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The Fragrance of East

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Editor's Note :

RELIGIOUS COMPULSIONS

Recent instructions of Madhya Pradesh government to both government and non-government educational institutions to hold mass Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) at the beginning of the day, as part of yoga exercises are quite disturbing and indeed a gross violation of the Constitutional provisions which guarantee freedom from such bindings. Moreover, it is contrary to the tenets of Islam to bow and salute before any of God's creation except Himself. Muslims are not allowed to bend before anyone but Allah. Bowing down head to others except Allah, it would be an act of polytheism. In Islam polytheism is an unforgivable sin. It is contumacious treason against Allah by putting up Allah's creatures in rivalry against the Creator. Almighty God forgives all sins except polytheism. The holy Quran says : "Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but he forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed. (4:48) Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) is a disservice to the spirit of secularism of the country with having great potential to damage the secular fabric and upset sense of communal harmony.

We may perhaps comprehend the sensitive and delicate points of Islam through the recent event in Agra in which an MLA Choudhary Bashir performed Puja at a Hanuman temple in Agra and distributed "Prasad" too. According to reports, a day after this event, someone approached the Shaher Mufti Abdul Quddus Roomi and sought a Fatwa on a situation where a Muslim offers prayers, performs "Puja" and distributes prasad. The Fatwa termed the act as un-Islamic and added that any such person is automatically stands "Kharij Islam" (ends his association with Islam). In the light of this Fatwa, senior office bearers of the Agra Jama Masjid administration allegedly expressed anger over Bashir's act and are believed to have even called upon the community members to ostracise him till he offers a public apology and reaffirm his faith in Islam.

No doubt, this event shows that Islam is not a bundle of dogmas and doctrines but is a complete code of life and indicates that Muslims are bound to bow down their heads only before Allah. Elaborating the sensitive issues of Islam Late Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi Ai Miyan (RAH) writes : "Islam embraces all the manifold aspects of human personality -- spiritual and material, moral and physical, emotional and intellectual, and personal and social. It casts a man into a new mould. Whoever embraces Islam with an open heart and believing it to be the chosen faith of the Lord and the Last of the Divine Mes-

sages will get cast into the Islamic frame. He will be transformed so radically as if he had been born a new because Islam is a complete and eternal plan of life which comprehends all aspects of change and revolution, and perfection and beauty. Islam is not a wooden dogma or a traditional religion, but a faith that permeates through the innermost recesses of the heart and soul.”

Despite the reality, Muslims often have to face a host of hindrances and obstacles in the way of upbringing of their children. We may recall in previous year government issued an ordinance to all state governments to singing of “Vande Mataram” on September 7 the day marking centenary celebration of the song. We may also recall when BJP and its allies came to power in 1977 directives were issued to all educational institutions that every class room was to have a map of India and 400mm x 700 mm having image of Saraswati goddess. Students were required to gather before the map and the image and sing Vande Mataram.

In a secular country like ours we must respect each other and not hurt other’s religious sensitivities. In order to restore the true spirit of democracy both the Union as well as state governments must keep in mind the religious sentiments and passions of all religious entities. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi: “true democracy cannot work by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village.” (Harijan, 18-1-48)

Of late, anti-Islamic forces in the country do not leave any chance to tease or antagonize the minority community. In such circumstances we must not give vent to our ire in a bizarre way but deal with the situation in most sober way by engaging the opponents in impressive and effective dialogues and arguments. It is quite possible that our persuasion may act as “Dawah” and infuse “light” in their heart. The movement of “Payame Insaniat” launched by Late Ali Mian (RAH) needs to be strengthened and spread all over the country. Maulana was of the firm belief that if India is to survive it must adhere to secularism and respect democratic way of life. (O.R.N.)

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THE ATTITUDE OF THE PROPHET TOWARDS WEALTH AND FAMILY

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The Prophet's attitude towards wealth and his behaviour with his family (keeping particularly in mind that he had utmost affection for the Ummah and was its greatest wisher and he himself has said: 'The best among you is he who is good for his household: and among you, I am the best for my household. Was typically illustrative of the Apostolic point of view. It was the attitude of a man to whom the sublimity and All-powerfulness of the Divine Being was an absolute and self-evident reality, whose morals were the morals of God and who was permanently solicitous of the Day of Resurrection and final Judgement. "The Day whereon neither riches nor sons will be of any avail; Unless it be he, who shall bring to Allah a whole heart." The Holy Prophet was more impatient for the Hereafter than the bird is for the nest after a whole day's flight. He would exclaim: "O God! There is no joy other than the joy of futurity." Wealth, in his eyes, was of no greater significance than the foam of the sea or the grime of the plam. To him the whole of mankind was the family of Allah and he regarded himself to be the guardian and protector of the orphans, the needy and the destitute. For others he wished ease and comfort, but for his own household, poverty and indigence. It was he who uttered spontaneously the words: "I may eat my fill on one day and go without a meal on the other' and also Of God! Bestow upon be necessary to sustain life." He candidly conveyed his Lord's message that was comfort to his eyes and a solace to his heart to his wives: "O Prophet! Say to your wives: If it be that you seek the life of the world and its adornment, then come, I shall make a provision for you, and shall release you with a handsome release. And if you seek Allah and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter then verily Allah has prepared for the well-doers among you a mighty reward."

The pious wives of the Prophet, on hearing the Allah's message, opted, without a moments's hesitation, in favour of living with him and not with their parents or brothers where every comfort and Luxury was waiting with extended arms to receive and embrace them.

THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET AND HIS FAMILY

What was the life which the Prophet's wives had opted for and deemed preferable? Here it is as described by Hazarat Aisha with her hereditary truthfulness and her vast personal

experience and knowledge. She says:

“The Members of the Prophet’s household never had even the barley bread to their fill. Sometimes for an entire month and sometimes for a couple of them no fire burnt in our hearths and we lived only on dates and water. When the Prophet died there was nothing in our house which a living creature could eat except a piece of bread that was left on a shelf.”

Once Hazrat Umar paid a visit to the Prophet and found that the prophet was sitting on a mat which had made its impressions on his body. On looking around, he saw nothing except a small water-skin hanging by the wall, a very little quantity of barley and a worn-out mat. Seeing this Hazrat Umar Burst into tears. The Prophet asked him as to what made him burst into tears. Hazrat Umar replied: O Prophet of God! How could I restrain myself from doing so! Here it is the mat that has made its impressions on your sides. It is all the treasure that I am seeing here that you have while Chosroes of Persia and Caesars of Rome are wallowing in the midst of their gardens of fruits and lakes, though you are the Apostle of Allah. The Prophet remarked: “O Ibne-Khattab! Are you being skeptical? These are the people whom to all the amenities of life can comfort have been given away in this world itself.”

The Prophet did not like to keep, even for a short while, money in excess of his need, in his house. Likewise, he did not allow the goods of charity which were the property of common Muslims to remain with him for a moment. He would not have the peace of mind unless he had them given away.

It is related by Hazrat Aisha that: “I had, during the Prophet’s terminal illness, six or seven dinars with me. The Prophet commanded me to have them distributed. Because of his illness, I could not find time to do it. Later, he asked me what I had done with those six/ seven dinars. I told him that owing to his illness I was too preoccupied to think of them. He, then sent for them and placing them on the palm of his hand said: ‘What would be the assumption about the Apostle of Allah if he joined him in such a state when theses were lying with him.’

He would not delay at all having all such goods and articles distributed and given away to the deserving.

He would not postpone it for some other time. Uqaba Bin Harith states that: Once in Madina I offered my Asr prayers behind the Prophet the moment he had finished the prayer he rushed hurriedly, scaling over the people’s shoulders, towards the chamber of some of his wives. The people got very worried because of his haste. Then he came out and felt that the people were greatly amazed at this haste. He then said: “I recalled that there was some gold lying in my house. I did not like to pass the night with this thing lying with me. I have, therefore, given instructions to have it distributed.

This is the morality and the character which the Prophet taught his Companions

and guided them to and the entire Ummah. In inducement on expending one's wealth and possessions in deeds of charity he gave so forceful homilies and exhortation that, as one reads them, starts wondering if the owner himself really had any claim over whatever is in excess of his needs. After having read these traditions when one looks at his own life and the comfort, ease and luxury he enjoys he is overcome by a feeling of great uneasiness. Everything appears to him unnecessary and superfluous. All these glamorous garments, numerous varieties of food items, luxury cars and vehicles and the abundance of amenities of life all appear to him unfair and unjust, although those advices and exhortations were only by way of inducement and these things are not totally banned by the Shariah and the law. But such was the way of the Prophet.

"Assuredly there has been an excellent pattern for you in the Messenger of Allah, for him who hopes in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much."

According to a well-authenticated Tradition, the Prophet said: "Whoever has a conveyance in excess should give it to one who is without a conveyance. Whoever has a supply of victuals in excess should give it to one who is without a meal."

He also said, "One who has a meal for two should make a third partake in it; and one who has meal for three should make a fourth partake it."

Once he said, "He is not a believer in me who, having had his fill, went and slept all the night while his neighbour remained hungry, although he was aware of it."

Another Tradition has it that: "A man came to the Prophet and said, 'Get me clad, O Allah's Prophet'. He asked him: 'Is there no one among your neighbours who has a couple of pairs in excess?' He said, 'There are more than one'. The Prophet said, 'May then Allah not get you and him together in the Paradise.'

The Prophet lifted the status of man to such height and raised the value and importance of bringing relief to the needy to such a level as any level higher than that is unimaginable even. Any one committing dereliction in this is just like one disobedient to Allah and a backslider. As per the famous Qudsi (Divine) Tradition, 'Allah, the Sublime, would ask his bondman on the Day of Judgement: I fell ill and you did not come to enquire about my health. The bondman would say: How Allah, the Almighty would say: Weren't you aware that so-&-so of my bondsmen was ill?! But you did not visit him to enquire about him. Had you visited him you had found me there with him. O son of Adam! I asked you for food; but you did not give it to me. He would say: O my Lord! How was I to give you food? You are but the Lord of the worlds. Allah Almighty would say: weren't you aware that so-&-so of my bondsmen wanted you to give him food. But you did not do so. Had you done so it would have reached Me. O son of Adam! I asked you for water, but you did not give it to Me. He would say: O Lord! How was I to give you water. You are the lord of the worlds. Allah would say: So-&-so of my bondmen asked you to give him water. But

you did not do so. Had you done so you have found me there with him.

What is ultimate in this respect and which no gesture of compassion, benevolence, equity and justice can surpass is what the Prophet made it a maxim when he said:

"None of you can be a perfect Muslim unless he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."

THE LIFE-STYLE OF THE REVERENCED COMPANIONS:

The life and character of Allah's Prophet made it utmost and indelible impact on the life, inclinations, attitudes and their behaviour with their family and their properties. This spirit had pervaded deep into their veins and arteries and ran with their blood in their hearts and minds. Their lives had become, to a great extent, a reflection or a mirror-image of the Prophet's life itself. And, of course, the nearer to him, the greater the resemblance with him. The incidents and instances of their austerity, compassion, bringing relief to anyone in need, contentment, simplicity and forbearance, altruism and self-denial that the history has kept preserved for us are the superior-most and brightest instances found in the annals of the entire history of ethics and religions. No nation in the world could ever come anywhere closer to it. It is a famous episode recorded and reported by history that the wife of Caliph Hazrat Abu Bakr once desired to have some sweetmeat dish made. By putting by daily a little bit cut off her daily stipend she got a sum accumulated for the purpose. When Hazrat Abu Bakr came to know of it he got these few dirhems also deposited with the Baitul mal and got the daily stipend slashed by that much amount as she had been able to save for preparing the sweetmeat dish saying that the experience has proved that we could do without that also.

The austerity and asceticism and the simple life led by Hazrat Umar has become, in history, something proverbial. In this regard it should suffice to relate a journey he made to 'Jabia' (Syria) in his capacity as the Caliph of Muslims and the Head of the Islamic State. Here is the depiction penned by a renowned historian:

'He was riding on a camel. His head was shining in the sun. He had neither a cap on his head nor a turban. Both of his legs were dangling on the two sides of the saddle. There was under him only a poor quality woolen mattress which served as his bed when he got down from the camel and served as a pack-saddle when he rode. There was a bag stuffed with cotton. When on the move, he used it as a pouch and when camping it served as a pillow. His apron was made of a coarse cloth. It was worn-out and old and was also torn on one side.

About Hazrat Uthman who was the richest and most well-off among his colleagues, shurahbnel Ibn-e-Muslim says: He would play his role as a host to others in a princely manner; but he himself would take, on going back home, just bread and oil.

The portrayal of the ascetic life of Hazrat Ali Ibn-d-Abi Talib (KAW) (who is counted

one among the most notable ascetic Companions) is made by Dhirar Ibn-e-Dhamra thus:

‘He was scared of, and disgusted with, the world and its adornments and was familiar with the darkness of night. He was very lachrymose, very reflective, wringing his hands and accosting his own self. His dress was ordinary and his food coarse and crude. By God! He looked like just one of us. If we asked him anything he would answer at once. If we came to see him, he would himself begin the conversation. If we invited him, he would accept the invitation.’

This reflection of the Prophet’s life and character and this mirror-image of his Apostolic comliness was relative to the association one had with, and the guidance he received from, him. Hence, the place attained by Hazrat Aisha, the Ummul-Momineen. (Who was the Prophet’s most beloved wife) in self-abnegation, altruism, magnanimity and benevolence is very high. It is put on record by the chroniclers that one she gave away one lakh dirhems in charity whereas she herself had only one worn-out dress to put on, and she was fasting. Her maid said to her it would have been better if she had saved a few dirhems for Iftar (fast breaking meal) Hazrat Aisha replied, ‘So would have I done had you reminded me in time’. She gave away one lakh of dirhems forgetting her own hunger and keeping only others in mind.

This moral attitude and spirit had seeped so deep into the earliest Islamic society that all the Companions seemed as if cast in just one mould. The self-effacement had become a second nature with them. Hazrat Ibn-e-Umar states that ‘We have had a time when none of us deemed himself more entitled to his own Dinars and Dirhems than his Muslim brethren.

As a result thereof such prodigious events and incidents took place as made the borders of kindness and compassion joined with those of equality and egalitarianism, and got the good-neighbourliness lifted to the highest point of altruism. Self-same Hazrat Ibne-Umar narrates that: ‘Once one of the Prophet’s Companions got a gift of a goat’s head. Thinking that such-&-such person had a greater need of it than hem, he sent it to him. But he, too, thought the same about some third person and, so, he sent it to him. And, thus, the head of the goat kept changing hands from one to another till after making a round of seven homes it came back to the same Companion who had first received it.

Talking of the abstinence and altruism, he the share of Tabeyeen (successors of the Prophet’s Companions) in this refined sensibility, craving for compassion with others, and the passion for being helpful to every one that got transferred to latter generations, was naturally the greatest.

Hazrat Hasan Basri, the ‘doyen of Tabeyeen states that: (In his times) the moral and spiritual state of Muslims was such that daily at day-break one of the men would call out: ‘O the inmates of the houses! Take care of the orphan amidst you! Take care of the indigent

amidst you!

In particular, the Banu-Hashim and the revered members of the Prophet's household were far ahead in this field. They kept pursuing this path with sincerity and integrity. Innumerable instances of generosity and benevolence, sympathy and kindheartedness of Imam Hasan and Abdullah Ibn-e-Jafar are recorded in history. Imam Ali Ibn Husain bin Ali (AKA Zain-ul-Abedin) had excelled and attained superiority in these virtues and qualities inherited by him from his ancestors. Mohammad Ibn-e-Ishaque narrates that there were quite a number of people who did not know how were they surviving and where their subsistence came from. On Hazrat Ali Bin Hussain demise, this supply line was snapped off. And then, they came to know that it was none else but he who used to bring, incognito, to them the provisions in the night. It was learnt on his death when the marks were seen on his back and shoulder that were caused by the bags he carried to houses of the widows and paupers.

RANDOM INSTANCES OF ALTRUISM AND COMPASSION

The precious legacy of this sublime fervour, subtle sensibility and self-scrutiny were kept successively preserved Muslims, generation after generation. Their 'profound-in-knowledge' clerics and the protagonists of education and edification kept fully representing, in every country and during every era, this way of life, conduct and fervour. The annals of history and tomes of biographical anthologies are replete with narratives of their prodigious events, anecdotes, feats and sacrifices. But, more mind-boggling and astounding than the incidents and episodes compiled by the peerless chroniclers are the incidents found in a lot of such books as have no direct bearing on this subject and about which it never occurs to one that such material.

The principle and the motto of these truthful, saintly clerics and venerated people has always been that no money should be left in their house when the night fell; that keeping the fulfillment of their own needs on hold, other's needs must be fulfilled first; that whatever gifts and offerings were received from the rich and the well-to-do must be exclusively used in rendering help to those poor and the needy living in the town who are deprived of them and are deemed not worthy of being given and thought. Their motto was: 'It (money) should be taken from the well-to-do and given away to the poor.' Their table-spreads were, like their hearts, larger, wider and more inclusive of the commoner than those of the rich and the lords. Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (the vanguard and torch-bearer of this entire clan of Sufis) is reported to have said once: 'I have got a hole in my palm. Nothing stays in it. Even if I got a thousand dinars, they would be spent before the night falls'. On another occasion he said, 'I wished the whole world was put at my disposal and I kept on feeding the hungry.'

There was, within the vast expanse of Islamic world, no nook or corner which

lacked such people. Moreover, one region's share of them was no less than that of the others. The biographies of these devoted and Godly clerics, seers and saints, are replete with incidents of asceticism and austerity, altruism and self-denial, commiseration and compassion, maintenance of brotherliness, fondness of generosity, eagerness for bringing succour to the destitute and fervour for making others comfortable at the expense of their own ease and comfort. We narrate hereunder only two specimens out of innumerable instances which are seen in the lives of this clan of people with such uniformity and regularity as is seen in the leaves of any particular tree. They were all the blooms and blossoms of the 'Tree of Apostleship' and had sprouted from the same 'root' of the tree which is defined in the Glorious Quran thus:

...Its roots firmly fixed, and its branches reaching the heaven; giving its fruit at every season by the command of its Lord.

About Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia the testimony is given by his attendant that he would place before him the Sahari comprising all sorts of dishes. He would, however, partook very little of it. About the rest he would instruct to have it preserved for the children. It was Khawaja Abdur Raheem who was assigned the responsibility of taking the Sahari to him. He states that more often than not he would partake nothing of it. "I would plead with him saying; 'Your holiness does not take much even at Iftar. If you did not have the Sahari also you would become very weak.' Thereupon he would burst into tears and say, 'How many poor and destitute are there in the corners and platforms of the mosque lying hungry and passing the night starving. How can I have this food gone down my throat, then. Hence, it would happen very frequently that I would take back the Sahari untouched by him and as was brought to him.

When the moment to breathe his last approached, he summoned all the attendants and disciples who were around and facing them he said: Do hear witness to it that Iqbal (the attendant) has kept any of the provisions withheld in the house, he would have to answer for it before the God on the Day of Judgement'. Iqbal (the attendant) has kept withheld nothing; everything had been given away in charity on his (Sheikh's) behalf. And true to his word, that magnanimous young man had really done the same. Barring the food-grains that save the food-grains everything had been given away to the needy. It made the Sheikh displeased with Iqbal. He sent for him and said to him, 'why did you keep this wretched sand-dust withheld? Iqbal said, 'whatever there was in the house had been distributed among the destitute save the food-grains. The Sheikh then ordered to get the hordes of the people collected. When they arrived, he said to them, 'Break open the storeroom of food-grains and take it all away without any compunction; and get the place swept with broom. It was not long before a multitude got collected and had the food-grains looted.

Another specimen of such a life-style is presented below from the life of Syed

Mohammad Saeed Anbalwi. His biographer chronicles that once Nawab Raushan ud-Daula called on him and presented a purse of Rs. 60,000 (which must not be less than lakhs of rupees leave the money somewhere and take rest. When Raushan ud-Daula had gone back, the Sheikh issued a common invitation to all the poor, the needy, orphans and widows of the city and the neighbouring townships and had all the money distributed among them holding not a single paisa back. When he must Raushan ud-Daula the next time in getting the Khaqah constructed as in being of service to the needy and the destitute.'

On another occasion, Emperor Farrukh Siya, Nawab Raushan-ud- and Nawab Abdullah Khan sent the Sheikh Rs. 3,00,000 alongwith their letters. The Sheikh had all the money distributed among the indigent and the members of well-born families of neighbouring towns and villages.

One might say that these incidents pertain to that clan of ascetics who had renounced the world and lived in isolation from the people and cut from the main-stream of life. What is to be seen is whether such instances of asceticism and altruism, self-denial and contentment are found among the other strata of the Ummah also. The history gives the answer to this query with full confidence in affirmative. For, we find in every Islamic generation, every Islamic society, every environment and every epoch, such people who were followers of the precepts laid down by the life-style of the Prophet in these matters and applied same moral standards as set by him to their life, their wealth, their family members, and even to their neighbours and compatriots. The history has kept preserved for us their episodes, scattered here and there. They belong to all categories including kings and emperors, clerics and saints. We pick up here only two categories to be cited; one, that of Ulama (clerics) and the other of rulers and conquerors:

The name of Sheikhu-Islam Imam Ibn-e-Taimia is the most qualified to represent the category of Islamic clerics. Particularly because those do not know enough about him level against him the charge of drabness and apathy and have the notion that his knowledge and intellectuality had overwhelmed his heart and emotions. About him one of his contemporaries, Hafiz Ibn-e-Fazlullah al-Umari writes:

Heaps of gold, silver and other goods would come to him and he distributed them all with nothing left with him. If he ever retained anything, it was only with the intention to have it given later to that extent that he would he would even take off his clothes that he had on and give them away to the needy. Hafiz Ibn-e-Fazullah writes further: 'He was every profuse in alms-giving and charity deeds. When he had nothing left to be given away he would sometimes take off his clothes he had on him and give them away to the needy and the destitute.'

Who else than the emperor Salahuddin Aiyubi can deserve to be the representative of the class of kings and conquerors. He was the ruler of the largest Islamic empire of his

time and had inflicted defeat upon the mightiest military power of the known world. His companion, Ibn-e-Shaddad testifies that:

‘All the legacy left behind by the Sultan was just an amount of 47 dirhems and a coin of gold. He left no other property in legacy.’

This great conquerer and ruler who ruled over a vast territory extending from the northern borders Syria in Asia up to south of African deserts of Nuba departed from this world in such a state that he did not possess even so much as could suffice for his funeral expenditure. Ibn-e-Shaddad writes:

‘Not a pice from his legacy was available to be spent on his funeral. All the arrangement was made from money taken on loan. So much so that the hay-cocks for the grave were also acquired on load. The shroud was arranged by his minister-cum-scribe, Qadi Fadil, from some permissible and legitimate source.’

This ways of life was not peculiar to any generation or any ideological or spiritual school of thought. But all the saintly sages and godly saints in every era pursued the same course. Their motto was: ‘a new day, a new provision’. They kept nothing saved for future, nor did they practice frugality for fear of getting run-out of funds. It is not some hoary tale the past. There are, on the contrary, even today such clerics and spiritual leaders who do not like that anything in excess of their need which might be needed by someone else should remain with them or they pass a night with any excess money lying with them. This trend is not owing to monasticism or renunciation of the mundane. Nor is there at work behind it the passion for interference with the divine law of nature, or the likeness for harshness in matter made easy by God, or presuming things made lawful and legitimate by Him as prohibited and forbidden. They did not, also, take to this path under any compulsion. They had, instead, in view only the fear of being called to account in the Hereafter, affection for the humanity, and the eagerness to follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet. They also had in mind that following in the Prophet’s footsteps in the life of the Prophet not only magnanimity, altruism and self-sacrifice but in all the righteous deeds is the silent inducement to their followings by means of practical instances and living example on doing these deeds. In fact this conduct of theirs made very lasting impacts on their disciples and fans who, in turn, got inspiration and zest to follow in their footsteps.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings, weaknesses and various malaises, which had regularly been fought against by the reformers of the Ummah, the Islamic society is still more distinguished and far superior than any other society in the deeds of compassion and commiseration, charity and benevolence. Thanks to Islamic precepts, the spirit of mutual commiseration, assistance and sympathy has penetrated deep into its veins and arteries. Compared to other societies, the Islamic one is most free from the bondage of materialism and worship of stomach. Moreover, there has never been any dearth of such members as

have been raising the banner of revolt against materialism and want to bring it within the control and range of influence of Islamic moral values. It is only its ensuing effect that the ratio of trade rivalry and competition, individualistic and personal egotism and mammon-worshipping is lowest in it compared to those societies which do not believe in any life after the present one, have no other objective in life than pursuit of pleasure and comfort, and running frantically, head over heels, after illusionary, economic ideals.

It is, notwithstanding its today's shortcomings and weaknesses, a peculiar, distinctive feature of the Islamic society. It has, therefore, more opportunities available with it, than any other society in the world, for practicing the social justice and loftier human values. It is basically because of the respect it has, in some degree or other, for the Islamic way of life and the in-faith bondage that exists in and has got all its pieces linked to each other in a string. ■

PANEL PLANS SHARIAT COURTS IN DISTRICTS

Lucknow : The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has decided to set up Shariat courts in every district of the country, a board member said .

"The decision came in the wake of recommendations of the Maulana Atiq Ahmad Bastawi committee, set up by the Board a few months back, to look into the need for quick disposal of Personal Law related disputes of Muslims", AIMPLB legal adviser and member Mr. Zafaryab Jilani said.

Mr. Jilani said : "The idea was to facilitate common Muslim masses to get their personal law related issues sorted out without having to bear the high cost of regular courts and their prolonged procedures."

Asked if these 'Shariat' courts would mean 'Shariat' courts would mean the creation of a parallel judicial system, Mr. Jilani pointed out: "Well, Shariat courts were already in existence in many part of country and many muslims preferred to take their personal litigations to these courts. However, so far there was no organised system of setting up such courts."

He added: "The Muslim Personal Law Board will now issue proper guidelines for the setting up of such Shariat courts at the district level to ensure that these are not only constituted under a uniform framework but those entrusted with the task of dispensing justice are appropriately qualified people." According to Mr. Jilani, "the board had always been of the view that Muslims should try and get their personal law issues resolved at the shariat courts as far as possible."

The board proposes to appoint a Qazi (Judge) at the district level to head each court. "Modalities for setting up the necessary logistics and related issues like remuneration for the Qazi are still being worked out," said Mr. Jilani.

"Since such courts were already in place in certain places, we are gathering details about their functioning," he added. And once the district level Shariat courts are set up, the board proposes to create a similar infrastructure at lower levels. (The Statesman - 7.2.07)

PERSIAN INFLUENCE ON LITERACY AND SUFI TRADITIONS IN SOUTH ASIA

Khaliq Ahmad Nizami

The story of South Asian relations with Iran goes back to hoary past and covers many important aspects of life-political, literary, cultural and religious. The spirit of Persian renaissance turned Iranian traditions into a vibrant force and shaped the sociopolitical ideals of the sultan, the literary and artistic paradigms of scholars, the moral code and spiritual goals of the Sufis, the melodies of the musicians and the parameters of the medical science. The artists, the painter, the architects, the calligraphists of Iran all came to be admired and imitated. The aesthetic and artistic genius of Iran inspired for centuries the literary and spiritual activities of the people in South Asia and its intellectual and emotional life revolved around the patterns set by Iranian traditions. Hardly any the lives of the people. Naturally therefore when one thinks of Iranian impact on South Asia, a world of historic visions and memories glows into consciousness.

Two preliminary observations may be made to put the present discussion in its proper conceptual framework. First, many of the important scholars of Islamic sciences who influenced Muslim mind in South Asia belonged to Iranian lands, though they wrote in Arabic. When their works came to be translated into Persian, the area of their influence widened. Of the six distinguished compilers of the hadith collections (sihah sittah) five were Iranians. Zamakhshari, the author of kashshaf, the classical work on exegesis, and sibuyah, the celebrated Arabic grammarian, belonged to Zamakhshar, and Shiraz in Iran. The Arabs themselves, remark Amir Khusrau, acknowledged their preeminent academic stature and addressed them as 'Allamah'. In fact, Persian became in South Asia the transmission house for Islamic sciences including tafsir, kalam, fiqh and tasawwuf.

Second, if the course of different streams of thought in Iran is closely followed, it would appear that there has been considerable cycling and recycling of ideas between Iran and India. India is the cradle of pantheistic philosophy and the Upanishads contain the earliest expositions of the ideas. When Islam reached Khurasan and Transoxiana, the religious atmosphere was saturated with Buddhist and Hindu ideas. The temples of Bamyān, Balkh and Marv were centers of Buddhist tradition. It was but inevitable that some of their concepts influenced the Iranian mind. The Upanishads proclaim Tattvam assi (Thou art

thou), and the idea finds its echo in Bayazid. The Karramiyan cult was a half way house between Islam and Buddhism. Hujwiri has given an account of twelve schools of mystic thought which flourished during the eleventh century of the Christian era. An analysis of the thought contents of these *garuhs*, as he calls them, reveals the impact of Indian ideas. Concepts like and Buddhist religious traditions. Thus some of the Iranian mystical ideas that reached India during the medieval period had in fact originated in India and were cycled back to India under Islamic rubrics. Indian fables (like Panchatantra), lexical and phonological traditions, mathematical theories and astronomical concepts reached Iran and influenced Iranian thought.

If one surveys the historical landscape of India during the medieval period, a number of Iranian cultural streams in the realm of polity, social traditions, literature, historiography and mystic thought seem flowing in every direction enriching the soil and contributing to the variegated culture pattern of India. It was generally believed in India during the Sultanate period that kingship was not possible without emulating Persian customs, ceremonies and principles of government. When Iltutmish, the real founder of the Delhi Sultanate, is referred to as *faridun farr*, *Qubad nahad*, *Kavus Namus*, *Sikandar Daulat*, *Bahram Shaukat*, the whole concept of greatness seems to reel round the Iranian descendants of *Afrasiyab*. Barani's *fataway-I Jahandari* illustrates the depth and dimensions of Iranian influence on medieval Indian polity. The sultans of Delhi were Turks by race but Iranian by culture. Their entire administrative set-up-from names and nomenclature of offices to forms and functions of institution was modeled on the Iranian pattern. Barani remarks: "it became necessary for us the rulers of Islam to follow the policy of the Iranian emperors in order to ensure the greatness of the True Word...and the maintenance of their own authority.

In the fields of learning and literature, Iranian influence shaped the contour and conspectus of historiography, poetry, *tasawwuf* (mysticism), *insha* (epistolary principal) and *tibb* (medicine). Amir Khusrau has referred to the linguistic homogeneity brought about by the Persian language in a country of proliferate linguistic traditions. He remarks:

"The Persian language as spoken in India is the same

from Sind to Bengal. This Persian is our *Dari*. Indian languages differ from group to and change. (their dialects) after every hundred miles. But Persian is the same over an area of four thousand *farsangs*.

History writing among the Muslims was conditioned by two distinct traditions the Arab and the Iranian. The Arabs wrote history of an age and handled the historical data year, the Iranians, inspired by the traditions of *Shah Namah*, dealt with dynasties and their assortment of facts concerned mainly the court and the camp. The Iranian historians generally dedicated their works to rulers or the ruling writing. From Hasan Nishapuri, the earliest historian of the Delhi Sultanate (*Taj al-Ma'athir*) to *Khair al-Din Ilahabadi*, the last historian

of the Mughal Empire (Ibrat Namah), the Iranian pattern determined the collection and presentation of historical data. The whole jargon of official correspondence and epistolography was developed in India on the principles of ilm-I dabiri, as described in Chahar Maqalah and as adopted in Dastur al-Albab fi 'Ilm al-Haisab by 'Abd al-Hamid Muharrir Ghaznawi. The drafting of fath Namahs (official communiqués of victory) was done on the Iranian model. The fath Nahamhs of 'Ala al-Din Khalji drafted by Kabir al-Din have not survived but Balban's fath Namah of Lakhnanti as drafted by Amir Khusrau is available in I jaz-ikhusravei and Akbar's fath Namah of Chittor is preserved in Namakin's Munsha at wa Ruqa'at. Their form and format are to all intents and purposes Iranian.

With the Shah Namah, which crystallized the historic memory of Iran, beings the history of literary, cultural and political traditions of Iran. It ushered in the dawn of Persian Renaissance and Firdausi justly claims: Ajam zindah kardam bidin Parsi (I have brought back Iran to life through this Persian). From the time of Balban to the days of Akbar and even later the Shah Namah was read at the courts of sultans and principles of governance and cultural effervescence were drawn from it. Its verses were recited even in the khanqahs. When Balban presented himself at Pakpattan to seek the blessings of Shaikh Farid Ganj-i Shakar, the saint recited the following verses Firdausi:

Fariun-I farrukh firishtih habud
Za 'ud-u za anbar sirishtih nabaud
Za dad-u dahish yaft an niku'i
To dad-u dahish kun, firishtih tu'i

(Faridun, the blessed, was not an angel; he was not made of agallochum or ambergris. He attained the position of kingship through his bounty and liberality. Bestow liberally and Faridun is thee.)

The Shah Namah influenced the politico-cultural thinking of the people so deeply that its translations were undertaken in several Indian languages—Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, etc. Isami wrote his futuh al-Salatin as Shah Namah-I Hind and said:

Jahan ta ki baqist andar jahan
Bi Shahnamah baqist nam-i-shahan

(As long as the world lasts, the Shah Namah will remain and with it the names of the kings it describes.)

Shaikh Azari versified the conquests of Ahamd Shah Bahmani in Bahman Namah on the pattern of Shah Namah. During the time of Aurangzeb, Bahadur 'ali rendered into prose many stories of Shah Namah and named them Shah Namah-I Bakhtawar khani. The glamour of Shah Namah as a model of sociopolitical activities inspired Hafiz Jallandhari to write Shah Namah-I Islam in Urdu.

In all the important genres of poetry—ghazal, mathnawi, qasidah the success of a

poet in South Asia was measured by the extent of his approximation to the standards set by the Iranian poets. In the words of Jami there were three prophets in the sphere of Poetry—Firdausi of abiyat, Anwari of Qasidah and Sa'di of ghazal. Each one of them had his literary following in India.

Sa'di was the great master of ghazal. He was justified in claiming sovereignty over the realm of letters (Sukhan mulkist Sa'di ra musallam). In his poetry, which is soaked in cosmic emotion, feelings move in tune and time as naturally as the hearts beats. Amir Khusrau and Hasan both tried to emulate him but did not succeed. However, both of them admitted their indebtedness to Sa'di. Khusrau acknowledged having poured in his cup the wine of Shiraz and Hasan claimed to have plucked a flower from the garden of Sa'di. Shaikh Nasir al Din Chiragh, a friend of both Khusrau and Hasan, however, remarked:

Amir Khusrau va Amir Hasan Bisiyar Khwastand ki bi
Tariq-I khwajah sa'di bi-guyand, muyassar nashud;
Khwajah sa'di anchih guft az sirr-I hal guft.

(Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan much desired to emulate Khwajah Sa'di in their poetry, but did not succeed. Whatever Khwajah Sa'di has said is based on cosmic experience.

Unfortunately this sirr-I hal of Sa'di was overshadowed by his eminence as a poet. But in India his pre-eminence as a dedicated Sufi was widely acknowledged and invocatory and incantational significance was attached to his verses. Shaikh Hamid al-Din Nagauri, a distinguished khalifah of khwajah Mu'in al Din Chishti of Ajmer, told his audience that during the closing years of his life Shaikh Sa'di lived in seclusion at the mausoleum of Shaikh 'Abdullah Khafifi and spent his time in prayer and meditation. He thus advised those who came to see him.

"offer five time prayers regularly and whatever much or less God has given you share it with the needy and the poor. If you do that then wherever you may be (placed in life), you can proceed from there on the path to God (and attain gnosis).

He made altruism a corner stone of his mystic discipline. He had learnt from his spiritual mentor, Shaikh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, that rejection of egotistical arrogance and self-abnegation was the only way to spiritual enlightenment. He says:

Mara pri-I dand-yi murshid, shihab
Du andarz farmud bar ru-yi ab
Yiki an-ki bar khwish khu-bin mabash
Duvum an-ki bar ghayr bad-bin mabash

(My wise and blessed spiritual mentor, Shihab

Gave two pieces of advice to me while sailing on the river First, do not be ego centric (and overbearing) Secondly, do not look down upon and wish ill of others.

Sa'di's role in focusing on moral and ethical ideas of Islamic mysticism was second to none. Innumerable works of Indian Sufis have quoted his verses as the real way to attain gnosis. In fact, in India the mystic spirit was generated and sustained more by Persian verses than mystic classics or ethical treatises.

In the thirteenth century the élan of Persian poetry was towards moral rejuvenation of society by restoring the dignity of man as Man and inculcating respect for moral and ethical values. There was a painful realization that the moral fiber of man had weakened and that human beings were multiplying while humanity was languishing. The life breath of the poetry of Sa'di, Rumi and 'Iraqi was their restless concern for humanity. In fact, the process of what Iqbal called adamgari (shaping the man) and which later on became the summum bonum of mystic activity, begins with them. Rumi set out in search of "Man" crying inshanam arizust (I year for a true human being); Sa'di found beasts masquerading in human form and sought protection from vicissitudes and revolution of the time (zinhar az dawr-I giti u inqilab-I ruzigar). They applied all their energy to resurrect the fallen structures of faith and confidence and in directing the soul movement of man. In the poetry of Amir Khusrau one can hear an echo of the spirit generated by these great masters. His mathnawi, Matla' al-Anwar, is soaked in this spirit of the age and reflects his anxiety to salvage humanity from its imminent doom. Surprisingly, the Iranian poets were writing in an age of gloom and depression when the Mongols had devastated centers of Muslim culture and Khusrau wrote when the Khalji Empire had risen with all its grandeur and glory. That under so dissimilar circumstances their concern for humanity should be the same shows their anxiety to salvage higher values in times of both gloom and glory. Rumi's Mathnawi and Khusrau's Matla' as-Anwar supplied Iqbal with both ideals and emotions and he prayed to God in Armaghan-I Hijaz

'Ata kun shur-i Rumi, suz-i khusrau

Bestow on me the tumult of Rumi and the flame of Khusrau).

Ghazals apart, sa'di's Gulistan and Bustan were read by princes and plebeians alike and were prescribed in the syllabus of medieval Indian madrasas. The Gulistan became a manual of guidance for the ethical and moral training of young minds. Not only its verses, but prose sentences also passed into proverbial literature and set the norms of good behavior. A number of works were written in imitation of Gulistan Baharistan, Kharistan and Parishan to name a few, but none could come anywhere near sa'di's work. Kharistan was written by Majd al-Din Khwaff at the instance of Akbar, Qasim Kahi wrote in imitation of Bastan during the same period. But Sa'di was inimitable.

In the sphere of ghazal, Hafiz (d. 1389) was the other charismatic figure whose influence on the literary traditions of India was deep and far-reaching. A literary artist, he depicted delicate feelings and ideas like a painter, giving them a life-like touch. Baba

Fughani, Sa'ib, Naziri, Urfi and a large number of other poets in Iran and India struggled hard to emulate his musical thought but did not succeed. Even the arrogant 'Urfi considered him a literary sanctum (ka 'abih-i sukhān). Urdu poets like Ghalib, Sauda and Mu'min have borrowed delicate sensitivity of emotions from him.

Hafiz's literary reputation reached India during his life time. Bengal and Kashmir were in direct contact with him. About the appreciation of his poetry by the people of Kashmir he himself says:

Bi-shi'r-i-Hafiz-ishiraz mi-raqsand-u mi-nazand

Siyah-chashmnan-i kashmiri-u Turkan-i Samarqandi

(The black-eyed Kashmiris and Turks of Samarqand love the verses to Hafiz of Shiraz and dance in tune.

His poetry came to represent the quintessence of romantic fervor of Iran. His verses, chiseled linguistically and charged emotionally, took the contemporary Persian speaking world by storm. Both men of letters and mystics enjoyed his verses in India. Looked upon as lisan al-ghayb (the tongue of secrets), people tuned to his work for auguries and divinations. An old manuscript of Diwan-i Hafiz preserved in Bankipur Library shows that Mughal emperors Humayun and Jahagir frequently consulted if for fal (augury). Reaching to this aspect of popular interest in Hafiz's poetry, Iqbal warned them against too much involvement in Hafiz. He was opposed to impressionism but fully realized Hafiz's greatness as a poet and his charismatic influence.

In fact the ghazal tradition in India, both in Persian and Urdu, derived its hue and colour from Hafiz. There were people in India who ascribed talismanic effect to his verses. Shah Fadd-i Rahman Ganj Murabadi, spiritual leader of some of the most distinguished Indian 'ulema' of the nineteenth century, wrote Hafiz's verses in amulets.

Hafiz returned India's compliment to Persian masters by eulogizing tutiani Hind. Amir khusrau has very beautifully described in Dibaichah-i-Ghurrat at kamal the significance of tuti imagery in literature. Hafiz's appreciation and esteem of khusrau's poetry is evident from the fact that he copied out his Khamsah in his own hand.

The khamsah tradition in Persian literature owes its origin to Nizami of Ganjah (d. 1209), the most resplendent poet of romantic epic. The profundity of his ethical and philosophical thought created a stir in the literary and Sufi circles in India. A large number of Khamsahs were written in Central Asia, Turkey and India in its imitation, but in Browning's words, "They strove to do, agonized to do, but failed in doing." In India Khusrau wrote a replica of his Khamsah. According to Jami, no other poet could write a better rejoinder to Nizami than Khusrau. But Nizami's emotional rigor and grasp of minute detail could not be achieved by Khusrau. Shibli thought that Nizami wrote with patience and concentration; Khusrau hurriedly and with a distracted mind. The result was obvious. According to

Daulat Shah Samarqandi some Central Asian princes held a seminar on the relative merit of the two Khamsahs. They debated and argued in support of their points of view. Ultimately the following verse of Khusrau:

Qatrih-i abi na khurad makyan

Ta na kunad ruy suy-iasman

(No hen takes a drop of water without lifting its head towards the sky (in gratefulness to God))

led to their verdict in favor of Khusrau. This was rather too much. However, it cannot be denied that Khusrau's use of bird symbols was superb. Explaining the concept of makan and la-makan he said:

Gar makan-u la-makan khwahi ki yak-ja bingari

Murgh ra bin dar hava ham la maqam-u-ham maqam

Important mystic teachers in India like Shaikh Farid al-Din Ganj-i Shakar and Shaikh Nizam al-Din Awliya cited verses of Nizami to explain and illustrate different emotional states any mystical concepts. Isami said that every word of Nizami was loaded with breath-taking incantational power. Inspired by Nizami's Khusrau u shirn, Jami wrote his Mehr u Mah. But Nizami was nonpareil.

The masters of Persian qasidah—Rudaki, 'Unsuri, Farrukhi, Khaqani and others—determined qwasidah patterns and motifs in India. Rudaki inspired generation after generation of Indian poets, including Ghalib and Shibli, to compose verse in the same rhyme and meter. Khusrau admits in Tuhfat al-Sighar that he struggled hard to emulate Khaqani but did not succeed. The Mugal court poets—Ghazzali, Mishidi, Faidi, Talib Amuli, kalim Hamadani—al followed the footsteps of the qasidah writers of Iran. Ghalib wrote a rejoinder to Naziri (d. 1612), the chief lyric poet of the time, but confessed his mistake:

Javab I khwajah Nazairi nivishiti am Ghalib

Khata nimudi am u chashm I afarin daram

In fact, the Iranian milieu—its smiling meadows, murmuring brooks, twittering bulubuls, melting glow of the twilight the moving moon up the sky was a source of undying inspiration to the poets of Iran. As the Indian poets did not have first hand and direct experience of the Iranian phenomena of nature, their references to it appear insipid and prosaic. However, the incantation of words in the qasidahs of Indo-Persian poets was superb.

The most prolific period of Persian poetry in India was the age of Akbar (1556-1605), which Professor Hermann Ethe considered to be the "Indian summer of Persian poetry." Abu'l Fadl has referred to Gulistan, Hadiqah, Mathnawi of Rumi, Auhadi's Jan-iJam, Shah Namah, Khamsah-iNizami, Kulliyat-iJami, Diwan-i Hafiz as popular studies at the court of Akbar. These works set the norms of excellence and the poets of Akbar's

court vied with each other in emulating these masters. Akbar's liberal patronage of men of letters attracted to his court scholars, philosophers, poets and artists from every part to his court speaking world—Mashhad, Isfahan Shiraz, Nishapur, Harat, marv, Najaf, Hamadan, Kashan, Ray, Sabzwar and Tabriz. Under him Agra could boast to have within its confine many of those celebrities whom the author of *ma'athir-iRahimi* significantly calls the *Musta'idan-iIran*. This atmosphere continued in the centuries that followed and as late as the nineteenth century Ghalib claimed:

Imruz man Nizami u Khaqani am bi-dahr

Delhi za man bi Ganjah u shirwan barabar ast.

(In the world today I am like Nizami and Khaqani. Due to my presence here Delhi is like Ganjah and Shirwan.)

The persian poetic genius found a congenial atmosphere at Akbar's court and its influence spread far and wide. India became a channel for the spread of Persian poetic traditions in other lands. "After Jani," wrote Ghalib, "Urfi and Faidi were the chief Persian influences on Turkish poetry." Nifa the gretest Turkish poet of the seventeenth century, is specially seen vying with 'Urfi and it is not without significance tht copies of some of the best qasidahs and Diwans of Urfi are found in the libraries of Ankara and Istanbul. Urfi infused a new spirit in eulogistic literature by his qasidahs and Ghazal, which are characterized by high ideals, deep egotistical perspicacity, dynamism and drive. According to Iqbal, who drew inspiration from him in evolving his concept of Khudi, Urfi's imagination built a magnificent palace at the altar of which the wonderland of Bu Ali Sina and Farabi could be sacrificed. Even Ghalib was beholden to him.

To emotional vigor and linguistic finesse with which Persian language, literature and traditions spread in India may be gauged from their effect on the various vernacular languages of India. Dr. Maulwi 'Abd al-Haq has traced the impact of Persian languages on the Marathi language. Many Persian tales and terms form part of Bengalis literature. Jayananda writes in his *Chaitanya Mangal*. A Brahmin will grow a beard and read Persian. He will put on socks and with a stick in one hand will take a bow in the Punjab many themes and stories of Iran were assimilated in the Punjab literature.

When Akbar got Sankrit works translated into Persian, the frontiers of Persian language were further widened and Persian became the language of all Indian religions. Mahabharat Ramayan, Atharban, Haribas, etc. were rendered into Persian by the scholars of Akbar's court. It was through Dara Shukuh's Persian translation that the philosophy of Upanishads was introduced to Europe. ■

ISLAM STRESSES ON TOLERANCE AND FORGIVENESS

Anis Ahmad Nadwi

Among moral teachings: self-restraint, forgiveness and tolerance are sternest one for a human being to adopt. Islam has conquered this hard tract of human nature very easily.

Islam lays great stress on tolerance, self-restraint forbearance and forgiveness. It exhorts Muslims to adopt these high moral qualities. Holy –Quran and the prophets Hadiths are full of injunctions which excite them to forgive and forbear.

The Holy-Quran says, “Who restrain anger and pardon (all) men for Allah loves those who do good.” (Aal-e-Imran 134)

It further says, “Let them forgive and overlook, do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? For Allah is oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”.

Islam is based on Monotheism. Besides having deep faith in the presence of one Allah (God) it tries its best to set His greatness and glory in the hearts of people. Yet it exhorts its followers to abstain from abusing idols of polytheists for it might excite them to abuse Allah in retaliation out of ignorance. The Holy Quran stresses on the point, when it says, “Revile not ye those whom they call besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance.” (Ana’am 108)

Teaching of tolerance have far-reaching effects in maintaining communal harmony and co-existence. In the concept of co-existence in society depends completely on tolerance and forbearance. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was asked to bear and forgive patiently the oppression and abuses of polytheists. He (PBUH) founded an exemplary society by eradicating the instincts of intolerance, ignorance and violence from the Bedouins who were deep in the abysmal position of moral degradation. He succeeded in his mission only through suppressing the rebellious desires and preventing mischief. Therefore, Muslims have been advised to avoid conflict, friction, violence, abuses and misbehaviour with non-Muslims in retaliation to their denigrating and oppressive measures. The Holy Quran lays stress on it and says “Hold to forgiveness: command what is right but turn away form the ignorant. If a suggestion form Stan assails thy mind (of taking revenge etc.) Seek refuge with Allah, for he hearth and knoweth all things”. (Araf 199-200) The forgiveness in

effectiveness increases when one is in anger. The Holy Quran emphasizes on the same point, it says in the praise of Prophet's companions "And when they are angry even they forgive".

No doubt those who suppress their anger and forgive the people who commit mistakes demeanor and misbehavior they are loved by one and all and become Allah's favourite. Such people win hearts of offenders as well as of others. In another place the Holy Quran guides those who insist to take revenge, it says, "And if ye punish, let your punishment be proportionate to the wrong that has been done to you. But if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient". (Nahl-126)

Mohammad Alghazali explains it in his famous book, 'Muslims character' when Islam came it removed the intensity of feeling and emotionalism and introduced the practice of pardon and forgiveness in the society. If one could not pardon, then one was given the command to act Justly. This objective could be achieved only when anger and wrath could be kept under the control of the intellect."

Let us examine the prophet's tradition regarding forgiveness. Ibada bin Samit narrates that prophet (PBUH) has said, "May I not tell you those qualities for which Allah will give you tall buildings in the Paradise and he may raise your rank?" The people said: "certainly tell manner of an uneducated person, you behave with him with tolerance, forgive the oppressors, and give to those who deprive you and he who cuts away from you, try to join him." (Tibrani)

It is reported from the prophet that once he was requested to invoke God's wrath against the Polytheists and to curse them. He said; I have been sent as a blessing (Rahmat), I have not been sent as a rebuker and reproacher. (Muslim)

Ibn Masood has narrated a Hadith from the prophet. He asked: whom do you call a sandow. People replied, one who is not knocked down by any body is called a sandwo among us." He said; No. sandow is one who controls his self in his anger."

One man requested the prophet: Give me some advice but not such a lengthy one that I may forget." The prophet said: "Do not be angry." (Malik)

All these Quranic verses and prophet Traditions reveal that much a person would control his self, as well as well as anger and pardon others errors, in the same proportion his rank will be raised before Allah.

Today when individuals, peoples groups, societies and civilizations are at loggerhead with one another, the importance of tolerance and forgiveness increase manifolds, especially in the present scenario of International Politics. The growing intolerance is really posing a serious threat. We can overcome it only with the weapon of tolerance, forgiveness and non-violence.

Alongwith these injunctions of the prophet regarding tolerance and forbearance,

his ideal character is a role model for us. What a model of tolerance he offered when angels came to him asking for the destruction of Taif people who had stoned him severely, till blood started oozing out from his sacred feet. Prophet said to the angels, "Don't destroy them. "May Allah forgive my people because they are ignorant.

The second example is that of the old woman who used to throw rubbish on the prophet (PBUH), when she failed to do it one day prophet asked for her well-being and went to enquire her welfare. The best example is that of Fath-e-Mecca. The day Mecca was conquered". When the prophet along with his companions entered the Mecca city victoriously, where they had been tortured badly. He as well as his companions adopted the method of forgiveness, tolerance and non-violence. He forgave all the bigwigs of the Quresh who had harassed, humiliated and inflicted them, and compelled them to leave Mecca when they were weak. Above all he (PBUH) forgave the most formidable enemy of Islam and Muslims Abdullah Bin Ubai. Now he was in full power and could easily take revenge from his enemies but he forgave them all. History is unable to offer such grand examples of tolerance, forgiveness and forbearance.

No doubt these were the Islam's traits which won hearts of people across the world and tied all humans with the bond of love and brotherhood, unmindful of their religion, caste, and creed. With the force of good manners and morality it spread all over the world not by sword as some people allege and propagate. Jawahar Lal Nehru describing the dynamic energy of Islam with which it spread from Spain to border of Magnolia, writes in his famous book, 'The Discovery of India', "They (Muslims) carried with them the brilliant culture". The triumphant career of a people whose homelands were the deserts of Arabia and who had thus far played no notable part in history is most remarkable. They must have derived their vast energy from the dynamic and revolutionary character of their prophet and his message of human brotherhood." ■

If you have a talent, use it in every which way possible. Don't dole it out like a miser. Spend it lavishly like a millionaire intent on going broke.

Brend Francis

ISLAM AND PEACE: EDUCATIONAL VIEWPOINT

Intekhab Alam Khan*

Peace in this cyber age has become a dream. Every sensible person is in need of peace: a concept that has become far-fetched.

The important of 'Peace' need not be emphasized. It is perhaps the most desired achievement of a human life. In Hindu philosophy, 'Shanti' holds very important place. A devotee normally prays for Shanti (peace).

The Greek philosophy advocates the concept of 'Truth' and 'Beauty' which, somehow or the other, is related to the concept 'peace'. In India, the same philosophy covers a broader dimension as it states, 'Satyam, Shivam, Sundram'. Satya (truth) is shiv (god); and a god is always sundar (beautiful), and one that is beautiful is always truth. Truth is also a philosophical concept. It does not have any physical entity as it is believed that a thing that has a physical shape is always mortal.

Peace is never related to a mortal world. It does not have a determined criterion. For example it cannot be found in a Five Star hotel that provides luxuries and comforts. These facilities can not lead o attainment of peace. It can rather be had even in small huts in a garden or at a river side. Attainment of peace however differs from individual to individual. Some people can get it by reading of Holy Qur'an or Ramayana or by other modes of prayers. Namaz offered by Muslims, Puja by Hindus can be named as finding out means to get peace. In yoga also, mental as well as spiritual peace has been emphasized. Aesthetics in philosophy has been much emphasized by philosophers like Rabindra Nath Tagore. 'Shanti Niketan' can be said to be the means to attain peace through education.

Plato advocated the concept of Ideal State. That too had the same notion. The attempts made by organization like SAARC primarily aims at peace. UNO is the organization that had been established to maintain peace all the world over.

Philosophy of Peace is not an easy concept to understand and to practise the same is more difficult. Mystic personalities like lord Buddha. Vivekanand and Tagore etc. have always advocated 'peace', however, the methods of preaching might differ.

If we exemplify evidences existing in the present society, still most people are in search of peace. It is a difficult issue whether such people are aware of the importance of he same or not. Usually, it is seen that youngsters and other people go to picnic spots or mountain sides. This is an attempt to have a change from the machine life to a peaceful state where one feels about other dimensions of life.

Peace can be an important factor for students, teachers, family members, businessmen, industrialists or any human being. Without it, one cannot do any work. Creative writing or a piece of art is never possible unless there is 'tranquillity'. Interestingly, disturbance has become a part and parcel of our daily life. A sensitive man, a literary figure, a fine artist, a thinker or philosopher can not be happy if this condition prevails any longer. Intelligentsia can also hampered to a great extent.

Man is of course not a machine. Even in the case of machines, the 'Rest' is the ultimate requirement. For human mind too, 'Rest' is a prime factor for healthy creation.

Everywhere a state of restlessness is prevailing. Natural settings have been encroached by the industrial expansions. Instead of listening and enjoying the songs of nightingales, cuckoo and skylark we are used to listen sirens, whistles, unpleasant sounds produced by different machines etc.

Terrorism and extremism seem to have become integral parts of human life. Scholars and intellectuals are highly against it. They wish to restore peace. Human life is very important. If it is not given by a human being, must not be attempted to take by any one. Even if one is alive he is unhappy due to disturbance and state of restlessness for many reasons. As human being, we must also try to establish peace and improve upon the prevailing situation. It would be a modest contribution towards humanity. Service offered to society or humanity is in other way, a service to God.

JIHAD AND PEACE IN ISLAM

The concept of 'Tolerance' in Islam is very powerful. Once a noble companion was fighting with a disbeliever. While doing so, he overcame his opponent and sat on his chest. In order to take revenge, the disbeliever spit on him consequently the noble companion got down. It was known later that he did so because that matter had become personal. Indirectly this incidence showed personal tolerance. In Islam, it is allowed to take revenge but those who tolerate and forgive are greater people.

The criticism that Islam receives is mostly due to concept of Jihad, however, this noble concept is normally misunderstood. And, this kind of misunderstanding is not only found among non Muslims but also among many Muslims. 'Jihad' comes from the word 'Jahada' that literally means 'to endeavour'. Literally 'Jihad' can be defined as a fighting against wrong doers who came on the way of right and virtuous deeds. Undoubtedly Jihad may lead to killings but it should have a sound reason. Otherwise, in Islam it is strictly prohibited even to kill an animal or a bird without a real reason.

The idea of revenge and the concept of force may be found to be related to 'Jihad'. In Islam, only self defence is allowed. A man can't be forcefully handled without a reason. Even a man is not allowed to take his life because it is believed that Allah has given life to

people so one has no right to kill oneself.

Qur'an clearly stated to have patience before going to war.

"And for the sake of your lord be patient" (LXX IV:7)

Another time, Qur'an says:

"And whoever is patient and forgiving, that most surely is of the affairs the doing of which should be determined upon". (XLII : 42, 43)

"These shall be rewarded with high places because they were patient, and shall be met herein with greetings and salutation".

"Abiding therein, goodly the abode and the resting place!" (XXV : 75, 76).

Quran is very clear about war and peace. It orders to avoid war if possible and induce others to avoid it. But, if one is forced, can fight.

"And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits, surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits". (II,190)

If we interpret the orders of Quran it will be quite clear that before going to war, a muslim must be clear about his aims and objectives. Every war can not be Jihad. Peace has been considerably emphasised, and a peace loving Muslim does not enjoy less prestigious reputation and status than a Muslim who joins a war without a mission. As we have seen in the opening paragraphs of this paper that Islam is a peaceful religion, and whatever war was fought, it was for the sake of restoration of peace and an ideal society. The wars of Islamic concepts were fought for making the people better and society based on humanitarian values. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), the leader of muslims had never been aggressive throughout his life

An example of neighborhood can be cited here. It is said in Islam that a person's food is illegal if his neighbour is hungry. It is never said that the neighbour should be a muslim only. General behaviour should be good so that even a disbeliever would be bound to think about good principles of Islam, consequently he may embrace the same.

At the time of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), when he used to walk down the street, an old woman used to throw garbage on him. Once she did not do. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) asked the people of that locality about the woman. He was told about her sickness. People would be surprised to know that he went to ask after her health and finally the lady was so impressed that she embraced Islam then and there.

Islam is the religion that has duly praised and recommended Equality, Socialism, Democracy, Brotherhood, Neighbourhood, Sacrifice etc. so that people of the Nation can restore unity and peace.

Allah asks every muslim to follow right path, in return, He promises heaven/ paradise. Heaven is believed to be a peaceful place. Therefore, it can be said that peace is the highest reward even from Almighty Allah's side. In this world even, every individual is

interested in having peace of mind and spirit. If a muslim is a true follower of Islam he will be peace loving. He should try his level best to ensure and enforce peace in the country and the entire world.

ISLAM, PHILOSOPHY AND PEACE

Islam is a way of life. Philosophy also leads to the practical aspect of life if it is properly understood and implemented.

Islam is a noble concept Muslims are the followers. They follow prophet Mohammed (PBUH) who was the last messenger. No where in Islam: Quran or the traditions of prophet Mohammed (PBUH), one can prove that the religion supports the idea of violence, terrorism, extremism etc. Islam is always in support of Peace, Pact, Patriotism etc. Those who allegedly blame Islam, they are in the wrong. They are not the intellectuals rather pseudo-scholars because they have neither understood Quran, traditions, prophet or Islam as a whole.

The term Islamic terrorism is wrong and objectionable. No religion can be terroristic in approach, therefore, Islam can also not be treated like that. However, an individual muslim (a muslim by name) can involve himself in such activities, therefore, a so-called muslim can be a terrorist but Islam can not support terrorism. In this connection, Maulana Azad can be quoted: "You must always keep in view the difference between a religion and the followers of that religion; they are two different things and must be kept apart. Two third of our disappointments are due to the fact that we forget this basic difference."

Philosophy being 'The way of life' is much related to religion. Besides, if we consider even the technical definition of Philosophy as 'The logical enquiry into the nature of Reality', it does not go against Islam. In Quran, it has been stated that one may use brain or positive logical thinking to decide what is right and what is wrong. Moreover, the philosophical dimension of any thought must not make any attempt to contradict however, deliberately the noblest ideas that exist in holy Quraan. And, any kind of such thinking is not allowed to question for the sake of only questions, but, obviously possible for the purpose of reaching near God or the ultimate 'Truth'.

Peace, a philosophical concept, received momentum in the recent past. Since then, it has been dealt morally and spiritually by plenty philosophers and literary figures. It is highly philosophical in nature and very much dealt with in Islam as well. Peace has many aspects: individual and social/political; physical and spiritual; peace-here and life here after. Peace can be considered as an eternal phenomenon and also a state/condition after a war of destruction. It could have prevailed even before the creation of the world and it may be found after the process of making was over. Besides, it is a post-destruction scenario.

In Islam, the concept 'Peace' bears a great significance. Peace in society is impor-

tant from individual point of view when he has a physical entity. When he departs from here, peace becomes more important therefore, a muslim wants to offer 'namaz' to his Almighty and tries to fulfill other Islamic requirements so that there is peace in his grave. A muslim finally worries about the day of judgement. He, therefore, wishes an utmost peaceful place which is none other than 'paradise' that has been promised by Allah for only virtuous muslims. When a muslim says good bye to this material world a lot of his friends and family members recite holy Quraan so that his/her soul may further be blessed by Almighty's mercy and enjoys complete peace and serenity. Thus, peace is important in either of the case. Now, it depends on an individual to choose his ways. It would be one's own target to facilitate his worldly life or life hereafter.

Brotherhood and universality in Islam enjoy a great reputation as holy Quraan often addresses by calling, 'O! the people of the world' or 'O! People'. Besides, it also referred at more than one place, to prophet Mohammed that he was sent as 'blessing' (Rahmat) for worlds.

Neighborhood in Islam also bears great significance. It is clearly mentioned that food eaten by a neighbour will be 'Haram' (disallowed) if there is no food to eat in neighbour's house. It may point towards importance of neighbourhood. There is no reference of caste, creed, race or religion of neighbours. Thus, it is evident that man to man relation; neighbour to neighbour relation is more important because the entire social life is an accord, an agreement and the life is synonymous to peace. There is no concept of life without peace. Besides, peace is also synonymous to agreement or accord.

The concept of justice is closely related to peace. Without it peace may appear to be a far fetched concept. In order to promote justice and peace, Islam issued a few very strong recommendations. About a thief, it is legal in Islam to punish him even by chopping off his hand or hands. Similarly, if one kills someone without a reason he will be killed by the judiciary of the Islamic country. However, there is a process that ensures the evidence against the accused whether right, and only if it is proved, the action of legal justice is taken. The action seems to be very cruel but the idea is highly noble. People are afraid to commit any crime because of the thought of the action usually taken by Islamic judiciary.

Thus, we may say that at the time of the last prophet and even now muslims follow some strict laws that can take life of the sinner or criminal. If it is a matter of religion one may even kill the evil character. Some example of this kind of action may be found during the time of Lord Rama. During the exile period, he had to fight against a very powerful king 'Ravana' who symbolises 'evil' and in order to teach him a lesson for his action noble wife of Rama a battle was fought. Finally, Rama won the battle because he was right. However, he was supported by his brother 'Lakshman' and a great admirer 'Hanuman'.

Islam is said to be an agreement – between creatures and the Creator; the

followers and the God; the help seeking and the Almighty; the sinners and the Divine who forgives. Peace is an agreement between people and society and nation. Philosophy is the search of knowledge – knowledge of the ultimate reality which constitute the demand of life. And, an individual is believed to demand 'Peace' from his life what ever type he is living.

Politically, Islam includes the concept of war and peace. There has been many wars (battles) in Islamic history for the betterment of society or for the making of an ideal society. The term 'ideal' may symbolise a peaceful state or country. Similarly, the concept 'war for peace' is also available in Islam. There have been many wrong doers at a particular time, therefore, Islamic people fought temporary wars in order to restore permanent or atleast long term peace. Peace after war is but natural. It is both physical and spiritual. After each war, there is a deathly calm and silence and later in the life of people. If the purpose of the war is achieved, peace prevails.

PEACE EDUCATION : PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWPOINT

Concepts like Philosophy, Art and Education are almost forgotten in this society. No one wants to know about such noble concepts. The level of right kind of education is very low. Those who are educated have different purposes of their education that consequently affect their targets of lives. Philosophy, misunderstood by many, is something that has to do anything with realities of life. As believed by many Art is the domain of those who belong to another world. Education is treated by majority of illiterates as wastage of time. Such attitude among people is really a serious issue for future. People's thinking and ideologies generally lead to practical aspect of life. In other words, what we think we generally act and accordingly achieve.

Education is the greatest achievement for an individual. It also depends on people's Philosophy. Education is now considered as status symbol. Besides, it is a necessity, pursued for employment and also for the sake of an all round development.

Education has many dimensions. It is related to sociology, politics, economics, psychology, philosophy and religion. Sociologically, it is betterment of society. Politically, it is process of making of citizens. From economic point of view, it is an investment while from viewpoint of psychology, it is a development of personality. From the viewpoint of philosophy, it is attainment of truth while religious point of view differs a bit and focuses on the attainment of spiritual advancement.

If one delves deep all the definitions share one thing common as they highlight the centrality of an individual. Betterment of society is not possible without amelioration of human being. Making of citizenship is not possible without education of human being. Right investment remain a dream unless individuals are rightly educated. Development of personality is not possible unless an individual fulfills requirements. Attainment of Truth

is only possible when an individual has a philosophical outlook and penetrating insights into certain social issues. Similarly, spiritual advancement can't be achieved if a man does not have socio-moral education and the knowledge of the purpose of the creation of he world.

Thus, it may be said that an individual is the most important part. Now the purpose of an individuals' life needs elaboration. An individual does a lot of thing in this fast progressing society. He is awfully busy and works like a machine. The questions why does an individual involves himself in so many activities if he is mortal. If we ponder we get frustrated. Why does a man get education? Why does one earn money? Why does he worship? Why does he serve his parents? Why does one aspire to get a good life partner? And why does an individual wish to go to a hill station? There is one and only answer: PEACE.

A man earns money to get physical comforts, to provide better life standard to family members and children, to attain desired social status, to have some peaceful moment. One gets education to understand the ultimate purpose of life. A man worships God in order to please Him, thus gets peace. He wishes to marry a good partner so that a mental understanding can be attained and life may be proved to be peaceful. In all these activities, one consciously or unconsciously responds for the attainment of Peace.

An artist, by making a creative piece does nothing except satisfying his artistic zeal. He may/may not have some pre-conceived notions. As said by an English poet/critic. It may be a 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotions; recollected in tranquility'.

Villages in the past were very peaceful. Still there exists greater peace than in towns or cities. Homes are now quite disturbed. There seems to be a chaos every place. A peace loving man seems to be disturbed and unable to do much for the restoration of peace. There is sound of machines, horns of vehicles, sirens of factories, sounds of audio-visuals in place of chirping of birds and singing of nightingale or skylarks. Sometimes an ordinary voice of a man seems to be bothering due to the fact that a man seeks some peaceful state of mind and body. Man would to be senseless if this situation prevails for a long time.

The present age is faced with a lot of political geographical disputes. It may lead to destruction of an ideal situation that a human being needs. Psychologically, *there is no* mental rest. From spiritual point of view, every one feels that there is lack of harmony and peace conducive to spiritual advancement. In short, in almost all the spheres of social life, there is an urgent need of peace. Thus, Peace Education is a must, keeping the present socio-political and spiritual sates in view.

Peace Education may be defined as a kind or mode of Education for the attainment of Peace Like other types of Education i.e. Science Education, health Education, Language

Education etc. Peace Education is also connected with different aspects of Education. The aspects may be summed up as : Educational objectives, curriculum and textbooks, Methodology, Teacher and Evaluation etc.

Peace Education is the most urgent demand of the present society. It is imperative from philosophical, political and social point of view. Without attainment of Peace, the humanity may face a tough time. The entire educational process particularly textbooks and teachers may be found to be more important agent than any other for the promotion of peace among human beings.

MADRASA EDUCATION MODERNISATION IN FOCUS

Lucknow : In an effort to modernise the syllabus followed in madrasas in the country, Jamia Syed Ahmed Shahid organised an international seminar from February 3-5, 2007.

Delegates from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Khazakistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh participated in the seminar.

The topic of the seminar was status and need for improvements in Syllabus and Training Imparted in Madrasas.' The first day sitting was presided over by Rector of Nadwat-ul-Ulema Syed Rabey Hasani Nadwi. Among the dignitaries who presented their views on the issue were, Kuwait Wakf minister Sheikh Abdul Fattah Dayab Hussain; Kuwait's Majlis-e-Islamia general seretary Dr. Badr; Salman-bin-Awaiz from Saudi Arabia; International Islamic Education Council, Saudi Arabia, general secretary Dr. Abdul Razzaq; mufti-e-Azam, Khazakistan, Sheikh Abdul Sattar; principal of Nadwatul Ulema Syeedur Rahman Azmi.

Most speakers felt that along with the curriculum in madrasa teaching, the aim and intention of the teaching was also significant. The experience of the teacher assumes primary importance in such a scenario. The path chosen is secondary.

The speakers also said that madrasa syllabus should incorporate elements of both, 'Din' (religious affairs) and 'Duniya' (worldly affairs). The need to impart modern education along with Islamic teaching was also felt.

(Times of India - 4.2.07)

VEIL-AN ISSUE IN EUROPE*

A.H.Nomani**

In September 1994, 13-yearold Emilie Ouimet was sent home from Montreal's Louis-Riel High School because her hijab did not conform to the school's dress code. Two months later, a second Quebec girl, 15-year-old Dania Baali was told she would have to transfer to another school from College Regina Assumpta if she observe hijab.

It strikes fear in the hearts of Western man when he looks a piece of cloth on a woman's head. To some, she is making a radical statement about her violent political ideas. To others, she is the symbol of absolute subjugation and is in dire need of rescue. For them, having such women as part of the American landscape is frightening.

She is "the veiled woman," belonging in a foreign place, an actor on an exotic stage. They are seen as poisoning this "free and democratic" culture with our "weak and submissive ways." Thus, various school boards in Quebec have decided that rooting out the unwanted influence at the earliest point possible is the best way to avoid contaminating their haute culture.

I often wonder why a woman in hijab participating freely in this society is perceived so threatening. I always thought that fear of such women was unfounded. After all, her wearing hijab has nothing to do with anyone else-it only has to do with her commitment to Allah (SWT). But now I realize the fear is legitimate. Muslim women are a threat. A woman who covers herself out of the love of Allah (SWT) is not just stating something about what she accepts but she is also saying something about what she rejects.

Any woman who refuses to play the gender games that are so basic to all societies is going to be pushed out. Women have always been expected to play some kind of role in every society. In North America, a great part of this role revolves around sex and the aura of sexuality. Any relationship involving men and women has some kind of sexual undertone.

When a women covers herself she is rejecting that role, she is saying sex will have nothing to do with her public life. It is the fact that she has taken out of the discussion her physical self that people find so upsetting. A female doctor, writer, electrician or plumber may be appreciated in the work environment for her skill but is still basically seen as "just a woman". But put her in hijab so that what makes her a woman cannot be appraised and all of a sudden they are dealing with a person. It is a radical idea not liked by many.

This person is not only rejecting preset gender roles but also the associated politics of gender. She is therefore rejecting the basic social structure which also means she is seen to be rejecting the political system and its tied economic setup. So educators in Quebec should feel threatened. Emilie and Dania are more than just two girls whose headgear does

* Based on Internet Sources

** Chairman Islamic Research Centre

not conform to school dress code. They are representatives of something bigger, of a different way of life and of living.

It took sometime to come to this conclusion. I had always seen hijab as a private matter between Muslim women and Allah (SWT). If Muslim women chose to wear hijab because she felt that her iman (faith) had to be translated into action and if Allah (SWT) asks her to cover herself, then she should. If she could not act out according to her faith then that was the point of saying that she had any faith? But, unfortunately, those around these women did not see her wearing hijab as a personal act of worship. Rather, they saw it as a personal attack on them. She wore hijab and that automatically meant that she disapproved of everything they did, she found the hostility is difficult to understand. Just because her head was covered, people were unable to relate to her. She had a newfound freedom and a greater sense of confidence in herself as a Muslim but most others saw her a throwback.

Progressiveness for women is unfortunately still defined by how much they are willing to reveal to themselves. The more power women seem to gain, the more compelled they are to take off their clothes. This paradox is at the root of the confusion faced by North American women. They are supposed to be strong, independent and assertive yet, at the same time, they are made slaves to an ideal physical image, which cannot be achieved by the vast majority of women. This duality is a marketable commodity. Take the fashion industry for example, the latest from Paris say "glamour" is the hottest look of the season with its glossy lipsticks, slip dresses, and spiked heels. Women object saying that fashion designers are expecting them to dress like prostitutes at the office. They loathe the fact that the female body is used for selling everything from cosmetics to clothing to cars yet when Muslim women cover themselves up and protest the very same thing, they are conversely regarded as being oppressed.

The confusion is terminal. While some fight against what they see as objectifying women others feel the ideal way to ultimate freedom for women is the right to go bare chest in public. The rationale seems to be that once their bodies were desexualized then it will be safer for them to go out on the streets. They just have to give up their dignity, their modesty and their privacy. And it is in the midst of all this confusion that women in hijab have arrived. Their unwillingness to play into the hands of either side has earned them scorn.

Hijab is fundamentally part of worship but right or wrong, it has become a political statement as well. They may only be expressing their commitment to their deen (faith) but hijab is seen to symbolize a rejection of the West. This perceived rejection has affected liberal secularists so profoundly that they are willing to push aside their own basic principle of individual freedom to stave off the "oppressive" influences of Islam.

He would be a wise person indeed who would realize that it is the very culture that secularists are trying to preserve which led people to search for something else. And for those who are truthful to themselves, they will see that Emilie and Dania have it figured out. ■

MAULANA AZAD

Jawaharlal Nehru

A comment in a British newspaper on the Congress Presidential election seems to indicate that Maulana Azad's election was arranged especially as he was a Muslim, and that in view of the communal situation, this would be to the advantage of the Congress. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The suggestion is unfair to the Maulana and the Congress. Of course Maulana Azad is eminently qualified to tackle the communal problem and the Congress and the country should take full advantage of his services in this as in other matters. But Congress Presidents today have to bear a terribly heavy burden and they are elected because Congress delegates consider them worthy of this. Never before has India had to face more difficult problems. In the national and international field, than today. Even the communal problem, important as it is, occupies a back place in relation to these vast issues.

It is right that Muslims and members of minority groups should occupy the honourable and responsible position of Congress President as they are as much concerned with this election and with India's future as any others. We welcome therefore the election of a Muslim. But it is wrong to think that Congress Presidents are elected for communal reasons. Certainly not Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

We welcome Maulana's election because he represents in an eminent measure the Congress tradition and the Congress viewpoint, and is respected by all sections of the Congress. I do not speak of the great ability and learning, which he carries so lightly, or of his long and proud record of service in the case of Indian nationalism and freedom, for every child in India knows about them. Though giants of old still fortunately with us, and he combines in a rare measure the solidity and strength of the old guard with a flexibility of the mind and an understanding of youth and new currents that are disturbing and yet vitalising the country.

It is well known for some years past the Congress President has been his, if he would but agree to accept it. Last year, after much persuasion he agreed but then changed his mind. Probably he would have been elected unopposed then if he had not withdrawn. This year he has at last agreed, though not without hesitation, for he is not of the sort who care for honour and office. It is good for the Congress and for India that he placed the interests of the country over his own personal inclination. We welcome him therefore as a brave and tried captain of our forces in an hour which will demand from him and from each one of us the best that we can give.

WORK SHOP ON REFORMATION OF SOCIETY

A three-day work shop in the premises of Nadwatul-Ulema was organized under the aegies of Dawat-wa-Irshad a unit of Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema lucknow from February 6 - 8, 2007 on reformation of society.

In his inaugural speech Maulana Rabey Hasani Nadwi president All India Muslim Personal Law Board and Rector Nadwatul Ulema said that Almighty God did not create human beings aimlessly. The main purpose of their creation is to develop a divine set up and establish rule of Allah. At the outset Allah sent prophets and apostles for the guidance of mankind. Now no Prophet will come. Hence the responsibility of reformation and improvement in society lie on each one of us. The need of hour is that we must lead people towards the path of salvation and try to implement divine laws with justice and equity. Maulana further added that a host of obnoxious and unholy practices, customs and usages have unfortunately percolated in Muslim Community . They have no relevance at all with Islam. To great extent the influence of western and unscrupulous powers is responsible for these unholy practices which adversely affect the Islamic civilization and culture.

Speaking on this occasion Dr. Saedur Rahman Al-Azami Al-Nadwi principal Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema expressed his concern that due to our countless shortcomings, other people are not being impressed with our deeds and acts. It is time we must carry out teachings of Islam and cultivate good qualities and sublime norms. The main plank of the advent of Prophets was to foster equity, brotherhood and fraternity amongst all sections of people regardless of caste and creed.

Elaborating the role of Madrasas in the construction of the nation, Maulana Salman Husaini Nadwi stated that these are the main source of spreading love, brotherhood and message of humanity to all. Maulana assured that one group of the nation will always be on right path and Almighty God will assist them and save them from all kinds of mischievous and disruptive elements.

Highlighting the role of Darul-Qazas, Mufti Atiq Ahmad Bastavi said that Darul Qazas play a leading role in solving religious issues of Muslims. He stressed the necessity of setting up of Darul Qazas in a large number.

Dr. Masudul Hasan Usmani General Secretary of DTC exhorted the participants to study world history besides Islamic history. It will help in broadening their world view.

Addressing the concluding session of the work shop, Maulana Khalid Ghazipuri Nadwi warned of Qadianism and described it a disruptive challenge. However, when truth prevails, falsehood perishes. The truth will certainly prevail. He emphasized that Mirza Gholam Ahmad Qadiani can never be taken as a prophet. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself said : "If any one had been a prophet after me, Omar would have been that". Prophet Muhammad (SAW) predicted that after me more than thirty persons will claim prophethood. Maulana said Mirza may be one of them. Almighty God has completed His religion. The onus of reformation is on society and spreading Islam is the duty of Ulema. They must regard it as an obligatory part of their lives and lead the people towards the straight path and help the community to face modern challenges. Islam is a complete religion and has come out successful through many challenges. Ulema should come forward to help us in bringing a revolutionary change to face the modern age challenges. Maulana Wazeh Rashid Nadwi, Maulana Hamza Nadwi, Prof. Anis Chisti, Maulana Nazrul Hafiz Nadwi Azhari, Dr. Haroon Rashid Siddqui, Maulana Ghufuran Ahmad Nadwi and others attended various sessions of the workshop.

(Obaidur Rahman Nadwi)

On the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him), who said that the Prophet (may the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him) said :

Allah will say to the inhabitants of Paradise: O inhabitants of Paradise! They will say: O our Lord, we present ourselves and are at Your pleasure and goodness rests in Your hands? And they will say : And how should we not be contented, O Lord, when You have given to us that which You have given to no one else of Your creation? Then He will say : Would you not like Me to give you something better than that?

And they will say: O Lord and what thing is better than that? And He will say: I shall cause My favour to descend upon you and thereafter shall never be displeased with you.

It was related by Al-Bukhari (also by Muslim and At-Tirmidhi)