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The Fragrance of East

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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. ■

CONTENTS

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|----|
| 1- The Message of Ramazan | - S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi | 7 |
| 2- Fasting | -S. Sulaiman Nadwi | 10 |
| 3- Islamic System of Education:
New Challenges | -Khadija Khamalodeen | 17 |
| 4- Islam Stands for Peace | -Muhammad Younas | 23 |
| 5- The Role of Muslim Community | -Obaidur Rahman Nadwi | 28 |
| 6- The Relationship Between
Ramadan and the Qu'ran | -Abdur Rashid Siddiqui | 30 |
| 7- Change Management in Islam | -Syed Kazim | 34 |
| 8- Body and Soul! | -Muhammad Sirajuddin | 39 |

Wisdom of Qur'an

They ask you to hasten the punishment. Allah shall most certainly not fail His promise; but a Day with your Lord is as a thousand years of your reckoning. How many towns did I respite at first though they were steeped in inequity, and then I seized them? To Me are all destined to return. Say (O Muhammad!): 'O people! I have been sent to you only as a warner (before the Doom strikes you).' So those who believe and act righteously shall be granted forgiveness and an honourable sustenance, whereas those who strive against Our Signs, (seeking to profane them), they are the friends of the Fire!"

(Al-Qur'ān – 22:47-51)

This refers to the ludicrous statement repeatedly made by the Makkan unbelievers to the effect that if Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) was indeed a Prophet sent by God, then why had his detractors not been visited by the scourge that ought to afflict those who deny a true Prophet? Why did such a scourge not specifically visit them even though they had repeatedly been warned by their Prophet that were they to deny him they would be seized by a calamity?

It is preposterous to think that the consequences of obeying or disobeying God's injunctions can be observed instantly. It is also absurd to think that they have taken that course for years together, and still no calamity has befallen them. For it often takes not days, months or years, but centuries for the consequences of a people's behaviour to become fully evident. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Abu Moosa Asha'ri narrates: "Ayesha (may Allah be pleased with her) took out and showed to us a sheet of cloth and a rough loincloth and stated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) died in these cloths."

(Bukhari)

This hadīth presents a glimpse of simple life that the Messenger of God Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) used to lead even when he was the ruler of the first Islamic State of Madinah. In eating and drinking, in dress and living, in short in every matter the Holy Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) liked and practised simplicity and informality, and used to be content with whatever was available with him. And even in poor circumstances he used to be generous to others. Accordingly he never saved any wealth for himself. His food consisted of ordinary things, like bread of barley and dates, and sometimes even these ordinary things were not available, and he was required to go to bed empty bellied. His dress was simple and, according to the custom of the time, consisted only of a sheet of cloth and a loincloth (*izar*). Similarly his bed was also made of the fibre of palm tree.

At the time of leaving this mortal world, he did not leave behind any wealth of property. And what a good example of preferring the life of the Hereafter to the life of this mortal world! This hadīth holds mirror to the power-hungry and materialistic world. ■

The Blessed Month of Ramazan

Ramadhan is the month of peace, tranquility, piety, righteousness, generosity and bestowal. Of the five tenets of Islam, fasting in the month of Ramadhan is a must every year. During fast one must abstain from eating, drinking and smoking including inoculation and injections from dawn to dusk. In this context the verses of the Holy Quran which ordain for fasting, as an obligatory duty for Muslims are as follows:

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that ye may (learn) self restraint." (Fasting) for a fixed number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number should be made up from later days. For those who can do it (with hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that indigent, but he that will give more, of his own free will, it is better for him, and it is better for ye that ye face, if ye only knew". (S.2,A.183-184)

Ramadhan's significance can be gauged from the fact that "the Quran was revealed to prophet Muhammad(PBUH) in this month as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present at his house during that month should spend it in fasting, but if anyone is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. God intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties. He wants you to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful. (S.2,A.185)

Needless to add that like Salat (Prayers), fasting has been an essential duty for the followers of earlier Prophets. The Bible says that Jesus Christ fasted for forty days (Matthew 4: 1-4, Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-4). In Peter 2:21 the followers of Christ are enjoined to fast as the Prophet did. Even the Vedas and the Puranas prescribe fasting. Thus earlier peoples fasted though with a difference in the number of days and the prescribed time of fasting.

It should be kept in mind that this particular month has been considered sacred even from pre-Islamic days too. Ibn-Hisham states that the Qurayesh in the days of ignorance spent one month a year on Mt. Hira, practicing penance (Tahannuth). Before instituting *fasting of Ramadhan* Muhammad (PBUH) evidently observed fast on the tenth of Moharram". (History of the Arabs, p. 133)

During Ramadhan evil conceals itself while good comes to the fore and the whole atmosphere is filled with piety and purity. The holy prophet says: "The deed of son of Adam is' increased several times (in Ramadhan) and the reward is increased by ten times. But Allah says that fasting is exclusively for Him and He himself will deliver its reward (to His bondsmen) as he abstains from eating and controls his desires only for Him. There are (two instances) of happiness for the fasting Muslim, one is at the time of breaking his fast and the other at the time meeting his Lord. And verily to Allah, the smell of fasting person's breath is the best and cleanliest. "The prophet of Islam also says: There is a door of paradise called Rayaan towards which only the fasting will be called. Only the fastings will be called. Only the fastings will enter it and those who enter it will never feel thirsty.

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of Allah said: "when the month of Ramazan' comes, the Gates of Heaven are thrown open, and the Gates of Hell are shut, and the devils are put behind the bar." (In another report, the "Gates of Mercy" are mentioned in place of the "Gates of Heaven." (Bukhari and Muslim)

"Salman Farsi narrates that the Apostle of Allah delivered a sermon on the last day of Sha'ban in which he said:'

"O my people! You are on the threshold of a month of great solemnity and blessings. It is a month whose one night is better than a thousand months. God has prescribed fasting in this month and make Taraweeh prayers optional Whosoever willingly and with good intentions does one good act in this month will have the merit of having done an obligatory act in other months and one who does a prescribed act in this month it will be equal to seventy prescribed act of other months. This is the month of endurance and the reward of endurance is paradise and this the month of sympathy with and care of the needy men of the community". (Mishkat)

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of Allah said: "Whoever omits even a single fast of Ramazan without the legal concession of a journey etc. or (a valid excuse like that of illness), amends cannot be made for the thing that is omitted even though he observes fasting throughout the life." (Tirmizi)

It is needless to add that fasting is a shield against sins, crimes, vices and other un-Islamic acts. The prophet says: "Fast is like a shield for protection from satan's attack. Therefore, when one observes fast he should use this shield and abstain from quarreling. If anybody abuses him or quarrels with him, he should simply say: Brother, I am fasting do not expect me to indulge in similar conduct (Bukhari & Muslim)

To restore real spirit of fast, it is incumbent to observe it with prescribed rules and regulations. The noble prophet said: "If one does not give up speaking a lie during fast, God does not require him to give up eating and drinking (Bukhari).

On another occasion, he said: "Many are the people who fast but who "gain nothing from their fasts except hunger and thirst: and many are those who stand praying all night but gain nothing except sleeplessness (Darimi)"

To sum up the fasting according to Islam, is a spiritual discipline and as a consequence it inculcates moral discipline. It imparts moral strength and leads to the promotion of" virtues of piety.■

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The Message of Ramazan

— S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

O Believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you. That you may become pious. (Al-Baqarah 2: 183)

The above Qur'anic verse lays down that fasting is a religious duty incumbent on all Muslims. Until the last Day the command embodied in this verse remains valid. Embedded in the verse is thus much food for thought.

First, the command is addressed to believers. For the command involves doing something which is difficult. It calls for courage and patience to fast. Accordingly, mention is made first of faith. The believers are asked to discharge this duty. For they have pledged their servitude to Him, affirming that He is the Master and Ruler-interest. For they are obliged to perform whatever He commands of them. This is because of their servitude to Him. Being His servants they are expected to behave thus. They are at His beck and call. Allah being All-Wise begins the command in the above fashion. Otherwise, secular laws are promulgated without any reference to one's gain or safety against some loss. Although Allah is the absolute Ruler, Creator of the heavens and earth who exercises total control over everyone's life, honour and property, He invokes the conviction of believers. Muslim are exhorted to act on the dictates of their faith.

They are expected to respond vigorously and positively to His call. Against this backdrop they are told that a month-long fasting is prescribed for them as a religious duty.

Allah is thoroughly conversant with human nature. For He is man's Creator. At the same time, He makes certain allowances for man out of His wisdom and mercy. Whenever He enacts a command, He prepares man mentally for it, enabling him to obey His command willingly. Man is instinctively repulsed by something new and odd. However, on realising that something is a standard practice, followed down the ages by many generations, man is drawn towards it and feels no hesitation in obeying such a command.

Believers are informed that fasting was a duty obligatory upon earlier generations as well. One learns from the history of world religions and nations that fasting has been a religious obligation in some form during all periods of time. Its details may be found in religious and historical works. One learns the exact form and duration of fasting among different religious communities. Finer points about the restrictions and the starting and concluding times of fasting may also be gleaned. Constraints of space prevent us from exploring this point any further.

The important truth home though is that fasting helps man attain piety. The Qur'an employs the term taqwa in this context. Generally speaking, words are invested with different meanings with the passage of time. A pious person is taken to be one who is constantly engaged in worship, and who sleeps little. One who does not fall asleep at all is recognised as a perfectly pious person. He is expected to offer prayers all the time and is very cautious about each and every issue, be it religious or mundane. In the original Arabic, however, taqwa does not carry these shades of meaning. It does not imply that one blessed with taqwa is given wholly to worship, stays awake throughout the night and fasts round the year. Instead taqwa signifies in the original Arabic a state of mind and consciousness. It encompasses one's temperament and way of thinking, Ramadan helps man attain piety. Yet it does not mean that with the passage of Ramadan, piety comes to an end. Piety is not some temporary condition.

Piety represents a constant state of self-control and restraint. If a child is brought up well, he imbibes the value of respecting his elders. He does not indulge in any act in the presence of his elders which may be offensive to them. By the same token, he refrains from mocking or insulting them. Piety signifies such a training of the mind which guides one to practice moral values all the time. A pious person thinks carefully before taking any

action whether his act is permitted by the Shari'ah or not. This reference to the Shari'ah at every step is a pointer to one's piety. Take the illustrious examples of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, holding exalted rank among the Prophet's Companions. They were witness to the revelation of the Qur'an. Furthermore, they possessed mastery over the Arabic language and idiom. They were born and brought up in Makkah and used the local language fluently. As true Companions they never felt shy of seeking clarification from the Prophet (PBUH). Once they asked 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud to define taqwa. To this he replied: "O Commander of the Faithful! Have you ever walked on a path with thorns on either side?" When 'Umar replied in the affirmative, he asked as to how he walked on that path. 'Umar replied: "I walk cautiously, ensuring that body and clothes are safe against thorns." 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud exclaimed: "This is the definitions of taqwa - to lead life in a way with our doing anything which may displease Allah. One's deeds should not be discordant with the Shari'ah."

Those not familiar with Arabic idiom think that fasting is prescribed for making believers pious. It is not however the point that one who fasts for twenty-nine or thirty days in Ramadan will turn into a pious person at the end of the month. One who fasts, recites the Qur'an often and prays to Allah at night, including offering Tarawih Prayers, does not turn automatically into

a pious person. This is not the end of his test. It signifies, at most, that he did not eat or drink during the daytime in Ramadan even what is lawful and wholesome, and he did so at Allah's command. Even a drop of water was not consumed by him. Needless to add, water is one of the greatest divine bounties. Allah has created every living being out of water. A true believer does not eat food during the daytime of Ramadan, though he was provided with food by Allah. He had food items at home bought out of his lawful earnings. Yet he did not take food or water, though he needed these as a human being. Only in deference to Allah's command did he not touch these otherwise lawful and wholesome things from dawn to dusk. Not a drop of water should pass his lips. Since one does all this in accordance with Allah's command, one should make a point of living by His directives after Ramadan as well. One should discern between the lawful and the unlawful. We are very sensitive to any impurity. Let us bear in mind that disobedience to Allah is the most damaging impurity.

As we forego lawful and wholesome things during Ramadan in deference to Allah's command, we should not draw near any sin after the month of Ramadan is over. We should not do anything which may displease him. Nor should we ever tell a lie. By the same token, we should not give false testimony or hurt any fellow Muslim's feelings. We should not deny

anyone his due or indulge in slandering. We should refrain from stealing, injustice, violence, and hurting others. Piety consists in shunning all that is sinful, impure and immoral. A constant effort to keep away from evil constitutes piety.

There is some difference an act of worship and piety. The latter represents an outlook and temperament. One may perform acts of worship. However, in a state of anger and in mundane transactions one may disregard the spirit of one's worship. This underscores a lack of piety. One's mind should be permeated with piety. Fasting is prescribed for Muslims for instilling piety into their minds and hearts. One should think all along of one's ultimate return and accountability to Allah.

Piety signifies God-consciousness. One should weigh up before doing anything whether this act will please or enrage Allah. One should ascertain first whether such action is in accord with the Shari'ah or not, and whether it is lawful or not. One's action should follow the command of Allah and His Messenger. Becoming habitual about this constant checking infuses piety into one. This is the rationale behind declaring fasting in Ramadan as an obligatory duty. For it may bless one with piety. ■

(Guidance from the Holy Quran by S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Page 80-84)

Fasting

- S. Sulaiman Nadwi

Definition: Fasting is one of the obligatory duties which every Muslim is to required to perform in the month of Ramadan. The Arabic word *sawm* which has been used in the Holy Qur'an and the Ahadith for fasting means "to abstain", "to keep silence". In the Technical language *sawm* signifies fasting or abstaining from food and drink and sexual intercourse etc. from the end of the Sahri till sunset. Fasting has been ordained as a religious duty for the Muslims for subduing their lust and keeping their appetites and temptations within reasonable limits so that man may not become their slave and lose control over himself. But Islamic fasting trains a person for cheerful and willing renunciation of eating, drinking and sexual end of the fast. This shows that Islam does not look down upon the appetites of flesh as something profane and ignoble. According to Islam both soul and body are sacred and worthy of respect.

Fasting in Islam not only imposes check upon eating, drinking, sexual intercourse but also exhorts its servants to refrain from other foul acts such as speaking ill of others, backbiting, slandering, telling lies, using foul language, discussion of disreputable matters and wrong behaviour of any

sort. Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Messenger (PBUH) as saying: If one does not abandon falsehood and other actions like it, God has no need that one should abandon one's food and drink. Fasting in Islam is thus an excellent institution for spiritual discipline and self-control. The exact date of commencement of fasting is not known. The famous English writer Herbert Spencer in the book *Principles of Sociology*, writes basing his argument on conjecture that the food they did not become popular as an institution because purification of the soul is common to all Divine religions. The writer of the article on "Fasting" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states that it would be difficult to name any religious system of any description in which fasting was wholly unrecognized. It was well-established among the Jews and the Christians.

The record of the Ahadith bears testimony to the fact that fasting was a common religious practice among the pre-Islamic Arabs, and they used to observe fast on the tenth of Muharram as on this day Allah saved Moses (peace be upon him) from the clutches of Pharaoh (Fir'awn). The Arabs and other people too were familiar with fast as an act of penitence of propitiation or

a preparatory rite before some act of sacrament.

However, whatsoever be the reasons of fasting in the polytheistic religion, the date, the significance and the aims and objects of fasting as explained in the Holy Qur'an are:

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you even as it was prescribed for those before you that you may ward off evil..... The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on journey, (let him fast the same) number of other days. Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you; and He (desireth) that ye should complete the period, and that you should magnify Allah for having guided you, and that peradventure ye may be thankful. (2:183-185)

Reality behind Fasting

One of the aspects of individual perfection or moral and spiritual elevation is the subordination of animal nature to reason and spirit. Nothing is as efficacious for this purpose as hunger, the heart (mind) and other organs. If one commits sin, penitence and repentance through fasting, brings solace and purifies his soul, even as it fortifies the will so as not to indulge again in sins and vice. To be a true servant of

Allah, it is essential that man should conform his behaviour to the moral and spiritual discipline embodied in the Shari'ah. One cannot achieve this end finds himself helpless before untamed and turbulent desires. The underlying idea behind fasting is to teach moderation and spiritual so that human temptations may not become so uncontrollable as to flout the commands of Allah. But as we have already said, Islamic fasting does not aim at complete renunciation of the lawful appetites and all those lawful things e.g. eating, drinking, sexual intercourse etc. become permissible after the fast.

During the month of fasting the whole atmosphere is permeated with religious piety and devotion to Allah. There is one extra prayer, Tarawih, which is performed each night either individually or in congregation in which the Qur'an is recited and the Muslim is reminded that it was in the month of Ramadan that the revelation of the Qur'an commenced. It is, moreover, a sunnah (practice) of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) to complete the recitation of the entire Qur'an during Ramadan. The last ten days and nights are marked by especially intensive devotions including the night during which the first revelation of the Qur'an came, known as Lailat-ul-Qadr. Sadaqat are also given with greater zeal. Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) as saying: When Ramadan begins the gates of Heaven

are opened, the gates of Hell are locked, and devils are chained.

The purpose of fasting in the month of Ramadan is two-fold. One has to abstain from food and drink in order to feel in one's body what the poor and the hungry feel and thus social responsibility is hammered into one's consciousness and secondly, the purpose of fasting during Ramadan is self-discipline (as for instance, in the total prohibition of all intoxicants.)

It is be remembered that one should not forget one's obligatory duty of prayer and fasting in the midst of material and mundane occupations. We know what there is a great difference in the rising and setting of the sun between normal (equatorial-tropical) countries and the regions situated beyond and extending to the two poles. Al-Barony had observed that at the poles the sun remains set for six months continually, and then rises to shine continuously for six months (excepting the two days of equinox). The jurists-theologians of Islam affirm in general that the hours at 45 parallel remain valid up to 90 parallel i.e., One is to follow the movement of the clock and not that of the sun. This applies to prayer as well as fasts etc.

During the period of fasting from dawn to dusk we eat not a grain of food nor drink a drop of water, no matter how delicious the dish or hungry or thirsty we feel. This process of incessant fasting for full month and experiencing hunger,

thirst and sexual abstinence etc. Make us conscious that are the true and loyal servants of Allah. It inculcates the spirit of patience and strengthens our faith.

However, the fast must be broken at sunset each day and it is also recommended to have a sahri (pre-dawn meal) before resuming the fast next day. While fasting may sound difficult to those who are not used to it, in practice, it is generally tolerable.

The Basic Rules of Fasting and Exceptions

The rules of fasting are quite simple. First of all, every day of Ramadan is a day of fasting. And fasting is obligatory on all Muslims past puberty, with the following exceptions: Sick persons to whom fasting is likely to be injurious, persons who are travelling and up to forty days following child-birth, pregnant women and nursing mothers, if fasting is likely to harm the mother or infant, the very old and the insane. The latter two categories are permanently exempt from fasting, while the others are exempt only for the duration of their conditions and must make up the missed fasts at any time before the beginning of the next Ramadan if possible. If one has a permanent condition which make fasting impossible or dangerous to health, he or she is permitted instead to give to a needy person a sum equivalent to one meal for each day he did not fast. If a Muslim is not fasting on any day of

Ramadan for any of the above reasons, he is not to eat or drink in front of others who are fasting, out of courtesy.

The period of fasting begins each morning of Ramadan before the first light of dawn becomes visible and lasts until sunset. A declaration of intention to fast a silent statement in any words or language that one intends to fast today for the sake of Allah must be made. It is sunnah to break the fast immediately after the sun has set, and have a meal before (sahri) at which the next day fast begins.

The keynote to all the observances of Ramadan is self-discipline and self-control. Although in some Muslim countries the work schedule is modified during the month, in many places Muslims carry on their work and other activities even though they may be hungry, thirsty and tired. Fasting is in no sense an excuse for neglect of work or obligation, idleness, in irritability or outbursts of temper, but, on the contrary, should be a total inner state leading to patience and self-control.

It should be noted that because Islam uses a lunar month rather than a solar month, any given date falls twelve days earlier each year than in the preceding one consequently Ramadan (and all other dates) rotates throughout the seasons, completing the cycle of twelve months in about thirty three years. Hence Ramadan sometimes falls in summer and sometimes in winter and

sometimes in between in the various parts of the world; people living in every clime therefore, experience it during all the seasons. Fasting is naturally quite easy during short days of winter but it can be difficult in the heat of tropical summer. Under such conditions the fasting Muslim learns that food and drinks are indeed precious gifts from his Lord, to be accepted with thankfulness.

Reforms Introduced by Islam in Fasting

The measures taken by Islam to create facilities and reduce the rigour in fasting are given below:

Before the advent of Islam in all the religions of the world, revealed or unrevealed, fasting was obligatory on some special group of the followers of the religions, for instance, among the Hindus, only Brahmans kept the fast. It was not obligatory for the non Brahmans. Among the Zoroastrians, their leaders and guides used to observe fasts. Among the Greeks only women kept fast, but fasting, as a means of spiritual purification, should have been an obligatory duty for all the followers of the religions.

Islam ordains fasting for all the Muslims without making any distinction between the leader and the follower and man or woman.

As we have already said Islam uses a lunar month rather than the solar month as a result of which Ramadan

rotates throughout the seasons. Sometimes it falls in summer, sometimes in winter, and sometimes in between them, therefore, experience it during all the seasons i.e. the facility of the short days of winter and the hardship of the heat of tropical summer, unlike the fasts under solar system which know no change in the seasons.

Jain's (a religious sect of Hindus) fast extended to weeks. The Christian monks of Arabia kept fast for days together. The Jews fast was for the duration of full twenty-four hours while Islam ordained the fast from the dawn to the evening.

The fast of the Jews that when they had taken something once at the time of breaking the fast, they did not take anything afterward, that is, there next fast began there and then. It was a custom with the Arabs that they ate what they desired before going to sleep; after having a sleep it was forbidden to take anything. In the beginning this practice of fasting was also in vogue in Islam. Once in the month of Ramadan, the wife of a companion was still preparing the supper. Her husband kept waiting for the meal and then went to sleep. When the meal was ready and she brought it he could not take it as he had fallen asleep. He was with fast on the next day too. Therefore, he swooned. Thereupon the following verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed: And eat and drink till the white streak of the dawn become

distinct for you from the blackness of night (2: 187)

The general impression amongst the Muslims before the revelation of the verse of the Holy Qur'an (2:187) was that during the month of fasting sexual intercourse was to be completely avoided even at night. It was unbearable hardship for the people, especially the young couples, to refrain from sexual intercourse for full one month. They, therefore, at time, under the serious stress of sexual urge copulated but there always remained a ranking in their minds that they had done something sinful. The All-Knowing Allah told them in clear words that they are permitted to copulated during the night in the month of Ramadan and there is nothing sinful in it. Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported: If anyone for gates that the he is fasting and eats and drinks, he would complete his fast for it is only Allah who has fed him and given him drink.

The fast is not broken by the actions not committed deliberately for instance, in vomiting or in the state of Junub because of sexual dream. According to Imam Abu Hanifa in some cases of vomiting fast is broken.

The fasting among the Jews was a sign of distress and sorrow. Therefore, they did not observe it cheerfully and looked sad and dejected. 'Isa (PBUH) said to them: When you are fasting do not put on sad and ugly looks like

hypocrites in order to show to the people that you are fasting. In fact, they have been awarded (punished) (for their hypocrisy). So when you are fasting, apply oil to your hair, wash your face, so that you may look as fasting.

In Islam applying oil to hair and surma (collyrium) to the eyelids, use of fragrance, during fasting is permitted and it has been stressed to observe the rules of purification, to wash the face, to clean the teeth etc., Properly. Besides physical purification, the underlying idea in it is that the man who is fasting should not be involved in the pretension and hypocrisy of wearing sad and dejected looks and the fasting should not be an unpleasant and distressing act for him but an act of cheerful and willing submission to the command of Allah like that of a loyal and obedient servant to his master.

There were some persons who acted with exaggeration in the matter of fasting and other acts of devotion. They observed sawm wisal, the fast which is observed uninterruptedly without meal at the daybreak or at the sunset. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) disapproved the observing of such a fast by the Muslims, since one cannot stand its unbearable rigour and it undermines the strength and vitality of a man beyond measure.

Ibn 'Umar (Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) observed fasts in Ramadan uninterruptedly and the

people (in his wake) did this. But he forbade them to do so. It was said to him: You yourself observe fast interrupted (but you forbid us to do so). Upon this he said: I am not like you: I am fed and supplied drink (by Allah).

The commentators are of the view that observance of sawm wisal is the special prerogative of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and other people should not follow him as he was especially favoured by Allah in this devotion.

Anas (Allah be pleased with him) reported: Allah's Messenger (PBUH) as saying; Take meal a little before dawn (sahri), for there is a blessing in taking meal at that time.

Sahri has so many blessings in it. Firstly, It equips the person with enough strength to undergo cheerfully the rigour of the fast. Secondly, it provides him an opportunity to thank his Lord for the food provided to him. Since it is after taking sahri that a Muslim commences the fast, he feels highly obliged to Allah for His immense favours to him. Thirdly, if the practice of eating before the daybreak is observed as a religious duty in a Muslim society, it would provide opportunities to the well-to-do persons to invite their brothers to the dining table. Fourthly, this practice of taking sahri is the distinguishing mark of Islamic society as the followers of Christianity and Judaism do not observe this practice. They unnecessarily put themselves to unbearable hardship.

Abu Huraira reported: Allah's Messenger (PBUH) as saying: Allah, the Majestic and the Exalted, said: Every act of the son of Adam is for him except fasting. It is done for My sake, and I shall give a reward for it.

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (Allah pleased with him) as saying: He who observes fast in the way of Allah, Allah would remove his face from the Hell to the extent of seventy year's distance.

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) observed i'tikaf (confined himself to devotion and prayer) in the first ten (days) of Ramadan; he then observed i'tikaf in the middle ten days in order to seek that night (lailat-ul-Qadr). Then (an angel) was sent to me and I was told that this night (lailat-ul-Qadr) is among the last ten nights of Ramadan, and he (the Holy Prophet) said: That (lailat-ul-Qadr) was shown to me on an odd night but I forgot it.

He was made to forget it or forgot the exact night when he saw lailat-ul-Qadr so that the persons may not become slack in the acts of devotion and confine it to one single night.

When we are fasting we are not only following the example of the Prophet (PBUH) but giving thanks to Allah for His grace and mercy that he had sent to us His true messengers and guides to put us on the right path and bring us from the profound darkness of

ignorance into the light of knowledge and onsciousness of Allah, awakening in us the sense of realization of our responsibility we owe to Him and to the humanity at large. He revealed to us, through the Last of His Prophets, the Holy Qur'an a complete and perfect code of life containing all that we require for our guidance in all spheres of our life acting upon which one can reach the highest apex of humanity and can bring about a revolutionary change in the lives of the nations turning bitterness into love and affection, savageness and bitterness into tenderness, callousness into softness, ignorance into knowledge superstitions and erroneous notions into rational and wise thinking and evil thought and fancies into sublime and noble thoughts. Islamic teachings helped to establish peace and security and gave immense satisfaction to the hearts and minds. It taught patience and perseverance in hardships. It is in fact an inevitable blessing and reward of Allah for the whole mankind. The Holy Qur'an alludes to this fact in the following verse:

And that you glorify Allah for his having guided you (aright) so that you may be grateful (to Him).(12: 185) ■

(Sirat-un-Nabi by S. Sulaiman Nadwi, V-5 Page 107-115)

Islamic System of Education: New Challenges

- Khadija Khamalodeen

The Islamic system of education is an all-embracing one. Indeed Islam is not a religion in the common understanding of the word, it is a faith and a way of life, a religion and a social order, a doctrine and a code of conduct, a set of rules and principles and a social movement. All persons are committed to this ideal i.e. Muslims are expected to live in accordance to this principle and strive to make a better world by enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. This mandate from Allah, the Lord of all the Worlds, is given to mankind, His vicegerent on Earth. It is; therefore imperative that we as Muslims fulfil our roles to the best of our abilities, so that life in this world is better for all of Mankind. Education is, as demonstrated by Allah in the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the first step in the process of creating a better understanding of the World in which we live, our role in this and in the process improve our cognition of the Creator, Allah.

STATE OF CRISIS:

The state of crisis that Muslims have found themselves is a direct result of the failure to properly educate our youth and take up the mandate given to us by Allah. The mention of the word "Muslim" immediately conjures up, to many, the image of a belligerent, arrogant, gun toting rebel or a submissive, uneducated woman. In recent years, Muslims have not

contributed meaningfully to their cause or the peoples of the Earth.

If Muslims are to survive as a community in the next century and if we are to fulfil the mandate given to us by Allah, it is of prior importance that we examine the challenges that will confront us and use the method shown to us by Allah, i.e. education, to effect *Siratul Mustaqeem*. An analysis of the educational challenges of Muslims which would dawn upon us within the next decade, depend firstly, on the realities of life in the next century as well as the desired environment and life-styles to facilitate growth and development of the community towards the fulfillment of man's purpose of being created i.e. to serve Allah. This analysis therefore will necessarily involve an evaluation of projections of life in the 21st century in the context of our present and past history as well as an understanding of the nature of life required of us by Allah.

THE MUSLIM DILEMMA

Many theories abound to explain the present state of the Ummah. An eminent scholar suggests that Muslims have either adopted the "imitative foreign solution" or the "imitative historical solution" to check the Ummah's degeneration. The first entails the borrowing of solutions which spring largely from the materialist West either in the form of individualism, nationalism, totalitarianism, secularism, theism, capitalism or Marxism, The

second is derived from the Islamic historical experience regardless of considerations of relevance in terms of time and place. Indeed the institution of education suffers the same fate and therefore the products of the present systems fall short of the ideally educated person. A summary of the factors bringing about educational decay are :

1. The Muslim mind became content with mediocrity. It dropped creativity and innovation for imitation and original thought became rare.
2. Failure to educate women in a planned and regular manner as required by Islam in view of not only the fact that it is their right and that they represent one half of the world's population, but the pivotal role they play in the shaping and molding of the Minds of the adults of tomorrow.
3. Failure to promote technical and scientific knowledge even though it flourished at one time in the Muslim world. Renunciation of branches of study like medicine, astronomy, chemistry and mathematics took place on the false premise that it would lead to skepticism and unbelief.
4. Relegation of "religious knowledge" to a secluded part of the individual's life, in the framework of modern liberal education instead of the comprehensive system of *ibadah* which implies worship of the Almighty in any and every aspect of daily living.
5. Colonization, which came with the rise of the industrial power in the West, led to the subjugation of the

Muslim world and other countries like India, Africa and America. The free growth of thought as required by Islam was stifled and the colonizer endeavored to distort Islam and hence facilitated the imitation of foreign and unnatural ideologies and philosophies. The imposition of secularism on Islamic society is one of the worst afflictions that the colonizer has brought about. It is a wound that is still open and is likely to be the greatest challenge to heal, because even today secularism finds support among many Muslims who command significant influence over the Muslim community.

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN:

With the waves of immigrants to the Americas either through indenture- ship or otherwise, pockets of Muslims settled throughout the Caribbean and the Americas. Caught between the materialist and largely Christian West, Muslim parents were/ are busy earning livelihood and often neglect the total and complete education of their children. More so, they are so impressed by Western civilization they are quite content to ignore 'spiritual and religious' aspect of their child's development. The consequences of which are Muslim children torn between two conflicting cultures— one practiced at home in an atmosphere of ignorance and from a ritualistic perspective and one at school which is fundamentally and diametrically opposite to that seen at home and which is presented in a very attractive package. Splayed in a web of multicultural and multi religious education, unrestricted liberty and permissiveness in society and

ignorance of Islamic way, Muslim children are driven away from their noble principles and values.

There is general consensus that education of Muslims is in dire need of reform. In many Muslim states the woman is subjugated and treated as a second class citizen. Her education is neglected on the erroneous assumption that her role as a mother and home-maker will be instinctive and lesser than the roles of her male counter-part. Even in the West, Muslim women are ensnared by cultural shackles and denied access to certain levels of education. The "hijab issue" particularly highlights the problems that Muslim girls face today if they attempt to grasp the opportunity for education at certain academic institutions. In view of the un-Islamic forces and unhealthy social and educational surroundings, there is an urgent need to review the goals of our education system and its methodology as it pertains to Muslims of today (and by extension the broader society). Also it is incumbent upon us to examine the existing institutions and determine its efficiency.

THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION:

Every society, whether simple or complex, has its own system for training and educating its youth. The Western system of education is greatly effected by liberalism. It is hostile to religion and all that it stands for. The natural result is that the average Western graduate neither believes in any religion or moral values nor has any ideal in his life to achieve. His life is steered by bio-logical needs and sensual desires. Even in the Christian

dominated schools, true concepts of God as taught by Islam are veiled. Indeed the central teaching of Islam is the Unity of Allah. Yet, Islam by infusion of liberalism in education promotes a freethinking individual.

The products of the present system, however, have been found to be skewed one way or the other. Having secularised the education system, religious education is confined to the mosque and the home while the school concentrates on training for employment. Many students are either academic robots who have mastered examination techniques with no humanity or unskilled charlatans who are neither employable nor trainable.

Education is a means to an end and not an end in itself. This is a familiar cry but many parents still perceive the goal of education is to secure a good job and ensure social and economic mobility. The goal of education for a Muslim is to become an obedient and righteous servant of Allah. It is clear therefore that none of these education systems have worked and many even have further deviated the Muslim Community from the real solution. Indeed the innovative application of original Islamic principles to changing circumstances is needed. The Ummah's intellectual and social leadership must search for the solution-Islamic education in its original and uncorrupted form.

THE IDEAL OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION:

Indeed Islam, being a comprehensive religion, takes care of man as a whole his spirit, his body and mind at

the same time. Education is deemed complete only when it takes into account the body, spirit, belief, worship, morals, knowledge, manual skills and good manners as defined by Islam. Education is what the Prophet (PBUH), meant by *adab* when he said:

"My Lord educated (addaba) me and made my education (ta'dib) most excellent".

The educational system needed is therefore one which produces a thinking individual who contributes meaningfully to society and fulfills his role as a Muslim. Indeed a Muslim strives his utmost in the path of Allah, the One God. If our structured societal institutions fail to educate our young Muslims then we will certainly plunge further into the abyss of ignorance. Indeed Allah instructs us in the Qur'an to "*Read, Read in the name of the One Who created...*" The Arabic word *lqra* translated as Read, conveys much more than mere regurgitation. It epitomises data gathering, analysis and comprehension. This in turn should, *Insha Allah*, bring about a positive change in an individual and a better understanding of his life, the universe and his relationship with the Creator, thus empowering him with the tools to serve Him better.

"I have only created jinn and men so that they may serve Me..." (Q:51:56)

PERFECT EXAMPLE:

Through the perfect example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Muslims enjoyed the greatest civilizational ideals. The best institutions of learning were set up and the fire of learning was ignited.

Science, astronomy, arts, crafts, agriculture, medicine, mathematics and poetry were highly developed and people of other nations flocked to learn from the Muslims. A leading scientist, John Davenport observed:

"It must be owned that all the knowledge whether of physics, astronomy, philosophy, or mathematics, which flourished in Europe in the 10th century was originally derived from the Arabian schools, and the Spanish Saracen may be looked upon as the father of European philosophy". Their *adab* was commendable, hygiene immaculate and political and social reforms practical. All this was due to the singular belief in God -*tawhid*, and practice of the laws of Allah in the Qur'an and the superb Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH).

"Nor has He a partner in His dominion: it is He Who created all things, and ordered them in due proportions". (25:2)

It is natural therefore that the solution to our present dilemma is in Islamic one. A process which brings the religious and the secular elements together, links reason and revelation and reforms the total essence of each human being is needed. In effect the solution involves making every human being a thinking human being. Instead of attempting to compete with the advanced technological societies by imitation, our institutions must serve to whet the appetite for knowledge, original thought, and creativity.

The concept of a 'global village' is not new to Islamic thought where all Muslims of the Ummah and residents of these countries were afforded free

movement and opportunity within all countries of the Muslim World. The perspective of its use today as proposed by the Western world appears to be one in which freedom of movement opportunity and life will be confined to the extent that one's ideology is consistent with theirs, as evidenced by the orchestrated destruction of Bosnia, the Gulf War and the onslaught on Baghdad, the great-est city in the World for many centuries, and the apparent inertia to meaningfully assist many disadvantaged nations and groups' to name a few.

CHALLENGE OF FUTURE:

The challenge of the future therefore appears to be creation and development of individuals who will not only be adept at coping with the harsh realities and demands of life, but who will also serve as a movement towards the establishment of the desired system for the overall growth and development of the society, towards the service of the One God, Allah.

A non-exhaustive set of challenges for this realization may be:

1. To provide an education system whose product is Muslim that is one who submits his will to that of Allah's.
2. Educational development of women must be seriously addressed if we are to fully realize our children's future. A *hadith* of the Prophet (PBUH) says that to educate one woman means to educate a generation. The role and contribution of women must be recognised and underscored.

3. To classify and index the texts of *wahy*; the Qur'an and the Sunnah and also the text of Islamic cultural heritage to facilitate a deeper access and understanding of them.
4. To recruit and train qualified scholars who combine areas of specialization with a sound Islamic intellectual heritage.
5. To increase awareness amongst the leaders and educated Muslims in general of the issue of Islamization.
6. Islamic academic institutions must now direct graduate research and programs towards the subjects and issues of Islamization.
7. To involve the entire community in the education process—the child, the parents and the teacher and establish workable relationships among the societal institutions like the masjid, the home and the school.
8. To encourage Muslims to become proactive instead of merely reactive and hence bring about the desired turning point in our decline.
9. To reorient thinking to one of excellence and not mediocrity.

The roles and challenges that we as Muslims have to undertake are both strenuous and perpetuating. We need to always retain in main memory the reality of the *Akhirah*. We cannot lay back and simply complain about the state of the world. We need to take the torch that has already been ignited and run to the endpost. Indeed "*whoever takes a step towards Allah, He will come running*". ■

Role of Islamic Countries

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

At a time like this when the Western Civilisation seems to have attained the highest stage of its evolution and the Islamic countries, because of their peculiar circumstances and reasons of history, cannot hope to participate in it on terms of equality, and, even if it were possible to adopt such a course, it would neither be wise nor proper for them to do so for it would mean the end of all the things they cherish and hold precious in life, their faith, their ideals and their distinctive way of individual and social existence, there is open to them an avenue of endeavour which leads neither to slavery and imitation nor to denial and isolation. To pursue it with all their might and sincerity will be both safe and honourable for Muslims. It will not only be in keeping with their destiny and natural role in the world but also be regarded as the most revolutionary step of the modern age and the greatest and most sacred undertaking of the time. It consists of the guidance of the modern civilisation itself, its rejuvenation and reorientation and its enrichment with Apostolic faith and with basic human tenderness and compassion. The duty of guidance and correction of the Western Civilisation can be discharged only by the Muslims but, as a first step, they will have to shed their sickly obsessions and moral and cultural consequences of centuries of political enslavement and intellectual inertia and degeneration. They will have to take stock of their situation and analyse the causes of their present plight before they can seal of t'the sources of the skeptical beliefs and inclinations that are corroding their cultural and spiritual heritage and making them 'an easy prey to the corrupting influences of the West. In the place of the Western workshops of the mind and the heart the Muslims will have, to 'set up their own Islamic workshops and to give themselves a new set of values and standards which will be fully integrated to their past as also to the challenges of the modern times" By its very nature the task is both original as well as derivative, critical as well as creative, but it will have to be taken in hand in all seriousness since the raising up of a new generation in the Islamic World, marked by the qualities of courage, self-confidence and enterprise, is dependent on it. ■

Islam Stands for Peace

- Muhammad Younas

encompassed by existence.

Islam shares with Christianity the oneness of God which negates the idea that the universe had more than one originator, thus denying any possibility of contradiction or incompatibility in its systems.

The Holy Quran including the previous scriptures give impetus to the universe and all things contained herein, guiding them toward a common goal; and God, excludes all confusions and contradiction, by joining the heaven and the earth, this universe has been thoroughly administered in such a manner that pre-cludes any collision among its spheres.

Life is not an accidental occurrence. The heavens and its laws have been so preconceived and designed as to allow life to emerge, to provide the living with their needs, and to allow continuity through renewal. This principle of harmony and coordination between the cosmos and life, refutes the idea that life is a result of accidental happenings. God (Allah) announces in the final revelation:

"Glory to God, who created in pairs all things that the earth produces, as well as their own (human) kind and (other) things of which they have no knowledge." (Q. XXXVI 36)

Islam is an Arabic word meaning peace, purity, obedience and submission (to the will of God or Allah). Islam doesn't tackle life's problems in fragments, for it does not set upon independent principle to solve each individual problem. It makes from its comprehensive theory an axis around which all other problems evolve. Thus, the different issues are linked, firmly or loosely, to the axis, and the whole complex forms a unified religious outlook.

RELIGION OF UNITY :

Islam is the religion of unity in this great universe, which comprises all elements, from a single particle to the most advanced species of sophisticated life. It is the unity of all existence- inanimate, plant, animal and human. All activities in the cosmos are included and integrated in this unity, whether they concern the rotation of planets or the working of the human minds. Islam finds unity in planets when following their eternal law as well as in souls when responding to their natural inclinations to acquire knowledge and implement justice. There is a unity of all energies whether it is the physical striving for necessities or the spiritual craving for relation. There is unity among all living beings, all species, all generation; in fact, everything

All beings collect into groups to from communities. Thus, all living things on earth constitute one big family which had the same origin, and which is interrelated with all inanimate things. Man, the highest species on the earth, is made of the same basic substance that comprises the most primitive life forms. All individuals are equally related to the same origin; as the Apostle Muhammad (PBUH) has said, "*Adam to whom all of you are related was created from earth*". God created Adam and his mate from a single soul; and from them both, all mankind is descended.

Having giving you the idea of synthesis of the universe, let me invite your attention to the fact that people are different by nature is not a reason for dispute among themselves. On the contrary, it should be a reason for mutual acquaintance and cooperation. By mutual respect, reverence, love, consideration and consultation we can make this world a paradise while without these we can convert this heaven into hell and torment. the Holy Quran says:

"O Mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other)."
(Q. XLIX. 13)

By establishing the singularity of mankind's origin, and emphasizing that

all individuals have the same nature, Islam strongly condemns segregation and apartheid. According to Islam, there can be no ground for strife or dispute among believing people because it declares that there is but one faith for the whole of mankind and that this faith calls for complete surrender to the creator, in both secular and spiritual matters. Islam goes further in illustrating the nature of the oneness of all creation when it indicates how such an idea is inherent in man's psychological, mental and emotional processes. It shows that this theory encompasses every aspect of human life and sufficiently clarifies the Islamic concept of peace.

GLOBAL PEACE:

Islam being the final religion, confirms the preceding revelations and includes them and takes moderation as a middle way between the extremes; the fulcrum upon which its rituals and regulations are balanced. It will be timely to mention here that there are some characteristics of international peace. It is not a negative peace for it advocates fighting injustice even if it means risking human lives. God warns the believers against the cowardly peace that is maintained at the expense of human dignity.

Islam ordains that men persevere in their efforts to establish the Word of God on earth. Islam does not tolerate oppression, whether it is from an individual who imposes himself on

others, or a class that exploits other classes, or a state that exploits other states, or a country over the other country. Justice is the mortar which cements the individuals to each other and to their society, to build a stable community on which peace will be raised to shelter and safeguard the society.

Islam commands humanitarian spirit which helps to establish the universal peace and integrates races and colors and encourages mutual tolerance, friendliness and compassion among human beings.

POWER AND ITS USE:

The divine law must dominates all secular and religious systems. Whoever usurps the right to legislate laws on his own is claiming a share in the divine powers of organizing the universal system. In other words, he would be taking on himself the right to rule as another god on earth. Islam came to establish justice in its widest sense; legally and internationally, and to apply it to people the world over.

Time may not permit to elaborate the role of power, its acquisition and proper jurisdiction but let me make a brief statement under this context. Islam being the final religion, is the guardian of the humanity, and like every guardian it acquires its power not through compulsion, coercion and intimidation but through dignity, respect and honor.

RULERS OF THE ISLAMIC STATES OF TODAY:

The life of the Holy Prophet and the Caliphs revealed the same behavior and successive generations followed their examples. There were a few cases of ignorant fanatics, is refused to pattern their behavior after the Prophet(PBUH). Their behavior with exception of few, however, should not be seized as an example of Muslim practices but should be regarded as deviation from Islam and its principles.

WHAT ABOUT WAR ?

In the Islamic faith, peace is the rule while war is the exception. Peace emerges as the preamble to the principle of harmony. Peace means harmony in the universe, the law of life, and the origin of man, while war is the result of violations of harmony as injustice, oppression and corruption. War is permitted against atheism which is the worst kind of injustice. Such a peril should be checked by drastic measures in order that peace be maintained.

Islam eliminates almost all reasons that normally incite war, and abolishes all wars for unjust gain and oppression. It condemns those :

1. wars based on racialism as contrary to the principles of the oneness of humanity.
2. wars caused by ambition and exploitation. The Islamic creed does not permit war which aims at

capturing markets, acquiring materials or exploiting human labour and resources.

3. wars of ostentation which purposely magnify the pride and pomp of kings. Islam also prohibits the looting which usually follows conquest. Killing after surrenders and retreat is not only unlawful but ignominious too.

In case of aggressions war is not only permitted but it is prescribed for enforcing the word of God, which is absolute and complete and should prevail. To eliminate the wrongs from the society war becomes indispensable only when the tire of diplomacy deflates. This necessity should not be resorted to but to achieve the following objectives:

1. To uphold the realm of God on earth, so that the complete submission of men would be exclusively to Him.
2. To eliminate oppression, extortion, and injustice by instituting the Word of God.
3. To achieve the human ideals which are considered by God the aims of life.
4. To secure people against terror, coercion and injury.

Sir T.W. Arnold concludes in his book that the aims of Islamic wars was to keep "the word of God" supreme on earth by ensuring the sovereignty of those who

believed in the oneness of God, to allow people the freedom to promote the welfare and to establish justice and peace in all societies. Under the rule of God, who has unique power and authority and who ordained a free way of life for all people, everybody has the right to worship as he pleases.

IS WAR A PRICE FOR UNIVERSAL PEACE?

Islam, being a comprehensive religion, fully covers the issue of universal peace treating it as an attainable ideal which should be an integral pan of life and which ought to dominate all fields of human activity. The definition of peace has a wider and deeper significance than that adopted by current statesmen. Peace must imply freedom, justice and security for all people. Following the Islamic criterion, peace cannot be established by abstaining from the War when there is oppression, corruption, despotism and denial of God's supremacy. Islam first imbues peace in the individual's conscience, in his family, the community, then the state and finally in international relations. Wars are usually successful in Winning the areas, territories and booties but not the universal peace.

Role of U.N. Peace-making:

Let me invite your attention to the role of UNO in gearing the peace in the member countries. How many resolutions have gone in vain since years regarding the Palestine,

Kashmir, Cyprus and some other Countries. If peace is the goal of all the member nations and democracy is beloved to every one, then let us try UNO after forfeiting the rights of veto by the major powers and give the right to vote to all nations of the world equally. Why don't we let democracy, for which we all struggle, run the UNO. It is an irony that the Super Powers of the world dictate terms at the UNO whereas we all detest dictatorship that govern their own people over the funeral of democracy. The dreams of true peace in the world and the effective role of UNO can't come to reality as long as UNO is the puppet of the big powers.

IN CONCLUSION:

In thesis of my talk I'd like to say that as long as this type of aggression prevails the concept of a united

humanity will be beyond our grasp despite our desperate need for it. As long as national ambitions continue to dictate behavior, justifying the political abuse of its citizens which shall be justified as long as state or race or class prejudices prevail. Islam transmutes treachery into political proficiency and turns abstinence and ruthlessness into military heroism. Islam stands for honour without treachery or humility and prohibits usury, monopoly and exploitation thus abolishing all reasons for profit-motivated wars. Humanity shall continue to suffer increasing injuries at the hands of the falsehood and deception and misled by corrupted civilizations, unless man follows the Islamic stem which leads every sincere and rational mind toward justice, discipline and peace. (Da'wah) ■

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)

The Role of the Muslim Community

-Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

The Muslim Community is the bearer of Allah's final message. Being adherents of the last prophet Muhammad (PBUH), a great responsibility lies on us. The Quran has emphatically proclaimed: "Ye are the best community that hath been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency and ye believe in Allah". (III: 110) and, again: "Thus we have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witness against mankind". (11:143)

Enjoining good and forbidding evil are a wide-ranging assignment allotted to the Muslim community by Almighty Allah. Accordingly we should gird up loins to discharge this duty. If we fail to perform this, we are liable to suffer huge losses. The prophet says: "If one sees an evil, one should change it by one's hands one dares not to do so, one should use tongue, if one has no courage to use tongue; one should realize in one's heart that it is bad and this is the lowest stage of Iman".

No doubt, if we keep this saying of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in view and act accordingly, a host of evil practices may come to an end. Unlike other religions, we have a definite purpose in life. Our main aim is to preserve a great deal of provisions for the Day of Judgment. Our stay in this world is transitory. The holy Prophet says: "My relation with this world is only this much that my likeness is of a rider who sat under the shade of a tree for a while and then got up and went away". It

should be kept in mind that our real life will commence in the Hereafter. We have full trust that what we sow and cultivate here, would be rewarded in the Hereafter. We should take it into consideration that this world is the firming of the Hereafter. As the Prophet said: "The world hath been created for thee and thou hath been created for the Hereafter".

With this object in view Islam does not regard the present world to be the highest goal of human beings and the pinnacle of their advancements.

The holly Quran vividly says: "The comfort of the life of the world is but little as against the Hereafter". (ix:38). This life of the world is but a pastime and a game. The home of the hereafter - that is life, if they but knew". (xxix:64). Know that the life of this world (as compared with the hereafter) is only play, and idle talk, and pageantry and boosting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children; as the likeness of vegetation after rein, whereof the growth is pleasing to the husbandman, but afterward it drieth up and thou seest it turning yellow, then it become the straw. And in the hereafter there is grievous punishment, and (also) forgiveness from Allah and His good pleasure; where as the life of the world is but a matter of illusion". (vii:20) The hereafter is a better and more long-lasting reality. Naught is the life of the word save a pastime and a sport. Better for is the abode of the hereafter for those who keep

their duty (to, Allah). Have ye then no sense?". (vi:32) And whatsoever ye have been given is a comfort of the life of the world and an ornament thereof; and more lasting. Have ye they no sense?

Noted Islamic scholar late S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi has rightly stated that "The Quran condemns those who prefer this perishable, transitory, and imperfect world to the eternal and everlasting, unbounded and faultless Hereafter which is free from every kind of evil and meanness, grief and distress, fear and loss and disease and ill-health".

Now let us see the following verses of the Quran.

"Lo! Those who expect not the meeting us but desire the life of the world and feel secure therein, and those who are neglectful of our revelations, their home will be the fire because of what they used to earn". (x:8-9) "Whose (only) desireth the life of the world and its pomp, We shall repay them their deeds herein, and there in they will not be wronged. "Those are they for whom there is naught in the hereafter save fire. (All) that they contrive here is vain and (all) that they 'are want to do is fruitless." (xi: 15-16)

And was unto the disbelievers from an awful doom; those who love the life of the world more than the hereafter, and (debar) men from the way of Allah and would have it crooked: such are for astray. (xiv:2-3)

They know only some appearance of the life of the world, and are heedless of the Hereafter." (xxx:7)

"Then withdraw (O Muhammad) from him who fleeth from Our

remembrance and desireth only the life of the world. Such is their sum of knowledge. Lo! Thy Lord is best aware of him who strayeth and He is best aware of him who goesth right." (Liii:29-30)

"Lo! These love fleeting life, and put behind them (the remembrance of) a grievous day". (L xxvi:27)

"Then as for him who rebelled, and close the life of the world, Lo! Hell will be his home." (Lxxix:37-39)

The above mentioned verses of the Quran precisely make it clear that our permanent abode will be in the Hereafter. Hence, we should devote ourselves to do good deeds and motivate others to do the same. Besides we should hoard more and more provisions for the last Day instead of involving in obnoxious and unholy acts. Moreover we should mould our behaviour and conduct and carry ourselves in the hue of ethical value and moral virtues" Our deeds and actions may indicate that we are followers of Islam. Abu Hurairah reported that the holy Prophet (PBUH) said: Anybody who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbor, and anybody who believes in Allah and the Last Day should "entertain his guest generously and anybody who believes in Allah and the last day should talk what is good or keep quiet i.e. abstain from all kinds of evil and dirty, talk".

Jabir bin Abdullah relates that the holy messenger said: "Avoid cruelty and injustice, for on the Day of Judgment, the same win turn into, several darkness; and guard yourselves against miserliness; for this has ruined nations that lived before you. Miserliness led them to bloodshed and to treat the unlawful as lawful". ■

The Relationship Between Ramadan and the Qur'an

-Abdur Rashid Siddiqui

"O mankind! There has come to you an exhortation from your Lord, and a healing for what is in the breasts, and a guidance, and a mercy for believers. ". Say: "In the bounty of Allah and His Mercy - in that let them rejoice; it is better than that they amass. "

(Yunus 10: 57-8)

Glory and greatness is for Allah (swt) and His Book. The Qur'an is the greatest blessing bestowed on human beings. We are fortunate to be endowed with this blessing. This is the blessing of which there cannot be any comparison with any other blessing, as Allah, the Most Merciful has mentioned in the verses just recited. The four qualities of the Qur'an enumerated in these verses are as follows:

First, the Qur'an is an exhortation (*Maw'izah* from Allah. People are living in ignorance. They are blindfolded and are being led towards their doom. They are oblivious of their predicament. Thus, the Glorious Qur'an is an exhortation and an admonition to warn them of imminent danger. In other verses, Allah gives the additional qualities of the Qur'an:

Here is a plain statement to people, a guidance and exhortation to those who fear Allah.

(Al 'Imran 3: 138)

O mankind! Verily there has come to you a convincing proof from your Lord:

for we have sent unto you a light (that is) manifest.

(al- Nisa' 4: 174)

Taking all these verses into account it is evident that the Glorious Qur'an is a clear statement, a declaration with convincing proofs regarding basic beliefs. Thus, it should guide humanity towards the Right Path that is neither dark nor shrouded in mystery. It is the Straight Path that is manifest and brightly lit. It is in the interest of all human beings to pay heed to these exhortations and admonitions.

Second, the Qur'an is a healing of hearts (*shifa'li ma fis-sudur*). The Qur'an is a healing for diseases of the heart. According to Qur'anic terminology the heart is not a pump which helps the circulation of blood, but rather it stands for the whole human personality - a person's emotions, motivations and his entire personality. This is well illustrated by many verses of the Qur'an and *ahadith*:

Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts.

(al- Hajj 22: 46)

But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart. (al-Shu 'ara' 26: 89)

Narrated by 'Abdullah al-Nu'man ibn Bashir

Allah's messenger (peace be upon him) said: "Truly in the body there is a morsel of flesh which, if it be sound, the whole

body is sound and which, if it be diseased, all of it is diseased. Truly it is the heart".

(Bukhari and Muslim)

So what are diseases of the heart? Of course these are hypocrisy, envy, jealousy, pride, evil desires, corrupt motivations and the like. How does the Qur'an cure these diseases? By inculcating *Taqwa* (God-Consciousness) and accountability on the Day of Judgement.

Third, the Qur'an is a Book of Guidance. It enlightens human beings and provides them with inner insight that leads them to the Right Path:

But to those who receive Guidance, He increases the (light of) Guidance, and bestows on them their Piety and Restraint (from evil).

(Muhammad 47: 17)

Finally, one of the most manifest qualities of Allah (swt) is Mercy. His Mercy engulfs everything. The Revelation of the Holy Qur'an is His act of Mercy:

(Allah) the Most Merciful!. It is He Who has taught the Quran.

(al-Rahman 55: 1-2)

Thus, it is the Mercy of the Qur'an that is saving humanity from the abyss of ignorance and leading them to light from darkness.

As there is no greater blessing than al-Qur'an, Allah (swt) has decreed the month in which the Qur'an was revealed as the Month of Blessing.

The night in which the revelation began as the Night of Power (*Laylat al-*

Qadr) and the Night of Blessing (*Laylah Mubarakah*) and fasting is ordained in this month. Thus, when this Bounty and Mercy have come down it is incumbent upon mankind to be joyous and celebrate this event and honour His Guidance. In this way, the month of Ramadan is the celebration of the descent of Allah's Mercy and Guidance:

Ramadan is the month in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear Signs for guidance and criterion (for judging right and wrong). So everyone of you who is present during this month should fast.

(al-Baqarah 2: 185)

Indeed We have revealed this (al-Qur'an) in the Night of Power.

(al-Qadr 97: 1)

Indeed We sent it down during a Blessed Night for We wish to warn (against evil).

(al-Dukhan 44: 3)

Some may question the necessity of fasting in this blessed and joyous month. Let me explain. In order to receive the Guidance one needs preparation. As with a gardener, who wants to plant seeds, the soil has to be prepared before sowing. Similarly, hearts have to be prepared to receive this shower of Mercy. Only through this preparation will the soul germinate and prosper. This has been the practice of Allah throughout the ages. All Prophets have to spend time in fasting and seclusion before receiving Guidance from Allah. We know that our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) spent many months in the Cave of Hira' before receiving Revelations from Allah.

The other reason is that fasting creates *Taqwa* (God-Consciousness) which makes hearts receptive to Guidance. And just as we know that there are seasons and specific times for cultivating and planting shrubs and trees in the natural world, if we disregard them the trees will neither flourish nor bear fruit despite our utmost efforts. It is the same in the spiritual world. There are specific times and places, which are set aside, for cultivating souls and for concentrating on spiritual development. Thus, we observe *Jumu ah* Prayers on a specific day and time. *Hajj* is performed in a specific month on prescribed dates. Similarly, the month of Ramadan is ordained for Fasting. The Night of *Qadr* is decreed to be better than a thousand months in its blessedness.

The Blessed month of Ramadan is with us. Are we preparing ourselves to receive this Guidance and Mercy from Allah (*swt*)? How should we rejoice in the Mercy and Blessing of Allah (*swt*)? How can we seek the treasures which await us in the Holy Qur'an? Is this to be achieved by reading the Holy Qur'an endlessly, turning pages laboriously, reciting its words beautifully, studying it in a most scholarly way? We do all these regularly but fail to collect its priceless gems and come away empty handed - souls untouched, hearts unmoved and our lives unchanged. The Blessings' of the Qur'an are limitless, but it depends on the capacity and suitability of our own receptacle which we bring to receive it.

We recite the Holy Qur'an, sadly, often without any real understanding. For us, recitation (*tilawah*) is mere reading without using the faculty of our hearts and

minds. We have to enter the Qur'an in the appropriate manner. What then is the appropriate manner? The Majestic Qur'an explains it for us:

Those to whom We have given the Book, they recite it as it ought to be recited, it is they who believe in it.

(al-Baqarah 2: 121)

Tilawah is to follow, not just to read: to abide closely with and go in pursuit of, to take it as a guide and to accept its authority. So, when we read, we should try to understand, follow, and act upon its Guidance. Thus, *tilawah* involves our whole personality - soul, heart, mind, tongue and body. This is graphically illustrated by the Glorious Qur'an:

For believers are those who, when Allah's name is mentioned, their hearts quake, and when His verses are recited to them their faith grows, and who put their trust in their Lord

(al-Anfal 8: 2)

Allah has revealed the best discourse in the form of a Book, consistent with itself oft-repeating whereat shiver the skin of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and hearts soften to the remembrance of Allah.

(al-Zumar 39: 23)

The verse from *Surah Yunus* quoted earlier is addressed to the whole of mankind, not just to Muslims. This dearly means that the Message needs to be transmitted to everyone, so that all human beings throughout all ages can benefit from it.

Two questions which emerge at this stage are: What efforts are we making to

understand the message of the Holy Qur'an? How are we preparing to extend the blessings of Allah (swt) to our fellow human beings?

These questions remind us of the true purpose of our lives. Come, let us join hands and engage ourselves in bringing the Message of the Holy Qur'an to the people of this country.

Let us remind the Muslim *Ummah* of its responsibility to present Islam to humanity at large. This is the means to gain the pleasure of Allah (swt) and the way to fulfil our purpose in life.

Let us pray that Allah, the Almighty may help us in disseminating the Message of the Holy Qur'an. (Amin.) ■

(Contd. from page 39)

reads the Qur'an, those brain cells will be activated wherein Allah's first address lies preserved. If we keep this in mind, it will not be difficult to appreciate that the translation of the Qur'an is a valid means of understanding it.

If Allah's address was the first covenant, the Qur'an is the second covenant. Each testifies to the veracity of the other. If one has little or even no grasp of the Arabic language, and can read the scripture only in translation, he should not anticipate that he will be frustrated in his understanding of the Qur'an, for the Qur'anic concept of man as the natural recipient of Allah's word has become a reality in modern times. The science of the genetic code and the findings of anthropology both fully support this viewpoint.

According to the Qur'an, material life is a testing ground while the hereafter is the place where the result of this test will be taken into account by the Almighty and whatever man receives in the life after death, by way of reward or punishment, will be commensurate with his intentions, expressions, and actions in this world. The secret of man's success in this life is to understand Allah's creation plan of his temporal pre-death and permanent post-death periods and chalk out his life plan accordingly.

Allah explained the reality of giving life, death and resurrection at several places in his final revision of His scriptures in the form of the Qur'an as follows: "O people! If you are in doubt about the Resurrection, remember that we first created you from dust, then from a sperm drop, then from clotted blood, then a lump of flesh, both shaped and unshaped, so that We might manifest you [Our power]. We cause what We will to stay in the womb for an appointed time, then We bring you forth as infants and then We cause you to grow and reach full growth. Then some of you will pass away early in life, while some of you will reach extreme old age in which they will know nothing of what they once know. You see the earth dead and barren, but no sooner do We send down rain upon it than it becomes to stir and swell, and produce every kind of luxuriant vegetation: that is because Allah is the Truth. It is He who gives life to the dead and He has the power to will anything." (22:5-6)

"Look, therefore, at the signs of Allah's mercy; how He resurrects the earth after its death. Truly, the same Allah will resurrect the dead; for He has power over all things." (30:50)

"... Allah is forgiving and merciful. But Allah undertakes to accept repentance only from those who do evil out of ignorance and those who repent soon after. Allah turns towards such people with mercy; He is All Knowing and All Wise. Forgiveness is not for those who continue to do evil, until, when death comes upon one of them, he says: 'Now I repent!' nor for those who die as deniers of the truth. We have prepared a painful punishment for them." (4:16-18) ♦

Change Management in Islam

-Syed Kazim

Change Management is an approach to transform individuals, teams, and organizations from a current state to a desired future state. It is an organizational process aimed at helping change the stakeholders to accept and embrace changes in their business environment. In some Project Management contexts, Change Management refers to a Project Management process where changes to a project are formally introduced and approved. Kotter defines Change Management as the utilization of basic structures and tools to control any organizational change effort. The goal of Change Management is to minimize the change impacts on workers and avoid distractions. Today, Change Management has become one of the hot topics for discussion in the corporate world. Let us see what type of Change Management Islam has to offer.

Islam talks about change at three different levels: the individual, social and political. Individually, Islam talks about changing oneself, to shun bad habits and imbibe good habits and character. At the social level, Islam talks about creating a society where everyone is given justice and which eliminates all kinds of injustice prevailing in society. At the political level, Islam talks about replacing man-made

laws with the laws given by Allah (swt). From the Qur'an, we learn that Ibrahim (asws) strove to bring change at three levels: within himself, within his family and society and within the leader of the time. Allah (swt) talks about change by placing before the people a specific condition for change. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an thus,

"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they (first) change what is in themselves." (Qur'an 13: 11)

In this verse, Allah (swt) makes it clear that He will not change the condition of the people unless and until the people first strive to change themselves. So, the first thing that we learn with respect to change is this: if we need to witness change, it has to start from our own self. On the one hand, the Qur'an commands people to forbid lying, backbiting, spying, suspicion, fraud, extravagance, arrogance, hoarding, mischief, corruption, mockery, ridicule, hypocrisy, interest, wine, gambling, adultery and theft and, on the other hand, the Qur'an commands the individual to be dutiful to parents, give the due to needy, to show kindness to neighbours, justice to relatives, help the orphans, exhibit cooperation, keep promises, to be honest, to be truthful, to be tolerant, to be punctual, to be kind, to

do justice, to be generous and to have a forgiving nature. It is a process of changing the person which involves removing the bad habits and inculcating the good ones.

The next objective of the Qur'an was to change the society. Indeed, the reason behind sending Prophet Muhammed (saws) was again to change and bring in a positive social reform, so that it could become a better place to live in. Not only Prophet Muhammed (saws), but all the Prophets who were sent, were sent with the ultimate goal of changing the society which they live in. Allah (swt) also says in the Qur'an,

"(This is) a Book which We have revealed to you, (O Muhammad), that you might bring mankind out of darknesses into the light by permission of their Lord – to the path of the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy." (Qur'an, 14:1)

This is a significant purpose for which the Qur'an was revealed, that is to bring people from the darkness of wrong beliefs and actions into the light of faith and righteous deeds. The responsibility of the Prophets was to put efforts to bring people to light through *da'wah* and communication, through explanations and reminders, educating and counseling, and it is then Allah (swt) Himself who guides people to accept this light.

In the world before Prophet Muhammed (saws), reading was generally the prerogative of the royal family, and of the families of the nobles and aristocrats,

and of the clerical and priestly classes. Others were often discouraged or even prevented from learning to read and write. In some instances, they were punished. This is how the world was before Prophet Muhammed (saws). The situation changed completely after Prophet Muhammed (saws). When we analyse the life of Prophet Muhammed (saws), the first commandment given to him by Allah (swt) was not of prayer, *da'wah*, charity, or fasts, but the very first command given by Allah (swt) was to read. '*Iqra'* (Read!), said the Qur'an to the world in the middle of the seventh century, and the world never looked back from there on. Today, in the twenty-first century, learning to read and write is one of the most pressing and popular priorities throughout the world, no matter what one's race, religion, class, age or gender. The gift of universal male and female literacy, across races and classes, is one of the most profound ways in which Prophet Muhammed (saws) changed the world.

From the Qur'an, we also learn that whenever change is implemented, it should be implemented in stages and not all of a sudden. In order to bring in change, the Qur'an has adopted a natural process. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an,

"We have revealed this Qur'an little by little so that you may recite it to people at intervals, and We have revealed it gradually." (Qur'an, 17: 106)

This step-by-step change has proved to be very effective and

successful.

Drinking was a part of the lives of the people at the time of Prophet Muhammad (saws). When alcohol was prohibited in Islam, it was not prohibited with just one command; it was, in fact, prohibited in three stages. Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu Hurayrah said,

"There were three stages to prohibit *Khamr* (intoxicants). In the first state, Allah (swt) said in the Qur'an, *'They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, 'In them is great sin and (yet, some) benefits for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit'*" (Qur'an, 2: 219). The verse commands people not to indulge in it as the sin is greater than its benefit. In the second stage, Allah (swt) said in the Qur'an, *'O you who have believed! Do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying'*" (Qur'an, 4: 43). This verse commands people not to approach prayer when they are intoxicated. And in the final stage, Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an, *'O you who have believed! Indeed, intoxication, gambling, (sacrificing on) stone alters (to other than Allah), and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful'* (Qur'an, 5: 90). This verse finally commands people to abstain from the consumption of Alcohol completely."

Through these verses of the Qur'an, Allah (swt) mentally prepared them to go away from alcohol and finally stop its

consumption. After finally prohibiting alcohol, in the next verse Allah (swt) also explains the reason why it was prohibited. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an,

"Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist?" (Qur'an, 5: 91)

This verse also made it easy for people to stop to consumption of alcohol. From this we also learn that, when we impose a change it is also necessary to explain the benefit for implementing change so that it will make it easy for people to accept it and adopt it.

When we are speaking about Change Management, it is also important and relevant to speak about the psychology of persuasion. Once, a research was conducted where the researchers asked a few house-owners to place a huge signboard in front of their houses and which read 'Drive Carefully' and everyone refused. Later, the researchers visited another set of houses and asked the people to place a small signboard which read 'Drive Carefully' and mostly everyone agreed. Two weeks later, the researchers asked them to replace the small signboard with a larger signboard and amazingly 76% of the people accepted. Psychologists call this the 'Foot-in-the-door effect.' Thus a concept which was implemented 1430 years back was also proved to be true according to the modern psychologist.

On one hand, when alcohol was

prohibited in the United States, which is also known as the 'The Noble Experiment,' it miserably failed, as people did not have strong belief in God. On the other hand, when alcohol was prohibited at the time of Prophet Muhammad (saws), people threw it away in the streets as soon as they heard the command. It was also because of the strong belief in God and the Hereafter. From this we also learn that if any positive change should happen, it can only happen when a person has strong belief in Allah and the Hereafter.

Finally, Islam addressed the aspect of political change. A change that will bring justice, a change that will bring Allah's law, a change which will make Allah's law superior, a change that will establish Allah's law and make it dominant over all the others ways of life. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an, "To establish the religion and not be divided therein" (Qur'an, 42: 13). Allah (swt) also says that the very purpose of revealing the True Religion is "to make it prevail over all other religions" (Qur'an, 48: 28). The objective of sending the messengers was also to bring a change in the system. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an, "It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion" (Qur'an 9: 33 and 48: 28). This is the final and ultimate change which the Prophets looked forward to and this change was anticipated with an objective to attain peace and justice.

Prophet Muhammad (saws) also

motivated people to change any wrong in society to which they are witnesses. As he once said, "He among you, who sees something that is disapproved (of by Allah), should change it with his hand. If he cannot do that, then let him change it with his tongue. If he cannot do that, then let him change it within his heart (by always disliking what is evil or harmful) and that (the last option) is the weakest (or lowest) of faith" (Sahih Muslim).

Many people are resistant to change, but we have to understand that resisting change is in the very nature of the human being. People will give many excuses when a new task is given to them. When we see the life of Prophet Moosa (asws), when he was given the task by Allah (swt), he gave excuses like, fear of getting killed, fear that the people may deny him and fear that the people might punish him. (Qur'an, 28: 33; 26: 12 & 20: 45). From this, we understand that resistance to change is in the nature of the human being.

Allah (swt) did not send down all the laws at one time. The Qur'an was sent down over a period of 23 years. In the first thirteen years at Makkah, none of the social laws were sent down. As a matter of fact, if you analyze the Makkan Surahs, they all talk about Tawheed, Shirk, Day of Judgment, Hell and Heaven etc. This was done in order to first build up the faith of the believers. It was only when the Prophet (saws) had settled down in Madinah that the social laws were sent down.

The Qur'an came down according

to the needs of, and problems faced by, the nascent Muslim community. The verses were revealed according to the growth in ideological affinity of the new adherents, according to the progress of the general social life, and according to new challenges faced by the Muslim community in its day-to-day life. One verse, or a few verses, would be revealed according to the special circumstances and events, and they would answer questions which arose in the minds of the people, would explain the nature of a particular situation, and would prescribe a way of dealing with it. These verses would correct their mistakes, either of understanding or of practice, would bring them closer to Allah (swt), and would explain to them the wisdom of the various aspects of the universe in the light of Allah's attributes. This teaches us that people change gradually and not overnight. This is the wisdom which we should apply even today. That is, if there is a sinner who wishes to turn back to Allah (swt), or a person who wishes to change himself, he may not be expected to conform to all the laws and quit all the sins he does overnight, but rather, it takes time and the change is witnessed gradually.

First, we need to change ourselves and then we should work towards the reconstruction of society in the light of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. If we are unable to change ourselves, then we will never be able to change the society. We should not accept anything and everything as and when it comes, but we need to question it

before accepting. The life of Prophet Ibrahim (asws) is the best example with regard to asking questions before accepting anything. The change which is made should be from negative to positive, from darkness to light, falsehood to truth and from bad to good. In the current society, if we make changes as per the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, like imposing capital punishment over rapists, banning alcohol, banning pornography, etc., the society would become more peaceful and prosperous.

If one has to learn 'Change Management,' he has to learn it from the life of Prophet Mohammed (saws). During a short period of 23 years, he changed his society completely. From paganism and idolatry to submission to one true God, from tribal quarrels and wars to national solidarity and cohesion, from drunkenness and anarchy to disciplined living, from utter bankruptcy to the highest standards of moral excellence, from absolute backwardness and ignorance to the epitome of knowledge, science and civilisation. He preached a religion, founded a state, built a nation, laid down a moral code, initiated numerous social and political reforms, and changed human thought and behaviour for all times to come. Man's history has never witnessed such a complete change of a society or a place and, that too, all these unbelievable wonders transpired within a short span of just 23 years. ■

(Courtesy: Young Muslim Digest)

Body and Soul!

- Muhammad Sirajuddin

O mankind! Fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul. He created its mate from it and from the two of them spread countless men and women [throughout the earth]. Fear Allah, in whose name you appeal to one another, and be mindful of your obligations in respect of ties of kinship. Allah is always watching over you." (4:1)

The above verse from the Qur'an is recited as part of every Muslim wedding ceremony, but as mostly observed, only in Arabic, without majority of the audience knowing its translation in the local language, let alone giving a detailed explanation to the heterogeneous gathering, with many first time attendees of a Muslim marriage, eager to see and know all about it.

In quite a few cases, pleasantly, a knowledgeable speaker explains the importance of marriage in Islam as a tradition of our beloved Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) besides reading the Arabic original and translation of the nuptial sermon.

It is high time all Muslims noted that it is their obligation to see that all human beings including all our Non-Muslim brothers are acquainted with certain minimum knowledge of the Qur'an, as the message of the Master of the worlds and traditions of the universal and final Messenger of Allah.

Unfortunately one finds Muslims, who are expected to "act as witnesses unto mankind," in respect of Islam, are themselves nowadays groping in dark about their own religion.

Although the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) were originally in Arabic, they are accessible, thanks to translations, to those who have no knowledge of Arabic.

The Qur'an is apparently in the Arabic language, but in reality, it is in the language of

nature, that is, the language in which Allah the Exalted directly addressed all human beings at the time of creation.

This divine invocation of humanity is ever-present in the consciousness of all human beings; that is why the Qur'an is universally understandable – to some on a conscious plane, and to others at the subconscious level. This reality has been described in the Qur'an as 'clear revelations in the hearts of those who have been given knowledge'. This verse goes on to say that "none deny Allah's revelations save the wrongdoers." (29:49).

This means that the Divine Reality, explained by the Qur'an on a conscious plane, pre-exists in man at the subconscious level. The message of the Qur'an is not therefore, something alien to man. It is in fact a verbal expression of that same Divine Reality, which is in consonance with man's own nature and with which he is already familiar. The Qur'an explains this by saying that those born in later times were all initially born (or existing) at the time of the creation of Adam and, at that time, Allah had directly addressed all these human souls.

This event is thus alluded to in the Qur'an: "[Prophet], when your Lord brought forth the offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said, 'Am I not your Lord?' and they replied, 'Yes, we bear witness that You are.' So you cannot say on the Day of Resurrection, 'We were not aware of this'." (7:172)

The Qur'an, for man, is in essence already known to him, rather than an entirely unknown entity. In reality, the Qur'an is unfolding of the human mind.

When one whose nature is alive – having saved oneself from conditioning – reads the

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