

THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

Vol. X1 No. 6

June 2009

Academy of Journalism and Publicity
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The Fragrance of East

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Wisdom of Qur'an

Whoever did a good thing-of the male or female and is a believer, on such we shall surely bestow a goodly life, and shall recompense them with better rewards than what they were doing. .” (Surah al-Nahl-97)

Commentary:

Although the article “Mun” (whoever) is inclusive of male and female, e.g. “if you say whoever is in the house” then, women will be included in the term “whoever,” yet, the addition of the words “male and female” here in this verse, is for emphasis, and to remove any doubt about it that Qur’anic injunctions, although expressed in masculine, are for both men as well as women (Alusi).

Opinions have varied over what constitutes “Hayatun tayyibah” (a goodly life), although, the various opinions can be reconciled. Ibn ‘Abbas said it means lawful provision. (Whoever enjoys it, enjoys a goodly life). Hasan al-Busri thought it is contentment (qana’ah) that is meant. In a second opinion he said that “a goodly life” is something that will be obtained in Paradise. Ibn Jarir thinks contentment is the best answer, since, whoever is given this quality, is given all. “Indeed,” adds Ibn Jarir, “our experience is that those who devote themselves to living a righteous life, are rarely well-off in this world. Without contentment such a life could not be characterized as a goodly life.” In fact, we have a hadith in Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmed, which reports that the Prophet (Saws) said, “Succeeded he who became a Muslim, was given just enough (of the means of sustenance), and then Allah granted him contentment over what He gave him” (Shawkani).

Zamakhshari writes: “A goodly life” is what a believer always enjoys, whether he is materially well-off or not. If he is well-off, then of course the case is clear. But if he is badly-off, then he perseveres with patience and is content with what Allah (swt) has provided him. Thus, he is blissful and tranquil in every situation. In contrast, the life of a “fasiq” is miserable in every situation. When he is badly off, then the case is clear. But if he is well-off, then too greed does not allow him to sit in peace. The desire for more keeps him restless so that he never truly enjoys the fruits of his labor.

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

It is narrated by Abdullah bin Omar that, (once), the Apostle of God passed by an Ansar who, [at that time], was talking to his brother about modesty and admonishing him in that regard. The Prophet, thereupon, said to him: “Leave him to his state, for modesty is a part (or fruit) of Faith.”

-Bukhari and Muslim

Commentary:

It tells that, among the Ansars, there was a man whom God had, particularly, blessed with the virtue of modesty owing to which he was very mild and lenient in his dealings with others. He avoided severity in the realization of dues and did not like to be outspoken even when it seemed necessary. A brother of his who did not approve of it was, one day, reproaching him and telling him that it was not good to be so timid and diffident that the sacred Prophet happened to pass that way, and, on hearing the conversation, told the Ansar to leave his brother alone. He was a highly blessed condition. Modesty was a branch of fruit of Faith, and even if it was not profitable from the point of view of worldly interests, it would, surely, lead to elevation in ranks in the Hereafter.

It is related by Abdullah bin Umar that the Apostle of God said: “Modesty and Faith exist together, and when one of them goes out, the other, too, goes out”.

-Baihagi

Commentary:

It shows that faith and modesty are so closely related to each other that either both will be present in an individual or community or not any of them.

Editor's Note:

Taliban Turf

Of late, anti-Islamic forces have got an easy tool in the name of Taliban in their hands to malign Islam and castigate Muslims. Projecting a section of Afghanis as role model of Islam, USA and Europe are creating an "Islamic" phobia in the world. Setting aside their own role of making most of the Muslim countries centre of their terrorism and tyranny, uprooting the well established governments, killing thousands of Muslims threatening invasion on flimsy grounds, Islam is being targeted as the "mother" of terrorism.

Islam is basically a religion of peace and its followers draw their inspiration and obtain guidance from the holy Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). There is no place of violence in Islam, if any section of Muslims go astray and indulge in violence then cause for it must be looked into and efforts be made to rectify it.

In late 1980s, after the largest Soviet operation in Afghanistan's history, American supported Afghan Mujahdeen defeated the Soviet 40th Red Army. Next the Soviet Union itself collapsed. The Mujahdeen were badly divided however, and quickly fell into civil war. The US could have led an international effort to restore order and rallied key players like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to try to end the conflict. Instead, Afghanistan got virtually no attention from the White House or the US congress. By the late 1990s, the radical movement had taken power and emerged as a strong force.

In late 2001 the CIA led a campaign to topple the Taliban with the support of the Northern Alliance, the Taliban's foe inside Afghanistan. By 2002 the Taliban were routed. Their concentration was limited to Pakhtun belt in the south. A harassed and uprooted group infact has been in search of a peaceful solution. Finding their interests unattended by 2008 they spread their influence and controlled much of the country side in the southern part of the country where Pashtuns are in a majority.

In recent days the spread of violence in Afghanistan and in the North West Frontier Province and Federally Administered Tribal Area of Pakistan by Pakhtuns is a matter of great concern. No doubt this is the land

of Pathans or Pashtuns who are generally have been viewed as being prone to violence and revenge. But looking back we find that these same Pathans during 1920-1947 under the inspiring leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan known as Badshah Khan proved to be a highly inspiring and completely non-violent freedom movement Brigade. In 1930-35 Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan succeeded in raising an army of about one lakh Pakhtuns as "Khudai Khidmatgar" (servant of God). Every Khudai Khidmatgar had to take the oath: "I am a Khudai Khidmatgar; and as God needs no service, but serving His creation is serving Him, I promise to serve humanity in the name of God."

For good behaviour they promised to refrain from violence and from taking revenge; to forgive those who oppress them or treat them with cruelty; to refrain from taking part in feuds and quarrels and from creating enmity; to treat every pathan as his brother and friend; to refrain from anti-social customs and practices; to live a simple life; to practice virtue and refrain from evil; to practice good manners and good behaviour and not to lead a life of idleness.

As is evident from the above there is a potential for reform amongst Pakhtuns, a sincere effort is needed to bring them on the right path. However, for it we need a towering and selfless leader of exemplary virtues like Badsha Khan. Will Pakhtuns be able to find one? . •

SA

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Mankind Debt To The Prophet Muhammad[❧]

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

In certain parts of the world, people enjoy freedom of conscience and choice, are free to lead their lives in peace and amity, to devote their energies to teaching and preaching, researching and making new discoveries. Even these parts of the world (which we would wish to make more amicable, more pleasant and cultured) have not been so tolerant, nor free from uncivilized strife, nor disposed to co-existence of different peoples, sects and groups, still less sufficiently broad-minded, to accommodate differences of opinion.

Mankind has seemed, many times, to be bent upon self-destruction, passed through stages when, by its own misdeeds, it has forfeited any right to survival. Men have sometimes behaved like crazed and ferocious beasts, and flung all culture and civilization, arts, literature, decency, the canons of moral or civil law, to the winds.

All of us know that the writing of history is of relatively recent origin. The 'pre-historic' era was very much longer. The decline of mankind when it relapsed into savagery was by no means an agreeable task for historians and writers to record. Nevertheless, we do find narratives of the downfall of empires and the decay of human society, told at long intervals in the pages of history. The first of these date from the fifth century A.D.-some are briefly touched on here.

H.G.Wells, the well-known historian, writes about the decay of the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires:

"Science and political philosophy seemed dead now in both these warring and decaying empires. The last philosophers of Athens, until their suppression, preserved the texts of the great literature of the past with an infinite reverence and want of understanding. But there remained no class of men in the world, no free gentleman with bold and independent habits of thought to carry on the tradition of frank statement and inquiry embodied in these writings. The social and political chaos accounts largely for the disappearance of the class, but there was also another reason why the human intelligence was sterile and feverish during this age of intolerance. Both empires were religious empires in a new way, in a way that greatly hampered the free activities of the human mind."

The same writer, after describing the onslaught of the Sassanids on Byzantium and eventual victory of the latter, comments on the social and moral degradation to which both these great nations had fallen:

"A prophetic amateur of history surveying the world in the opening of the seventh century might have concluded very reasonably that it was only a question of a few centuries before the whole of Europe and Asia fell under Mongolian domination. There were no signs of order or union in Western Europe, and the

[❧] A public lecture given on Tuesday 22, August 1989 at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

Byzantine and Persian empires were manifestly bent upon mutual destruction. India also was divided and wasted."

Another writer, Robert Briffault strikes a similar note:

"From the fifth to the tenth century Europe lay sunk in a night of barbarism which grew darker and darker. It was a barbarism far more awful and horrible than that of the primitive savage, for it was the decomposing body of what had once been a great civilization. The features and impress of that civilization were all but completely effaced. Where its development had been fullest, e.g., in Italy and Gaul, all was ruin, squalor and dissolution."

The civilization nurtured by the ancient religions was disintegrating, according to J.H. Denison. In Emotion as the civilization, he writes:

"In the fifth and sixth centuries the civilized world stood on the verge of chaos. The old emotional cultures that he made civilization possible, since they had given to men sense of unity and of reverence for their rulers, had broken down, and nothing had been found adequate to take their place.....

It seemed then that the great civilization which it had taken four thousand years to construct was on the verge of disintegration, and that mankind was likely to return to that condition of barbarism when every tribe and sect was against the next, and law and order was unknown..... The old tribal sanctions had lost their power The new sanctions created by Christianity were working division and destruction instead of unity and order. It was a time fraught with tragedy. Civilization, like a gigantic tree whose foliage had overarched the world and whose branches had borne the golden fruits of art and science and literature, stood totteringrotten to the core."

Now, at the time when mankind and human civilization were on the edge of destruction, the Lord and Creator of the word caused a man to be born in Arabia who was entrusted the most difficult task: not only to rescue mankind from imminent destruction but also to raise it to heights sublime beyond the knowledge of historians and the imagination of poets. If there were not incontrovertible historical evidence to demonstrate his achievements, it would be difficult to believe their greatness. This man was Muhammad (peace be upon him) who was born in the sixth century. He saved mankind from the threatened and imminent danger, gave them new life, new ambition, fresh energy, a revitalized sense of human dignity and intellect and idealism. It was because of him that a new era came about, of spirituality in art and literature, of personal sincerity and selfless service of others, which produced an ordered, graceful and kindly culture. His most precious gifts to man were devotion to righteousness and aversion to evil, hatred of false gods and passion for establishing justice and morality, and the readiness to lay down one's life for these righteous goals. Such goals ultimately are the fountainhead and incentive for all reforms and

improvements. Whatever great and sublime heights man has attained have been owed to these noble sentiments-indeed, all material resources, means and methods owe their existence to human will and determination. That great benefactor of humanity replaced barbarism and brutality with the mild of human kindness, magnanimity and courtesy. He struggled unceasingly for the propagation of his noble teachings with complete disregard to his own self, his life or prestige.

It was because of that there arose, from among an uncivilized and ill-mannered people, noble-hearted men who led a graceful and kindly life, who started a new era of courtesy and warmth in human history, who engendered gentleness and goodness in the men around them. The world obtained a fresh lease of life; justice and fairness became its hallmark; the weak were emboldened to claim their rights from the haughty and strong; mercy and kindness became norms. It was the time when humanitarianism became a driving force, faith and conviction captured human hearts, mankind began to take pride in selflessness, and virtuous behaviour became habitual with the people.

We list here in brief the precious gifts of Islam which have played a key role in the advancement of human values and culture. A new and bright world, quite different from the decaying and disintegrating humanity at the time of its advent, came into being as a result of these contributions of Islam:

1. The clear and unambiguous creed of the Oneness of God.
2. The concept of human equality and brotherhood.
3. The concept of human dignity and man being the masterpiece of God's creation.
4. Acknowledgement of the proper status of women and restoration of their legitimate rights.
5. Rejection of despair and infusion of hope and confidence in human beings.
6. Fusion of the secular and the sacred, the refusal of any cleavage between them.
7. Integration of religion and knowledge, making one dependent on the other and raising respect for knowledge by declaring it a means of attaining nearness to God.
8. Emphasis on the use of intellectual faculties in religious and spiritual matters and encouraging the study and contemplation of natural phenomena.
9. Charging the followers of Islam with the responsibility of spreading virtue and goodness in the world, and making it a duty incumbent on them to restore truth and justice.

10. The establishment of a universal creed and culture.

I will not elaborate these points, instead, I would rather cite a few eminent thinkers and writers of the West who have acknowledged these virtues of Islam. One of the bases of culture and civilization –something that enhances gentility, and refinement, civility in conduct as well as in literature–is the acknowledgement of a truth, appreciation of the great achievements of other and returning thanks to those who have done any favour to us. The day this noble sentiment is expelled from our lives, literature, ethical standards, intellectual labours, even the right of expressing our thoughts freely, will become meaningless. It will not be a world to live in and die for. It will be a world of beasts and brutes where the ruling passion is to fend for oneself alone. No sentiment will remain except fulfillment of carnal desires. All rightly ordered relationships between teacher and taught, benefactor and beneficiary, physician and patient, even between parents and children, will peter out and lose their significance.

Gratitude, as defined by William H. Davidson, a contributor to the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, is a spontaneous and natural sentiment generated by kindness and benefit conferred by someone. It is a human virtue, abiding and universal. Davidson says:

Gratitude has been defined as that delightful emotion of love to him who has conferred a kindness on us. The very feeling of which is itself no small part of the benefit conferred. (Thomas Brown, op. cit., lxiii). Gratitude is an unselfish joyous response; the ultimate meaning of which is that human nature is so constituted that affection and unity between persons is the foundation of it, ill-will and enmity (all indications to the contrary notwithstanding) being abnormal and depraved.

Ingratitude is thus a moral depravity and perversion of human nature, a sign of benumbed human conscience. The lowest depth to which this immorality can fall is the ingratitude shown to founders of religion, the teachers of morals and the greatest benefactors of humanity. Grotesque parody in deliberately offensive language is not appropriate of any person, let alone of those noble souls who have founded religions, for it hurts the feelings of millions who not only follow them but are also willing to lay down their lives for them. An effort at such offensiveness also means a denial of truth. No cultured people, country or society should tolerate or defend anyone so depraved and unmannerly, who possesses no conscience. •

(To be continued)

The Message of Humanity[©]

S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

Besides purifying people's doctrine, Prophet Muhammad taught them ethical values and sublime norms and exhorted them to co-operate each other and show kindness, affection and consideration to Allah's creatures. Apart from it he advised them to avoid such things which lead one to anarchy, split and divergence. He called upon them not to harm others and treat all and sundry gently and respectfully. He said: "Those who have mercy will receive the mercy of the Most Merciful. Have mercy on those who are on earth the One in heavens will have mercy on you".

Prophet Muhammad laid great emphasis on ethics and morality. He said "O' mankind, your God is one and you have but one Creator. You are all progeny of Adam and Adam was made of clay. Lo! The noblest among you, in the sight of God, is the best in conduct.

He also said that Allah put forth various stories and tales in the Holy Quran so that you may derive benefit from them.

The first thing on which Prophet laid more emphasis was oneness of God.

He denounced all kind of polytheistic and impious acts and tried to persuade people to accept the true message of Islam.

He said Allah is one and only He deserves to be worshipped. Surah Al-Ikhlās categorically states the concept of oneness of Allah.

"Say, He is Allah, the one and the only God. The eternal the Absolute. He begetteth not, nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him". (c11:1-4)

Addressing people of Mecca he ensured that Oneness of God is the essence of Islamic Shariah. Later on these admonitions were also communicated to entire Arabs. A responsibility was assigned to disseminate these instructions and teachings for forthcoming generations till the day of Judgement. Prophet taught them that Islam consist of doctrine and good deeds. Both are inseparable. They also told

that Islam rests on five pillars. This is vividly mentioned in the following saying of the Prophet.

"The foundation of Islam rests on five things: (1) Kalima (declaration of faith) that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, (ii) The establishment of Namaz, (iii) the payment of Zakat, (IV) the observance of Fast, in the month of Ramzan, and (V) the performance of Hajj by those who can afford to make the pilgrimage".

They were informed that these were the fundamental tenets of Islam. They should follow them. Besides they should not perpetrate atrocities and cause oppressions on others. It was also said that success lies in carrying out these tenets of Islam.

In this context following verses of holy Quran are quite relevant.

"Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them but address them, in terms of honour" "And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: My Lord! Bestow on them Thy mercy even as they cherished me in childhood".

"Your Lord knoweth best what is in your hearts: if ye do deeds of righteousness, verily He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again (in true penitence)."

"And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer. But squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift."

"Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the satans. And the satan is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful". "And even if thou hast to turn away from them in pursuit of Mercy from thy Lord which thou dost expect, yet speak to them a word of easy kindness". "Make not thy hand tied (like a niggards) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute." "Verily thy Lord doth provide sustenance in abundance for whom He pleaseth, and He straiten it, for He doth know and regard all His servants".

"Kill not Your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily 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 their 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 to the orphans property except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength; and fulfill 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 all of those shall be questioned of".

Nor walk on the earth with insolence: for thou can not rend the earth asunder, nor reach the mountains in height".

"Of all such things the evil is hateful in the sight of thy Lord".

"These are among the precepts of wisdom, which thy Lord has revealed to thee. Take not, with Allah, another abject of Worship, lest thou shouldst be thrown into hell, blameworthy and rejected"(S.17 A 23-39)

This was the message of Islam revealed on Prophet Muhammad in a comprehensive and compendious form.

It is obvious that salvation lies on acting upon the path shown by Prophet

The holy Book says: "The religion before Allah is Islam". (5. A 19) It further says: "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost". (S.3 A85)

Prophet said Islam is complete code of life. If one wants to achieve success and attain pleasure of Allah relinquishing teachings of Islam

aside, one can not succeed in life. Prophet Muhammad communicated this message to his people as much as he could. To a great extent he succeeded in his mission.

Prophet ensured that the message sent by Almighty Allah is followed in letter and spirit.

Islam commenced with these fundamental objectives and ordered its adherents to carry them out wholeheartedly.

It was also warned that sending Prophets ends on Prophet Muhammad. After him, no prophet will come till the Day of Judgement. In Sura no 33, A no 40, Almighty Allah clarifies this fact that "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the messenger of Allah, and the seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things".

This was the decree of Allah that this noble cause will be completed by Prophet and Islam will not be confined only in Mecca but would prevail all over the world.

Accordingly Prophet Muhammad had to face a lot of resistance, impediments and difficulties in disseminating the message of Islam. Even he and his sincere and selfless companions had to migrate from Mecca to Madina to accomplish this noble deed. They did their best to convey the message of Islam to the Arabian peninsula. They had to sacrifice their lives in this cause. Ultimately Prophet achieved his mission and conveyed the message of Islam in a comprehensive way. Then this verse of holy Quran revealed:

"This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion" (S.5 A.39 • (English rendering: Obaidur Rahman Nadwi)

Media and Islamic Dawah

S. M. Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi^M

Two forms of religious programmes are aired on Radio and Television. One of them is called religious programme which are relayed intermittently between various fixed items. While the other is called the religious broadcasting. The latter is permanent programme on religious issues and subjects. Such programmes are common on the TV network of Muslim countries. Muslims hire a time slot from broadcasting agency in several European countries in which they offer their own programmes. This practice is common in several European countries. It has two forms. The first of which is that some Muslim businessmen hire a few hours of the broadcasting time. In other words they pay completely for the hours they use for their own purposes. Generally they are taken as advertisement. Fortunately such programmes become medium of introducing Islam. This concept is being experimented in different European countries. Besides the Radio in Journalism also this practice is in vogue. For example if the country where broadcasting time is hired is Non-Muslim then Muslims are allowed to engage the hired time freely according to their wish and desire for offering programmes. Thus Muslims use the allotted time for Islamic Dawah. These programmes are so effective and impressive that often people embrace Islam after hearing them. The position is the same in the television section as well. It has different channels or special time for particular telecast. Besides these channels there are also various private Radio Stations, which offer religious programmes similar to that adopted by the Christian Missionaries.

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Many people embraced Islam after watching prayers of the Holy Mosque (Haram Sharief) and the Haj Scenes on the Television. Being prejudiced and having reservations a few countries have imposed a ban on the telecast of Haj Scenes and films. They reasoned that haj film could not be put on air as people embrace Islam after watching the scenes of Haj rituals.

When King Faisal started television programmes in Saudi Arabia he reasoned out the objection of the ulema that if we do not launch our own T.V. channel, it would surely be watched on other T.V channels. It is too easy to control ones own T.V. channel but it is almost impossible to put a check on programmes of other T.V. channels. Islamic programmes like five time prayers, scenes and sites of Haj in its season are shown on it. Generally it is observed that people watch T.V for news, views and comments but on the contrary they find it brimming with degenerating, straying and tempting scenes in the name of advertisements or cultural programmes. So the controlled and righteous T.V. is its remedy.

In this era T.V. is the greatest medium of education. Researches in Science, technology as well as in other fields of arts and sciences are imparted through it. Their wrought lessons and theories appear on it. Likewise the languages too could be learnt easily by it. It is said that language is learnt more easily through listening on Radio but to observe the tongues' movements of the speaker on the T.V. could be more helpful in learning. However, it is like two edged sword. It is an important issue since besides advantages it also has disadvantages. However in numerous Arab and Islamic countries the introduction of T.V. for Islamic Dawah and reformation works has started. Internet should also be considered in the same vein. Several Islamic circles have hired various Dawah reformation sites on it as well. Their positive effects are being felt. It is a grand medium of advice on a point of religious law as well as dispensing Islamic law. Besides refutation

and nullification of allegations, doubts and objections against islam, it could also be a magnificent medium for asking shariah's views(Fatwa) as well as of dispensing them. Several Madarsas and Islamic circles have already started benefiting out of it.

In short several ways are being adopted on Radio and T.V. in the modern age. Some of them are permanent religious channels while on others religious programmes are telecast. A third kind of T.V. channel is that which set apart only a few hours for religious programmes. Such a practice has been adopted both by the radio and also television. These methods have not yet been experienced yet in India, though at different occasions several religious programmes are presented on T.V. and radio in India. On the contrary in some Islamic countries there are few Arab organizations which utilize these sources and spend huge sums of money on them. They even possess their own news agencies. They have hired a few hours of T.V. while some others have launched their own T.V. channels. Just as the time is hired on radio they have taken it on T.V. as well in a few countries, in which they present their religious programmes. There are also many agencies and companies which prepare audio and video cassettes on Islamic topics which generally consist of songs, plays and dialogues. This kind of presentation (on T.V.) is welcomed.

To what extent such programmes cast effect on society and which type of trend is developing up on the T.V. operatives themselves, can be guessed by an incident occurred in Egypt a few months ago. Here seven female T.V. artists having been impressed by these religious programmes decided to observe Hijab. Consequently Management suspended them from service. However audiences discarded those programmes because those lady artists presented them in such an impressing, appealing and charming manner that was liked by the viewers. The popularity of these programmes declined fast. The Management suffered major

losses and sensing the declining graph of viewers, suspended artists were recalled in services with the conditional permission of observing Pardah. They were told to present the programmes cautiously which they rejected absolutely saying that they would observe the complete Hijab. Finally they were allowed to present the programmes according to their wish observing complete Hijab.

Before this incident a very popular T.V. artiste Kareeman Hamzah had also decided to observe Hijab. She was the most popular T.V. artist at the time. When she was fired from the service she planned to launch a system of presenting her own religious programmes on T.V. People assisted her and she succeeded in her task of presenting religious programmes on T.V. Her programmes besides getting popularity all over the world posed a challenge to her previous mentors. However such Islamic trends are coming forward and are on increase manifold.

Unfortunately in India we are not aware of the circumstances, ways and means which are being adopted in other parts of the world for Islamic Dawah. We have no contacts with standard magazines and highly thought provoking books which are published from different institutions or from several European countries in both, Arabic and English as well as in other languages. These are trend setter sources which motivate people to tackle problems in a specified manner. Instead of hopelessness these sources increase optimism and raise hopes. Muslims who are aware of such programmes and tidings are hopeful to work much more in the field of Dawah. The literati are embracing Islam in Europe mostly on account of the struggle of media and other information technologies in this field. The interviews of Neo-Muslims are broadcasted by these resources which also play an important role in this regard.

A Fiqh workshop was organized in Delhi in 2003. I met one of the Egyptian born Muslim intellectual in it who had come from

America, he held a key post in an educational institution in America. We had a long discourse with him about Europe and America. We interacted on post 9/11 scenario of Islamic Dawah Work. He admitted clearly that on one hand the severe crackdown is being operated which is so painful; people are being put in prison, severe punishment is being meted out to them, Islamic activities and Muslims are being monitored, and the media also is displaying tough and antagonistic stand against Islam, still on the other hand the reaction which has cropped up due to unnecessary hullabaloo against Islam, goes in its favour. In response of the antagonistic propaganda of the media especially the western media, people have started thinking deeply to know the truth about Islam. The trend of studying Islamic literature is increasing day by day. Due to this phenomenon many people are embracing Islam. He told me that people in large number are expressing inclination towards Islam. The Islamic literature is spreading abundantly and people are desirous to know more and more about Islam. He told me unhesitatingly that the testing period we are passing through no doubt is inflicting to a great extent, but he was too hopeful when he said that its results are fruitful and gladdening. He said with pain that 2500-3000 persons are in different American jails, but we should also look into the state of affairs in Muslim countries. What is happening there is more painful than that in America. More than the number mentioned above are in the prison in Muslim world. More hardships are being put in the pathway of Islamic Dawah Works by respective governments. He told me that 20000 men are behind bars in Egypt. The same telling story prevails in Syria, Tunisia and Iraq. It is miraculous that those people who are interned, their ambitions are on sublime. When

they are freed from prison after suffering severe punishment in jails, their ambitions are as high as they were before going to jails. The story of their resolve, courage and determination appears in the Press from time to time. The people having Islamic mindset or Ikhwani who are arrested in Egypt, and tortured, on release after enduring severe physical and mental agonies, they are more determined and resolved in their mission of Islamic Dawah as compared to those who never passed through that test. I myself got the same feeling during a visit to Egypt. I met a person who had spent a few years in jail. Marks of punishment were still visible on his body. I knew he was in severe agony when he was out of prison after 20 odd years, he was expressing his views openly and criticizing the government bravely. When we urged him to be cautious he said, there is no more left to be meted out against me. What they have done to me is beyond human perception. Nothing could be more than what I have suffered. Such real life stories appear in the Press. The impressions and story of sacrifices of such courageous people which are published and broadcasted through different media, motivate people to Islam. Antagonistic media and behaviour of governments play a key role too in creating positive sentiments to Islam. Islamic media whether it is in the form of a book, journalism or radio, and whether it is too limited to be counted, had played its role in every field of Islamic sphere. Despite limited resources the consequences which appear are quite encouraging. • (Translated by Anis Ahmad Nadwi)

Israeli Invasion of the Gaza Strip: Humanitarian Tragedy and War Crimes

Mozammel Haque

A massive wave of Israeli air attacks launched on Saturday, the 27th of December, 2008, against Hamas in Gaza, killed at least 205 people the highest death toll in a single day in the territory since the end of the 1967 Six Day War. Israel used American-supplied F-16s and Apache helicopter to attack a string of civilian targets it linked to Hamas, including a mosque, private homes and the Islamic university.

Mayhem, Death and Destruction in Gaza

"In the bloodiest onslaught on blockaded Gaza since it was captured and occupied by Israel 41 years ago, at least 310 people were and more than a thousand reported injured in the first 48 hours alone.

Mayhem, death and deafening destruction came to Gaza at 11.30am yesterday when Israel dropped a first wave of bombs on the Hamas security compounds it had determined to wipe off the face of the map. By the end of "Operation Solid Lead", about 60 aircraft had launched about 100 strikes and at least 205 people were reported to have been killed. It was the most devastating attack on Gaza since 1967," reported by Toni O Loughlin in The Observer on 28 December 2008.

"The bombing went on for about 10 minutes. It was like an earthquake on top of your head. Israel's fierce bombardment of the Gaza Strip continued into a second day, when eight young Palestinian students at the UN College in the Gaza City were killed by a massive Israeli air strike. Christopher Gunness, UNRWAs chief spokesman, said: Whatever was targeted, the fact is that it happened near a large crowd of young civilians. We need an investigation which will establish the full facts and deliver accountability", quoted

by Donald Macintyre in his report in The Independent on 29 December 2008.

For the children it is like living in hell. After fourth day of Israeli attacks, Palestinian deaths rose to more than 370. At least 64 of the dead were civilians, according to the UN. Two of Tuesdays victims were girls aged four and 11, killed as they rode on a cart.

On the third day, five Palestinian sisters were killed by the Israeli bombing while they were asleep. The Five sisters are Tahrir, 17; Ikram, 15; Samar, 12; Dina eight; and Jawaher, four. The five Palestinian sisters were fast asleep when a night-time Israeli air strike hit the next-door mosque in Gaza. One of the walls collapsed on to their small asbestos-roofed home and they were all killed in their beds. The eldest sister, Tahrir, was 17 years old, the youngest, Jawaher, just four", reported by Donald Macintyre and Said Ghazali in The Independent on 30 December 2008.

On the sixth day, Israeli jet dropped a onetonne bomb on the home the home of a senior Hamas leader, Nizar Rayan, in Gaza on Thursday and killed him, four of his 12 children and two of his four wives and at least four others during the attack.

Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

Gaza is one of the most densely populated regions in the world covering just 365 square kilometers and home to 1.5 million people. The six month truce expired on 19 December but this six month truce became a six month economic blockade on Gaza. It did not benefit the Palestinians; rather it accelerated the decline of Gaza's population into hunger and poverty.

"According to Oxfam, only 137 trucks of food were allowed into Gaza last month to feed 1.5 million people. The United Nations says poverty has reached an unprecedented level. When I was last in besieged Gaza, I saw hospitals turning away the sick because their machinery and medicine was running out. I met hungry children stumbling around the streets, scavenging for food," wrote Johann

Hari in his write-up. The True Story behind this wart is not the one Israel is telling in The Independent, 29 December 2008.

But we do know that the air raids brought the biggest total loss of life on a single day in Gaza in 40 years: more than 230 Palestinians. The death toll by last night had climbed to nearly 290, with more than 700 wounded. This in reply to hundreds of rockets from Hamas militants which killed one Israeli in six months. But the equation is always like this," wrote The Guardian in its editorial (Gaza air strikes: Killing a two-state solution) on 29 December 2008.

During the last seven years, 14 Israelis have been killed by mostly homemade rockets fired from the Gaza Strip, while more than 5, 000 Palestinians were killed by Israel with some of the most advanced US-supplied armaments in the world. And while no rockets are fired from the West Bank, 45 Palestinians have died there at Israel's hands this year alone. The issue is of course not just the vast disparity in weapons and power, but that one side is the occupier, the other the occupied.

Muted Response from Western Capitals

"The relatively muted response from the capitals of the Western world over the conflict in Gaza is a sad testament to a kind of collective failure of the will and imagination on all our parts. There are now more than 300 dead in the territory while thousands of others have been rendered homeless. But where are the signs of urgent diplomatic activity aimed at bringing an end to the killing?" commented The Independent in its editorial (We must not let despair dash hopes of peace in Gaza), on 30 December 2008.

This lack of condemnation is as good as approval for Israel. The initial response to the crisis from European countries, including Britain, has been mostly formulaic, comprising routine expressions of dismay at the loss of civilian life, harsh words for Hamas, and a gentle tap on Israel's shoulder," wrote Simon Tisdall in his write-up The World Gives Israel a Free Hand in The Guardian, 29 December 2008.

UN Secretary General: Ban Ki-Moon

As President George Bush continued to blame Hamas for the worst violence in Gaza in living memory, the UN Secretary General, Ban Kimoon, criticized Israel's excessive force and urged the international community to do more. I think regional and international partners have not done enough. They should do more, Mr Ban said, in a rare departure from the diplomatic norm. They should use all possible means to end the violence and encourage political dialogue, emphasizing peaceful ways of resolving differences.

Similarly, The Guardian editorially held Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni and the defense minister, Ehud Barak, responsible for dropping explosives. The foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, warned loudly of her government's intention to topple Hamas if it did not stop the rocket fire. But both she and the defence minister, Ehud Barak, are responsible for dropping over 100 tonnes of explosives on up to 100 targets in a strip of land crowded with 1.5 million people, wrote The Guardian editorially on 29 December 2008.

People's outcry

Though the world leaders were hesitant to come out to condemn the attack, there were international outcry and the people come out to express their anger through writings and demonstrations. Thirty-two MPs of the British Parliament wrote a letter published in the Letter Column of The Guardian on 31 December calling on the international community to stop the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. We call on the international community to stop the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva convention, to intervene to stop the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. We call for an immediate ceasefire by all parties and for an embargo on the supply of military equipment to both sides.

Similarly, on the same day at the Letter column of The Guardian, another thirty-nine MPs, Peers, MEPs and MSPs called on the Scottish and UK governments to do all they can to pressure the Israeli government to halt attacks on the Gazan people who are being collectively punished for the actions of a minority.

We believe that a strong statement of condemnation of Israel's actions must be forthcoming from world leaders and political institutions before the air attacks escalate and ground troops sent into Gaza. We urge our leaders to do all they can to halt the killing of innocent lives and send a strong message of condemnation to the Israelis for their current attacks, the letter said.

Israeli Invasion and World leaders

After eight days of Israeli devastating bombing campaign with air strikes averaging one every 20 minutes on Gaza City, Israeli ground troops and tanks crossed the Gaza border and entered into the Gaza City on Saturday, the 3rd of January, 2009. The death toll as the Israeli assault entered its second week rose to more than 470 Palestinians, about one third of them civilians or policemen and left between, 1,850 and 1,850 injured.

The US President Bush, in his first comments since the ground offensive began, said the Jewish state was justified in protesting itself against Hamas militants. The situation now taking place in Gaza was caused by Hamas, Bush said. Instead of caring about the people of Gaza, Hamas decided to use Gaza to launch rockets to kill innocent Israelis. Israel obviously decided to protect herself and her people.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia said on 5th of January 2009 the international stand that Israelis barbaric attacks on Gaza are in self-defense is weak, muted, unprecedented and blind to the history of the occupation, to Israel's terrorizing of the Palestinians, to the huge power imbalance between the two sides, and to Israel's disregard for the Arab peace initiative.

King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, said, Israel's ruthless war of collective punishment of innocent men,

women and children in the Gaza Strip and its destruction pillar of Gaza's economy, violate all human principles, rules of war, and the most basic principles of international conventions.

Iyad Amin Madani, then Minister of Culture and Information, cited the Council as saying that Israel's policy of war, violence and genocide in Gaza and all Palestinian lands is nothing but implementation of extremist ideologies from within Israel and outside, which aim to reshape the Middle East according to their vision and terms.

The Kingdom will be in the forefront of any joint Arab-Islamic work that can effectively deal with this serious crisis, instead of just meeting and issuing statements after statements, Madani cited the Council as saying.

The fact is not unknown to the international community that during the last seven years, 14 Israelis have been killed by mostly homemade rockets fired from the Gaza Strip, while more than 5,000 Palestinians were by Israel using some of the world. And while no rockets were fired from the West Bank, 45 Palestinians have died there at Israel's hands this year alone. The issue is of course not just vast disparity in weapons and power, but that one side is the occupier, the other the occupied.

Qana Revisited

An UN-run school has become the latest casualty of Israel's so-called quest for security. Forty-two people, most of them children, have been killed in the Tuesday night attack on the UNWRA compound that has been a shelter for hundreds of Palestinian families uprooted by this war. Children, who make up more than half of crowded Gaza's 1.4 million people, are the most defenceless victims of the war between Israel and Hamas. The Israeli army has unleashed unprecedented force in its campaign against Hamas militants, who have been taking cover among civilians. •

As many as 257 children have killed and 1,080 wounded- about a third of the total casualties since Dec. 27, according to UN figures released Thursday, 8 January 2009.

Witnesses said two shells exploded outside the school, killing at least 43 civilians and wounding dozens among people who had taken refuge there and residents of nearby building. Israel's shells have fallen around at least three schools and a health centre run by the UN for Palestinian refugees. There s nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone here is terrorized and traumatized, said John Ging, the top UN official in Gaza.

Last night was a horrible night and these images will stay in the minds of the people, a Palestinian aid worker said by telephone from Gaza. If houses are targeted, schools are targeted, healthcare facilities are targeted, where else is there [to go]? On the streets? In the sea maybe?

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said it was totally unacceptable that Israel would attack any of the United Nations 23 Gaza schools where some 1,500 Palestinians whose homes were destroyed or who were fleeing the violence had sought refuge.

Israeli officials have accused Hamas of using civilians as human shields. But Christopher Gunness, at UN Relief and Works Agency, which is responsible for the Jabalia school, said the agency was 99.9 per cent sure there were no militants or militant activity in the facility or in the compound.

UNRWA had called for an investigation into the incident but had so far received no positive response from Israel officials, Mr Gunness said.

Holocaust in Gaza

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, called it a holocaust. The Holocaust that is what is happening right now in Gaza, Chavez said in a televised programme on Tuesday, 6th of January, 2009.

The president of Israel at this moment should be taken to the International Criminal Court together with the President of the United States.

"The shelling is incessant, hospitals are over whelmed, children are shell-shocked, the Gaza nights are miserably cold in the windowless homes. And residents fear their nightmare could worsen. And residents fear their nightmare could worsen. Children are traumatized, living in fear of the next explosion that will shake their home. Many kids have stopped eating. They are inactive, they barely talk, they cling to their parents all the time," said Sajy Elmaghinni, who works for the UN Children Fund (UNICEF) in Gaza.

"Children are now scared of the dark, which is a major problem because there is no electricity," says Elmaghinni, whose own home has been without power for five days.

"The Red Cross on Thursday, 8th of January 2009 accused Israel of failing to help wounded people in an area of Gaza where its rescuers found four small children huddling next to their dead mothers, too weak to stand up. The Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded" the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said in an unusually blunt statement.

The delay in allowing access to rescuers was unacceptable, the ICRC said.

The rescue team, which included members of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, found four small children next to their dead mothers in one of the houses. They were dead mothers in one of the houses. They were too weak to stand up on their own. One man was also found alive, too weak to stand up. In all there were at least 12 corpses lying on mattresses.

23 Palestinians had been killed, pushing the death toll to 777 in the two-week -old conflict, according to Gaza health officials who say at least half of those killed were civilians. Thirteen Israelis have also been killed.

They used a bulldozer to pile up the bodies of the dead. There were bodies of many fighters, said the man, who was released by the Israelis after five days of detention and allowed to return to Gaza.

At least 11 ambulances have been hit since Israel began the offensive on Dec. 27, the WHO statement said, while referring to targeted attacks by the Israelis on relief shipments. Hospitals that depend on generators for power are running out of fuel, WHO said. At least 750 Palestinians have died and 3,500 have been wounded in the attacks.

The British aid charity Save the Children warned that newborn babies in Gaza are at risk of hypothermia because of freezing temperatures and a cut in the power supply.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for an independent war crimes investigation in Gaza as Israel ignored a UN Security Council call for a cease-fire in its war on Palestinians. UN rights chief Navi Pillay told an emergency meeting of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that the harm to Israeli civilians caused by Hamas rockets was unacceptable, but did not excuse any abuses carried out by Israeli forces in response.

Pillay went further in an interview with the BBC saying the incident in Gaza City this week appears to have all the elements of war crimes. Pillay said violations of international humanitarian law may amount to war crimes for which individuals should be held accountable.

Amnesty International has accused Israeli soldiers of using civilians as human shields.

Israeli soldiers have entered and taken up positions in a number of Palestinian homes. Forcing families to stay in a ground floor room while they use the rest of their house as a military base and sniper position, the human rights group said in a statement.

Protest and Demonstration

26 Lawyers and Professors: There were lots of protests from the lawyers, academicians, professors of the University and the

common ordinary people throughout the world denouncing what is going on in Gaza. Writing in the Sunday Times on 11 January 2009 at the Letter Column, 26 Lawyers and Professors including four QCs, said, the killing of almost 800 Palestinians, mostly civilians, and more than 3,000 injuries, accompanied by the destruction of schools, mosques, houses, UN compounds and government buildings, which Israel has a responsibility to protect under the Fourth Geneva Convention, is not commensurate to the deaths caused by Hamas rocket fire.

In addition, the blockade of humanitarian relief, the destruction of civilian infrastructure, and preventing access to basic necessities such as food and fuel, are *prima facie* war crimes, the letter said.

Pope Benedict: Pope Benedict's point man for justice and peace issued on Wednesday, 7th of January, 2009 the Vatican's toughest criticism of Israel since the latest Mideast crisis began, calling Gaza a big concentration camp. In his remarks to the Italian website *Il Sussidario*, Cardinal Martino, one of the Pope's closest aides, said: Defenceless populations are always the ones who pay. Look at the conditions in Gaza: more and more, it resembles a big concentration camp.

Prince Saud Al-Faisal: Prince Saud Al-Faisal, the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has warned that the failure of the UN security Council to end the Israeli attack against the Gaza Strip will endanger the Council's credibility.

In a speech delivered on Tuesday evening at a Council meeting, Prince Saud urged the Security Council to act, saying, Arab countries are committed to international law, but we need to see action. Either the Security Council deals with our legitimate issues with seriousness and responsibility based on those principles of international law or we, the Arab countries, will be

forced to turn our backs and decide on the options that impose themselves.

Prince Saud reminded the Security Council of the danger posed to the Palestinian people in Gaza, saying, At this moment people are dying, children are orphaned and parents are losing those whom they love. There is no reason for that, except that they exist there. Will you allow that to continue for another hour?

In Brussels, Belgian trade unionists on Friday threatened to isolate their Israeli counterparts if they did not speak out against the Israeli action in the Gaza strip, where more than 760 have been killed.

Protests against Israeli assaults in Gaza have spread not only in Muslim countries but even in some Western nations. As Israel continues its aggression on Gaza, protests across the world are getting more pronounced. In UAE, thousands of residents took part in several marches held yesterday to protest the ongoing Israeli bombardment.

More than 15,000 people took part in the demonstrations held in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah and Ras Al-Khaimah. Carrying placards showing pictures of babies killed during the onslaught on Gaza, protesters demanded international action to stop Israeli aggression. Sharjah witnessed the biggest demonstration where more than 9,000 people attended. The protestors, many of whom were women and children, were calling for a jihad to liberate the Palestinian territories. Addressing the crowds, Mohammed Al-Rokn, an Emirati human rights activist, blasted the international community for keeping silence while innocent civilians were being slaughtered.

In Egypt, more people rallied after Friday prayers to condemn Israel's ongoing assaults, in the biggest such protest of the day worldwide. In the Egyptian capital, riot police foiled demonstrations outside a number of mosques.

In Jordan, police stopped more than 2,000 demonstrators from reaching the Israeli Embassy in the capital Amman.

In Europe, more than 2,000 demonstrated in Athens and Thessaloniki at the behest of the Greek Communist Party, setting fire to the US and EU flags outside the US Embassy and the Israeli flag outside the Israeli mission.

British Muslims

Thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of central London and gathered at a rally in Trafalgar Square on Saturday, the 3rd of January, 2009 to demand a ceasefire in Gaza amid growing international anger over Israel's weeklong bombardment. The Stop War Coalition, organizers of the demonstration, said the real figure was six times that more than 60,000.

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)

The Israelis have once again chosen to stage their assault when Western governments are in recess, said Dr. Daud Abdullah Deputy Secretary General. We call on Prime Minister Gordon Brown to take a firm stand against this disgraceful attack. The time has come for a total lifting of the political and diplomatic cover that has allowed Israel to perpetrate these atrocities, he added.

Israel's use of F16 war-planes against civilian targets in the Gaza Strip confirms yet again the failure of our government to fulfill our international obligation (under the Fourth Geneva Convention) to end the Israeli Occupation and its unmitigated use of state sanctioned terror against the Palestinian people. That it comes just days after it denied entry to the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights to the Occupied Palestinian Territories suggests that the Israeli leadership clearly intended to conceal the evidence of its war crimes, the press release also added.

Union of Muslim Organisations (UMO)

Dr. Syed Aziz Pasha, General Secretary of the Union of Muslim Organisations of UK And Eire (UMO) also said, The UMO has always insisted in its resolution of its annual conferences for the past 38 years that liberation of Palestine from the Israeli occupation should be the top priority of governments of the Muslim countries as it is a holy land which has Baitul Muqaddas (Jerusalem) as the important city and which has Masjid al-Aqsa which was the first Qibla of the Muslims and the place from where our Prophet (Peace be upon him) travelled to Al-Miraj.

Open Letter to The Prime Minister by Muslim Organisations

On 31 December, The Guardian published in its back page an Open Letter to The Prime Minister on Gaza from 21 Muslim organizations urging the Prime Minister: This is your hour with history and we urge you to take the first step. We expect nothing less of our government than an unequivocal condemnation of Israel's actions, as it has condemned similar brutalities committed by various states around the world. We urge you to ensure:

- *An immediate end to Israel s military assault on Gaza
- *An immediate end to the blockade and siege on Gaza
- *An end to Israel s violation of International law
- *An end to Israeli Occupation.

Professor Tariq Ramadan

Tariq Ramadan, a professor of Islamic studies and author of Radical Reform, Islamic Ethics and Liberation, wrote in his article, An Alliance of Values, in The Guardian, on 2 January 2009, "The current massacres are but a confirmation of the well-known: the "international community" does not really care about the Palestinians, and it is as if the state of Israel, with the support of the US and some European countries, has imposed a state of

intellectual terror. Among the presidents and kings, nobody dares to speak out; nobody is ready to say the truth. All are paralysed by fear.

Demonstrations and articles are but we need to go further. To launch a global movement of non-violent resistance to the violent and extremist policy of the state of Israel has become imperative. The violence inflicted, in front of us, upon a population of one and a half million humans makes our silence, our division and even our limited emotional reaction undignified, in-sane and inhumane. A true and dignified resistance requires commitment, patience and a long term strategy of information, alliance and huge, non-violent democratic participation, observed Professor Tariq Rahman.

Leaders of all major faiths in the UK joined Christian Aid in calling for an immediate ceasefire and unfettered humanitarian access to Gaza. In a joint call, faith leaders including the Bishop of Exeter the Rt Rev Michael Langrish, Rabbi Danny Rich and Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, Secretary-General of The Muslim Council of Britain demand that Prime Minister Gordon Brown renews efforts to end the suffering of 'the powerless and the vulnerable'.

Christian Aid is asking members of the public to email the prime minister telling him: Not in our neighbourhood. Behind all the horrors of death and destruction in Gaza are human faces and human stories. Behind all the statistics for those killed and wounded, on either side, are human beings, each one a child of God, said The Rt Revd Michael Langrish, Bishop of Exeter.

In a call on UK citizens to take a stand the Bishop continued: When a child of God suffers no believer in God can stand idly by. Urgent action is required to end the violence, to secure immediate and effective humanitarian relief, and to encourage a genuine dialogue for justice and peace. •

(Courtesy: The Muslim World League Journal)

Importance of Ethical Values in Islam

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

This is an undeniable fact that the ethics is the essence of all the religions of the world. English has borrowed the term ethics from Greek, 'ethos' which means character. No doubt, ethical values and norms are the greatest asset of human beings.

Syed Ameer Ali has rightly said that "The principal bases on which the Islamic ethical system is founded are (1) a belief in the unity, immateriality, power, mercy and supreme love of the Creator; (2) Charity and brotherhood among mankind, (3) subjugation of the passions; (4) the outpouring of a grateful heart to the Giver of all good, and (5) accountability for human actions in another existence" (The Spirit of Islam, P.138).

It should be kept in mind that Prophets and reformers laid great stress on moral concepts. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: "I have been sent to teach perfect good manners. Swami Vivekananda Says: "Coming to ethics, we find a tremendous departure. It is, perhaps, the only science which makes a bold departure from this fight. For ethics is unity; its basis is love."

As regards Islam, it attaches great importance to ethical values. The following verses of the holy Quran clarify the view point of ethical values of Islam. "You shall never attain goodness till you share with other (the poor or the needy) what you cherish (particularly your wealth. And Whatsoever you give away, God surely will know it. Serve your God and join not aught with Him. And be good to parents, and to kinsfolk, and to orphans, and to the needy and to the neighbour who is of kin and to the neighbour who is not of kin, and to the fellow traveller and to the wayfarer and to those under your care and control (the slaves). Verily, God loveth not the proud, the boastful, who, themselves being niggardly, bid others to be niggardly and abstain from disclosing that God of His bounty hath given them. For the ungrateful we have prepared a humiliating chastisement."

Needless to add that Islamic ethics does not limit with these few "do's and don'ts", on the contrary it encompasses whole gamut of human beings lives. The following verses are quite relevant in this regard: "And if two groups of the believers are at war, then ye make peace between them. And if one of the two continue to wrong till they yield to the ordinance of God: And when they yield ye make peace between them with fairness and act equitably. God indeed loveth the equitable. The believers are after all brethren unto one another. Therefore, make peace between your brethren and fear God, that ye may receive mercy. O believers! let not some men among you laugh at others: It may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the latter are better than the former. Let none defame another, nor give bad names to each other. It is a sin for a man to give a bad name to anyone. And mark ! those who repent not for wrong done to others are wicked indeed. O believers! Avoid excessive indulgence in suspicion, for in some cases suspicion is a sin. Let none spy on anothers, and let none indulge in backbiting among them. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Surely, ye would abhor it. And be mindful of God. Surely, God is Oft-indulgent, the Merciful."

In this context, it would be apt to mention some more sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). "When a man dies, his works also stop, except three: acts of charity which continue, knowledge by which all profit, and a religious issue which prays for him." Verily, God is Pure, and loves the pure, is Cleanly and loves the cleanly, is Beneficent and loves beneficent, is Generous and loves the generous." The most perfect Muslim, in point of faith, is he who is the best among them in manners, and the best among them to his wife. "A true Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands the people are safe." "He is not a true believer who eats his fill while his neighbour lies hungry by his side."

"The pleasure of God is in the pleasure of the parents and the displeasure of God is in the displeasure of the parents." "Send presents to one another, for verily presents take away the grudge of the heart;

and let no neighbour despise the present of his neighbour be it even so little."

It should be noted the conversation of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) with Hazrat Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam. Ali asked the Prophet one day about the principles governing his general behaviour, and he replied: "Knowledge is my capital, reason is the basis of my religion, love is my foundation, desire is my mount for riding, remembrance of God is my comrade, anxiety is my companion, science is my arm, patience is my mantle, contentment is my booty, modesty is my pride, renunciation of pleasure is my profession, certitude is my food; truth is my intercessor, obedience is my sufficiency, struggle is my habitude and the delight of my heart is in the service of worship." (Introduction to Islam, P.76)

Keeping in view the prevailing moral decay in our social milieu, it is imperative that we should cultivate good qualities and sublime norms. We should impart our children moral teachings and good manners in a sober and decent way from the very outset. An excellent and disciplined society may come up only if we follow these rules. •

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of Allah said: "To speak gentle is a kind of charity" (Bukhari)

Around the World

I do not accept Israel as Jewish state: Abbas

JERUSALEM, April 27: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas today dismissed the new Israel government's call to recognize it as a Jewish state for further peace talks, saying it is "none of his business".

"I do not accept it. It is not my job to give a description of the state. Name yourself the Hebrew Socialist Republic – it is none of my business," Abbas said, as the issue has turned out to be a major hurdle in the path of rekindling the stalled peace process.

Israel's hardliner Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a statement last week said it would be impossible to make progress on the diplomatic track and reach a peace agreement without Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state.

Netanyahu, however, clarified that he had not made such recognition a precondition for starting peace negotiations.

He has so far resisted calls from the US and other western nations to back a two state solution to the Israel Palestinian conflict leading to the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Palestinians fear that recognition of Israel as a Jewish state could mean an end to the demand of right to return of refugees, a coreprinciple of the Palestinian national movement.

Those concerns were heightened five years ago after then US president George W Bush described Israel as a Jewish state in a letter to then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and suggested that Palestinian refugees be settled in a future Palestinian state rather than in Israel.

Sharia law may be enforced in UK courts

LONDON, April 27: Sharia law may soon be enforced in the UK if a EU plan for family courts across Europe is put in place by the government, a move that could trigger a row in Britain. Judges in Britain could be forced to bow to Sharia law in some divorce cases heard in the country.

A EU plan calls for family courts across Europe to hear cases using the laws of whichever country the couple involved have close links to. It could mean a court in England handling a case within the French legal framework, or even applying the laws of Saudi Arabia to a husband and wife living in Britain, the Daily Mail reported today.

Pope visits Jordan Mosque

Pope Benedict XVI told Muslim leaders in a Jordanian mosque on Saturday that it was not religion that sowed division between the world's communities but its manipulation for ideological ends.

In a speech delivered in Amman's Al-Hussein Mosque, the Pope said all human beings were God's creatures and that all places of worship were like jewels on the earth. But he made no new apology for a 2006 address in which he quoted a mediaeval Christian emperor who criticized some teachings of Prophet Muhammad as "evil and inhuman".

The Pontiff apologised at the time for the "unfortunate misunderstanding" but ahead of his visit to Jordan, the kingdom's main opposition party the Islamic Action Front said the pope was not welcome unless he again apologized.

"Certainly, the contradiction of tensions and divisions between the followers of different religious traditions, sadly, can not be denied," the leader of the world's 1.1 billion Catholics told his audience.

"However, is it not also the case that often it is the ideological manipulation of religion, sometimes for political ends, that is the real catalyst for tension and division, and at times even violence in society?" AFP.

Mecca to become Mini-Dubai

The mountain is to move for Muhammad. Norman Foster and Zaha Hadid are involved in plans to transform the landscape around Mecca, Islam's holiest city, to make way for a high-rise metropolis complete with high-speed rail link for pilgrims.

Architectural designs being considered by king Abdullah of Saudi Arabia could see the mosque at the heart of the city expanded five-fold to accommodate 5m worshippers in one go.

However, much of the land around the historic site, including ancient mountains, is likely to be flattened to accommodate seven-star hotels and towering blocks of luxury flats. Critics believe the 20 year redevelopment programme will turn Mecca in to a "mini Dubai", the emirate that has become a byword for consumerism.

Hadid, who has designed the aquatics centre for the London 2012 Olympics, is believed to have submitted proposals to extend Mecca's Harm mosque.

Foster, who designed the Gherkin tower in London, has been commissioned to design four stations along a new high-speed railway line linking Mecca to Medina.

Irfan Al Alawi, founder of the London-based Islamic Heritage Research Foundation, said, "The place is being blown to pieces. They are dynamiting mountains and removing heritage buildings to make way for skyscrapers around the grand mosque." •

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