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THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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Resurgence of Muslim is the God's Will

S. M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

The system and functions of the entire universe are ordained by God and are under His direct control. The essential requirement for initiating and promulgation of a pure, pious order of life was that the minds of the target population be uncontaminated and free of any predilections. At the time of emergence of Islam, the civilized world was ruled by two powerful kingdoms; Rome and Sasanians (present day Iran), both endowed with quality culture, Knowledge and wisdom, military power (much akin to USA and USSR of our times). Arabs, bereft of and totally uninitiated to any of such qualities, dwelt in a different territory, in a state or disarray.

This deprivation rendered them as a clean slate upon which original words of advice, guidance and exhortation to positive action, could be inscribed, without having to eradicate too many preconceived notions. This coupled with their natural valour and willingness for vigorous action, marked them out as an ideal repository for a new, righteous way of life. They embraced the divine order, Islam, and became the pioneers for its magnificent uprising.

By virtue of untiring devotion and a burning zeal, the Arabs, within a period of two hundred years, became a highly enlightened race and a force to reckon with. So much so, that for over seven hundred years no other nation could consider itself their equal. Till this day, a vast and rich store house of knowledge in the world owes its origin and existence to Muslims, specially the Arabs. Genesis of this lofty status lay in a simple and pious way of life. ●

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Wisdom of Qur' an

"Lo! We have honored Adam's progeny, borne them on the land and the sea, provided them with good things and preferred them greatly over many of those We created." (Surah Al-Isra, 70)

Commentary:

Yousuf Ali comments: "The distinction and honor conferred by Allah on man are recounted in order to enforce the corresponding duties and responsibilities of man."

Nobody ever disputes the fact of man's superiority over all other organic organisms. But whom does the credit go to? Here comes the denial. However a few have refuted some wild denials. Majid quotes: "In the language of modern anthropology, 'the great superiority of man's mental manifestations over those of all other animals is too patent to be called in question by any serious worker in the field of anthropology. Indeed, according to some eminent psychologists, the gap between them cannot be bridged over by the doctrine of organic evolution'. 'The attempt to minimize this remarkable disparity between man and brute has not met with much support from any class of investigation'. (ib)."

It might be noted however, that Allah (swt) said that He favored man above most of His creations. He did not say he favored them above all creatures. Hence, and although the present verse does not lend help, the commentators have judged that: (i) Common but committed believers are superior to common angels. (ii) Messengers from among the humans are superior to the messengers from among the angels. (iii) The messengers from among the angels are superior to all common angels as well as committed believers. And (iv) Common angels are superior to common men (Alusi, Shabbir, Shafi) ●

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Relates Wasila bin el-Asqa that "I myself heard the Apostle of God say: 'Whoever sold a defective thing to anyone without disclosing the defect to the buyer would be caught, permanently, in the wrath of God. (or was it) (that) 'he would always be cursed by the Angels?'"

-Ibn Majah

Commentary:

Sometimes, a narrator is not sure of the exact words spoken by the holy Prophet, and by way of caution, he indicates his lack of certainty while relating the event. In the above Tradition, too, Wasila bin el-Arqam was caught in two minds and could not decide whether the Prophet had said about the deceitful seller that "he would be caught, permanently, in the wrath of God," or that "he would always be cursed by the Angels.

"It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of God said: "Do not go forward and meet the caravan carrying grain etc., (for trade), (before it had reached the market-place). The trader who went ahead and bought the goods in the way, the owner would, then, have the right to cancel the deal, (if he wished), on reaching the market."

-Muslim

Commentary:

It was common, in those days, for people to bring the articles for trade from the outlying areas to the towns for selling them in the market. They used to travel in groups, both large and small, and were called Jalab. Clever traders would go on and settle the deal much before the caravan had arrived at the market-place. This practice, evidently, was not to the advantage of the sellers because they could, thereby, be cheated into selling the goods at a lower rate owing to the ignorance of the price current in the market. Another disadvantage of it was that all the grain and other articles of trade coming from outside went into the hands of skillful merchants and they sold them at a much higher rate to the ordinary consumers. Were the goods sold in the market, they would have fetched a better price and the consumers, too, would have got them at reasonable rates. It was for these reason that the holy Prophet forbade the buying of goods in the way, before they had reached the market, and, further, indicated that if anyone did that, the seller would be entitled to cancel the deal if, on reaching the market, he felt that he had been cheated." ●



Terrorist Attacks - A National Tragedy

Recent terrorist attack at German Bakery in Pune, after a gap of a year or so, proves that people involved in fissiparous and destructive activities are still at large. Arrest of innocent and unconcerned persons on suspicion is infact the failure of State machinery to proceed in right direction and nab the actual perpetrators of crime.

These dastardly attacks have raised many questions. The foremost one being the responsibility of the state in protecting its citizens from abject acts of violence. The state extracts taxes from society and therefore it is the primary responsibility to tighten up its police and intelligence networks. Repeated acts of terrorism are the sign of weak state. One that needs to invest more and tighten up its surveillance network. We do realise that in a country like India, with more than a billion

population, it is very difficult to provide surveillance at public spaces: railway stations, markets, airports etc. And therefore the state agencies need the full cooperation of the people in ensuring safety. Each individual has to take upon himself the responsibility of being a vigilant citizen in the interest of public safety.

But what is more alarming is the needle of suspicion in some quarters on the Muslims of this country. It is true that the community will be up for scrutiny if people and organizations with Muslim names perform these condemnable acts. However, what needs to be kept in mind is that the terrorists and terrorism has no religion. Reacting to the Mumbai train blasts Maulana S. M. Rabey Nadwi, Rector Nadwatul Ulema called it a shame for those who involved in the ghastly act of abhorrent serial blasts. Maulana stressed that such acts of violence had nothing to do with any

particular religion.

The ethical code and principles propagated both by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and invoked in the holy Qur'an severely condemn such violence. Qur'an says: "That whoever killed a person-unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land, it would be as if he killed the whole mankind. And if anyone saved a life it would be as if he saved the whole mankind." (Maida: 32)

The efforts of some political parties to paint all Muslims or Islam with the colour of terror are therefore unfair. In the past innocent Muslims have been the targets of much harassment at the time of such national tragedies. But the government and its agencies need to have a discerning eye. They need to sift the bad fish from the rest which is law abiding. This is precisely what a delegation of prominent Muslims alerted Mrs. Sonia Gandhi to. And unlike in the past, the UPA

government has so far shown great sensitivity and alacrity in preventing the communalization of the bombs tragedy. It is indeed heartening to note that Muslim neighbourhoods in Mumbai, under the needle of suspicion, are actively cooperating with the police investigations. So are individuals, organizations and seminaries. After all, the security of the nation is of paramount significance to all Indians irrespective of caste and religion. The terrorist can be isolated only if the community is mobilised. That can happen only when our political leaders give up their habits and strategies of dividing communities. Let us pledge ourselves to protecting and upholding the freedom and security of our great nation. Let us also commit ourselves to assisting the investigating agencies in any way we can to maintain peace and communal harmony in our country. ●

S. A.

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The Guides and Leaders of Humanity

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The Havoc Wrought by Self-appointed Leaders

Throughout the course of its long history, mankind has been cruelly subjected to gruelling tests and trials by its self-appointed leaders, tyrants and despots, guides and legislators. These 'patrons' of humanity have ever played the devil with their own species almost in the same way as a child does with a piece of paper. He folds and unfolds, twists and turns the paper and tears it into pieces when he takes a fancy to it.

These leaders have seldom set store by the human life, the vast possibilities of its advancement and the far-reaching significance of its betterment. Their fellow beings yielded obedience to them for God had created the inclination for dutifulness and fidelity in man, but they were neither gracious nor God-fearing enough to be rightful and just to their followers. Nor were they mindful of their obligations and responsibilities to their friends and kinsmen: they only attended to their fancies and desires and made their leadership a means to fulfil their own ambitions. The caprice and conceit, perversity and pettiness of these leaders moved by their racial and national prejudices have sown the seeds of an unending catastrophe for the humanity. They have, indeed, created doubts about their sagacity and

trustworthiness, civility and benignity. Now, there is little reason to believe that they will ever succeed in ushering mankind in an era of peace and prosperity. History of the human race is an unrolled scroll of tragedies and misfortunes which makes one shed tears as well as smile at its luck. There is even today many a nation in the east and the west which is at the mercy of a wolf in sheep's clothing who trifles with the people and brings them to a new test ever and anon and, then, innocently declares that he has not succeeded in his efforts. Oftentimes, the crimes and misdeeds of such leaders are brought to light by their successors after they are dead and gone. It is then that a succeeding generation comes to know of the guilts of their leaders but then it is merely an obituary in the life story of that nation.

Prophet Needed to Lead the World

This blundering leadership has not spared even the creeds and beliefs of the people on which depend man's success in this world and salvation in the world beyond, which form the fundamental bases of true morality and healthy civilization and the nexus between man and God; but once these links are severed it becomes well-nigh impossible to restore them again. The world, therefore, needs leaders and guides who are trustworthy, faultless,

self-denying and beyond reproach, who are not devoured by their greed or passion, who do not base their decisions on their own imperfect knowledge, faulty experience or personal gains, and if they ever commit a mistake they are willing to undo the wrong in the light of divine commandments.

Sincerity and Trustworthiness

This is the reason that you see every prophet assuring his followers about his sincerity, trustworthiness and selflessness.

See how the prophets affirm their selflessness and assure their nations about their trustworthiness.

Noah's folk denied the messengers (of Allah), When their brother Noah said unto them: Will ye not ward off (evil)? Lo! I am a faithful messenger unto you, So keep your duty to Allah, and obey me. And I ask of you no wage therefor; My wage is the concern only of the Lord of the Worlds."

"(The tribe of(A'ad denied the messengers (of Allah), When their brother Hud said unto them: Will ye not ward off (evil)? Lo! I am a faithful messenger unto you, So keep your duty to Allah and obey me. And I ask of you no wage therefor; my wage is the concern only of the Lord of the worlds."

"The (tribe of) Thamud denied the messengers (of Allah), When their brother Salih said unto them: Will ye not ward off (evil)? Lo! I am a faithful messenger unto you, So keep your duty to Allah and obey me. And I ask of you no wage therefor; my wage is the

concern only of the Lord of the Worlds."

"The folk of Lot denied the messengers (of Allah), When their brother Lot said unto them: Will ye not ward off (evil)? Lo! I am a faithful messenger unto you, So keep your duty to Allah and obey me. And I ask of you no wage therefor; my wage is the concern of the Lord of the worlds."

"The dwellers in the wood (of Midian) denied the messengers (of Allah), When Shu'eyb said unto them, Will ye not ward off (evil)? Lo! I am a faithful messenger unto you, So keep your duty to Allah and obey me. And I ask of you no wage therefor; My wage is the concern of the Lord of the worlds."

The unity of purpose or common objective of the prophets sent to different nations at different times is eloquently meaningful. The word Aminun or truthful used by every prophet to asseverate his dependability fully, encompasses the function of apostleship and covers the responsibility of receiving divine messages as well as his capability to transmit it truthfully to others. No other word so comprehensive, so meaningful is there in the Arabic language which embodies all the different obligations and compulsions lying on a prophet of God.

Muhammad,, the Prophet, was known by the pagans of Mecca, as if by the pre-ordained will of God, by the name of 'Amin' even before he was invested with the mantle of prophethood.

The Prophets are, thus, sincere, selfless and indifferent to personal gain

or partisanship. It is but natural for man to give his love and respect to such self-sacrificing well-wishers of humanity,. But, when they are rejected by the people they sorrowfully express their surprise, as Prophet Salih had said to his tribe:

“O my people! I delivered my Lord's message unto you and gave you good advice, but ye love not good advisers.”

And the man who then came from the uttermost part of the city, advised his brethren thus-

“O my people! Follow those who have been sent! Follow those who ask of you no fee, and who are rightly guided.”

Moses, too, presented the same message explicitly before Pharaoh when he told him:

“Moses said: O Pharaoh! Lo! I am a messenger from the Lord of the Worlds,

“Approved upon condition that I speak concerning Allah nothing but the truth. I come unto you with a clear proof from your Lord. So let the Children of Israel go with me.”

A Tower of Strength

This sterling quality the truthfulness, faultlessness and selflessness of the prophets is a godsend blessing for the people. It helps their followers to maintain the uncompromising fidelity to an ideal; it is a passionate attachment to truth in the hour of stress and strain unleashed by the contending idealism of an alien people. Their conviction in the

truthfulness of their prophet saves them from suspicion and disbelief.

Impeccability of the Prophets

Shah Waliullah has shed light on the vital characteristics of the prophets in his immortal book, Hujjatullah-il-Baligha, wherein he writes:

“It is essential for a prophet to demonstrate that he has been assigned a Divine charge and that his teaching is free from every fault and blemish. He has also to make plain that he is not a complaisant reformer willing to compromise on principles, that is, taking his reform to a certain extent and giving up a portion of it. If he has been sent to uphold the mission of an earlier prophet whose truthfulness is acknowledged by all and whose teachings have been preserved uncorrupted, then he can bring the beliefs and attitudes of his people into question and summon them up to accept the directions of the bygone prophet, whose mission he has come to propagate and complete.

“Anyway, the people need an impeccable guide who is accepted by all and who is either present among them or whose trustworthy teachings and traditions have been preserved. The doctrines of religious beliefs and their rewards or the sins and their punishments cannot be fathomed by the intellect which is otherwise adequate for worldly affairs, for these are not disclosed save to intuitive reason. Just as hunger, or thirst, or effects of medicines are felt by the instinct, the things seemly or unseemly

to the soul are known only through an evolved sense.

“Impeccability of the prophets is the outcome of divine knowledge and conviction which impart assurance to them that the message vouchsafed from the divine source is God's truth: they feel as if they are beholding the facts of mute reality and are also certain that their eyes are not deceiving them. The certitude of a prophet resembles the accepted connotation of a word as understood by the people speaking that language. It is like the sense of the words Maun or Adhun which always signify water and the earth for an Arab, even though he may have no argument to clinch his point, nor any testimony to prove the relationship between these terms and their significations. But, he is still confident of his comprehension of these terms. A prophet has, similarly, an inborn sense which always leads him, intuitively, to the truth of the matter and thus he is persuaded of the correctness of his inspired knowledge.

“The people are brought over to admit the faultlessness of a prophet through the rational and verbal arguments advanced by him. The call he gives is always correct and his character so unblemished that it leaves no contingency of his being a liar. The people round a prophet often find credence in his fellowship with God through the miracles worked by him or the answering of his prayers. These are also to assure the people that a man with such a pious and angelic soul could never speak lies about God nor commit a sin. The confidence so produced

brings the people nearer to the prophet and makes him dearer to his nation as water is sought by the thirsty or the goods and children are adorned by the people. These are the imperatives without which no nation can be imbued with the touch and feelings of a prophet nor can it establish a concord with the soul ever engrossed in the remembrance of God.”

Obedience to the Prophets

These men of God, so pure of heart, holding the ring of truth, sincere and honest, who always keep themselves within bounds and are the best amongst all men in thought and action, intellect and inclination, deserve that every man should submit himself in obedience to them. Following the divine command: “that thou mightiest be trained according to My Will” heavenly hosts stand over the prophets to rear and raise them as teachers and guides of humanity. “Lo! We purified them with pure thought, remembrance of the Home; Lo! in our sight they verily are the elect, the excellent,” is the dictum of God about them. For they are preferred over the rest of mankind by virtue of their wisdom and prudence, talent and genius, God favours them with the Book and the direction and the prophethood, and tells mankind that:

“Those are they whom Allah guideth, so follow their guidance.”

Approved and Admirable

The prophets are accepted and approved by God. They enjoy such a divine favour that their way of life, habit

ad behavior become the shining example to be observed by all observers.

There may be many paths leading to the same destination, but the one trodden by the prophets gets the approval of God. It is then preferred to every other way for it is the way of God's devoted friends; everything liked by the prophets becomes a model and a standard in the eyes of God. It is for this reason that to follow the example of the prophets, to take after their habits and behaviours and to act in accordance with the precedents set by them helps one to gain propinquity to God. The love of prophets makes one beloved of God and divine wrath is invited by ill-will to them this is the Law of God that undergoes no change with the change of time and space. This is the ordinance of God proclaimed by the Prophet of Islam.

"Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): If ye love Allah, follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

Just the opposite are the leaning towards the way of tyrants and misbelievers, the acceptance of their modes and patterns, which puts man away from God and invites His displeasure.

"And incline not toward those who do wrong lest the Fire touch you, and ye have no protecting friends against Allah, and afterward ye would not be helped."

Ways of Guidance

The ways and manners of the

Prophet are recognized by the Shariah as Khasal-i-Fitrat or natural dispositions and Sunan-ul-Huda, that is, the ways of guidance. Divine law upholds prophetic practices as favoured observances and asks the believers to follow them. The usages and practices of the prophets exalt and elevate the character of man, for they have the approval of God.

"(This is the) colour from Allah, and who is better than Allah at coloring! We are His worshippers."

And this is the reason why God prefers a certain mode, behavior and practice over another style, manner or usage. The modes and behaviours acceptable to God are, thus, recommended by the Shariah as the traits of believers and natural dispositions of man. Any habit that is at variance with the prophetic practices is looked down upon by the Law as an impress of the ignorant, a custom of the stupid and a way of the unbeliever. One is the praxis of the prophets and the elects of God and the other is the old way of the pagan past, the beaten path of the devil and his followers.

This is the principle regulating customs and conventions, manners of eating and drinking, modes of dressing and living, in short, everything that goes by the name of prophetic culture.

Why is the right hand preferred over the left; why is every good act, eating and drinking and giving of a thing or taking it commendable by the right hand; and why is the left hand used for washing after passing the urinal or for similar other purposes? Both the hands

have been created by God and both seem to have an equal claim for respect. The people not conversant with the ways of the prophets do use both the hands for the same purpose for they have nothing to guide them in this regard.

There is no other reason except that the prophets, in general, and the last Prophet, in particular, got in the habit of using their right hand either by their own inclination towards cleanliness or through divine inspiration. As a matter of fact, the settled dispositions of the prophets are always in accord with the will and pleasure of God. The use of right hand for performing every act, dignified and decent, thus, became commendable practice or a set form of Islamic way of living. 'Ayesha relates that the Prophet of Islam used to begin every wholesome act with his right hand.

"The Prophet (PBUH) preferred to begin, as far as possible, every work from the right hand side even if it were mere purification, or combing or putting on shoes."

Now, one can visualize from it the inclinations and habits of the great patriarch, Abraham, whose ways have been described in the Traditions as commendable.

Prophets The Founders of Culture

The prophets do not summon the people to accept only a creed and a law-Islam, but they also lay the foundation of a new way of life which carries the seed of a new culture, a new civilization. This prophetic culture has

its own particular rules, signs and characteristics which distinguish it from all other paganish cultures; it differs from the essence of others in the same way as the manifestations and outer forms of each conflict with one another.

Abrahamic-Muhammadan Civilisation

Abraham, the originator of this prophetic civilization, raised its edifice on the foundation of God's Unity, His awe and an undying trust in Him, natural instincts and geniality of human nature and common weal of the human species.

Abraham's moral sense and his way of life percolate through the fibre of this civilization.

"Lo! Abraham was mild, imploring, penitent."

"Lo! Abraham was soft of heart, long suffering."

Abraham was the author of this civilization while the genius of Muhammad, who was a successor to the great patriarch, completed and perfected it. He gave a new life to it, imparted it the widest, unbounded prospect of perfection, refined its shape and content and made it a civilization fit to become universal, perpetual.

Some Conspicuous Traits

That the Abrahamic-Muhammadan civilization detests heathenism and association of partakers with the One, Supreme God, it lifts man from the reproach of idolatry in every shape or form. The ardent supplication made by Abraham to God was:

"My Lord! Make safe this

territory, and preserve me and my sons from serving idols."

And, his testament to his followers was:

"So shun the filth of idols, and shun lying speech; turning unto Allah (only); not ascribing partners unto Him."

This civilization does not permit anyone to indulge in vices, immodesty or vulgarity, nor does it prize filthy lure of the world. It never appeals to arms for winning position and prestige for it is essentially a mission whose slogan is

"As for the Abode of the Hereafter We assign it unto those who seek not oppression in the earth, nor yet corruption. The sequel is for those who ward off (evil)."

It does not differentiate between man and man: the colour, race or country makes no difference for it.

"All men are progeny of Adam and Adam was made of clay. No Arab has any preference over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, save by virtue of his piety. O mankind, We have given birth to all of you from a man and a woman and have made you different groups and tribes so that you may know one another. He is worthiest unto God amongst you who wards off evil."

For this was the guiding principle of this civilization, the last Prophet and teacher of humanity directed that:

"He is not one of us who gave a call for partisanship and who fought for partisanship and who died for partisanship."

Once, When some Muhajirs and Ansars had called out their tribes for help, the Prophet admonished them

saying:

"Give up this factionalism, it is dirty and dead."

This is a civilization which glorifies Unity of God as a creed, dignity and equality of man as a social principle, humbleness and fear of God as a norm of behavior, effort for the Hereafter and fighting in the way of God as human endeavour and charity and justice as the rule of war. Its norm for the conduct of government prescribes that spiritual well-being should take precedence over financial interests, dissemination of truth over collection of revenues, conferment over recipience and service of the people over wielding of the scepter. It is the only civilization which has the distinction of serving humanity with a selfless zeal, liberating mankind from the tyranny of superstition and ignorance and investing humanity with the spirit of altruism and charity.

For the name of God is the essence of this civilization, His remembrance its sustenance, the divine hue its colour and trust in God its fibre, it can never be unfastened from its indwelling divine mood and disposition.

The Quranic Dictum

The Qur'an lays stress on following the way of the prophets and asks the believers, time and again, to pattern their lives and conduct after the example set by the messengers of God.

"Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the Last Day, and remembereth Allah much."

It directs the Muslims to beseech God always to show them the right path.

“Show us the right path, The path of those whom Thou hast favoured; Not (the Path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray.”

This prayer which forms part of the service repeated several times a day, teaches man to seek the companionship of the prophets, their leaders and guides and God-loved souls. Whoever shall live up to this supplication by coming close to the appearance and behavior of these pious souls shall undoubtedly be sanctified and redeemed by divine grace.

Love and Respect of Prophets

The Qur'an demands reverential regard and affectionate devotion to the apostles of God; a tender feeling of admiration that arises from the core of one's heart; for, it places no value on an obedience which lacks spiritual coupling of the two souls. People yield obedience to their kings, political leaders and military commanders but the submissiveness of this sort is more often a passive subservience. Islam wants more than that; it does not demand mere payment of Zakat and charity or observance of religious obligations; it wants willing and dutiful acquiescence in its commandments.

“That ye may believe in Allah and His messenger and may honour him.”

“Those who believe in him, and honour him, and help him.”

The divine Scripture, therefore,

calls upon the believers to keep watch over everything that upholds the honour of the prophets and avoid whatever shows a lack of respect for them. An express injunction of the Qur'an is that:

“O ye who believe! Lift not up your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor shout when speaking to him as ye shout one to another, lest your works be rendered vain while ye perceive not.

“Lo! they who subdue their voices in the presence of the messenger of Allah, those are they whose hearts Allah hath proven unto righteousness. Theirs will be forgiveness and immense reward.”

“Make not the calling of the messenger among you as your calling one of another.”

And, it was to safeguard the honour and dignity of the Prophet that his widows were denied wedlock again after his death.

“And it is not for you to cause annoyance to the messenger of Allah, nor that ye should ever marry his wives after him.”

Many more commandments exist which require the believers to love and prefer the Prophet over their own lives, goods and children. And authentic Tradition of the Prophet declares that:

“None of you shall be a believer unless I am held dearer by you than your own father and your sons and all other men.”

Another version of this Tradition, related in Al-Tabrani's Al-M'ujam Al-Kabir and Al-Awsat adds “than your own lives too” to this saying of the Prophet.

Similarly, it is related from the blessed Prophet that:

“One, who has three things shall savour the sweetness of faith; first, who holds Allah and His messenger dearer than all others.”

The companions of the Prophet of Islam had understood the significance of all-consuming love for God and His Apostle. They were, on this account, always extremely zealous in carrying out the orders of the Prophet; they took pleasure in following his lead and patiently endured every hardship at his call. They shall, therefore, always occupy the pride of place among all the believers till the end of time. Abu Bakr loved the Prophet more than his own life. Once, he was so mercilessly beaten by 'Utba bin Rabi'a that his swollen face made the cheeks indistinct from his nose. Banu Tamim ultimately carried him away taking him to be dead. But when he regained consciousness, the first question he asked was whether the Prophet was alright? His anxious mind was set at ease only when he was assured that the Prophet was hale and hearty. But when he was asked to take some food, his reply was:

“Honest to God, I will touch no food or drink until I have seen the Prophet.”

Similar was the love of that Ansar lady a love born of faith- who lost her father, husband and son in the battle of Ohad. She was told about the irreparable losses she had suffered, but unmindful of her bereavements she continued to enquire about the welfare of the Prophet, and when she saw him

she came out spontaneously, “No suffering matters so long as you are safe.”

The same was the love felt all too deeply by Abdullah, son of the hypocrites leader, Abdullah bin Ubayy. He heard his father having remarked that the highest in dignity shall drive out the most debased when they returned to Madina. The worthy son of the unworthy father unsheathed his sword at the gate of the city and demanded from his father: “Were it you to say that? so help me God, you shall just know to whom belongs the dignity- to you or to the Prophet of God.” He added, “You shall not enter Madina until you are granted permission by the Apostle of God.”

And, it was this volcanic emotion which had made the Prophet's companions to put their lives at stake for Islam; they left their hearths and homes but not the way of God; death had become so dear to them that when, before the battle of Badr, the Ansars were asked by the Prophet to express their opinion about taking the field, they replied with one voice:

“As for our affairs, they are at your command. By God, if you go to Bark al-Ghimad, we shall accompany you to the end; and by God, if you demand of us, we shall jump into the sea with you.”

Lifeblood of Islamic World

Islamic world of today lacks this lifeblood of love. If people do not act on the Shariah, if religious observances appear bothersome to them or if the

modern educated youth has difficulty in following the precepts of the Prophet, it is because the Muslims are not inspired by the love and respect for the Prophet as demanded by the Qur'an. It is, of a fact, the same vital spark which has done wonders in the past and has still not lost its miraculous power. To lose this spark is a great loss- a loss which cannot be made good by intellectual gifts, determination or organization.

Key to Success

Success of the communities following a prophet depends on their unquestioning submission to that prophet. No such community or nation can ever succeed, whatever be its talents, or means, or cultural attainments, if it does not love and follow and strive for the mission of its prophet. The nations which give up the track of their prophet and lean on their own political maneuvering or on the help of any big power for gaining strength and importance ultimately end up in collapse, internal disorder and ignominious ruin.

Misfortune of the Muslim World

The whole world of Islam, nowadays, in general, and the Arab countries, in particular, furnish a pathetic example of what happens when the followers of a prophet deviate from the path chalked out for them. The people of these countries have no success to their credit, nor have they been able to solve any problem facing them since the day they began giving preference to various 'isms' and the

leaders upholding such cults, over the precepts of their unfailing guide. They have not even won the esteem of other nations by their readiness to accept the values and concepts of nationalism, socialism or modernism or by giving up the Islamic beliefs and observances to emulate the example of our Arab brethren for they have already lost their unity and the freedom of Palestine, and failed to obtain even an honourable position for themselves in the comity of nations. Every day that dawns brings a new problem, a new difficulty for them. The present condition of the Arabs calls to my mind the wisdom of what Caliph Umar had remarked when he was asked by someone to flaunt himself as the ruler of the biggest empire of the day. He had replied indignantly: "You were the most despicable people, then God bestowed honour on you through Islam. Hence, whenever you would try to gain recognition sans Islam, Allah will bring disgrace on you." ●

Religion

The religion you follow lays great stress on the dignity of the individual and rears him up in such a way that he may spend everything he has for the sake of God and His creatures. This religion which is eternal has not exhausted its possibilities. It can still bring into existence a new world in which the poor can levy taxes on the rich and human society is founded not on the equality of the stomach but on the equality of the soul.

-Iqbal

The Rights of the Relatives

S. Sulaiman Nadwi

When we talk of rights and duties, the first and foremost rights and duties are those of the parents, next to them are the rights and duties of the children and then come the rights and duties which the husbands and wives owe to each other. After this is the turn of the rights of the relatives. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has laid great stress on fulfilling the rights and obligations which we owe to our relatives, prohibited to break the ties of relationship with those who join their ties of relationship. In relations with the relatives has been impressed upon the minds of the people again and again. We must do so considering it to be not a favour or obligation done to an individual but as imposed by Allah. There are at least twelve verses of the Holy Qur'an containing plain commands concerning the rights of the relatives.

Give their due to the near of kin, to the needy and to the wayfarers. (30:38)

And Give to the near of kin their due and also to the destitute and to the wayfarers. ((17:26)

It is the height of virtue to help and fulfil the needs of the relatives despite one's love and temptation for wealth and his personal want:

The righteous man is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day, in the angels, the Book and the Prophets, who

for the love of Allah gives his wealth to the kinsfolk. (2:177)

After the parents it is your relatives on whom you should spend out of your wealth. They will ask you about alms-giving. Say: Whatever you bestow in charity must go to your parents and to your kinsfolk. (2:215)

After the parents, benevolent treatment with the relatives is one of the special commands of Allah regarding which the Children of Isra'il were asked to make a covenant.

When we made a covenant with the Children of Isra'il:

You serve none but Allah. Show kindness to your parents, to your kinsfolk, to the orphans, and to the destitute. (2:83)

In the Surah Nahl, benevolent treatment with the relatives has been ordained along with just and fair dealings.

Allah enjoins justice, kindness and charity to one's kindred. (16:90)

It does not become a rich and affluent person to withhold the help and support of relative as punishment for any fault of mistake on his part.

Let not the honourable and rich among you swear not to give to the kindred, the poor, and those who have migrated for the cause of Allah. (24:22)

Besides Allah's worship and Tauhid (belief in Oneness of Allah) and benevolent treatment towards the parents, the third most excellent of

virtues is kindness to the kith and kin.

Serve Allah and associate none with Him. Show kindness to your parents and your kindred, to the orphans and to the needy, to your near and distant neighbors, to your fellow-travellers, to the wayfarers, and to the slaves whom you own. (4:36)

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said that he did not demand anything for the endeavours and efforts and for the hardship he had to bear in propagating Islam except that he might be repaid by showing kindness to relatives.

This is what Allah announces to true believers who do good works. Say: For this I demand of you no recompense except love of relatives. He that does a good deed We add to its goodness for him. (42:23)

There are a number of *Ahadith* of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) which indicate the importance and honour accorded to the tie of kinship by Islam.

Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari reported: A man said: O Allah's Messenger! Inform me of a deed which will make me enter Paradise. The people said: What is the matter with him? Allah's Messenger (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: He has something to ask (what he needs greatly). The Prophet (PBUH) said to him: (In order to enter Paradise) you should worship Allah and join none in worship with Him. You should offer prayers perfectly, give Zakat (obligatory charity), and keep good relations with your kith and kin.

Jubair bin Mutim reported that he heard the Prophet (PBUH) as saying: He who is desirous that his

means of sustenance should be expanded or his age should be lengthened should joint the ties of relationship.

'A'isha (May Allah be pleased with her) reported Allah's Messenger (PBUH) as saying: The tie of kinship is suspended to the Throne and says: He who unites me Allah would unite him and he who severed me Allah would sever him.

The Holy Qur'an explains the importance of keeping the ties of relationship and warns against breaking them.

If you turn away (from the faith) you would surely do evil in the land and cut off the ties of kinship. Such are on whom Allah has laid His curse, leaving them bereft of sight and hearing.

Will they not ponder over the Qur'an Are there locks on their hearts? (47:22-24)

To a Muslim, close relations and kindness to other relatives i.e. grandparents, aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews and grandchildren are also very important. If there are conflicts or breaches among the members of a family for any reason, the Muslim has a duty to intervene and try to bring them together. ●

"The best amongst you is he who learns Qur'an and teaches it to others."

-Bukhari

What Muslim Personal Law Means to Muslims?

S. G. Mohiuddin

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board is a representative body of all the important religious, political and cultural organizations of the Indian Muslims. Being a non-political organization it also enjoys the support of an overwhelming majority of the representatives of Muslims in various national political parties, Muslim legislators, scholars, lawyers etc., and thus it is the only organization that can authoritatively speak for all the Indian Muslims, belonging to all sects and schools, barring, of course, a few individuals who have no following whatsoever among the Muslim masses. The Board has no apologies, no excuses to offer, nor to explain away or make acceptable to others what has been laid down by the Qur'an and the Prophet in regard to Muslim Personal Law and what has been so consistently accepted and adhered to by the Muslims. Its stand is clear and unequivocal: no change in the Personal Law of Muslims. The Presidential address delivered by Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi at the conference of All India Muslim Personal Law Board held at Calcutta on April 6 and 7, 1985, candidly explains the Muslims point of view in this regard. It gives the reasons why Muslims cannot agree to any change in their Personal Law, the background as well as the reasons for not appreciating the Muslim viewpoint,

the fine distinction between the concept of revealed law and modern legal philosophy and the unreasonableness of the demand for an uniform civil code in a way which would not only be found instructive by the Muslims but would also be appreciated by broadminded non-Muslims who want to understand the reason for reluctance of the Muslims to any change in their Personal Law.

There are others who hold the view that the Muslim Personal Law is stagnant, glorious for its time, a handicap for ours and hence it must change like other laws. Change in human understanding, progress in standards of civilization, which is considered to be linear in time, and advances in technology are all supposed to be genuine pressures on the Shari'ah to change or to give up those parts which do not seem to rhyme with the changing time. But what has really changed? Essential human nature, its motives and drives, its emotions and desires have remained virtually unchanged throughout the ages. Technology has certainly advanced and some ways of looking at the world have altered but no new definitions and concepts like 'cruelty', 'civilised', 'justice', 'equality' have emerged to command universal adherence. Man's lusts and fears, hopes and anxieties, loves and hates, aspirations, yearnings and longings remain what they have always been.

Similarly, the idea that something which evolves later in time is necessarily superior to that which preceded it is also untenable. The only absolute and universal criteria can be those given by God, the All-knowing, whose words are above any change.

Experience has shown that the conflicting demands of law stability and change- have never been reconciled. The law that is based purely on reason carries the seeds of its own destruction, for human reason is fallible and erring. Actually, the tension caused by the demands of stability and change calls for balance and harmony which are conspicuous by their absence in the modern laws of the West. They lack balance and stability since they have to serve the interest of an ever-changing society. Divine law is distinct from human laws, which are always subject to change and correction, in that it has its own method and ethical norms of good and bad which keep social change itself within bounds. It controls the society and is not controlled by it. Undoubtedly it is eternal and immutable for the simple reason that it has to exercise its controlling force on the society. It has, as a matter of fact, kept the social fabric of Islamic society compact and secure throughout the last fourteen hundred years. Its objective is to give rise and guide a moral-spiritual society. It has accordingly established, in the words of Hamilton A. R. Gibb, "norms for all Muslim institutions and societies, which have ever since remained the sheet-anchor of Muslim culture through the many and terrible vicissitudes of later centuries; it

expressed and went far to creating a united Muslim community, in spite of political fragmentation and conflict; and it is still, notwithstanding all the criticisms of Muslim modernists and reformers, the sole embodiment of what would otherwise be merely formal unity of faith among all Muslims." Such a law has necessarily to be immutable yet it contains broad principles that admit of interpretation which can accommodate changes in life. Such is its capacity to reconcile stability with changing need of life that the Branch of Oriental Statutes of the International Congress of Comparative Law held in Paris on the 7th of July, 1951, and attended by eminent scholars and professors of law from both the East and the West, adopted the following resolution:

"The delegates, being interested in the problems brought about during the 'Week of Islamic Law' and in the discussions which demonstrated the indisputable value of the principles of Islamic Law, and the fact that the variety of schools within this great juridical system implies a value of juridical elements and remarkable techniques, allowing this law to respond to all needs of adaptation required by modern life."

But, let it be understood clearly that the overall scheme of the Shari'ah and its various specific provisions for meeting the changing needs of life are determined by the way Islam resolves the perennial question of tension between the individual and society, in accordance with its own objectives and within its own framework. It needs no outside interference. ●

Presidential Address at Calcutta (1985)

I would first of all seek your apology for not being able to present a written address as it is customary on such occasions. My heavy pre-occupations apart, I had to go on tours after short intervals. But this unintended lapse on my part might have been for the better. Without underrating the solemnity or utility of Presidential Addresses prepared before-hand for such august gatherings which have become a part of our intellectual, literary and political history I must say that sometimes such premeditated addresses or a part of them become out-dated by the time they are delivered, or changed circumstances make them lose some of their relevance. May be that the Providence had willed me to speak to you spontaneously on this occasion in the light of recent developments in our country.

Friends, differences of opinion, denial of anything or even opposition in any matter is not necessarily the result of enmity or clash of interests. Oftentimes, this is caused by misunderstanding or faulty information which is, in my opinion, more dangerous than ignorance of anything. Such misunderstandings and faulty knowledge and ignorance has in the past led to as lamentable consequences at the level of individuals

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi
and families as in the case of nations and countries. Instances can be found in the pages of history where a misunderstanding, lack of knowledge or incorrect information has resulted in clash of arms.

I do not think that all those non-Muslim individuals and associations or schools of thought which are opposing the Muslim Personal Law and advocating an uniform civil code are motivated by a hatred of Muslims. I think that misunderstanding or lack of correct knowledge is to be blamed more than anything else.

I want to invite your attention to two aspects of the issue; the status and importance of the Muslim personal Law among the Muslims themselves. Those who are serious-minded and patriot, possess a constructive rather than destructive frame of mind, and are also realists and liberal in their attitude never find it difficult to accept a given fact. I hope that this august meeting and our mass-media would enable me to have their ears.

As a student of comparative religions I can speak authoritatively for all those religions which claim to be a revealed one, have a scripture and a prophetic tradition, but I will prefer to speak here about the religion of which we claim to be followers. One of the fundamental truths about this religion is

that it has been handed down to us not by philosophers, social workers, reformers or conquerors. The persons belonging to these groups undoubtedly deserve our esteem. Moreover, every religion, culture, system and school of thought has always a line of demarcation which separates it from others in its deeper content and the resulting manifestation. This demarcating line in the case of revealed religions, which can never be overlooked, is that they should reach the people through those exalted persons who are raised up as messengers of God and blessed with revelation from Him. This is the basic fact and all those who fail to comprehend it very often make such demands from the followers of these religions which cannot be accepted by them so long as they do not renounce their faith. Such demands are obviously not justified at all. Such wiseheads sometimes assume the responsibility of interpreting the religious injunctions of other people by placing reliance on their own studies or pet views thinking that as liberals they are competent to do so. They try to describe all religions as if they were merely different philosophies or man-made social or cultural systems evolved through human experience. This mistake is not unoften made by even thoughtful and responsible persons. They do not know what separates a revealed religion from other faiths. Philosophy, social sciences, cultures and civilizations, societies and social organizations exist

as perceptible realities. We do not deny them and acknowledge them as such. We are also aware of our obligations and responsibilities towards each of them. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that the Muslim community also constitutes a society, a culture and a school of thought. It is a faith and a way of life which was brought and propagated, made a part of our lives, by those who were the Apostles of God. It was neither a product of their brains nor their utterances were in compliance with their own wish or understanding. What they brought was a revelation; something emanating not from an internal but an external source and as holy and sacred to them as for us. The Qur'an says:

"Your comrade is not astray, neither errs, nor speaks he out of caprice." (53:3-4)

The Prophet was told:

"Thou knowest not what the Book was, nor belief; but We made it a light, whereby We guide whom We will of our servants. And thou, surely thou shalt guide unto a straight path." (42:52)

There are people, learned and wise who have spent their lives writing books after books unnecessarily to start a campaign of criticism and vilification about a people they wanted to take the benefit of their counsel without giving thought to the simple fact that they ought to have first tried to understand the people, their beliefs and the way of thought. They should have understood that the people they intended to address were followers of a Prophet of

God who himself refrained from giving any instruction to his companions *without receiving a revelation from God*. I can cite scores of eye-witness accounts when the Prophet was asked something but instead of giving any answer to such questions, he told the enquirers to wait till a revelation was received by him. Often it happened that somebody came to enquired about a certain matter and a revelation was instantly received explaining the issue. The companions beside him at the time of revelation could mark the change in the Prophet's condition and tell others to see for themselves how the Prophet received revelations. Once a companion of the Prophet was by his side when revelation came upon him. He says that the Prophet's thigh fell upon his so heavily that he feared it would break. The Prophet appeared to be in transport on such occasions, away from his surroundings. When he recovered, he narrated the revelation received by him. Once the disbelievers asked the Prophet about Ashab-i-Kahf (the Seven Sleepers) and Zul-qarnain (the two horned one). The Prophet awaited a revelation until 15 days passed and the disbelievers got an opportunity to reproach the Prophet. The Suratul Kahf was ultimately revealed and the Prophet was able to narrate the whole story as if reciting from a book.

The revelation and prophethood basically differ from the commonly understood concept of inspiration. I do not blame our non-Muslim friends and

scholars for the distance of time from the age of prophets has made it difficult for many of us to understand these concepts properly. Even the Arabs before the advent of the holy Prophet suffered from similar misgivings. It is not due to lack of understanding or that they are unable to comprehend these concepts. It is a historical fact and psychological inadequacy that anyone not conversant with the content of revelation and prophethood and the sublime positions they occupy, and the demands they make on those who accept them, cannot be deemed as competent to advise the Muslims on any question pertaining to their religion. The first question that a court has to decide is whether a person is competent to present a case before it. A number of learned lawyers are present here. They can vouch that a new advocate has first to present his certificate or degree to satisfy the court that he has studied law. Thereafter the court would satisfy itself that the lawyer is attorney-at-law in a particular case. But, strange though it may seem, everybody considers himself competent, nay, to have the right, to advise others and demand a reform in matters pertaining to religion without bothering to know about its propositions, its history and the spirit underlying its principles. And if a follower of that religion opposes such a move, he is dubbed as ignorant, conservative and a dolt.

I am a student of religion. I can also say that I have studied history and

literature. Hence I cannot dare give any advice about anything whose fundamentals are not known to me. If anyone has not studied even elementary science, physics or mathematics, no sane person would allow him to dispute the findings of a physicist or a mathematician. Then why everyone is deemed competent to say whatever he likes about any religion, interpret or misinterpret it, point out its shortcomings and propose reforms in it according to his sweet-will. Does this practice not flout the accepted principle about every discipline of learning? Today every branch of learning is based on specialization. Is religion exempt from this accepted norm? Every religion has a distinctive ethos, its own terminology, different words for different concepts, a different psychology and if a man ignorant of all these, whether he is a Muslim or non-Muslim, expresses a discordant view about any issue pertaining to the Muslim Personal Law, he certainly exceeds his limit. He is neither aware of the context nor the checks and balances kept in view in the case of a certain juristic issue about which he is raising an objection. He is even ignorant of the fact that if any opinion is to be expressed about any matter forming part of an integrated system, it has to be viewed in its totality and not in segments. But the state of affairs here is that any one can say whatever he likes or take the pen to air his views, however ill-conceived, in the press. This gives rise to anarchy- an intellectual anarchy which is more

dangerous than political lawlessness. You might have marked that mental and moral anarchy precedes political anarchy in any country. Being a student, if not a scholar of Islam, although I have spent my life in its study, I can assert with the fullest sense of responsibility that it is essential to understand the reality of revelation for comprehending the religion of Islam. It is based on celestial revelation brought by the prophets. You will find the Jews, whose religion is based on revelation, extremely jealous in this regard. Tell a Jew that a certain law followed by him is unjust or wrong, he would reply that it is based on the commandments brought by Moses. He would tell you that he has to follow it even if the entire world considers it wrong. Even today the entire social structure and the family laws of Israel are based on Jewish religious law.

Then why the energy of this country or its citizens is being wasted on this issue. Every moment of the national life is too precious; it ought to be devoted to development and progress of the country; it is absolutely necessary that the present atmosphere of mental confusion, misunderstanding and apprehension should be brought to an end for ever. No country can progress if different segments of its society are apprehensive of their future. It would be a disservice to the country if the energy necessary for the country's integrity, safety and development is spent on creating unnecessary doubts and fears and then allaying them. I

would even say that if the Muslim of this country entertain the fear that their future generations will not have the same faith or not participate in the same cultural process that they have followed and considered essential, then this will give rise to an internal unrest among them which would be harmful for them as well as the country. It is no part of wisdom that at the time when the country is not passing through any crisis, there is no emergency, no cyclone, no drought, no external aggression caused by the Muslim Personal Law, demand should be made time and again for amendment in it.

Another matter that needs to be clearly understood is the scope of Islam. Different religions have different views in this regard. There are religions which trace their origin to revelation and prophethood, but they have themselves limited the sphere of their religious teachings to devotional exercises. But this is not the case with Islam. Islam encompasses the entire gamut of human life. This is a fundamental creed of Islamic which cannot be understood without appreciating the relationship between God and man in Islam. Every Muslim deems himself as a dutiful servant of God; this relationship is everlasting, comprehensive, deep and extensive. The Qur'an directs the Muslims:

"O you who believe! enter into Islam wholly and not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is to you an enemy manifest". (2:208)

Here is no qualification, no

reservation, no division that a certain part of man's life is personal and another part devoted to God. No part of it is apportioned for the country, or state, or family, or tribe, or community. It belongs wholly to God. Every act of a Muslim is prayer if performed in obedience to God. Islam really means total submission to God. A Muslim cannot take the plea that his economic difficulties, cultural demands or family traditions require that he should not follow the Islamic rules of inheritance. He cannot say that he does not want his landed property to be apportioned after him since a part of it would go to his daughter married into another family. Islam encompasses the entire life of a Muslim and nobody, no government, no religious scholar, no jurist and no Imam has any say in this matter. I am making this statement here before a number of religious scholars present here; and they would be duty-bound to contradict me if I am wrong.

Now these two things have to be clearly understood by all: that we have received this religion through revelation and that even the Prophets of God were ordered to act on Divine commandments. There Qur'an says:

"And now We have set thee on the right path. Follow it and do not yield to the lust of ignorant men." (45:18)

This is the command given to an impeccable Prophet. Then how can we be asked to give up or change the Shariah?

We are sometimes told that a uniform civil code is necessary for the

unity and integrity of the country or for promoting a sense of common citizenship. I would ask you a simple question which can be answered by any student. The First World War was primarily a conflict between England and Germany. Englishmen and Germans were both Christians, both were Protestants and their family laws were also the same. You can find out that both subscribed to the same laws of Christianity. Then why did they fight? If uniform civil code was capable of diffusing the conflict, it should have come to their rescue then. The same was the case during the Second World War. Christians and Protestants, whose culture, family laws and social customs and traditions were the same fought the most terrible war of history. Go to any court of law and you will find a Muslim litigating with another Muslim. One Muslim denounces another Muslim and wants to put him to the greatest harm although their family laws are one and the same. Very often there are cases of manslaughter within a family. The reality is that discord and enmity are the results of selfishness, excessive love of wealth and materialistic way of thought fostered by our faulty system of education and imperfect curricula which overlook moral education. It has nothing to do with one's family laws. I have no hesitation in saying that uniform civil code will not bring any change in the existing moral state of the nation. Then why is it that we are told repeatedly to adopt a uniform civil code for the sake of greater harmony and

affinity between different communities?

Friends, many of you would be aware that belong to a family which had first raised the banner of revolt against the Britishers and made great sacrifices for it. The city of Calcutta will bear witness that the body of those godly men had landed here to embark the ships for Hijaz. It came here disseminating the light of Faith and adherence to Islam. On return from Hajj they had stirred up a spirit of Jihad against the British rule throughout the country. But the Qur'an commands me to be always fair and let no indignation, howsoever righteous, against any people make me depart from the path of truth; justice and equity. It says:

And let no detestation for a people incite you not to act fairly; act fairly, that is high unto piety." (5:2)

I must say that Englishmen were more realistic in this regard. When they took over the administration of India, they decided that they would not interfere in the Personal and Family Laws of the Muslims and Hindus. It was the result of this policy that learned treatises on Mohammadan Law came to be written in this very city by Rt. Hon'ble Justice Amir Ali and Sir Abdur Rahim. Englishmen took two very wise decisions. The first was that they decided that the religious susceptibilities of any people should not be injured unnecessarily as this would create difficulties in administration. This is the attitude of a nation which has experience of administration. The other decision they took was to keep the

educational system thoroughly secular. They decided that educational curriculum might include stories of cats and dogs but not of any religion. I have also read English Primers and Readers which contained stories of jinn and devils and animals but had nothing of Greek mythology or Christian creed. This gave satisfaction to the people. The factors that made Hindus and Muslims to join hands for fighting the war of independence and ultimately pushed the British power out of India were entirely different. But I maintain that the above-mentioned decisions of the Englishmen helped to strengthen and prolong their rule in India; otherwise what happened in 1857 would have come about in 1757. It could have happened in the beginning of the eighteenth century. They were able to rule undisturbed for more than a hundred years because of their wise decision not to interfere in the religious matters and personal laws of the people in this country and to adopt a secular system of education, leaving the people free to follow their religion.

I would also submit that if the Muslims agree to give up their Muslim Personal Law, they would be reduced to half or semi-Muslims, or rather the danger is that they would not remain Muslims at all. Those who have studied philosophy of morals and religion are aware of the fact that no religion can be served from its peculiar cultural process with which it is always inextricable intertwined. The relationship between the two is so close and natural that the

one cannot exist in the absence of another. It would mean that one would be a Muslim in the mosque (and how long he remains in the mosque?) but not a follower of that faith in his house or in his dealings with others. No. We cannot allow any other cultural system or civil code to be foisted upon us. We regard it as call of apostasy and so shall we face it. This is our fundamental and religious right in a democratic country. We enjoy this right under the constitution of the country and deem that to fight for our just rights is in the interest of the country. Democracy can be maintained in this country only by safeguarding the rights of every section of our population, allowing them to freely express their views and to practice their religion. This is the way to peace within the country and satisfaction of all communities.

I thank you all for the honour you have done to me and allowing me to express my views before you. ●

"The superiority of a learned man (in religion) over a (mere) worshipper is like the superiority of the moon when it is full over all the stars."

-Bukhari

Petition Seeking Ban on Photo of Muslim Women in Electoral Rolls

The Election Commission said wearing a burqa was a mere custom and did not "have any force of law." In response to a petition before the Supreme Court, seeking ban on photographs of Muslim women in the electoral rolls, the EC filed its affidavit stating use of purdah (veil) could not be considered an essential or integral part of Islam.

The apex court bench headed by Chief Justice K. G. Balakrishnan agreed with the poll panel's concern and said it wasn't possible to have electoral rolls without photographs since that would not ensure free and fair elections.

The EC affidavit denied the photo electoral rolls violated the right of Muslim women to practice their religion under Article 25 of the Constitution. It said the essential attributes of a custom were that it must be ancient, certain, reasonable and must be observed without interruption.

"Protecting fidelity of election is an act pursuant to protection or public order and morality and democracy has been held to be the basic feature of the Constitution," the affidavit read.

It said the use of photograph in the electoral roll was necessary to maintain the sanctity of democratic process and to prevent fraud of voter identity. It added that the photo-electoral rolls would help in identification of electors and prevent bogus enrollment.

Though SC did not pass a final judgment on the petition challenging the provision of photo electoral rolls, it told the petitioner that a voter's photograph was essential in the list to ascertain his or her identity. Distribution of the list to the polling agents, too, was necessary to rule out the possibility of bogus voting.

The SC bench felt it was not possible to deny the polling agents access to the electoral rolls. It, however, granted time to the petitioner, M. Ajmal Khan, and the Election Commission to sort out the issue. ●

* Views of Readers (not more than 200 words) are solicited on this issue. (Editor)

Why the East Sticks to Religion

Imran Khan

My generation grew up at a time when colonial hang up was at its peak. Our older generation had been slaves and had a huge inferiority complex of the British. The school I went to was similar to all elite schools in Pakistan. Despite gaining independent, they were, and still are, producing replicas of public schoolboys rather than Pakistanis.

I read Shakespeare, which was fine, but no Allama Iqbal the national poet of Pakistan. The class on Islamic studies was not taken seriously, and when I left school I was considered among the elite of the country because I could speak English and wore Western clothes.

Despite periodically shouting 'Pakistan Zindabad' in school functions, I considered my own culture backward and religion outdated. Among our group if any one talked about religion, prayed or kept a beard he was immediately branded a Mullah.

Because of the power of the Western media, our heroes were Western movie stars or pop stars. When I went to Oxford already burdened with this hang up, things didn't get any easier. At Oxford, not just Islam, but all religions were considered anachronism.

Science had replaced religion and if something couldn't be logically proved it did not exist. All supermatural stuff was confined to the movies. Philosophers like Darwin, who with his half-baked theory of evolution had supposedly disproved the creation of men and hence religion, were read and revered.

Moreover, European history reflected its awful experience with religion. The horrors committed by the Christian clergy during the Inquisition era had left a powerful impact on the Western mind. To understand why the West is so keen on secularism, one should go to places like Cordoba in Spain and see the torture apparatus used during the Spanish Inquisition. Also the persecution of scientists as heretics by the clergy had convinced the Europeans that all religions are regressive.

However, the biggest factor that drove people like me away from religion was the selective Islam practiced by most of its preachers. In short, there was a huge difference between what they practiced and what they preached. Also, rather than explaining the philosophy behind the religion, there was an overemphasis on rituals.

I feel that humans are different to animals. While, the latter can be drilled, humans need to be intellectually convinced. That is why the Qur'an constantly appeals to reason. The worst, of course, was the exploitation of Islam for political gains by various individuals or groups. Hence, it was a miracle I did not become an atheist. The only reason why I did not was the powerful religious influence my mother wielded on me since my childhood. It was not so much out of conviction but love for her that I stayed a Muslim.

However, my Islam was selective. I accepted only parts of the religion that suited me. Prayers were restricted to Eid

days and occasionally on Fridays, when my father insisted on taking me to the mosque with him. All in all I was smoothly moving to becoming a Pukka Brown Sahib. After all I had the right credentials in terms of school, university and, above all, acceptability in the English aristocracy, something that our brown sahibs would give their lives for. So what led me to do a 'lota' on the Brown Sahib culture and instead become a 'desi'?

Well it did not just happen overnight.

Firstly, the inferiority complex that my generation had inherited gradually went as I developed into a world-class athlete. Secondly, I was in the unique position of living between two cultures. I began to see the advantages and the disadvantages of both societies.

In Western societies, institutions were strong while they were collapsing in our country. However, there was an area where we were and still are superior, and that is our family life. I began to realize that this was the Western society's biggest loss. In trying to free itself from the oppression of the clergy, they had removed both God and religion from their lives.

While science, no matter how much it progresses, can answer a lot of questions two questions it will never be able to answer: One, what is the purpose of our existence and two, what happens to us when we die? It is this vacuum that I felt created the materialistic and the hedonistic culture. If this is the only life then one must make hay while the sun shines- and in order to do so one needs money. Such a culture is bound to cause psychological problems in a human beings, as there was going to be an imbalance between the body and the soul. Consequently, in the US, which has

shown the greatest materialistic progress while giving its citizens numerous rights, almost 60 percent of the population consult psychiatrists. Yet, amazingly in modern psychology, there is no study of the human soul. Sweden and Switzerland, who provide the most welfare to their citizens, also have the highest suicide rates. Hence, man is not necessarily content with material well-being and needs something more. Since all morality has its roots in religion, once religion was removed, immorality has progressively grown since the 70s. Its direct impact has been on family life. In the UK, the divorce rate is 60 percent, while it is estimated that there are over 35 percent single mothers. The crime rate is rising in almost all Western societies, but the most disturbing fact is the alarming increase in racism. While science always tries to prove the inequality of man (recent survey showing the American Black to be genetically less intelligent than whites) it is only religion that preaches the equality of man. Between 1991 and 1997, it was estimated that total immigration into Europe was around 520,000, and there were racially motivated attacks all over, especially in Britain, France and Germany. In Pakistan during the Afghan war, we had over four million refugees, and despite the people being so much poorer, there was no racial tension.

There was a sequence of events in the 80s that moved me toward God as the Qur'an says: "There are signs for people of understanding." One of them was cricket. As I was a student of the game, the more I understood the game, the more I began to realize that what I considered to be chance was, in fact, the will of Allah. A pattern which became clearer with time. But it was not until

Salman Rushdie's "Satanic Verses" that my understanding of Islam began to develop.

People like me who were living in the Western world bore the brunt of anti-Islam prejudice that followed the Muslim reaction to the book. We were left with two choices: fight or flight. Since I felt strongly that the attacks on Islam were unfair, I decided to fight. It was then I realized that I was not equipped to do so as my knowledge of Islam was inadequate. Hence I started my research and for me a period of my greatest enlightenment. I read scholars like Ali Shariati, Muhammad Asad, Iqbal, Gai Eaton, plus of course, a study of Qur'an. I will try to explain as concisely as is possible, what "discovering the truth" meant for me. When the believers are addressed in the Qur'an, it always says, "Those who believe and do good deeds." In other words, a Muslim has dual function, one toward God and the other toward fellow human beings.

The greatest impact of believing in God for me, meant that I lost all fear of human beings. The Qur'an liberates man from man when it says that life and death and respect and humiliation are God's jurisdiction, so we do not have to bow before other human beings.

Moreover, since this is a transitory world where we prepare for the eternal one, I broke out of the self-imposed prisons, such as growing old (such a curse in the Western world, as a result of which, plastic surgeons are having a field day), materialism, ego, what people say and so on. It is important to note that one does not eliminate earthly desires. But instead of being controlled by them, one controls them. By following the second part of believing in Islam, I have become a better human being Rather than being

self-centered and living for the self, I feel that because the Almighty gave so much to me, in turn I must use that blessing to help the less privileged. This I did by following the fundamentals of Islam rather than becoming a Kalashnikov-wielding fanatic.

I have become a tolerant and a giving human being who feels compassion for the underprivileged. Instead of attributing success to myself, I know it is because of God's will, hence I learned humility instead of arrogance.

Also, instead of the snobbish Brown Sahib attitude toward our masses, I believe in egalitarianism and strongly feel against the injustice done to the weak in our society. According to the Qur'an, "Oppression is worse than killing." In fact only now do I understand the true meaning of Islam, if you submit to the will of Allah, you have inner peace. Through my faith, I have discovered strength within me that I never knew existed and that has released my potential in life. I feel that in Pakistan we have selective Islam. Just believing in God and going through the rituals is not enough. One also has to be a good human being. I feel there are certain Western countries with far more Islamic traits than us in Pakistan, especially in the way they protect the rights of their citizens, or for that matter their justice system. In fact some of the finest individuals I know live there.

What I dislike about them is their double standards in the way they protect the rights of their citizens but consider citizens of other countries as being somehow inferior to them as human being, e.g. dumping toxic waste in the Third World, advertising cigarettes that are not allowed in the West and selling drugs that are banned in the West. One of the problems facing Pakistan is the

polarization of two reactionary groups. On the one side is the Westernized group that looks upon Islam through Western eyes and has inadequate knowledge about the subject. It reacts strongly to anyone trying to impose Islam in society and wants only a selective part of the religion. On the other extreme is the group that reacts to this Westernized elite and in trying to become a defender of the faith, takes up such intolerant and self-righteous attitudes that are repugnant to the spirit of Islam. What needs to be done is to somehow start a dialogue between the two extreme.

In order for this to happen, the group on whom the greatest proportion of our educational resources are spent in this country must study Islam properly.

Whether they become practicing Muslims or believe in God is entirely a personal choice. As the Qur'an tells us there is "no compulsion in religion." However, they must arm themselves with knowledge as a weapon to fight extremism. Just by turning up their noses at extremism the problem is not going to be solved.

The Qur'an calls Muslims "the middle nation", not of extremes. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) was told to simply give the message and not worry whether people converted or not, therefore, there is no question in Islam of forcing your opinions on anyone else.

Moreover, we are told to respect other religions, their places of worship and their prophets. It should be noted that no Muslim missionaries or armies ever went to Malaysia or Indonesia. The people converted to Islam due to the high principles and impeccable character of the Muslim traders. At the moment, the worst advertisements for Islam are the countries with their selective Islam,

especially where religion is used to deprive people of their rights. In fact, a society that obeys fundamentals of Islam has to be a liberal one.

If Pakistan's Westernized class starts to study Islam, not only will it be able to help society fight sectarianism and extremism, but it will also make them realize what a progressive religion Islam is. They will also be able to help the Western world by articulating Islamic concepts. Recently, Prince Charles accepted that the Western world can learn from Islam. But how can this happen if the group that is in the best position to project Islam gets its attitudes from the West and considers Islam backward? Islam is a universal religion and that is why our Prophet (PBUH) was called a Mercy for all mankind. ●

Madrasa Board

Debated for years and cautiously revived again in 2009, the UPA government's plans to set up a Central Madrasa Board (CMB) seem to have hit yet another rough patch.

With no consensus in the Muslim community on the proposed Board, highly placed sources told The Indian Express that Union HRD Minister Kapil Sibal has approached the Parliamentary Affairs Minister for dropping his ministry's "assurance" to set up the Board pending in Parliament now. Sibal will also clarify to both Houses that no step towards setting up the Board will be taken until there is consensus within the community.

(Indian Express 04-03-2010)

How to Confront Anti-Islamism of the West

S. M. Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi*

This is a fact that it is anti-Islamic attitude of Western media which is the main reason of the Western enmity towards Islam and the exceeding distance between them. Even this is the opinion of the fair-minded intellectuals. The president of the largest Jewish organization in the USA, "Union for Reformation of Judaism", Mr. Eric Uni, has blamed US media, as well as the political circles, for character assassination of Islam and depicting Islam as a satanic body. He says that there are misunderstandings among Americans about Muslims because of US media. He added that "We hear many voices from American people saying that extremism and intolerance are the basic elements of Islam but we know nothing about Islam."

Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London, studied different facts of anti-Islamism and concluded that the main cause and the fundamental reason of anti-Islamism is anti-Islamic media which is propagating, under a planned scheme, that there is no possibility, at all, of reconciliation and harmonizing relations between Islam and the West. And to this idea in public mind, they connect every terrorist act with Islam and Muslims. The media adopts this destructive policy in giving coverage to all global events of similar nature.

In September 2007, a report of the British news media has been published which the mayor of London has made a basis of his study and analysis. The expert analysts of British news media have prepared this report after one year research and analysis and a number of international magazines and journals have printed it prominently.

The sum and substance of the

report is that during one week the British media published 352 news items and articles about Muslims. Out of these 91% news were negative. Similarly, in the national newspapers 96% of the news relating to Muslims were negative, and 89% material was negative in prominent British newspaper.

Mr. Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London, commenting on this report, said that any amount of condemnation of criticism of the British media and journalism was fair. It was the responsibility of the editors and programme directors to reconsider and revise their policies and modus operandi. They should give a clear and factual picture of the news about Islam and Muslims.

As per Mr. Ken Livingstone, the British media generally gives the impression that Islam is entirely different from the West and therefore it is a challenge. This is simply a false propaganda. Mr. Ken has equated the methods of British media with the communist's method of atrocities in Russia in 1908 and has added that the British media always ignores the positive aspects of Islam.

The animosity of the orientalist, in the past, with Islam had limited effects. But in this age of advancement of information technology everyone is affected by it. Furthermore, the electronic media has widened these effects greatly and now everyone has misgivings about Islam because of the propaganda by the media. The British media, particularly the BBC network is performing the central role in creating Islamophobia. But Britain is not alone in this planning of anti-Islamism. Now all the European countries are leading in

*Director of Education, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow

this aspect and the media of every country is busy in presenting a terrifying picture of Islam and depicting Islam and Muslims to be a great danger for the world peace, while it is to the contrary. Islam is a religion of peace and security. As a consequence, Islam is astonishingly spreading so fast in Europe and the graphs of other religions are going down. Especially after the incidence of 9/11, it has stunned many American experts by the speed with which Islam is spreading in the USA and Europe. In Vassar College, Mr. Lawrence Mamia, the teacher of African and other religions, has declared that Islam is the fastest spreading religion among the blacks of America after 9/11. Those who accept Islam include people of all strata of society. They believe that it is Islam alone which guarantees peace, security and prosperity. The report also shows a possibility that the western media does not represent the general opinion. Instead it gives a misleading coverage leading to misguidance of public opinion. According to the review, the majority of European people is peace loving and does not want tussle and confrontation. Consequently, 77% of European population favour understanding and friendship between Islam and western countries. Likewise, in Italy 78%, and 69% in the USA do not favour confrontation. This shows that only a very small part of the society favours confrontation and tussle between Islam and the West. These people have their own political motives behind it. 52% of the British people and 85% of the Italian people believe that the conflict and confrontation between Islam and the west is political. Therefore, the basic reason for all that is the inimical attitude of the Western media.

A powerful and effective media in the western world is required to end anti-Islamism by presenting a true and clear picture of Islam in a far-sighted, firm and skillful way. Side by side, it is also a responsibility of Muslims to present a true

and practical picture of Islamic teachings. The president of Italian Islamic organization, Mr. Sheikh Abdul Wahid has strongly emphasized this aspect. He says that four methods can be adopted to end anti-Islamic attitude of the West:

(1) We should prove to be Muslims in the real sense. We should apply Islamic teachings in our own lives and show it as a model of Islamic character to non-Muslims as was done earlier by our ancestors and large areas were converted to Islam by the exemplary characters of the Muslim conquerors.

(2) To establish a powerful and effective media and present Islam in different languages because media will be the most effective method for presenting Islam internationally.

(3) To prepare preachers of Islam in different international languages who must have control over the languages.

(4) All the existing Islamic institutions should stop bickering among themselves and devise a method for the service of Islam, so that the spirit of co-operation and mutual help is created, and instead of paying their attention in one field, the attention is paid in different fields. Considering different challenges, use wisdom and far-sightedness in preparing a program to present an actual and true picture of Islam to non-Muslims.

We had adopted a sort of carelessness towards the attitude of orientalists previously as a result of which their books have given rise to misunderstandings of our past, abhorrence of our present and disappointment of our future, as also suspicious cropped up towards Islam and the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) and the sources of Islam.

If Muslims repeat the same mistake in the case of media as they had done before with orientalists then the result will be much greater than what had happened before because the present age is the age of media. ●

What Drives One to Commit Suicide

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Ever increasing incidences of suicide cases are alarming. Reportedly, in Lucknow recently in a month, 30 persons including nine students have committed suicide.

The State Crime Record Bureau (SCRB) reports that 3,449 persons ended their lives in 2005 whereas figure reached 4,088 in 2008. Statistics of 2009 are still being collected.

Causes of suicides are varying such as poverty, tension, depression, frustration, love affairs, illicit relations, prolonged sickness, mental illness, traumatic events, drug abuse, family disputes, dowry, failure in exam, avarice of materialism, lack of mental happiness, lack of trust and confidence in God and so on.

Plato says: "A person who has committed suicide must be buried without any mark of respect at a lonely place where no monument could be erected at the place of burial." Aristotle says: "Suicide is a cowardly and wretched act unworthy of man." Kant says: "Life must be preserved, whatever the cost be."

No doubt committing suicide is an act of grave sin. That is why one who attempts to commit suicide is guilty of an offence punishable under Section 309 of the IPC which says: "Whoever attempt to commit suicide and does any act towards the commission of such an offence, shall be punished with simple

imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine, or with both."

Similarly suicide is prohibited in Islam. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says: "whoever commits suicide with piece of iron will be punished with the same piece of iron in the Hell fire." Narrated Jundab: The Prophet (PBUH) said, "A man was inflicted with wounds and he committed suicide, and so Allah said: My slave has caused death on himself hurriedly, so I forbid Paradise for him." Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet (PBUH) said, "He who commits suicide by throttling shall keep on throttling himself in the Hell Fire (forever) and he who commits suicide by stabbing himself shall keep on stabbing himself in the Hell fire."

It should be kept in mind that lack of trust and confidence in God often drives one to commit suicide. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says: "If you put your trust in God as He has the right to be trusted, He would provide you sustenance like the birds who fly in the morning in a state of hunger and come back satiated to their nests in the evening, but even the birds have to fly to the fields and gardens in search of their food what does not come to them in their nests. The people who lack confidence and trust in God and do not work cannot meet their expenses and remain depressed and frustrated and resort to illegal means to obtain money.

They do not even hesitate to commit forgery, theft, decoity, robbery, murder and other so many crimes. If they had earned their livelihood through honest and lawful means, they would not have committed such major sins."

As regards students' suicides, parents are more responsible for it. Minister for Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal's recent admonition is thought-provoking. He has blamed parents for students' suicides. He has rightly remarked that children live under constant pressure to meet their parents expectations. They are told to secure more than 90%; they are asked to do this and to do that. It's parents who share the blame of pushing their kids to limits."

Teachers may also play constructive role in keeping students aloof from such acts of cowardice by surmonising and making them aware of its harmful effects.

B. K. Parashar has precisely said "Despite all talks of globalization, poverty still continues to be an important factor responsible for driving many people to commit suicide."

Apart from making the living conditions attractive by providing all possible facilities to people the state and Union governments must ponder over the causes of frustration and do their best to remove them. In a country like India which has the fragrance of spirituality all around the fear of God be instilled in the hearts so one should not even think of getting over the life bestowed to them by the Almighty God. ●

The Kinds of Moral Education

The message of Islam is whole-hearted devotion to Allah's will and guidance. The Islamic teachings relating to morals and behaviour embrace the whole of man's individual and collective life in all its aspects- personal, political, economic as well as what pertains to the spiritual life, thus providing alike for the needs of the body, mind and soul.

The first part of Islamic teachings include the rights which an individual owes to other human beings and animate and inanimate things. He has been ordained to fulfill these rights and obligations as far as possible.

The second part of moral teachings relates to the personal character and behaviour of a person for instance, speaking the truth is one of the virtues as telling a lie is an evil.

The third part of moral teachings is that one should do all his works and deeds in the best possible way according to the Shariah and Islamic etiquettes which must be applied to all our actions and deeds- such as standing, sitting, eating and drinking etc. ●

-S. Sulaiman Nadwi

Goldstone and Gaza

Jimmy Carter*

Richard Goldstone and the United Nations fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict have issued a report about Gaza that is strongly critical of both Israel and Hamas for their violations of human rights. A (recent) special meeting of the U.N. General Assembly began a debate on whether to refer the report to the Security Council. In January 2009 rudimentary rockets had been launched from Gaza toward nearby Jewish communities, and Israel had wreaked havoc with bombs, missiles and groundinvading forces. Judge Goldstone's claim is that they are both guilty of crimes against humanity. Predictably, both the accused parties have denounced the report as biased and inaccurate. It is good to remember that Judge Goldstone, from South Africa, is one of the world's most widely respected jurists, with an impeccable record of wisdom, honesty and integrity. He is a devout Jew and has long been known as a fervent defender of Israel's right to peace and security. In April 2008, I personally visited Sderot and Ashkelon, Israeli communities near enough to have been hit by rockets fired from within Gaza. While there, I condemned these indiscriminate attacks on civilians as acts of terrorism, and I consider their condemnation by Judge Goldstone to be justified. A year later, after the Israeli

attack on Gaza, I was able to examine the damage done to the small and heavily populated area, surrounded by an impenetrable wall, with its gates tightly controlled. Knowing of the ability of Israeli forces, often using U.S. weapons, to strike targets with pinpoint accuracy, it was difficult to understand or explain the destruction of hospitals, schools, prisons, United Nations facilities, small factories and repair shops, agricultural processing plants, and almost 40,000 homes. The Goldstone committee examined closely the cause of deaths of the 1,387 Palestinians who perished, and the degree of damage to the various areas. The conclusion was that the civilian areas were targeted and the devastation was deliberate. Again, the criticism of Israel in the goldstone report is justified. He has called on the United States, Israel and others who dispute the accuracy of the report to conduct an independent investigation is under way, but Israel has rejected Judge Goldstone's request. Putting this dispute aside, it is important to examine present circumstances and the need to prevent further suffering. The rocket fire from Gaza is now being severely restrained, perhaps because of the certainty of Israeli retaliation, but the punishment of the 1.5 million Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza continues. Now has not permitted

*Jimmy Carter was president of the United States from 1977 to 1981 and is a member of the Elders.

cement, lumber, panes of glass, or other building materials to pass their entry points into Gaza. Several hundred thousand homeless people suffered through last winter in a few tents, under plastic sheets, or huddled in caves dug into the debris of their former homes. The weather was warmer when I was there several months later, but the description of suffering through the winter cold was heartbreaking.

Another winter is now (here), and neither the Israelis nor the international community has taken steps to alleviate the Gazans plight. United Nations agencies and leaders in the European community have offered to provide an avenue of channeling funds and building materials directly to the people in need, completely bypassing the Hamas political leaders. These officials, both in Gaza and in Damascus, have assured me that they would accept this arrangement. There would be no chance for the misuse of such assistance for weapons, military fortifications, or other non-humanitarian purposes. I was informed recently by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia that he has pledged \$1 billion, and other Arab leaders have added an additional \$300 million for this purpose. There is little doubt that other nations would also be generous. Without ascribing blame to either of the disputing parties, it is imperative that the United States and the international community take steps to assure that the rebuilding of Gaza be commenced, and without delay. The cries of homeless and freezing people demand relief. ●

(YMD)

Greek Influence

"These Greek sciences are neither our theological sciences nor is the understanding of our religion dependent upon their knowledge. Imam Ghazali had included them in the syllabus of our theological schools so that our Ulema did not remain ignorant of the Greek sources of the philosophical concepts propagated largely by the followers of the Batini sect and could provide a fitting answer to the agnosticism of their time. But now these agnostics have disappeared and so have the Greek sciences. The Rationalists have lost faith in the soundness of the issues raised by them. Their influence has waned automatically and they have ceased to be a threat to Islam. In their place, there are new sciences, new problems and new discoveries, and what the Ulema of today need is to master them in order to remove the current difficulties of Islam and to dispel the doubts and misconceptions of the modern age in a scientific manner." ●

-Shibli Naomani



AROUND THE WORLD

King Faisal Prize for Service to Islam

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose achievements have set an example of judicious leadership in the Islamic world, won the 2010 King Faisal International Prize (KFIP) for Service to Islam. The award for Islamic studies was withheld, as none of the nominees met the criteria laid down by the selection committee this year. The Turkish prime minister has pioneered a major campaign that placed Turkey among the world's leading countries, economically and industrially. His unyielding position on various Islamic and global issues, particularly the rights of the Palestinian people has gained him the respect and admiration of the entire Islamic world and the international community at large. ●

US survey reveals heightened bias against Muslims

Americans are more than twice as likely to express prejudice against Muslims than they are against Christians, Jews or Buddhists, a new survey found. Nearly two thirds of Americans say they have little or no knowledge of Islam. Still a majority dislike the faith. The analysis is from the Gallup World Religion Survey and is part of a project on finding ways to increase understanding between Americans and Muslims. Asked about

the knowledge of Islam, 63 percent of Americans say they have very little or none at all. A large majority of respondents believe most Muslims want peace. Yet, 53 percent of Americans say their opinion of the faith is not too favorable or not favorable at all. The authors of the report say this finding underscores the need for better education on what Islam teaches. The report, from the Muslim West Facts Project, a partnership of Gallup and the Coexist Foundation, is based on a random telephone survey of more than 1,000 adults conducted from October 31 to November 13 of last year. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.4 percentage points.

Basic Human Rights

Human Rights Watch has blasted France's efforts to ban burqa for violating rights of Muslim women, warning the move could stigmatise the whole Muslim minority in the country. "We are still very concerned that the restrictions will seriously interfere with the rights of Muslim women in France- the right to manifest their religion and the right to personal autonomy", Judith Sunderland, senior researcher for Western Europe at Human Rights Watch, told the Inter Press Service. She said that any partial or blanket ban on the face-veil would be a violation of basic human rights. ●

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