfare and pension were introduced in Islam in the form of Zakat. Zakat and Jizya collected in the treasury of an Islamic government were used to provide income for the needy, including the poor, elderly, orphans, widows, and the disabled.

Animal welfare: Concern for the treatment of animals can be found in the Qur'ân and in the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be to him).

Qur'ânic verse: “All the creatures that crawl on earth and those that fly with their wings are communities like yourselves” Qur'ân 6:38, Muslims must be in controls of their passions and desires.

Islamic teachings on abortion: Muslims regard abortion as wrong and forbidden.

Islam and capital punishment: Islam on the whole accepts capital punishment. But even though the death penalty is allowed, forgiveness is preferable. Forgiveness, together with peace, is a predominant Qur'ânic theme.

Euthanasia and suicide in Islam: Suicide and euthanasia are explicitly forbidden. Islam believes that all human life is sacred because it is given by

Allah, and that Allah chooses how long each person will live. Human beings should not interfere in this.

Do not take life, which Allah made sacred, other than in the course of justice. Qur'ân 17:33.

And no person can ever die except by Allah's leave and at an appointed term. Qur'ân 3:145.

Destroy not yourselves. Surely Allah is ever merciful to you. Qur'ân 4:29

What is better than to conclude with this Hadîth: The Prophet summarised the conduct of a Muslim when he said: "My Sustainer has given me nine commands":

- to remain conscious of God, whether in private or in public;
- to speak justly, whether angry or pleased;
- to show moderation both when poor and when rich,
- to reunite friendship with those who have broken off with me;
- to give to him who refuses me;
- that my silence should be occupied with thought;
- that my looking should be an admonition;
- and that I should command what is right." ■

Voluntary Fasts

Besides obligatory fasting mentioned, every Muslim is expected to observe voluntary fasts (Saum'i Tatawwu) on the following days.

1. One day fast on the tenth day of Muharram i.e., the Day of Ashura. Other recommended fasts during Muharram are Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and the first day of Muharram. The Prophet is reported to have said, "Those who fast on Thursday, Friday and Saturday of this month shall be removed from hell fire a distance of 700 years journey and those who fast on the first day of month shall be kept from sin for the next two years." Such is the excellence of Muharram.

2. Six days fast following Id al-Fitr.

3. Weekly two days fast on every Monday and Thursday.

4. If possible in the whole of Shaban or some part of the month.

Fifteenth Shaban is one of the sacred days of Islam. Known as Shabi-Barat or Night of Record, the devout Muslims keep an all-night vigil on the strength of belief that God registers all the actions of mankind for the following year on this day. Fasting on the day and offering special hundred rak's prayer in the night has special reward.

5. Fast on the Bright Days (Al-Ayyam Biz) i.e, 13th, 14th and 15th of every month.

6. Fasting on alternate days, Prophet David was believed to have fasted on alternate days and kept a very good health.

7. Fasting in Rajab, the most honoured month is also recommended to the pious Muslims.

(Islam Ethics and Teachings by Muhammad Kunju Salim, Page, 128-129)

Bank Interest in Islam Revisited

- Naseem A. Zaidi*

Islamic behaviour is governed, mainly, by the teachings of Quran and precedents laid down by *sunnah* or *hadiths*. The Holy Quran prohibited some things like wine, gambling, eating meat of prohibited animals and marriage with some specified close relatives etc. and ordinarily Muslims refrain themselves from these things. However in case of receipt or payment of interest, *ulma* (Muslim clerics) say as *haraam* (prohibited) yet million of Muslims receive or pay interest in various forms. The dichotomy of the issue needs re-examination.

The paper is divided into four parts: Part I deals with the early Islamic period in which usury was a major social evil. A new era started with the advent of commercial banking, industrial revolution, and the growth of other financial intermediaries with interest becoming life blood of economies. How the new tools were interpreted by the *ulma* in this period became important. The aspect has been examined in part II. In the new circumstances some *ulma* relaxed the earlier rigid and orthodox views and allowed payment and receipt of interest in some cases with so many conditions attached with it. The aspect is covered in part III. The reforms in this

area are only half-hearted and there is an urgent need that the persons entitled to give *fatwa* (religious ruling) come forward to give a clean chit to an activity that has no illegitimacy or immorality attached with it. The conclusion and suggestion are covered in part IV.I

Quran on Interest

Quran prohibits *riba*, an Arabic word that literally means addition or excess. The globally accepted English equivalent of the term *riba* is usury. The term has wide applications in Arabic language and apart from excess payment in the form of interest on borrowed money it applies on credit sale if extra money is charged as well in various types of unfair trade practices going on in the pre-Islamic period.

The early Islamic scholars were divided on the issue what constituted *riba* as stated in Quran. They distinguished between 'usury of deferment' and 'usury of excess' Under the former, if borrower could not pay back at appointed time, the date of payment was deferred but on the condition of excess payment. The usury of excess was defined as "the increase of commodity stipulated in the sale contract over the legal measure or weight of that commodity". Usury of deferment was the type proscribed by

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the Holy Quran, the other type of it that of excess was proscribed by the august *sunnah*. (Kharofa 2002)

Usury has been a condemned practice since the ancient times and even prohibited in *Torah* (Old Testament). The laws of ancient Iraq provided for a temporary enslavement of the indebted person, his wife and family in case of default (Kharofa, a). The practice was prohibited in Judaism, Christianity and in this perspective it was condemned in Quran in the strongest possible words.

In the seventh century (AD) Arabia, the society was divided into two distinguished classes i-e oppressors and the oppressed, the former, a rich class amassing wealth by exploiting the latter, generally poor earning income by hard work. Addressing the oppressor class it was stated in Quran, "O you who believe do not eat usury doubled and multiplied" (verse 3: 130). The message was repeated in the words, "They took usury though they were forbidden and they devoured men's wealth wrongfully" (verse 4: 161).

Apart from the above two places, the word *riba* is repeated six times in Quran and in all places it appears in contrast to noble deeds especially charity that has been considered as opposite extreme of usury. The message here is that instead of overburdening friends, relatives, neighbours and other persons by loans and

excessive interest, they should be helped by *zakah* and *sadqah* that are considered real investment to be rewarded in the eternal life after death (verse 2:274). If we look into the sequence in Quran, verses about charity and spending for poor are preceded to the verses about usury (verses 2:275-280). The contrast here is significant, as usury leads to unequal distribution of income and wealth in society while charity results in reducing disparities between rich and poor leading to overall social welfare. Usury is coupled with proscription while charity is coupled with an enjoyment by Allah (Kharofa, b). In contrast to usury, trade has been considered a desirable activity as trade and industry increase prosperity and stability of men and nations while usury would merely encourage a race of idlers, cruel blood suckers and worthless fellows who do not know their own good and therefore akin to mad man (The Holy Quran).

The reason for prohibiting *riba* has not been explicitly stated in Quran. Even though we do not get the reason in the form of a direct statement, some scholars have inferred some reasons read in their context. Siddiqui, (2005) identifies five such reasons:

Riba corrupts society; it implies improper appropriation of other people's property; it results in negative growth, *riba* demeans and diminishes human personality and it is unjust.

Riba and Hadiths

At the time of Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century Arabia, Muslims came to him for queries about various issues and the Prophet used to respond them in the light of the teachings of Quran or on the basis of his own wisdom. About usury there was a problem of demarcation between a normal and an excessive rate leading to exploitation. Hadhrat Umar, a close companion of the Prophet felt some difficulty in the matter as "the Prophet left this world before the details on the question were settled. This was one of the three questions on which he wished he had had more lights from the Prophet" (The Holy Quran, a) Due to this problem the issue remained unresolved.

The application of *riba* was not restricted to borrowing and lending only, many issues in trade involved it. In the absence of specified currency in that period, barter system i.e. exchange of goods for goods was very common. Use of gold and silver as medium of exchange was also popular besides exchange of goods for goods. In this scenario quality and purity of gold and silver and other goods as dates and food grains etc. was a significant factor. According to Ibn Rushd, "It is clear from the *shariah* (Islamic laws) that the purpose of prohibiting *riba* relates to the possibility of great cheating that existed therein" (Siddiqui a)

Imam Wali-al-Eddin Muhammad bin Abdullah (742 A.H.) in an authentic collection of *hadiths* 'Mishkat Shareef (Khan, 1987) included 25 *hadiths* in the chapter on *riba* and out of these 16 deal with unfair trade practices mainly about quality of goods exchanged like gold, silver, some items of food grains and dates etc.

There was a group of companions of the Prophet led by Abdullah ibn Abbas that quoted Prophet as saying "there is no usury except in deferment". "Every usury in *jahiliyyah* (pre-Islamic time) is null". The usury proscribed in the Holy Quran was that of *Jahiliyyah* as indicated by the linguistic form of *riba*. The context denotes that usury of deferment popular in *jahiliyyah* is one intended by the proscription in the Holy Quran (Kharofa, c)

To conclude, in Quran and *sunnah*, while prohibiting *riba* the main focus is on morality, legitimacy and social welfare through reducing disparities, rather than on simple addition.

II

Advent of Commercial Banking

For centuries after the life time of the Prophet, professional money lenders (henceforth called as money lenders) operating on the principle of usury remained the only source of lending till the emergence of institutional source of financing in the form of commercial banks in Europe during the

fifteenth century. In the beginning, these banks started keeping money and other valuables of depositors in safe custody and charged for the service. Gradually these banks realized to earn profit by lending, and passing on a part of it to depositors in the form of interest. With the passage of time these banks developed and took the form of financial intermediaries between creditors and debtors on the principle of mutual benefit of all the three parties.

Usury versus Modern Banking

The Muslim clerics failed to distinguish individual financing practiced by money lenders working on the principle of usury from the institutional financing introduced by banks on the principle of mutual benefit of the three parties. The objectives, features and motives of the traditional money lenders are entirely different from those of commercial banking in the following ways:

1. Money lenders, ordinarily, do not collect deposits and lend money from their own resources. The modern banks collect deposits and use credit creation power generating many times more loans as compared to deposits, thereby increasing profitability of banks. While money lenders indulge in oppression and exploitation of needy persons, banks function on commercial basis where interest is determined by economic forces of demand and supply of loanable funds.

2. While under usury, lender commands economic powers, gets a tool to exploit needy persons; under banking system depositors are millions of savers and accept whatever rate of interest is offered on different saving schemes. Unlike in case of usury where lenders are strong entity capable to exploit masses, commercial banks have to face stiff competition in the market. Therefore, lending rate is not as high as in case of money lenders.

3. Money lenders mostly operate on local level while in case of commercial banks the area of operation is very wide spreading in some cases on international level.

4. Banks are subject to regulations by an apex body mostly central bank of a country that lays down rules so that undesirable practices adopted by banks are under check. In case of traditional money lenders they command monopoly powers in the local area of operation and exploitation of masses becomes unavoidable feature as there is no external control over them.

5. On macro level, the banking system promotes economic and social welfare. The modern industry and commerce thrive on loans resulting in higher GDP and percapita income in a country. On the directive of the central bank, a certain percentage of loans is earmarked for priority sector providing crucial finances for the poverty alleviation programs. In India, for

example, domestic commercial banks are required to lend 40% of the total credit to priority sector that includes agriculture, micro and small enterprises and other weaker sections of society. The Self Help Group scheme in which banks help small loans has emerged as a major micro- finance program in India.

Muhammad Yunus created a system of micro finance in Bangladesh in the late 1970s by extending credit to rural women skilled in local handicrafts and saving them from the clutches of local money lenders. The model created by him spurred similar lending practices worldwide and the innovation won him the 2006 Noble Peace Prize shared by the Grameen Banks he developed. The banks working on interest have resulted in women empowerment and brought cheers to millions of households in Bangladesh.

Growth of other Financial Intermediaries

During the later part of the eighteenth century a modern industrial system emerged along with the traditional economies based on agriculture, small scale industries and trade. The new system was based on division of labour in which land including raw material, labour, capital and enterprise etc. were provided by different sections of society and each agent got share in production on the basis of goods and services provided

by them. Large amount of capital was required in the system and individual entrepreneurs as well as banks could not provide this magnitude of capital.

Now, in the traditional as well in the modern sector capital is mobilized through two different flows:

A- Equity Flows

In these flows return of capital is paid in the form of dividend that varies according to profitability in the ventures. Share of companies, equity based mutual funds and insurance plans etc. come under this category.

B- Debt Flows

These are based on a pre-determined fixed rate of return in the form of interest payment independent of profit or loss of the borrower. Bank or post -office saving banks or fixed deposits, provident funds, National Saving Certificates, bonds, loans for production or consumption and hire-purchase system etc. are covered under this category.

Muslim Clerics and the Modern Capital market

The *ulma* permit investment in equity flows while prohibit it in debt flows. Their discrimination is based on a verse of Quran (2:275) that states "Allah hath permitted trade and forbidden usury" and the verse (2:276) declaring "Allah will deprive usury of all blessings, but will increase for deeds of charity: For He loveth not any ungrateful sinner".

Riba Versus Trade

A pertinent question arises whether interest in modern times comes under the category of *riba* that is prohibited or trade which is permitted. Here concept of trade has a wider usage and includes all the legitimate economic activities based on mutual benefit promoting social welfare in production exchange and distribution of goods and services etc. A judicious human judgment based on rationality and reasoning may not be denied while distinguishing *riba* and trade. While trade is a permitted activity but trade in prohibited goods and services may not be justified. Investment in shares is permitted by the *ulma* but some times share business becomes akin to gambling and many families are ruined in this business due to collapse of a company. In *hadiths* application of *riba* is equally there both in usury as well as in trade in the form of profiteering, hoarding, black marketing, adulteration and so many forms of cheating going on in trade. Thus, demarcation between *riba* and trade is based on justice, fairness, absence of oppression or exploitation rather than on two different practices.

The Muslim clerics, generally, adopt the criterion of profit and loss to distinguish between trade considered to be desirable and *riba* that is prohibited in Islam. All forms of trade including production, exchange or

distribution of goods and services carry risk and uncertainty resulting in profit or losses as recovery of capital invested in trade is not totally assured. The elements of profit and loss lead to variable returns unlike in case of interest where return is said to be fixed on the basis of initial contract.

While giving a clean chit to all forms of trade on the ground of profit and loss and prohibiting interest on all forms of debt flows, the *ulma* ignore the following facts:

1. Modern banking is subject to great risk in the form of non-recovery of loans. This was the main factor that led to collapse of giant banks in so many countries in recent years jeopardizing the capital of million of depositors. In India, bad debts called as non-performing assets are a major issue especially when loans are granted in priority areas.

2. *Ulma* failed to distinguish nominal value and the real value of the capital assets invested in all the interest-bearing instruments like provident fund, saving bank and fixed deposits, bonds and NSCs etc. As inflation is a popular factor in almost all the economies, therefore, there is a continuous erosion of the real value of assets with the passage of time. If the annual rate of interest is 8% and rate of inflation is 10%, the interest is unable to compensate the erosion in real value of the assets invested and there is a loss

in real terms. The expected rate of inflation may not be guessed, therefore, uncertainty about profit and loss is there. The problem was realized by some scholars and a scheme of 'indexation' was suggested (Jarhi 2001) but nothing could come out in any country.

3. If the risk hypothesis fails, there is no valid ground to distinguish between fixed return such as in case of interest and variable returns emanating from the condition of profit and loss. Moreover, there are numerous agreements with fixed returns and no or minimum risk without carrying stigma of illegitimacy, exploitation or oppression. Rental of houses, shops and other buildings, rental of capital goods with fixed return and fixed periodicity and rental of land for different uses are some of the examples never included in the category of *riba*.

4. *Ulma* distinguish between trade and *riba* on the ground that the former involves human efforts, skill or capability while in the latter, money comes in the form of interest with no efforts involved. Here no distinction is made between past and current efforts. Financial as well as physical assets are accumulated with the help of the both, or as a result of inheritance in which skill or efforts were involved in the earlier generation.

Further, the hypothesis works only in small scale production and trade. Banks or other financial intermediaries get larger part of profit from corporate

sector in which due to larger division of labour, physical work is provided by working class getting wages or salaries for their work and the other groups receive rent, interest and profit for their respective services. The group providing capital either in the form of equity shares, mutual funds or debts is not expected to go to factories or other enterprises to work there.

5. When talked about comparative venues of investing capital, Muslim clerics as well Islamic scholars give first priority to *mudarabah* (enterprises on the basis of profit sharing) but this assumes a high level of integrity among business partners. Due to lack of mutual trust the practice is not very common. Investment in shares, mutual funds and other equity based saving plans etc. is permissible but persons having moderate level of education can not deal with these instruments easily. Due to these difficulties majority of Muslims keep their savings in banks or other interest bearing instruments defying the rulings of *ulma*.

III

Reform Efforts

Owing to the fact that interest occupies a central position in the modern economic life and especially since interest is very life blood of the existing financial institutions, a number of Muslim have been inclined to interpret (interest) in a manner which is radically

different from the understanding of Muslim scholars throughout the last 14 centuries (The Holy Quran, b).

Modern Jurisprudents on the Issue

The modern scholars are divided on the issue of interest into two groups: One group following an orthodox view rejects interest and the other supports it on the ground that it is not the same as usury proscribed in the Holy Scriptures including Quran. The group supporting interest (see Kharofa, *ibid.* PP. 154-161) believes that the interest paid by saving banks differs from usury prohibited in Islam and it should be viewed in a different manner to meet the requirements of the modern age. Among this group are Rashid Rida, Shaikh Muhammad Abdu and Shaikh Mahrnud Shaltut, formerly Rector, Al Azhar University, Egypt. Kharofa quoted views of Shaikh Abdul Wahhab Khallaf as follows:

Allah proscribed what is harmful to the Muslims in any way. But here is some thing useful in every way. It is a transaction which does not fall under usury of deferment or excess since it is a type of profit-loss sharing specifying a certain share of profit for the owner. This may run contrary to the opinion of some faqihs (jurisprudents) but it does not contradict the Quranic text or the *sunnah*. (Kharofa d)

It was towards the close of the twentieth century that a *fatwa* was, once again, issued in Egypt legitimizing, first,

the interest on investment certificates issued by the government and then bank interest. Two considerations for legitimizing interest in these cases were pointed out (Siddiqui b): To afford the small man the possibility of safely keeping savings as well as earning modest return on it and secondly, to involve Muslims in business which was increasingly relying on banks for funding as well as for other services. Some other Islamic scholars supported bank interest in modern times. It was claimed that there is no moral case against bank interest i-e its prohibition has no rationale; it does not make sense in the contemporaneous situation. (Saeed 1996)

Reforms in India

In India, bank interest was considered as legitimate by a group of scholars and social activists associated with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who excluded bank interest from the prohibited *riba* (Faridi 1958). An association was formed to promote the idea and a journal titled *Soodmand* was launched from Aligarh in 1925. (Siddiqui c). A *fatwa* with the seal of approval by numerous religious scholars was also circulated (Faridi, b)

Of late, in India some relaxation has been granted in the old rigid views on interest. Now bank loans for necessities of life have been permitted. Apart from consumption needs interest bearing loans may be accepted for

agriculture trade and other forms of business if existence of enterprises is jeopardized without loans (Rehmani 1998). Loans for comforts, luxuries or for raising one's standard of living have not been allowed. Here difficulties may arise in the implementation part of the *fatwa* in defining the conditions for eligibility of loans. Government loans at subsidised rates are permissible as these are considered to be working expenses of the banks. (Rehmani a)

Bank deposits have been allowed with the objective of safety, tax saving plans or due to some legal requirements (Rehmani b). Certain conditions have been laid down for disposal of interest income. The money may be spent on poor persons or for social welfare work without intention of charity. The interest income may be spent on interest payments of debts or income tax payment. Fixed deposits are still prohibited except in the condition if these are unavoidable for saving income tax (Rehmani c)

Interest on Provident Fund

Interest on provident fund is permissible but the ground on which it has been allowed seems to be illogical. According to some *ulma* the reason is that the deposited money remains at the disposal of employer rather than with the employee. It is only partially true as loans from the fund or partial withdrawal are allowed after fulfilling certain conditions. Moreover, money remains

with the debtors in case of bonds fixed deposits or other debt schemes in which a lock-in period is there. Hence a distinction between a PF deposits and other debt deposits is not justified. For some other *ulma* reason for justifying interest on PF is that addition in the form of interest is not a part of service contract, therefore, it is gift by the debtor at a time of leaving a job (Rehmani, d). The argument is not valid as one of the conditions of a PF contract is "as per rules amended from time to time". In case of PF, employer invests money, earns interest/dividend and part of it is transferred to deposits of employee on the basis of periodic declaration. It is in the knowledge of employees what percentage of interest is added annually to their account. Further, if interest is considered as *haram* whether it is justified to accept a gift or prize in that form.

The economic reasons of accepting interest of PF are more plausible. There is opportunity cost of keeping deposit with the employer. Had his money would have been received on year to year basis it could earn by investing income in alternative sources. As this was not possible a cost was involved and interest payment is compensation of this cost. Further, as inflation is a permanent feature of all the economies resulting in erosion of real value of deposits, it is compensated by addition of interest on year to year basis. The deposits that are paid at the time

of leaving a job have much lower net value than at the time these were deposited and interest is money to neutralize the effect of inflation over time.

IV

Conclusion and Suggestion

It was due to oppressive nature of *riba* (usury) it was prohibited in Quran and *sunnah* as well as in other Holy scriptures. Islam being a religion of peace wanted to establish an economic and social order that are not based on exploitation of one section of society comprising mostly poor persons by another including generally rich persons. Amassing wealth and thriving at the cost of others who earn income by hard work result in economic disparities and the phenomenon leads to an undesirable economic and social order not fitting in Islamic vision. The spirit of Quran and *sunnah* is against the oppressive and unfair rather than the additive feature of *riba*. Although Quran permitted trade and prohibited *riba* but the application of human judgment is also necessary to determine what is right and what is wrong as there are more cases of *riba* in trade too.

With the advent of the modern banking Islamic jurists failed to distinguish between usury practised by professional money lenders and the modern banking system working on the principle of mutual benefit, poverty alleviation and promoting social welfare etc. Some scholars took the point and the old, rigid and orthodox views on *riba*

were relaxed to some extent but the pace of reform is only half-hearted as some important services of banks to common man viz. saving bank and fixed deposits as well as loans for agriculture, industry and business in normal conditions are still in prohibited list.

Islam is flexible rather than a rigid religion. Judgment of deeds depends upon *neeyat* (intention) of a person whether he is going to do right or wrong deed. Due to changing circumstances and new conditions emerging if a problem is not solved in the light of Quran and *hadiths* there is a provision of *ijma* that means a general concord among the jurists of a particular age on any question. Lastly, there is a provision of *the qiyas* in which jurists have to use their own discretion and reasoning, and Prophet Muhammad approved this channel too.

Ijtehad is a provision emanating from *qiyas*. According to Wahba Zaheli of Syria, a successful *mufti* (person responsible to give religious rulings) is one who gives religious opinion according to need of the time. A religious edict should fulfill, on one side, Quran and *sunnah* and on the other side requirements of common man according to need of time (Rehmani e). It is ripe time for leading Islamic schools of thought in India not to shirk their responsibility of issuing a realistic *fatwa* failing which million of persons would go on defying them undermining their status. ■

Man and The Divine Plan

-S. Muzaffar Hussain

Man constitutes the glorious theme of all religions, philosophies and social sciences. He occupies a central position in the web of human history. Having solved the most baffling mysteries of Nature, man has recently scaled unknown heights to the moon with the jewels of God-given faculties and senses. As the crowning glory of God's creation, his endeavours as well as failings are a constant theme of Quran.

As a part of God's Will and Plan, Man, of all the known beings and objects, had audaciously accepted the challenging task of preserving God's Trust referred to in Quranic verse 72 of *Surah Al Ahzab* - a task which mountains, angels, and all others were unable to fulfill. To be able to undertake the impossible task, God favoured man by bestowing on him certain gifts of senses and intuition, and also undertook to guide him in his efforts (Q. 92: 12). He has been endowed with will power, as well as emotion, initiative and independence - qualities which the angels lack.

A HIGH DESTINY:

Man on the other hand, though made of clay, had God's spirit within himself to fulfill a high destiny (Q.15:29). By virtue of this spirit, he is expected to bring his whole being into harmony with God's Universal Will and Plan. His duty is to preserve the pattern on which God created him (Q. 30:30). He is born with all the purity, innocence, and righteous inclinations towards virtue, but gets corrupted and contaminated by false

customs, superstitions and selfish values surrounding him. As a result he soon becomes pugnacious, false and slavish, hankering after what is wrong and forbidden.

As against the guilt complex of Christian teachings characterising man, the Quran has elevated him to the position of honour above the brute creation (Q 17:67). Having inherited the earth from God, man is His vicegerent (Q 2:30-6: 165), and a responsible being, for his own acts, with no one vicariously atoning his faults or sins. He has been given the full liberty and initiative to act according to his judgement aided of course by revelation, and he is the maker of his fortune. (Q. 17:13), to be finally judged by his record. (Q. 17:71).

Though created in the best of moulds, he is to toil and struggle in his career (90:4). Two highways are open to him- the steep and difficult path of virtue and the easy path of vice. The first leads to blissful days, but the other though of pleasure and rebellion leads to destruction, (Q 90: 10). By following the evil, man abases himself as the lowest of the low, from the high pedestal, and divested of all the good of which he is capable. Being hasty, impatient, weak, and ungrateful, man in his inordinate vanity, mistakes God's gifts as his own achievements. His strengths, wealth, position, or power are by no means his own. Even the more subtle gifts such as knowledge, or talent in science, arts etc., are not his own, but endowed by God.

No scripture apart from the Quran is so rationalistic with its constant emphasis on understanding (Q. 30:24) to reflect (14:52) to ponder (16:67) to think (Q. 10:24) and to know (Q. 7:32) sweeping the cobwebs of superstition, and darkness, and heralding the age-of reasoning, science and advancement. Again Quran instead of expounding miracles, preaches how to discover the secrets of nature, and the scientific truth in the natural phenomena. Says the Quran *"Those who remember Allah, standing, sitting, and reclining, and consider the creation of the heavens and earth (and say); Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain; glory be to Thee."* (3: 191). The Quran had wrought a mental revolution in man, and no wonder Arabs were the pioneers of a scientific outlook, when as admitted by Europeans themselves, Europe was going through the thousand-year long age of darkness.

REAL PURPOSE OF CREATION:

The real purpose of all creation, according to Ibn-e-Arabi, the 12/13 century Arab mystic, is man himself. His "perfect man" is the prototype and the mirror of God whose most significant role in this world is translating the Will of Allah. Intellect creates understanding and perception inducing ~relative activity to transform the environment. The ideal and perfect man of Ibn-e-Arabi, is the Holy Prophet (PEUH) himself whose personality radiated the divine virtues. He inspired, preached, guided and reformed, transforming a warring society into a civilised and cohesive force.

"No emperor," wrote Carlye. "was obeyed more as this man in the cloak of

his own clouting, who even at the zenth of his worldly power submitted to the menial offices of the family, kindling the fire, sweeping the floor, milking the ewes, and mending with his own hands his woollen garments." He was not a spiritual peddler of an age or epoch but the greatest builder of humanity, whose message transcended race, colour and geography and whose profound teachings uplifted the status of man upwards from the depth of darkness into higher realm of light and truth.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) was the meekest, the bravest, the gentlest, the chastest and the most charitable.

Gifted with the mighty powers of imagination, intuition, elevation of mind with delicacy and refinement of feeling, as stated by Dr Stanley Lane Poole (the historian), he was philosopher, orator, Prophet, legislator, warrior, and conqueror of ideas.

Man is born to strive and struggle, and to suffer hardships. If he exercises patience, God will smoothen his way (Q. 90:4). With true and sincere desire to obey God, his difficulties may vanish (Q.45:4), Man's success and failure in this world and the hereafter depend upon his own endeavours. The way of the righteous is made smoother, but for the arrogant with the crooked will, the way is that of misery. (Q. 92:7, 10). Whereas the righteous fear Allah, the man of evil is arrogant, selfish and greedy. Being seduced from Allah, he loves the floating world, having rejected or at least put away the thought of Hereafter. Man in himself is weak; he must seek God's grace, without it he can do nothing, with it he can do all. ■

(Da'wah)

Prophet's Sermon on Ramazan

Baihaqi reported on the authority of Salman Al-Farsi ® that Prophet (PBUH) delivered a sermon on the last day of the month of Sha'ban and said:

"O people! The month of Allah (Ramadhan) has come with its mercies, blessings and forgiveness. The days of this month are the best among the days and the nights are the best among the nights and the hours during Ramadhan are the best among the hours. This is a month in which you have been invited by Him (to fast and pray). Allah has honoured you in it. In every breath you take is a reward of Allah, your sleep is worship, your good deeds are accepted and your invocations are answered.

"Therefore, you most invoke your Lord in all earnestness with heart free from sin, evil, and pray that Allah may help you to keep fast, and to recite the Holy Qur'an. Indeed! Miserable is the one who is deprived of Allah's forgiveness in this great month. While fasting remember the hunger and thirst on the Day of Judgment. Give alms to the poor and needy. Pay respect to your elders, have sympathy for your youngsters and be in towards your relatives and kinsmen. Guard your tongue against unworthy words, and your eyes from scenes that are not worth seeing (forbidden and your ears from sounds that should not be heard.

"Be kind to orphans so that if your children may become orphans they will also be treated with kindness. Do repent to Allah for your sins and supplicate with raised hands at the times of prayer as these are the best times, during which Allah Almighty looks at His servants with mercy. Allah answers if they supplicate, responds if they call, grants if He is asked and accepts if they entreat, a people! You have made your conscience the slave of your desires.

"Make it free by invoking Allah for forgiveness. Your back may break from the heavy load of your sins, so prostrate yourself before Allah for long intervals, and make this load lighter. Understand fully that Allah has promised in His Honour and Majesty that, people who perform salat and sajda (prostration) will be guarded from Hell-fire on the Day of Judgment.

"O people! If anyone amongst for *iftar* (meal at sunset) for any believer, Allah will reward him as if he had freed a slave, and Allah will forgive him his sins. A Companion asked: 'but not all of us have the means to do so' The Prophet (PBUH) replied: 'Keep yourself away from Hell-fire though it may consist of half a date or even some water if you have nothing else.'

"O people! Anyone who during this month cultivates good manners will walk over the Sirat (bridge to Paradise on the day when feet will tend to slip. For anyone who during this month eases the workload of his servants, Allah will make easy his accounting, and for anyone who doesn't hurt others during this month, Allah will safeguard him from His Wrath on the Day of Judgment. Anyone who respects and treats an orphan with kindness during this month, Allah shall look at him with kindness on that Day. Anyone who treats these kinsmen well during this month, Allah will bestow Him on that Day, while anyone who mistreats his kinsmen during this month, Allah will keep away from His Mercy.

"Whoever offers the recommended prayers during this month, Allah will save him from Hell, and whoever observes his obligation during this month, his reward will be seventy times the reward during other months. Whoever repeatedly invokes Allah's blessings on me, Allah will keep his scale of good deeds heavy while the scales of others will be tending to lightness. Whoever recites during this month an ayat (verse of the Holy Qur'an in other months.

"O people! The gates of Paradise remain open during this month. Pray to your Lord that they may not be closed for you. While the gates of Hell are closed, pray to your Lord that they never open for you. Satan has been chained, invoke your Lord not to let him dominate you."

(The Muslim Word League Journal)

Reforming the Society

-Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Society owes its own existence from us. A healthy society comes up when its adherents are nice and live and enjoy freedom; but complete freedom often cause damage. For instance, food is to eat but snatching other's food is forbidden. One may enjoy own wife not of others. Islamic Shariah fixed limits of everything. The holy Quran says: "Those are limits set by Allah: those who obey Allah and His messenger will be admitted to gardens with rivers flowing beneath, to abide therein for ever and that will be the supreme achievement. But those who disobey Allah and His messengers and transgress His limits will, be admitted to the fire, to abide therein: and they shall have humiliating punishment." (S:4,A 13-14)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)said: "O people! Beware! Every king has a Hima and Hima of Allah on the earth is His illegal (forbidden) things. Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body. If it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good, but if gets spoilt, the whole body gets spoilt, and that is the heart."

It is unfortunate that today we see evils and vices around us but do not stop them. Allah says: "You are the best community that hath been raised up for mankind, ye enjoining what is right,

forbidding what is wrong" (S 3 A 110)

The Prophet says: "Whoever amongst you sees an evil he should try to change it by his hands (i.e. using force) and if he cannot do that he should use his tongue to condemn it. And if he has not that much courage at least he should realize in his heart; that it is bad and this the lowest stage of iman"(Muslim)

A healthy society may perpetuate when we become honest, pious and righteous. Besides we should be fair in our dealings. We should not embezzle and not defalcate and usurp others property and wealth. The holy prophet said: "The signs of a hypocrite are three: 1) Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie. 2) Whenever he promises he always break it (his promise). 3) If you keep something as a trust with him, he will not return it."

In order to create a healthy society we should regard obligation or rights towards Allah's creatures including human beings (Huquqal-ibad).

Shahi Bukhari contains a hadith wherein the prophet is reported to have said: "If anybody is under his obligation to his prestige or something of that sort (like property or loan), it is better that he should meet his obligation in this world

rather than defer it to the time when there would be neither dinar or dirham to compensate for it. If the defendent has any meritorious act to his credit so much of it would be taken as can satisfy the claim of the plaintiff. If such a person has none of the virtues than the claimant's sins corresponding to the dues owed would be transferred to him." Another report'in the Sahih Muslim says: "All the sins of the martyr would be condoned save a loan." The prophet added that Gabreil conveyed it to him. Another report included in the Sahih Muslim: "The prophet asked his companions, 'Do you know who is a "destitute, a pauper?' The Companions replied we call him a destitute who is penniless with resources. The prophet then said, 'The destitute among my followers would be one who would have prayer and fasting and poor due on the Day of Judgement but he would have abused someone, made a false accusation against, another, misappropriate someone's property, shed someone's blood or assaulted someone. His virtues would be given to the wronged persons. and when these would have exhausted and these would still be . some more dues, then the sins of the wronged persons would be heaped on him and he would be cast into the hell."

Sura Al-Hujurat of the holy Qur'an vividly mentions some principles of reformation in society. A few verses of the Sura are mentioned below:

O ye who believe! Put not your selves forward before Allah and His messenger; but fear Allah: for Allah is the who hears and knows all things. O ye who believe! Raise not your voices above the voice of Prophet, not speak aloud to him in talk, as ye may speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds become vain and ye perceive not. Those that lower their voices in the presence of Allah's messenger. their hearts has Allah tested for piety: for them is forgiveness and a great reward. Those who shout out to these from without the inner apartments - most of them lack understanding. If only they have patience until thou couldst come out to them, it would be best for them: but Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful. O ye who believe! If a sinner comes to you with a news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done. And know that among you is Allah's messenger: were he in many matters, to follow your wishes, ye would certainly suffer: But Allah has endeared the faith to you, and has made it beautiful in your hearts, and he has made hateful to you unbelieve, wrong doing, and rebellion: such indeed are those who walk in righteousness. A grace and favour from Allah and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. If two parties among the believers fall into a fight, make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the others, then fight ye

all against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of Allah, but if it complex, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for Allah loves those who are fair and justice. The believers are but a single' brotherhood: so make, peace and reconciliation' between your two contending brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive mercy.

“O ye who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: it may be that the latter are better than the former: nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by offensive nicknames: ill seeming is a name connoting wickedness, to be used of one after he has believed; and those who do not desist are indeed doing wrong. O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much as possible: for suspicion in some cases is a sin: and spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you Like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it but fear Allah is oft-returning, most merciful. O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may despise each other verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous of you. And acquainted with all things.” (8: 49,A:1-13)

Almighty Allah further says: “Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide, sustenance for them as well as

for you. Verily the Killing of them is a great sin. Nor come nigh to adultery for it is an indecent deed and an evil way nor take life-which Allah has made sacred- except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority to demand Qisas or to forgive: but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life; for he is helped by the law. Come not nigh the orphan's property except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength; and fulfil every engagement for every engagement will be enquired into on the Day of Reckoning. Give full measure when ye measure., and weigh with a balance that is straight: that is better and fairer in the final determination. And 'pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for surely the hearing, the sight, the heart of all of those shall be questioned of. No walk on the earth with insolence: for thou canst 'not rend the earth asunder, nor reach the mountains in height. (8 17 A31-37)

On that account: We ordained for children of Israel that if anyone slew a person unless it be for murder or,for spreading mischief in the land-it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the whole people. (8: 5, A: 32)

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution or crucifixion, or the cutting off

of hands and feet from opposite sides or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Here after. (8: 5, A: 33)

It should be kept in mind that we should restrain ourselves. For lot of mischievous and obnoxious things come out of our mouth.

An Arabian poet says:

“Wound of lance may be filled but gash of spear can not be filled.”

The holy Quran says “O ye who believe! Fear Allah and make your utterance straight forward.” (8 33 A70)

It is narrated in a Hadith that the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, “You take guarantee of two things, I take guarantee of paradise for you i.e. tongue and private part” .

In order to create a healthy society it is also necessary that we should abstain from extravagance and prodigality. We should not waste money in unnecessary things. Unfortunately today lot of money is spent in marriage ceremony, birthday party, death’ anniversary and so on. The holy Quran says; “Verily spend thrifts are brothers of the Satans. And Satan is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful. “(S 17 A 27). The commentary of Quran says: “Spendthrifts are not merely fools. They are of the same family as the Satans. And the Satan himself fell by this

ingratitude to Allah- So those who misuse or squander Allah’s gifts are also ungrateful to Allah.”

In short, it is incumbent on our part to develop humanitarian attitude and come forward to render reformative deeds and devote time, energy and money to guide to the right path those are ignorant and misled. May Allah give us strength to perform this noble cause. ■

The Night of Power

“We have indeed revealed this message in the Night of Power. And what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah’s permission, on every errand: peace!... This until the rise of morn. ”

(S.97 A.1-5)

Preserve Heritage of Nature to Save Life on Earth

Shaista Bano

With the onset of industrialisation has arisen the ecological crisis to pose a big challenge to the world. Many of man's schemes designed to improve the condition of life are, in fact, ill-conceived due to the lack of appreciation and understanding of interdisciplinary approach. The world is a cosmos, an ordered system and not a chaos. The Environment encompasses climate and its various components: plants, animals, human beings, oceans, rivers, mountains, all things found in the ground and atmosphere, all inter-dependent.

The pernicious activities of man and manmade machines, endangering the cleanliness of air, water and soil disturb and upset Nature. Consequently, Nature retaliates; floods, draughts outbreak of diseases, water logging, salinity and alkalinity of soil, air and water pollution and noise are some of its manifestations. The environmental crisis – the Ecocide of environment – is fast reaching its pinnacle and we seem to be tackling the pollution monster in too casual a manner.

There has been a sudden buzz around air pollution of NCR region in the last four or five months and Delhi's air quality has been dubbed by many as the worst in the world.

Breathing in a Stroke (*Indian Express*, May 4, 2015)

Long-term exposure to ambient air pollution is associated with cerebrovascular disease and cognitive impairment, but whether it is related to structural changes in the brain is not clear. Researchers studied the associations between residential long-term exposure to ambient air pollution and markers of brain aging, using magnetic resonance imaging.

The study showed that exposure to elevated levels of MP2.5 was associated with smaller total cerebral volume, a marker of age-associated brain atrophy, and with higher odds of cover brain infarcts. The findings suggest that air pollution is associated with insidious effects on structural brain aging even in dementia and stroke free persons.

Participants in the study in the United States were at least 60 years of age, and free of dementia and stroke.

Climate change could kill 1 in 6 of Earth species (*Indian Express*, May 2, 2015). Washington: One in six species on Earth could be threatened with extinction from climate change unless steps are taken to reduce global warming emissions, new research has warned. According to an analysis of more than 100 smaller studies, up to one-sixth of the species could disappear if climate change remains on its current course. Emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse

gases have boosted the global average temperature by about 0.8 degrees Celsius since the Industrial Revolution.

The main air pollutants are carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (N₂O and, NO₂) ammonia (NH₃), benzene vapours, sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and microm level particulate matters (PM). Particles up to a size of 2.5 microm (PM 2.5) can be inhaled like other gases.

Carbon monoxide, a highly poisonous gas, reaching the blood circulatory system combines with haemoglobin (red colouring matter) of blood and converts it into carboxy haemoglobin (a cherry red compound) thus rendering the haemoglobin useless as oxygen carrier. If inhaled in its pure form, it first produces giddiness then unconsciousness and finally death. A concentration of one (1) in eight hundred (800) volumes of air will produce death in 30 minutes. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is also a highly toxic gas which corrodes the skin and on inhalation causes headache and sickness. Benzene vapours are very harmful and toxic and can produce unconsciousness. Its poisoning in the long term can prove fatal by destroying red and white blood corpuscles. Ammonia with characteristic pungent odour brings tears into eyes. It is used in ice-plants for refrigeration. The leakage of vast amount of ammonia in the wee hours of April 10, from a cold storage in the village of Navangarh, Iglas (U.P.), played a distractive role among the villagers, leaving one employee and 14 cows dead

and many people and animals unconscious and sick (*Inquilab*, Urdu, April 13, 2015). Sulphur dioxide with pungent sulphur burning smell can cause inflammation of the lungs and induces asthmatical complaint.

Nitrous oxide (N₂O) is poisonous in nature. If inhaled in small amounts, it causes hysterical laughter (so termed as laughing gas). Mixed with oxygen, it is used as an anaesthetic. Large doses might prove fatal.

These poisonous gases have very very low permissible limits and are monitored by CPCB and DP CC regularly.

Carbon dioxide, a minor constituent of air (about 0.03% by volume), about 1.5 times as heavy as air, is very crucial as regards the life on earth. It is neither combustible nor a supporter of combustion. It does not support the life and animals exposed to it die due to the lack of oxygen. Large amount of CO₂ are produced as a result of combustion of carbon and its compounds, fermentation of plants and their products. Animals breathe in oxygen and exhale CO₂ (respiration). Decay of dead animal bodies also produces CO₂, besides evolution from volcanoes. During day times plants take up CO₂ from air and return oxygen (Photosynthesis) while at night plants take in oxygen and give out CO₂. These opposing processes constitute carbon dioxide- oxygen cycle, keeping the percentage of CO₂ practically constant in air.

Carbon dioxide, water vapours absorb long wavelength (2.5 – 15 micrometre (mm) infrared (IR) light. This heat trapping process caused by CO₂, water vapour, methane, nitrous oxide and many other greenhouse gases is termed as Global Warming or Green House Effect.

The increase in concentration of greenhouse gases results in global warming. Thus the temperature of the earth is slowly but steadily increasing. The greenhouse effect may differ in magnitude with latitudes and altitudes and seasons. The rise in temperature in Himalayan and Tibet regions is higher compared to that in other parts of the world. The world observes 5 June as Environment Day. As the 1972 Stockholm Conference for global efforts to protect the environment was organised on June 5, the World Environment Movement celebrates 5 June every year as World Environment Day.

The impact of air pollution is also delocalised as air accepts no barrier or boundary and so it is a matter of grave concern for all of us.

Many people pay respect to land and rivers as “Dharti Mata” and “Ganga Mayya”. The serious and positive measures to check and control the pollution of all rivers including the Ganga would be a step in the right direction. Over 500 years ago, the downfall of Mesopotamian Civilization was the result of environmental destruction. Then came the downfall of Sindh Civilization as the

rivers there changed their course due to undesirable human activities. Ethiopia and Africa also suffered due to the same cause. Acid rains in Kuwait, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia are the result of burning of huge amounts of oil and heavy bombardment on Iraq. History stands witness to the havoc played of the innocent citizens there, especially children. Now the present crisis in that region is a cause of grave concern for the whole world.

Exploitation of mountains should also be stopped. Is the destruction of environment not an act of encroachment on the rights of all living beings of today and tomorrow?

In Islam the environment is a very vast subject and its protection has been given attention in very unambiguous terms. The cutting of green trees and destroying agriculture are prohibited even during war times. Polluting water reserves is condemned. So “Zero Tolerance” here is the formula to save the life on the planet earth. The consequences of unchecked and indiscriminate use of natural resources in the reckless race of industrialisation are inevitable. When man puts the heritage of Nature at the altar of industrialisation, disturbing the balance and harmony of environment, he must face its fury too. ■

*(The writer is Former Principal,
Women's College, A.M.U., Aligarh)*

'Adl and I'tidal (Moderation)

- K.K. Usman

In Arabic, the language of Revelation, metaphysics and philosophy of Islam, the words for justice ('adl) and moderation, temperance, balance, equilibrium, harmony (i'tidal) are semantically and etymologically kindred. Muslim societal ethics, the very basis of society itself, is but a quest for equilibrium and justice, and hence felicity, with God, nature and history. It entails submitting oneself to the will of God, accepting the mandate of the trustership and striving to be a moderate community (*ummah wastah*). The goal of justice, Muslim consciousness affirms, is reached by treading the path of moderation (2:143).

The moderation of Islamic ethics stems from its life-affirmation. Islam holds that society is necessary for morality and that the demands of religious commitment can best be, indeed must be, approximated within the social system of a *lay community*. Institution of monkery and asceticism are repugnant to the temperate and societal ethos of Islam. Prophet Muhammad was a great teacher of moderation. He has directed his followers against overextended rituals of worship, against celibacy, against exaggerated fasting, against pessimism and morose mood. He

ordered them to break the fast before performing sunset prayer, to keep their bodies clean and their teeth brushed, to groom and perfume themselves and wear their best clothes when they congregate for prayer, to marry, to take their time to rest and to sleep and recreate themselves with sports and arts. 'To enjoy the bounties of God's provisions but not to over-indulge', the well-known Quranic dictum, is indeed forever on the lips and in the hearts of Muslims (7:31). The concept of *Ijma* (general consensus), *istihsan* (preference for the better) and *Istislah* (public welfare), the dynamic principles of *Sharia*, all have moderating influences on Muslim society. The symmetry of Islamic arts, the immediacy of the Islamic way of life, the harmony of contemplation and action are all, likewise, felicitous expressions of the fundamental Islamic ethic of justice and moderation. The adoption of the ethic of moderation may, it is hoped, save our societies from the ills of wanton consumerism and the senseless destruction and squandering of human and natural resources.

However, our civilization must now abandon its cherished goals of unlimited technological growth and over consumption, and change its basic

conception of man and nature. Here the world-view of *tawhid*, the concepts of *khalifa*, *amanah* and *akhira* have a great deal to teach and a major role to play in alleviating the Spiritual and teleological crisis of our civilization. One does not have to be a Muslim to benefit from such teachings.

Prophet Muhammad was a great advocate of moderation and on various occasions showed his concern about the environment and its proper maintenance. The following are some of the traditions (*Hadith*) related to environmental ethics of the Prophet:

- Guard yourself against three causes that beget the wrath of the Lord: Polluting the water resources, befouling the pathways and shades.
- The Apostle of God strongly disapproved of cutting down trees that gave shade and shelter to travellers and animals.
- People share three things: water, pasture and fire.
- No one should be deprived of anyone's (stored) surplus water.
- Do not waste. Even if you are taking ablution from a big river, do not over-indulge and waste water.
- Even at the time of impending Doomsday, plant a sapling. You will realize its fruit as reward from your Lord on the Day of Judgement. ■

What is Islam?

Al-Islam, the name of the Muslim's religion, literally means resignation to the will of God. This name of the religion was announced in Surah 5, verse 3, of the Holy Qur'an. This verse was revealed to Prophet (PBUH) during his last pilgrimage to Mecca. A part of the verse reads: "This day have I perfected your religion for you, and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion 'al-Islam'." It is wrong to call Islam Muhammadanism.

Islam preaches humanitarianism, universal love, universal benevolence, aims at universal fraternity, and rejects all concepts of racialism and sectarianism.

The Qur'an enjoins preaching and persuasion, and strictly forbids compulsion and violence in the conversion of people to Islam. This precept is set forth with the utmost precision in the Qur'an. "Let there be no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth made distinct from the erroneous one" (2:256). The charge that it was the sword that brought about the rapid spread of Islam now no more stands. It has been refuted by a large number of eminent non-Muslim writers. Carlyle has exploded it. Sir Edwin Arnold in his work "The Preaching of Islam" has proved convincingly that the spread of Islam was due to its simplicity and rationality. Mr Gandhi has affirmed the same view". ■

(An Epitome of The Teachings of Islam)

AIMPLB plans to launch stir against yoga in Govt. schools

The executive committee of AIMPLB met in Lucknow on June 7 2015 President of AIMPLB Maulana S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi presided over the two session of the meeting.

The All India Muslim Personal Board (AIMPLB) decided to launch a national movement against the RSS-VHP led conversions, Surya Namaskar and yoga classes and the teaching of the Gita in government schools in some states. The decision was taken at the executive committee meeting of the board here on Sunday. The NDA government has planned to make the International Yoga Day on June 21 a big success.

Senior board member Maulana Khalid Rashid Firangi Mahli told HT resentment was brewing among the board members over the Sangh Parivar's campaign on conversion with several BJP MPs issuing highly objectionable statements on the issue. The board has also expressed concern over the stoic silence of the BJP leadership on these issues. He said a committee had been constituted to finalise the plan for the movement.

He said the board, an apex body of the Muslim community, had decided to reach out to "likeminded" people in non-Muslim communities to take them along on these issues. The movement was aimed at creating awareness in the Muslim community and keep vigil on the rival forces.

The board was of the view that the Sangh-sponsored conversion drive, Surya Namaskar and Yoga exercises in government schools had no "Islamic sanctity" and were also against the country's secular constitution. The board said that it was not against any community and wanted strong secular ethos to prevail over-all development and progress. Meeting after the April 2014 Jaipur convention, the 51-executive committee took stock of the prevailing situation during the last one year. It chalked out an action plan accordingly.

The committee also plans to entrust more responsibility to youth leaders/clerics in the board. There are also moves afoot to effectively reach out to the media to present a proper image of the Muslim community. The committee has decided to move court in various Shariat related cases.

In view of illness of general secretary Maulana Nizamuddin, 85, the committee appointed Maulana Wali Rahmani of Munger as the acting general secretary. The committee also reviewed the Babri Masjid case pending in the Supreme Court. The AIMPLB has repeatedly made it clear that it would abide by the final verdict of the apex court. The Lucknow bench of the high court, in its split judgment in September 2010, had trifurcated the land. The verdict was unacceptable to all three parties and they moved the Supreme Court where the hearing is yet to commence. ■

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