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THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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Islamic Culture

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The Prophets of Allah do not only call people to the religion of Islam by presenting tenets of the Islamic Faith and its codes of law; they also pioneer a new culture, a new civilization, and a new way of life. Such a culture can aptly be called "Ibrahimi Culture". This culture has certain fundamental principles and characteristics which distinguish it from other cultures based on ignorance. This distinction may be seen in its spirit and principles as well as in its outward manifestations and details.

The first distinctive characteristic of the Islamic culture is the authentic religious beliefs, social ethics, and moral values on which it is based. This factor is commonly shared by Muslims all over the world, irrespective of their nationality, language, and dressing style. Due to this common feature of a family, easily identifiable as representatives of the same culture. Thus, the Muslims of the world have a specific culture of their own which could be best called the "Ibrahimi Culture". ●

CONTENTS

1- The Place of Knowledge And Responsibilities of Those Who Acquire it	S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi	7
2- The Significance Of Salat in Islam	Syed Sulaiman Nadwi	13
3- Embracing Islam	Sumayyah Bint Joan	19
4- If We Walk Together	Harsh Mander	21
5- Islam And Science	Obaidur Rahman Nadwi	25
6- Prophet: A Model To Emulate	Zeeshan Ahmad	27
7- Accused Without Any Evidence	Vidya Subrahmaniam	29
8- Why Are So Many Modern British Career Women Converting to Islam	Eve Ahmad	32
9- An Honourable Farewell	Irena Akbar	36
10- Around the World		38

Wisdom of Qur' an

Say, 'If sea was ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the sea will be exhausted before the words of my Lord are exhausted,' even if we brought the like of it, in supplement.' Say 'I am only a mortal, the like of you (except that) it has been revealed unto me that your God is One God. So, let him, who desires to meet with his Lord, work righteous deeds and associate not anyone in the worship of his Lord. (Surah al-kahf, 109-110)

Commentary:

Mu'awiyah b. Sufyan is reported (in Tabarani: Ibn Kathir) that this is the last of the verses to be revealed to the Prophet (Ibn Jarir). Probably he meant meaning-wise, and not chronologically, since this is a Makkan chapter (Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Jarir explains the verse with the following report. Somebody asked 'Ubadah b. Samit, "I pray and fast a lot - for Allah. But I wish to be praised for it. What have you to say about it?" He answered, "They are all worthless. Allah has said, 'I am the best of those associated with. If there be a deed in which another has a share, I give away my share also to the one associated."

According to a narration in Hakim and Bayhaqi (judged Sahih by Albani: S.Ibrahim), someone asked the Prophet, "What do you have to say about a man who takes part in a battle seeking the reward as well earning a name; what will he get!?" The Prophet answered, "He will get no rewards." That sounded tough for the Companions, So the man asked the same question but got the same answer thrice, "He will get no rewards" (Alusi, Shwkani).

Ahmed, Nasa' I, Ibn Hibban, Tabarani and Hakim (who declared it trustworthy) have reported the Prophet (PBUH) as having said, "He who fought but did not intend except to get a piece of rope, then he will get what intended" (Alusi). ●

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of God said: "Whoever is offered a sweet-smelling flower should accept it, and not reject it because it is a very ordinary thing. Its fragrance is a thing of joy."

-Muslim

Commentary:

If an ordinary thing like a flower was refused, the giver might feel that his gift had been refused because of its ordinariness, and it hurt his feeling. In another Tradition, quoted in Tirmizi, it is stated that "whoever is offered a sweet-smelling flower should not decline to accept it for a sweet-smelling flower is a gift of paradise". In Sahih Muslim, it is, further, mentioned, oil the authority of Hazrat Anas, that "the practice of the Apostle of God was that he never refused a perfume." ●

It is related by Abudullah bin Omar that the Apostle of God said: "There are three things which, particularly, should not be refused: a pillow, oil (used for applying to hair etc.,) and milk."

-Tirmizi

Commentary:

The peculiarity with the three things mentioned above, again, is that they cost little and the person who offers them is made happy on seeing them being used by the recipient. ●

Acts of God

Recently a much advanced and developed country Japan suffered the triple disasters of quake, tsunami and nuclear crisis. Three days after the massive earth quake hit the north-eastern coast of Japan, American conservative radio host and political commentator Glen Beck called the disaster a "message" from God. South Korea's Yoido Full Gospel Church-said to be the world's largest single church with 8,00,000 members told news media the Japanese had only themselves to blame for the earthquake. "Because the Japanese people shun God in terms of their faith and follow idol worship, atheism and materialism, it makes the wonder if this was not God's warning to them," the pastor said.

Any such natural calamity which has no scientific explanation and causes severe blow to human beings automatically makes one to sit and ponder over the reasons for such a severe punishment. Believers no doubt accept it as an act of God, the creator, and start

searching within themselves the reasons for such a wrath. One may recall that last year a prominent Iranian cleric 'Hujjatalislam Kazem Sedighi attributed the cause of earth quakes in Iran to the immodest clothing of Irani women. He said: "Many women who do not dress modestly lead young men astray, corrupt their chastity and spread adultery in society, which increases earthquakes." Similarly when the tsunami hit Acch, Indonesia, in 2004 Muslim clerics said the disaster was sent by God to punish non-practicing Muslims.

The tragedy of the earthquake-tsunami induced failure at Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant, early close to the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe is no doubt, a grim warning that nuclear holocaust could come to us without a nuclear attack.

Fukushima episode in Japan and Chernobyl in Ukraine, a part of former USSR are the living examples of how men are helpless in the hands of nature.

Seeing the natural calamities and suffering of humanities one has to look for solace. The only soothing effect one can get is from religion. Islam is considered to be a faith which provides wide scope for seeking peace. Moreover, it is the religion which in its scriptures has already warned of such situations:

"When the Earth is shaken to her (utmost) convulsion. And the Earth throws up her burdens (from within). And man cries (distressed): What is the matter with her?. On that Day she will declare her tidings. For that your Lord will have given her inspiration. On that Day men will proceed in companies sorted out, to be shown the Deeds that they (had done). Then anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, shall see it. And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it". (S. 99,A,1-8) The Holy Book further said: "The Day when Man shall remember (all) that he strove for. And Hell-Fire shall be placed in full view for (all) to see. Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds. And had preferred the life this world. The Abode will be Hell-Fire. And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) and had restrained

(their) soul from lower Desires. Their Abode will be the Garden (S. 79, A,35-41) And again: "At length, when there comes the Deafening Noise. That Day shall a man flee from his own brother. And from his mother and his father. And from his mother and his father. And from his wife and his children. Each one of them, that Day, will have enough concern (of his own) to make him indifferent to the others. Some faces that Day will be beaming (bright). Laughing, rejoicing. And other faces that Day will be dust-stained. Blackness will cover them. Such will be Unbelievers, the Doers of Iniquity. (S.80,A,33-42) And again: "O Mankind! Fear your Lord! for the convulsion of the Hour (of Judgment) will be a thing terrible! The Day you shall see it, every mother giving suck shall load (unformed): you shall see mankind as in a drunken riot, yet. not drunk: but dreadful will be the Wrath of Allah. (S. 22, A, 1-2)

In a crisis like one we saw in Japan, Ukraine, Indonesia, Iran and quite recently in South India helplessness of mankind is blatantly obvious. A firm faith in God can be the only remedy to waive of worldly threats. ●

(S. A.)

The Place of Knowledge And Responsibilities of Those Who Acquire it*

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Knowledge, I believe, is one and indivisible, and to separate it into parts, into ancient and modern, eastern and western, and ideological and practical is incorrect. As Iqbal has said:

Talk of modern and ancient is
The sign of narrowness of vision.

I regard knowledge a truth which is a gift of God and does not and should not belong to a particular race or community. I see unity even in its diversity. That unity is truth, search for truth, the aptitude for it, and the joy of its realization. I am grateful to the Chancellor and other officials of the University that their choice for this high academic honour fell upon a person who is associated with the traditional system of education.

Whatever the branch of study, literature, philosophy or science, I do not conform to the view that he alone, is a scholar and an intellectual who appears in its 'uniform' and whoever does not clothe himself with it is not worthy of recognition. The same, unfortunately, is the case even with poetry and literature, and it has come to be taken for granted that any one who does not display his wares in the shop-window or show himself off in the trappings of a poet or writer has forgiven even born litterateurs who did not put on the 'uniform' or were not

lucky enough to obtain one from the 'store-house'. I believe that has always been favoured with Divine guidance. If earnestness is there and the urge is genuine, the grace of the Lord is never withheld. It is always reaching.

At this Convocation of the University of Kashmir, situated as it is in a beautiful valley of the heaven-kissing Himalayas, I am reminded of the incident that had taken place, 1400 years ago, in the arid land of Arabia, and on a mountain which was neither high nor verdant. The tremendous impact it made on history, and the imperishable effect it produced is, absolutely, unique in the annals of our race, and, significantly enough, in the annals of our race, and significantly enough, it, too, was related to the 'tablet' and the 'pen' upon which rested the entire structure of knowledge and civilization, and without which neither the magnificent seats of learning would have come into existence nor the huge libraries. I mean the Divine Revelation that was sent down to the Prophet Muhammad, (PBUH) on or about February, 12,611 A. D. in the Cave of Hira, near Mecca. It said:

"Read (O Muhammad)! In the
Name of thy Lord who created-
Created man out of a (mere)

* The speech delivered on receiving the Degree of D. Litt. (Honoris Causa) at the Seventh Convocation of the University of Kashmir held on October 29, 1981)

clot of congealed blood.

Read! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful,-

He who taught (the use of the)

Pen-

Taught man that which he knew not."

Even in this initial instalment of the Revelation, this first shower of the Mercy, the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds did not put off the proclamation that the destiny of learning was bound up with pen, To be sure, it was in the solitude of Cave Hira where an Unlettered Apostle had gone to seek Message from Almighty God for the guidance and instruction of humanity and whose own state was that he could found at read nor write. Can the like or equal of it be found at any stage of history? And to imagine the sublimity of it. The Revelation is sent down, for the first time, to the Unlettered Prophet in an illiterate country where what to speak of educational institutions, even bare literacy was rare, and contact is established, even hundreds of years, between the sky and the earth, and it begins with Read. He who did not know how to read or write is being commanded to Read. It signified that the community that was to be given to him would not be a mere student, but teacher of the world and bearer of knowledge. It would promote learning among mankind. The era that had been granted to him would not be an era of darkness and ignorance, but of progress and enlightenment.

It declared: Read! I in the Name of thy Lord who created-. The great misfortune was that the bond between knowledge and the Creator had been

broken, and, consequently, learning had lost the sense of purpose and direction, and gone out of the right way. The broken link was restored now when knowledge was glorified. Besides, the warning was, also, given that knowledge should start with the Name of God for it was a Divine gift and could make a steady and balanced progress only under His guidance. It was the most revolutionary and epoch-making call the world had ever heard. No one, indeed, could have conceived of it at that time, and in those circumstances. Had it been put to the thinkers and writers of the world to guess as to how would the Revelation that was going to be received begin and what would take precedence in it, I am sure, no one with an idea of the mental and cultural condition of the Arabs would have said that it would commence with Read.

The announcement that the voyage of knowledge should begin under the guidance of the Omniscient and All-knowing God was unprecedented. It marked a watershed in the world of learning. The journey was long, hard and perilous. It was full of pitfalls. Caravans were robbed in broad daylight. A perfect guide was essential, and who could it be save The Supreme Being, The All-wise? It was not abstract knowledge that was aimed at. Not the knowledge that consisted of ornamenting with colours or playing with the dolls or was meant simply for entertainment or for fighting with one another or filling the belly. Not the knowledge that taught only the use of the tongue. But:

Read! In the Name of thy Lord

who created-

Created man out of a (mere) clot
of congealed blood,

Read! And thy Lord is Most
Bountiful,-

He who taught (the use of the)

Pen,--

Taught man that which he knew
not."

The proclamation was clear,
firm and positive. Read! Your Lord is
Most Benevolent. How can He be
unaware of your needs and
weaknesses? Read! And thy Lord is
Most Bountiful,- He who taught (the
use of the) Pen. What could have
elevated the pen in power and dignity
more than have elevated the pen in
given greater glory and honour to it?
Remember, it was the first Revelation
of Cave Hira and in a town where,
perhaps, there was no pen in any
home. If you needed one, you would
have had to go to a Warqah bin Naufel
or someone who had received
education in Persia.

It, further, unfolded the great
reality that knowledge was infinite. It
was without end, He taught man that
which he knew not. What is science?
What is technology? Man is going to
the moon. We have conquered space,
and pulled the ropes of the earth. Is it
not a miracle?

I shall crave your indulgence,
now, to offer a few suggestions as an
ordinary wayfarer of the valley of
learning.

The foremost task of the
Universities is character-building.
Their endeavour should be to produce
men who, in the words of Iqbal, may not
be willing to sell their conscience for "a

handful of barley". Under the influence
of modern ideologies and current
order of things, it has been presumed
that everyone carries a price. There is
no who cannot be bought in exchange
for something or another.

The real success of a University lies
in moulding the personality of its
scholars in a way and giving such
citizens to the society who do not put
themselves up to auction nor can be
lured away by a destructive ideology
or misguided movement;-such worthy
specimens of humanity as can say
with Iqbal:

By Thy grace, I am not without
honour,

No Toghral's or Sanjar's, slave I
am:

Though world-Seeing is my
nature,

I am no Jamshed's cup.

Secondly, our Universities
ought to send forth men who may be
ready to sacrifice their lives for the
sake of truth, knowledge, reform and
uplift, and derive the same satisfaction
from going without food as people,
generally, do from eating and drinking
to their heart's content, and to whom
loss appears to be more worth-while
than gain.

The Universities should see to
what extent they are being successful
in producing men of real worth and
merit. The greatness of a country does
not depend on the number of the
Universities it has. This criterion has,
now, become out-dated. The real thing
is how many of its citizens are endued
with an awareness of their duties and
obligations and can come forward to
dedicate themselves to the attainment

and promotion of knowledge, growth and development of moral virtues, and suppression of evils like corruption, greed, cruelty and injustice. How many of them are able to rise above personal considerations and lift the country to a higher cultural and spiritual level?

The fundamental aim and purpose of knowledge is to impart a new life and a new soul to the country and the nation. I shall read out to you a few verses from Iqbal which not addressed directly to the poets or writers are applicable to all the branches of learning.

Valuable is the taste for Art, ye men of vision,

But vision that perceives not reality is futile.

The song of the poet or the minstrel's strain,

Worthless is the zephyr which makes the

Garden depressed.

The goal of Art is the flame of immortal life.

Not a spasm or two vanish like sparks.

Before I conclude, let me say a few words to the fortunate brothers who have successfully completed their studies and obtained the degrees or are still under instruction here. I shall take recourse to relating a parable which may sound more agreeable to the ears after the exhortation I have just inflicted upon you.

Once, some students were enjoying a ride in a boat. The time was pleasant, the air was cool, and the young men were in high spirits. With the simpleminded boatman, also, being there to serve as students sit quietly? One of them asked the

boatman, "Uncle! What subjects have you read?" "I have read nothing," the boatman replied. The young man sighed, and said, "Oh! Have you not read science?" "I have not even heard its name," replied the boatman. "But you must be knowing Geometry and Algebra," said another young man, "These names, also, are altogether new for me, came the reply. It was now the turn of the third student to sharpen his wit." "You would have surely studied History and Geography," he said. "Are these the names of men or towns?" asked the boatman in reply. At it, the boys burst into laughter, and enquired from the boatman what his age was. "Forty years or so," he said. "You have wasted half of your life and learnt nothing," remarked the young men. The poor boatman remained silent. Soon afterwards, a storm arose in the river and the boat began to be tossed on unruly waves. Disaster seemed imminent, and the students who had no experience of journey by water felt extremely nervous. They were seized with the fear of their lives. The boatman, then, asked the young men, with feigned seriousness, what they had learnt. Failing to grasp the real intent of the boatman, the students began to give a long list of subjects that were taught in the colleges. When they had finished, the boatman said with a smile, "You have read all these things. But, tell me, have you, also, learnt swimming? If, God-forbidding, the boat over-turns, how will you reach the coast?" "Uncle!" the young men replied, "This is the one thing we do not know. We never thought of learning it," Upon it,

the boatman laughed aloud and remarked, "I have wasted half of my life, but you have lost the whole of your lives. Your education is not going to help you in the storm. Only swimming can save you today, and you do not know it."

The so-called powerful and advanced countries of the present-day world are confronted with an identical situation. The boat of humanity is in grave peril, the tides are moving menacingly towards it, and the shore is far away. The worthy passengers of the boat know everything, but are worthy ignorant to the art of swimming or navigation. Or, in other words, all the intellectual and scientific achievements notwithstanding, the modern man does not know how to live like a civilized and God-fearing human being. Iqbal has drawn pointed attention to the dismal state of affairs, the strange mark before the Twentieth-Century world and brought it at the cross-roads of destiny.

He says:

He who enchained the
sunbeams could not

Unfurl the dawn on life's dark
night:

He sought the orbits of the stars,
but failed

To travel his own thought's
world:

Entangled in the labyrinth of his
learning,

He lost count of good and evil.

The art of leading a good,
useful and dignified life consists,
basically, of God-fearingness,
humanitarianism, self-restraint and

willingness to subordinate one's own advantage to the common good. Unselfish interest in the welfare of others, respect for mankind, the urge to protect the life, property and honour of fellow-men, preference for duties over rights, defense of the weak and the down-trodden and the strength to stand up against the oppressors, firmness in opposition to those who have nothing to be proud of save power and wealth and refusal to be over-awed by them, the courage to speak the truth at all times and in respect of one's own country, belief in an All-knowing and All-seeing Power, and anxiety of being recreated after death and called upon to render a full account of one's doings on the earth,- these are the essential conditions of a good and noble life, and the fundamental requirements society, and a strong and honourable nation. To arrange for training and instruction in these attributes and to create an environment that may be conducive to their development is the primary responsibility of educational institutions.

Occasions like the Convocation we have the honour to be attending today offer an excellent opportunity to look into ourselves and see how successful our educational institutions are in the realization of these ends, and what is the worth and calibre, in that regard, of the scholars produced by them, and draw up plans for the future.

I thank you, once again, for the honour bestowed upon me, and the affection and trust you have been kind enough to express through it. ●

Cardiologist from Denmark Gives Mantras to Ward off Diabetes

Eminent cardiologist from Denmark Prof Lionel H Opie on Sunday gave five mantras to stay safe from diabetes.

Opie was in the city for the book-release function of his work 'Living Longer, Living Better-exploring the heart mind connection. The event was organized by Sahara Hospital on Sunday.

In his address, Opie said, "the heart and mind connect to form an individual. A fast, stressing and sedentary lifestyle scatters the three. This leads to diseases."

He said, the psycho-physiological pressures become evident in increased heart rate and blood pressure, which often causes disease. "A healthy mind can overcome these pressures and it shields the heart against diseases," he said. Opie stated that Indians have an edge and irrespective of their problems. They manage to stay happy.

Another scientist Dr Peter Gaede from University of Copenhagen, Denmark lectured on diabetes and effects of intensified intervention in patients while treating the disease.

The programme was attended by Padamshri Dr Mansoor Hasan and Dr Nakul Sinha. ●

(The Pioneer,7-4-11)

The Significance Of Salat in Islam

Syed Sulaiman Nadwi

There is hardly any religion of the world which has not prescribed Salat but since the teachings of those religions were limited and confined to particular people and nations, they lost their significance in practical lives. Before the advent of Islam, no religion of the world could give the practical form of Salat (prayer) as an expression of perfect faith of Allah's bondsmen in Him and complete resignation and submission to His Will. Islam taught what is to be recited in Salat (prayer) and with which words His humble servants should supplicate, praise and glorify Him. According to the Holy Qur'an there was not a single Prophet who had been sent to this world on whom Salat (prayer) had not been enjoined and he had not ordained his followers to observe the prayer; but the position is that with the exception of Islam his proper shape of prayer does not exist anywhere in the world or it is strictly observed as a primary obligatory duty. Since the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is the Last of the Prophets and the Holy Qur'an is the last of the Divine Books, this obligatory duty was given a clear, well defined perfect shape and a prominent position in Islam – an abiding and enduring Din (religion) which Allah revealed to His Prophet, Muhammad (PBUH) in its complete and perfect form to guide the humanity so long as this world exists.

This is the duty which every Muslim is bound to perform so long as his senses are working. The Holy Qur'an has

praised, more than a hundred times those who pray and has exhorted the followers of Islam to observe this duty strictly. Slackness and laziness in prayer are signs of hypocrisy and abandoning it is a Kufr (disbelief). The command for Salat was given at the advent of Islam but it was enjoined in its complete and perfect form during the Holy Prophet's Ascension (Mir'aj) to heavens.

The first and foremost command in Islam is to affirm One's implicit belief in the articles of Faith (Iman) and its requisites. Next comes the command of Salat (Prayer)

It has been ordained in the Holy Qur'an:

That is the right religion but most men not turning unto Him (only); and be careful of your duty unto Him and establish worship, and be not of those who ascribe partners (unto Him). (39: 30, 31)

It is evident from the above verse of the Holy Qur'an that after Iman, the next most important duty is that of Salat (Prayer) and that abandonment of Prayer may possibly lead a person to Kufr (disbelief) and Shirk (polytheism) as unless we purify the spiritual state of our mind or heart and translate these ideals or beliefs of ours into practical reality or actions, we cannot achieve spiritual elevation. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) always laid stress on the significance of Salat and expressed his fear that he who abandons the Prayer runs the risk of committing Kufr or Shirk.

So the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: Prayer is the pillar of religion. If the pillar gives way, the whole building which stands on it will fall down. When the envoy of Ta'if negotiated with the Holy Prophet (PBUH) for peace and asked that they might be exempted from the last two things but he said regarding the prayer: There is no goodness in the religion which does not teach to bow before Allah. He further said: Prayer is the light and soul of religion. It is the fire of separation from the Lord and prayer is pure and pleasant water which puts out that fire. The distinction between Kufr (disbelief) and Iman (Faith) is that of prayer. It is an expression of the highest and most noble inner feelings of man's love and devotion for Allah. In the last moments of the life 'of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) the words prayer and slave were on his lips.

The Real Significance of Prayer

The correct Arabic word used for prayer is Salat which stands for Du'a in Arabic and Hebrew languages so, in the literal sense, it means prayer or supplication or request to Allah and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has also given the same interpretation of this word. Mu'awiya b. al-Hakam said: While I was praying with the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), a man in the company sneezed. I said: Allah have mercy on you! The people stared at me with disapproving looks, so I said: Woe be upon me, why is it that you stare at me? They began to strike their hands on their thighs and when I saw them urging me to observe silence (I became angry) but I said nothing. When the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) had said the prayer, I swear that he did not scold, beat or revile me but said: Talking to persons is not fitting during the prayer, for it consists of glorifying Allah, declaring His

Greatness or recitation of the Qur'an or words to that effect. I said: Messenger (PBUH) reported: Allah's Messenger (PBUH) once said: Prayer is the essence of worship. Nu'man b. Bashir al-Ansar reported: Messenger of Allah said: Prayer means 'Ibadat (worship) and then to elucidate this point he recited the following verse of the Holy Qur'an.:

And your Lord has said: Pray unto me and I will hear your prayer. Lo! those who scorn my service, they will enter hell disgraced. (40: 60)

In Mustadrak (Kitab al_Du'a) it has been mentioned that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: The most excellent worship is prayer and then he recited the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

Exhorting Musa (Peace be upon him) to establish worship, Allah, the O Exalted, has explained the significance of His Dhikr (prayer, remembrance) in only one word:

Lo! I, even I, am Allah; There is no god save Me. So serve Me and establish worship for my remembrance. (20: 14)

It has been said in the Holy Qur'an that success and salvation have been promised for him who is not forgetful of His Dhikr and worships Him. It has been in the Holy Qur'an:

He is successful who growth, And remembereth the name of his Lord, so prayeth. (86: 14, 15)

When all the struggles and planning of a person prove to be in vain and he fails to achieve the desired results of his efforts and he finds himself quite helpless before the mighty hand of Nature: when he is rejected at every door and finds no rescue; when he imagines that this world and every object therein including himself is transitory and is to

meet its destruction, he is in the grip of extreme anxiety and discomfort of heart and mind. In these critical moments of his life, the only source of comfort and peace of mind is to seek Allah's help and to pray to grant him the good in this world and the good in longings of one's heart which the humble servant of Allah conveys to His Lord in the hope that He would grant them. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an:

A believer has, therefore, been ordained to show patience and perseverance and seek Allah's help through prayer; and truly it is hard adversities.

Seek help in patience and prayer; and truly it is hard save for the humbled-minded. (2: 45)

The whole creation, animate or inanimate, in the heavens or the earth, is bound to submit to Him and follow His Law. The sun, the moon, the stars, mountains, deserts, jungles, forests, birds and animals-all obey Him and none of them can deviate from the Divine Law. Their prayer and Dhikr or Tasbih consists in their obedience to Allah's will and command. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an.

The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but hymneth His praise; But ye understand not their praise. (17: 44)

Haste thou not seen that unto Allah payeth adoration whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth, and the sun and the moon, and the stars, and the hills and the moon, and the stars, and the hills and the trees, and the beasts, and many of mankind, while there are many unto whom the doom is justly due. (22: 18)

Just think, everything on the earth

and in the heavens is bound to bow before the creator without exception, Despite this, there is a considerable number of men who denies Him and does not bow their heads before Him and as such they incur the displeasure of Allah and will be punished for their arrogance. With the exception of man, the rest of the creation is constrained to obey the Divine Law as it has not been given the free will and the power to do anything of its own accord. It is working according to Allah's will from the very attitude of man is that he has taken an undue advantage of the limited freedom which Allah has, in His infinite grace and mercy granted to him and has become disobedient and rebellious. Islamic prayer calls all the people to come to prayer! Come to salvation! And be His pious and obedient servants. When the whole creation glorifies Allah in their own way and language of prayer, why a man should not pray and glorify him?

Prayer as a means of Spiritual Elevation

The significance of prayer from the spiritual of view is that a man should give thanks to Allah, the Creator of the universe, the Provider and Sustainer of all, the Sovereign Lord, the Great Bestower, for His infinite favours and rewards form the core of his heart so that His magnificence and majestic glory and Greatness should be fully impressed on his heart and he should feel that He is very close and near to him and has immense love for him. The belief in the Omnipotence of Allah should take firm roots in him. He should never forget that He is fully aware of what he does and knows, even the desires and intentions of his heart and nothing is hidden from His sight. He must, therefore, feel

remorse on the evil suggestions of his heart and refrain from sinful acts. Once the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was sitting among the companions when there appeared a man and said to him (the Holy Prophet): Inform me about Iman. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) explained it. He (the inquirer) again said: Inform me about al-Ihsan (performance of good deeds). He (the Holy Prophet) said: That you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him for though you do not see Him, He, verily, sees you. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) while teaching a person the etiquettes of prayer said: When anyone of you is engaged in prayer, he is holding conversation with his Lord, so none of you should spit in front of him. It has been reported by Ibn 'Umar that one night when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was observing I'tikaf and the people were perhaps observing Tarawih separately, he (the Holy the Prophet) looked out and said: O people! When any one prays, he is holding conversation with his Lord and he must be aware what he is saying. So do not suppress each other's voice. Now you must have understood how does this habit of prayer exert its influence on the mind and heart of a sincere worshipper and how significant is its role in rectifying his conduct and behavior. The Holy Qur'an has explained this fact in the following verse.

Recite that which hath been inspired in that of the Scripture, and establish worship. Lo! Worship preserveth from lewdness and inequity, but verily remembrance of Allah is more important. And Allah knoweth what ye do. (29: 45)

Thus there are two advantages of prayer, the first is that it prevents a man from sin and indecency and the second

is that it purifies the heart and soul and fosters Taqwa (piety, fear of Allah) in him which implies submission to Allah's commands and abstinence from that he has been commanded not to do. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an:

He is successful who growth,
And remembereth the name of his Lord, so prayeth.

It is evident that prayer prevents man from moral indecencies and enables him to grow spiritually:

Lo! Man was created anxious,
Fretful when evii befallerth him
And, when good befallerth him,
grudging; save worshippers Who are
constant at their worship. (70: 19-23)

Due to these blessings and rewards of prayer the Holy Prophet (said to his companions: If there was a river at the door of anyone of you and he took a bath in it five times a day would you notice any dirt on him? They said: Not a trace of dirt would be left. The Prophet (PBUH) added: That is the example of the five prayers with which Allah blots out (annuls) evil deeds. Once a bedouin Muslim inquired the Holy Prophet (PBUH) as to how could his sin be expiated. Upon this the following verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed:

Establish worship at the two ends of the day and in some watches of the night. Lo! good deeds annul ill deeds. (11: 114)

It is clear from the above details that the mainspring and origin of noble thoughts, feelings and sentiments which Islam aims at arousing in its followers is Salat or prayer observed carefully fulfilling all the requisite conditions and formalities. In view of its great importance, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has called the prayer as one of

the pillars of Islam. If it falls the whole edifice (of religion) would surely fall down.

Prayer consists in devotion and humility, remorse and repentance, obedience and submission, praise and glorification of Allah. It is an expression of one's helplessness and humility before his Lord. It aims at purifying the heart and soul and to achieve this objective such articles and conditions of prayer and bodily movements have been prescribed as are meant to awaken the consciousness of man's being present before the Creator and Master of the universe, lowering his gaze, the right hand placed on the left, supplicating before Him as His loyal and obedient servant. His praying place should be free from impurities like his body and dress. As the impurities on the body produce not only unhealthy effects on his physical being but also on his mental health, Islam stresses that the process of the purification of soul should also start with the physical efforts of purifying the body that a man could fully develop the spiritual element in him and be the recipient of Allah's great rewards and blessings.

This is the reason why the congregational obligatory prayer has preference over the individual obligatory prayer and the obligatory prayer which is offered in the mosque has preference over that offered in the house. The scene of the mosque, the rows of worshippers bowing heads and prostrating before One and the same God, the unity and discipline, not only lifts the soul to the spiritual height, but also illuminates the body with the light of God consciousness. ●

Continued from page No 26

Yunus made use of pendulum for the measurement of time. Ibn Sina used air temperature. Paper, compass, gun, gunpowder, inorganic examples of scientific and technological developments of Muslim scientists, which brought about an unprecedented revolution in the human civilization. (Islam and Evolution of Science, P,15)

Strangely despite this genuine fact when we hear the word science our attention is surely be drawn to the west. There are two reasons behind it. One is that biased historians ignored most names of Muslim scientists. Even if they mentioned some of them, that too in distorted form. Take for instance, Abu Ali Sina is known as Avesina, Zakariyyah Al-Razi (Razes), Jabir Ibn Hayyan (Geber) and so on, what to speak of non- Muslims even educated Muslims do not know that Avesina, Razes and Jaber were from Muslim community.

It is time we must bring contributions and achievements of Muslim scientists in focus so that our new generation may learn of their achievements and derive benefit out of the works of these doyens of science.

It is unfortunate that today scant attention is being paid to education by Muslims. While other people are being benefited by our ancestors scientific achievements and contributions. The need of the hour is that we must impart our children good education and adorn them with good qualities and sublime norms only then our past glory may again come back. Besides we may act on the first revelation which Allah sent to His last Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for creating a new civilization. ●

'Islam Teaches to be Faithful to Your Country'

Chief Imam of Masjid al Haram (kaba) Sheikh Abdur Rahman Al-Sudais called upon Muslims to propagate the message of peace and love in the world and urged them to live with harmony with their non-Muslim brothers.

Imam was addressing a sea of clansmen at the Friday prayer at Rashidiya Mosque during his maiden visit to Darul Uloom of Deoband.

People from across the country including various districts of western UP descended in huge number to hear the speech of their most pious Imam who had come from Saudi Arabia.

Referring to the bilateral relations between Saudi Arab and India, Imam said it would only strengthen with time. "I am glad to know that Muslims in India have been living with peace and harmony with one another showing respect and honour for their country "he said while delivering his speech in Arabic.

"I will share my experience and feelings with Badshah Abdullah and his successor and convey the message of Deoband, he said. While making a special prayer, Imam begged to Allah, "Let the peace and happiness rest upon the people of India, Islamic countries and Badshah Abdullah of Saudi".

Stressing that Islam and prophet have come as blessings for the entire world, he urged Muslims to follow prophet's teachings. Referring to Hadees (Prophet's teaching), Imam clarified that it was the duty of everyone to be faithful to the soil where they live.

He further said that Muslims in India were good citizens because they follow the teachings of religion and expressed hope that Indian Muslims continue to follow the ethics of Islam. Dubbing Darul Uloom as the biggest seminary imparting Islamic education, he said thousands of Ulema who passed out from here have been enlightening the world with their religious knowledge and wisdom.

He also recalled his meetings with mohtamim of the seminary Maulana Murgubur Rehman and expressed his deep condolences for him. Prior to this, officiating rector of the seminary Mufti Abul Qasim Naumani welcomed Imam and presented him a citation. Those who offered prayer behind Imam include seminary's Mohatmim Gulam Mohammad Vastanvi, officiating mohtamim Mufti Abul Qasim Naumani, Maulana Arshad Madani, MP Mohd Azharuddin, union minister of state for tourism Sultan Ahmad, deputy mohatamim of the seminary Maulana Abdul Khaliq Sambhali, Ambassador of Saudi Arab, Sheikhul Hadeed Maulanan Abdul Haq etc. ●

Embracing Islam

Sumayyah Bint Joan

Ever since I was a little girl, I have always had a profound relationship with God. Even though I was raised a Catholic, with all its ambiguities, contradiction and confusion, I did my best to stay God-focused and not to give in to the teachings of the Church, because even to me as a child, they seemed to go against the grain somehow.

During my high school days, I made a conscious decision to apply myself more thoroughly to my faith. I attended mass twice a day, every day; went to the confessional at least once a week, and did all the ritual practices my priest insisted upon; all in an effort to draw closer to a God.

The church failed to answer all of life's most pressing questions: who am I, who and what is God, why am I here, and what should be my relationship with this superior Being who created the universe? How am I supposed to live my life? Who is my role model, and how should I follow Him?

My priest was unable to answer my questions, beyond stating that I should have faith, and that it did not all have to make sense as long as my faith was strong enough. This did not satisfy me, and on finishing high school, I left the church and set out on a quest to find the correct way, belief and religion.

I investigated a number of religions in an effort to get rid of this internal emptiness. I practiced Hinduism, Taoism, Zen Buddhism, and

in later years even dabbled in White Witchcraft. Now, most people may find this crazy, but you have to understand that I was searching, truly searching, but all these left a void, and just never seemed to fit.

Then one day my sister came to see me and what I saw took me by surprise. She entered the house with a very long dress and was covered from head to toe. Her hair was covered by an opaque scarf and came over her chest to right above her waist. After asking her why she was dressed like that in the middle of summer when it's at least 85 degrees outside, she explained to me that she was a Muslim.

Now, of all the religions I looked into, I never thought of investigating Islam, mainly because there did not seem to be a lot of information readily available, and because I carried a lot of the Islamic stereotypes in my head, that I now have to deal with in other people. So I left my family and moved to California, still without a religion, or a sound relationship with God.

In the beginning a lot of stereotypes about Islam kept me from studying about this religion.

At that point I gave up, and just decided to go with the flow, and not worry about it. I did this for two years, and although I found love got engaged to marry to my college sweetheart; something was still missing.

In the back of my mind, there was always that nagging voice that

kept telling me that my life was out of order, but I would do my best to ignore it, until one fateful night. Right before I was due to leave California, and return to my home state to be with my fiancé and begin building our lives together, I had the scariest dream I have ever had in my life.

In this dream, two very tall men dressed in white were standing at the foot of my bed. As I looked at them, I thought they were either aliens or angels, I wasn't sure which, but I was very afraid and was trying my utmost to get away from them, but the harder I tried to get away, the closer they got.

Eventually, we ended up on top of a very high mountain, with a sea beneath us as red as blood and as hot as lava. The two men pointed and instructed me to look into the sea. What I saw will stay with me until the day I die. The sea was full of naked people, being turned over and over, like meat being roasted over a fire, and they were screaming, "Help us, help us!"

Needless to say, I felt I was getting a first-hand glimpse of Hell, and I was terrified. I told my fiancé about the dream, and he just laughed and said that I had an overactive imagination, but I could not dismiss it so easily.

When I returned to Michigan, I found out that my other sister and my cousin had also embraced Islam during my absence.

This made me curious, so I asked my sister to give me some books to read, and one of the first was Descriptions of the Hell Fire. Everything that was in my dream was in this book. I was floored.

So I began reading and reading, and going to lectures and asking questions, and the more I learned about Islam, the more my head and heart told me that this was what I was looking for all along.

I had made up my mind to embrace Islam but I had one small problem, my fiancé. He was adamant that he was not going to be a Muslim, so I had to choose between the man I loved and doing what I knew in my heart was right.

Allah, SWT, says that if you say you truly believe in Him and His Messenger, (PBUH), He will test you, and this was my test. Despite the great amount of pain it caused me at the time, I did choose Islam over my fiancé.

That was almost six years ago, and Allah has since blessed me with a wonderful husband who loves Him and His Messenger (PBUH), and a beautiful son. Allah says for all who truly want guidance, He will lead them from darkness into light; and I know that is what He did for me. ●

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of God said: "whoever failed to give thanks to anyone who did a favour to him failed to give thanks to God."

-Musnad-i-Ahmad and Tirmizi

If We Walk Together

Harsh Mander

Each year, a fresh but weary harvest of young boys migrate from Baruliya—a village of mud and thatch homes of mostly Muslim residents, in Darbhanga district of Bihar – to seek work in small factories or as domestic help in cities and towns scattered across the country. Some save a little money to send home, but most can barely fend only for themselves. There are boys and young men who return to their families once or twice a year; others leave never to return, lost to their families for all time. For their parents left behind, the only work to be found is in the fields of landowners. Even this work is uncertain, dependent on whether the rain falls, when it falls and how much: there can be drought and there can be floods, or both. For farm employment, they are paid wages of little more than Rs. 50 a day. In lean months, the adults also migrate to bidi factories across the state.

A dusty, two – hour drive from Kolkata is another Muslim settlement in Diamond Harbour – part village, part slum. Most residents pull rickshwas in Kolkata, or labour in farmers' fields' closer home. The women earn at most Rs, 50 a day, in home – based embroidery or tailoring. There is no drainage, sewage disposal or piped water. Their hovels are surrounded by slime. Only a fifth of them have ration cards, but even these are almost useless because the shop selling subsidized grain rarely opens. The residents believe that education is the only path which can

lead their children to a better life. But they are convinced that life will be only worse, not better for their children. This is their life's only certainty.

Our travels to districts with a high Muslim population in three states, Bihar, West Bengal and Haryana – demonstrated to my colleagues and me how little recent government initiatives had altered significantly the conditions of penury and settled despair of poor Muslim household. The high – level committee of 2006 – chaired by Justice Sachar and appointed by India's Prime Minister to examine the conditions of Muslims in the country – had suggested many ways to reverse their cycles of poverty, low-end employment and poor educational attainments, and secure for them a better future. We tried to understand why the recent slew of official initiatives has so far failed to illuminate the lives of millions of India's largest socio-religious minority.

Low allocation

There are extraordinarily low budgetary ambitions of programmes for socioeconomic development of a historically disadvantaged community of 177 million people. The per capita plan allocation of resources for minorities in 2010-11 was as paltry as Rs. 797, below even allocations for Scheduled Tribes of Rs. 1,521; and Rs. 1,228 for Scheduled Castes. Religious minorities, including Muslims, constitute 19 per cent of the populations, but budgetary allocations for schemes designed for them is a little

over five percent of total plan allocations.

The Government's major flagship programme in response to the Sachar findings, the Multi-Sectoral Development Programme (MsDP), identifies 90 districts in which Muslims are 25 per cent or more of the population. In these districts, officials prepare area-development programmes, mostly for augmenting infrastructure. They are not required to – and are often actively discouraged from – actually targeting expenditure to Muslim dominated villages, hamlets or urban settlements. As a result, although money from this modestly funded programme is spent in districts with higher proportions of Muslims, we found that the projects mostly are neither located in nor benefit the Muslim population.

Unanimous demand

Muslim women and men, rich and poor, of all ages, in villages and in towns who my colleagues and I encountered in our travels were unanimous about one thing: the single most important and valued contribution that they wanted from government was education, in government institutions with both Hindu and Muslim children. Muslim settlements have few government schools, and those that exist lack facilities and staff. They also require for older girls exclusively girls' schools, and residential hostels for both boys and girls. If this deficit is to be addressed, those Muslim villages, hamlets and urban slums which lack schools at various levels should be identified, and schools opened and equipped with buildings, teachers and facilities.

In Mewat district in Haryana –

with 80 per cent Muslims in a state in which they constitute barely five per cent of the total population – there are less than 5,000 Muslim students in secondary school. My colleagues visited a Muslim village and found the primary school with 'a dilapidated building, barren courtyard and dingy classrooms,. But instead of spending MsDP funds to upgrade this school, the government preferred to spend it on a neighbouring, wealthier non-Muslim village. This pattern was repeated in all the other districts we visited. In Darbhanga, in 2009, 10, 66 new primary schools were opened, ostensibly for enhancing access to children from minority backgrounds. Curiously, only seven of those were in minority concentration areas. Programme projects were to build additional classrooms for schools and hostels, but these had few Muslim children enrolled and mostly in areas with few minority habitations.

Officials we spoke to shared in private that they were actively discouraged to map and target their plans to Muslim settlements. In any case, this is not mandated in the scheme instruction. There appears at all levels reluctance, once again, to boldly target services to this disadvantaged community, for fear of accusations of 'appeasement'.

For Government's attempt to close the vast livelihood gap of Muslims in 24 Parganas, we found that only 2.2 per cent minority BPL households have been covered by the self-employment SGSY scheme, and less than 1 per cent of the households have actually received bank credit. Likewise, in MG

NREGA, although Muslims constitute 36 per cent of the population and 45 per cent of the job card holders, they account for only 13 per cent of the wage employment generated under the programme.

There are grave problems also with the institutional machinery created by government to deliver these modest initiatives. In districts, we encountered officials who were de-motivated, untrained and often carried mainstream prejudices against Muslim people. They prepare plans without ever consulting the intended recipients: Muslim youth, women and impoverished workers. In state capitals, minority departments were typically marginalized, under-resourced and under-staffed. At the apex in Delhi is the union Ministry of Minority Affairs. It faces role confusion similar to other Ministries such as for tribal, women and child welfare. These ministries tend to have a self-image of being marginalised to the side-lines in the hierarchies of power. They have modest budgets because they are not primarily implementing, but advocacy departments. They should monitor and advocate for the disadvantaged group with each central Government department and state government. But for this responsibility, they neither have the clout, nor the motivation.

Instead, as acutely observed by the lead researcher of our study, Sajjad Hassan, '...there seems excessive anxiety to dissociate schemes for minority development from the minorities... Government has been unable to cut through the tired, and by now defeated argument that schemes

specially for Muslims are potentially socially disruptive, and hence best avoided. If anything, social cohesion is best promoted by engendering equity, something that requires tailor-made targeted interventions for those left behind by the development has been reduced to an area-scheme that misses everyone.

Workable solutions

If governments are to assist millions of indigent people of Muslim faith in India out of poverty and exclusion, the answers are so not hard to find. The Sachar Committee Report itself lists many solutions. Government must create a separate budgetary sub-plan for investment exclusively on development programmes for Muslims, in the way that governments have done for Scheduled Castes part of these earmarked resources in building schools and technical institutes which are located in or near Muslim habitations, and to provide stipends, scholarships and residential schools to make in feasible economically for impoverished parents to send their children to school and college rather than to work. Textbooks and the school environment must be egalitarian and respect diversity. The doors of banks should open to people of minority faiths, and disadvantaged castes, and traditional livelihoods of small producers protected. Diversity should be actively promoted in the work place – public and private – and in habitats. Discrimination should be legally and resolutely resisted.

The burdens of history cannot be shed in a day. But we can surely walk that path if we walk together. ●

Ex-NBRI Scientist Honoured

A felicitation ceremony to honour Dr Muhammad Iqtedar Husain Farooqi, who is a retd NBRI scientist and recipient of Oman Award, was held at Jai Shankar Prasad Hall under the joint auspices of Media Foundation and Society for Promotion of Health and Education.

Sultan Qaboos of Oman presented Dr Muhammad Iqtedar Husain Farooqi an amount of 25,000 dollars in appreciation of his books 'Plants of Quran and Medicinal Plants in the traditions of Prophet'.

The programme was presided over by Maulana Syed Rabey Hasani Nadwi, President of All India Muslim Personal Law Board and Rector of Nadwa. A New publication entitled 'Muslim societies – rise and fall' by Dr MIH Farooqi was also released by Maulana Nadwi on this occasion.

Ex-prof JNU Sharib Rudaulvi emphasized on the need of education to abolish the social evils of society. Muslims were presently in a deprived state. They have been unable to create awareness amongst people about the importance of education. "Although we have opened several educational institutes, we lack in providing education to those who need it," he added.

V-C Arabi, Urdu Farsi University, Anees Ansari, complemented Dr Farooqi for his contribution to create scientific temper in the society and bring religion and science closer with each passing day.

Dr MIH Farooqi informed that in his book 'Muslim societies rise and fall' is based on glorious past of Muslims and their deprived state at different countries in the present scenario. He said relevant information about Muslims from time of the prophet till 2008, has been revealed in the book like. The information is related to factors like population, GDP, education, achievement and finances. He said he collected the information during five years of research from Internet, religious books and via social awareness.

He mentioned that the topic of status of Muslim women in Islamic societies present and past was the most challenging of all when it came to writing. He mentioned that the preface of the book was worked out by Syed Hamid.

The meeting was attended by prominent scholars of Lucknow including renowned botanisi and ex-director of botanical survey of India Kolkata, Dr SK Jain, senior journalist, Abid Suhail, social activist, Choudhary Sharafuddin, proprietor of Hayat Hospital, Maulana Zaheer Siddiqi, Padamshri Dr Mansoor Hasan, Head Cardiologist Sahara Hospital, Ex prof, LU, Begum Sabira Habib and others. ●

Islam And Science

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

The Arabic word for Science (ilm) in English corresponds to "Knowledge" or "Learning". From the Islamic point of view knowledge means to uncover the truth and strengthen the faith of a believer. Islam is the only religion which has made education obligatory and mandatory for its adherents. Even the first revelation was sent to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by Almighty Allah also indicates towards knowledge. The holy Qur'an says: "Read in the name of thy Lord Who created-Created man form a clot of blood. Read: Your Lord is the most bountiful. He who taught the use of the pen, taught man that which he knew not" (S.96, A-1-5)

If we think why God commenced the first revelation with reading, we find that the age in which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent, the age of ignorance and illiteracy. It is obvious that without education ignorance and stagnation cannot be dispelled.

One of the distinctive features of Islam is that it forged a close and pious link between religion and knowledge. The holy Qur'an carries a number of verses on different branches of knowledge-Cosmology, Astronomy, Astrology, Physics, Mathematics, Geology, Botany, Zoology, Biology, Agriculture, Economics, Anthropology, History and the likes.

An eminent writer Ahmad Fariruddin writes: "in the Quran matters relating to science have been referred to at 750 places whereas matters relating to law have been mentioned at 250 places".

Needless to add that the word

Earth is mentioned in the Qur'an more than 460 times and it is mentioned in three different contexts. When the Qur'an talks about the earth in comparison with heavens, with the moon or the sun or the stars, it means the whole planet earth. When the Qur'an talks without reference of these planetary bodies it may mean the crust on which we live, the continental masses or what covers that crust of soil. In so doing the Qur'an describes the earth its shape, motions and origin, describes mountains, the origin of the atmosphere and the hydrosphere, the darkness at the bottom of the ocean, the darkness in outer space and many of the phenomena. (Scientific Signs in the Holy Book, p,11)

Islam says that nothing is useless in this cosmos. The holy Quran says: "Our Lord! Not for naught have thou created all this. Glory to Thee; give us salvation from agony of fire". (S.3, A 191)

Islam stands for its followers to acquire knowledge and study whatever lies in the heavens and on the earth as stated in the Qur'an: "Say: behold all that is in the heavens and on earth. (S 10, A 101) The holy Qur'an further says: "Behold in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alteration of night and day; There are indeed signs for men of understanding".

It should be kept in mind that at the very outset due attention was paid to science by Muslims. No doubt, contributions and achievements which Muslims made in the field of science have no parallel in the history of the world. Even

caliphs had also shown their keen interest in developing science. Accordingly caliph Al-Mansoor, caliph Haroon Rashid and his able son Al-Mamoon and later other caliphs also played a constructive role in promoting science in various ways. Caliph Al-Mamoon had established a great research centre in the name of Baitul-Hikmah (The house of wisdom). A number of books had been rendered into various languages and brought out from that centre.

It should be noted that Islam has never been a barrier in progress and development. History can not cite any instance from other religions of the world that has played a leading role in the field of science and technology as Islam did. In the words of noted Islamic Scholar late Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi: "There is not a single sector of European revival which is not indebted to Islamic thought. Islam imparted a new glow of life to Europe"

In his book, Islam at the Crossroads Muhammad Asad has rightly said: "History proves beyond any possibility of doubt that no religion has ever given a stimulus to scientific progress similar to that of Islam. The encouragement which learning and scientific research received from Islamic theology resulted in the splendid cultural achievements in the days of the Umayyads and Abbassides and the Arab rule in Spain. Europe should know this well, for its own culture owes to Islam nothing less than the Renaissance ("re-birth") after centuries of darkness. I do not mention this in order that we might pride our selves in those glorious memories at a time when the Islamic world has forsaken its own tradition and reverted into blindness and intellectual poverty. We have no right, in our present misery, to

boast of past glories. But we must realize that it was the negligence of Muslim and not any deficiency in the Islamic teaching which caused our present decay.

Similar thoughts have been expressed by Maulana S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi, Rector Nadwatul-Ulama, Lucknow and President All India Muslim Personal Law Board: "When Europe was passing through darkness and ignorance of the Middle Ages, Muslim world was producing scholars, thinkers, educationists and eminent masters of physical and social sciences. European writers have quite often acknowledged that for six hundred years Europe learnt and benefited from the researches of Muslims before commencing their march to progress."

In the words of Marquis of Duffering: "It is the Musalman science, Musalman art, and the Musalman literature that Europe has been in large measure indebted for its extrication from the darkness of Middle ages".

Dr. Robert Briffault has rightly stated that science arose in Europe as a result of new spirit of enquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks, and that spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs (Muslims).

It goes without saying that the Muslim scientists not only made original contribution to science but also to technology. In other words, they made practical use of their scientific discoveries. They observed the stars, and prepared star maps for navigational purposes. Ibn

Continued on page No 17

Prophet: A Model To Emulate

Zeeshan Ahmad

The life of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, sets an example to follow in every field of life. The high tributes paid to his personality in the Quran and the Sunnah or Islamic practices remind us of his exalted stature. Five times in a day, the adhan, the call to prayer, reminds Muslims that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. In addition, the namaz recited by Muslims also emphasizes the unity of Allah and the messengership of the Prophet in the same breath, thereby underscoring the significance of his persona.

Islam teaches us that Allah introduced Himself in His own words. For the guidance of humankind, Allah sent about 124,000 prophets, the first of them being Adam and the Last being Muhammad. It was the Holy Prophet of Islam upon whom Allah chose to reveal His final message and complete the chain of prophethood and messengership. The Qur'an says: "This day, I have perfected the religion (Islam) for you; completed My proof upon you and am satisfied with Islam as a religion." Again, we find that Allah emphasizes the finality of prophethood and messengership of the Prophet with the words, "Muhammad is not the father of any of the men among you, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophet."

At one place, the Holy Prophet is called "Uswatul Hasanah"-the ideal model to emulate, while at another place, he is called the "bearer of good news" (paradise) and a "One who warns" for divine chastisement and retribution.

The period before the arrival of the Holy Prophet in Arabia was one of ignorance. Wars were fought for petty matters, superstitions were rife and respect for women at its lowest. The social fabric of the Arabs veered more towards vice and

debauchery than religion. Principles like justice and shame, which we take for granted in our lives, were thrown to the winds. It was in such difficult circumstances that the Holy Prophet announced his message – one that would change the face and social fabric of the Arabs, and perhaps the world forever. Within a period of 23 years, surely, but surely; with extreme patience; with the odds of success staked against him, the Prophet attracted people towards Allah's message. Enmity was replaced by brotherhood and superstitions traded with firm beliefs and reliance upon Allah.

A single verse from the Quran abolished unspeakable practices that discriminated against the girl child. Through the love showered upon his only daughter, Fatemah, the Prophet reiterated his commitment to the respect and uplift of women.

The path adopted by the Prophet to spread the message and attract more and more people to his message was his excellent character and morals. So whether it was dealing with his family members, his friends or his enemies, he set the highest standards of ethics. It is for this reason that despite the passage of 1,400 years since his birth, he lives amongst us through his teachings. Muslims need to adopt this mode themselves in their lives and through their behavior and actions, illustrate to the world that they are adherents of a Prophet who was respected for his morals and values. This will be true homage to the leader on whom Allah bestowed the distinction of being His last Prophet and Messenger. ●

Light And Darkness

Population

Population increases by more than 181 million, or 17.6%, from 1.03 billion to 1.21b between 2001 & 2011. Male population rises 17.2% to 624 million, female by 18.1% to 899.5m.

2001-2011 is the first decade (with the exception of 1911-1921) when population has grown less than in the previous decade. In 1991-2001, it grew 21.5%, and the decade before by 23.9%

UP (199.6m) is most populous state in the country, followed by Maharashtra, (112.4m), Bihar (103.8m) West Bengal (91.3m) and AP (84.7m).

The total number of children in the age-group 0-6 years is 158.8m, a decline of 5m, or 3.1% since 2001; -2.4% for males and -3.8% for female.

Overall Sex Ratio

National sex ratio rises to 940 (females for every 1000 males) in 2011 from 933 in 2001. Been rising since 1991 and highest since 1971.

There major states (J&K, Bihar & Gujarat) have shown a decline.

Among major states, Kerala with 1,084 has the highest sex ratio followed by TN with 995; the lowest are Delhi with 866 and Haryana with 877.

Child Sex Ratio

Child sex ratio (0-6 years) has worsened to 914 in 2011 from 927 in 2001. Decline unabated since 1961 Census.

Among big states, Chhattisgarh has the highest ratio of 964 followed by Kerala with 959.

Haryana is at the bottom (830) followed by Punjab (846)

Except for a few states, it's got worse everywhere.

(The Times of India, 01-04-11)

Accused Without Any Evidence

A lot has changed in the nearly four years since the peace of Hyderabad was shattered – first by the May 2007 Mecca Masjid blasts and, three months later, by the twin blasts at the Gokul Chat Bhandar and Lumbini Park.

Some 20 Muslim boys, who were picked up randomly in the aftermath of the blasts and charged with waging war on the nation, have won their freedom. A new term, Hindutva terror, has gained official recognition. The Andhra Pradesh police who, by instinct, habit and training, chased after Muslim "masterminds" and connected the dots between Muslim terror groups, have learnt the hard way that terror does not always have to have opened up, suggesting that the Muslim boys were deliberately framed.

And yet, these are at best cosmetic changes that have brought no tangible relief to those falsely implicated in the blast cases. For many of them, the feeling of living on the edge continues; the court may have acquitted them but the label of "terrorist" remains as does the lurking fear that the reprieve is temporary, that the cycle of police visits, interrogation, torture and incarceration can re-commence anytime – if there is a fresh terror attack or even if there isn't.

For Mohammad Rayeezuddin, who smartly chatted up customers at Hyderabad's grandest jewellery showroom before being picked up and tossed into jail, the experience was a life-altering one. Two facts went against him: he was witness to a shoot-out outside the

Vidya Subrahmaniam
office of the Director-General of Police in 2004 and he lived in the same locality as Shahid Bilal a key terror suspect.

The dragnet began to close in on Mr. Rayeezuddin, now 28, after the Mecca Masjid blasts. First came the summons from the Special Investigation Cell, which put him through the wringer on Bilal's whereabouts, network and this specific role in the Mecca Masjid blasts. With the Gokul-Lumbini twin from "terror suspect" to "terror accused," going through the inescapable drill of being blindfolded, shunted between shadowy farmhouses and tortured, before being formally arrested and fleetingly produced before a magistrate. Mr. Rayeezuddin was picked up on August 31, 2007 but typically in the police records, the arrest date is shown as September 6, 2007. He was released on conditional bail on February 14, 2008. And on December 31, 2009, the Court of the VII Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge cleared him and 20 others of all charges. But the freedom has been only in a manner of "*Hum utthe baitthe dar me rahte hain*" (I live in constant fear of the police). The men in uniform turn up often to give him company, when it is the anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition, when a terror alert has been sounded, or when there is trouble anywhere in the city.

Scarred for life

Mr. Rayeezuddin lost his job the day he visited the special cell. Today, scarred for life and stigmatized for

having once been charged with terror, he sells watermelons on the pavement. Others acquitted along with him feel similarly wrecked: the torture marks have faded but the memories have not. To compound the injury, there has been much promise but no action on compensating and rehabilitating the young men. Chief Minister Kiran Reddy and others in the Congress have offered to apologise for the injustice, which seems so much a mockery not been prosecuted and punished. Says Mr. Rayeezuddin: "Please tell the Chief Minister that we have forgiven him. Now will he please punish those policemen who so brutally and calculatedly turned us into terrorists?"

The plight of the boys was formally recorded in an interim report as early as September 2007 by L. Ravi Chander, Advocate Commissioner for the Andhra Pradesh Minorities Commission. Mr. Ravi Chander, who visited the blast suspects in the Cherlapally jail, was left so shattered by the experience that he began his final report, submitted in September 2008, with a poignant quote from Vikas Swarup's debut novel, Q&A, made later into *Slumdog Millionaire*. In the story, the Dharavi slums of winning a quiz show. But arrests are an everyday affair in Dharavi, and so the boy concludes that even if he had "kicked and screamed, protested his innocence, and raised a stink," the neighbourhood would not have lifted a finger to defend him.

"Unfortunately, sometimes life imitates fiction," Mr. Ravi Chander noted in his report, going onto detail the shocking lack of procedure in the detention of Mr. Rayeezuddin and others: "[The boys] reiterate with telling

consistency the now familiar story of arrest without warrant, arrest without informing the kith and kin, being taken away to unknown places, torture, etc... Typically pigments on skin reflecting minor electric shocks are visible. While time heals the physical wounds, [they have] left an indelible impression on the psyche of the persons." It was like a macabre replay as each boy spoke – of being detained without knowing the charge, of extended periods of torture, of indifferent magistrates who somehow always missed the distress signals from the prisoners, of being forced to confess to terror plots and of having to sign on blank papers.

Mr. Ravi Chander's report reiterated the procedure laid down by the Supreme Court for arrest and detention, including maintaining records of the time and date of arrests along with the names of officers executing the warrants; preparing a memo of arrest, signed by a witness preferably from the detainee's family and countersigned by the detainee; ensuring a tri-weekly medical examination of every detainee and keeping a memo of major and minor injuries, again countersigned by the detainee. The Supreme Court held failure to comply with the requirements to be punishable with departmental action and contempt of court proceedings. Mr. Ravi Chander concluded his report with this chilling passage: "To counter terrorism and "counter terrorism:" [by the State] are not one and the same... it is clear that all the victims belong to a single community and mostly to a single economic class. This may be insufficient to place the burden surely at a single door-step, namely the police. This however surely

tells a pattern. A seriously dangerous pattern."

Mr. Ravi Chander's findings came as a surprise to civil rights activists. Because, as he himself laughingly told The Hindu, "I am not viewed as a Muslim-friendly person, as I had fought on the opposite side on the issue of Minorities reservation." But this fact has only enhanced the credibility of the report.

Stunning expose

If Mr. Ravi Chander underscored the arbitrariness of police detentions, the court proceedings turned out to be a stunning expose on the state of Indian policing and the investigation-prosecution apparatus. The burden of the two charge sheets filed by the police was that Shahid Bilal (listed as Area Commander of Jais-e-Mohammaed/Huji, and believed to have been killed since) and his associates conspired to wage war on the nation by organizing bomb blast in Hyderabad. In this they were helped by many others, including Mr. Rayeezuddin. And yet, astonishingly, neither charge sheet linked the accused specifically to any of the three bomb blasts. While the first was filed against two other key actors, Abdul Sattar and Abdul Khadir. Having learnt bomb-making in Bangladesh, Sattar and Khadri helped Bilal with pitched in by promising "their solidarity and protection of Muslims all over the world."

With Bilal presumed killed, the second charge sheet came up in the court, which threw it out, quashing the charges against all the accused. Against each of the 21 accused, the charge sheet had shown invariably the same recoveries: "Two VCDs containing

seditious clips, rebellious Islamic activities, Urdu seditious matter and Muslim fundamentalism." But not one of the panch witnesses produced by the prosecution accepted that he was present when the recoveries were made. Panch witness Mohammad Saleem testified that the police wrote up the seizure mahazer (memo) after seizing the papers and CDs from a fellow police inspector. In one instance "Urdu seditious literature" turned out to be in English. The inspector who framed the charge sheet confessed to not being able to read Urdu. "Except the alleged confessional statement rendered to a police officer, there is no other evidence available connecting the accused with the theory of conspiracy to wage war," the judge noted.

Earlier, in December 2008, another Hyderabad court cleared some among the same group of Muslim boys of the charge that they had conspired to kill a local Bharatiya Janata Party leader, Sampath. In that case the police inspector had translated "Arabic literature" into English without knowing any Arabic. The prosecution witness could not even confirm the existence of Sampath!

The BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are furious that Aseemanand and some other Hindutva names have emerged in recent terror investigations. The parivar has every right to demand that due process be followed in their cases. However, one wishes they had been similarly concerned about young Muslim boys jailed and charge sheeted without evidence. ●

(The Hindu)

Why Are So Many Modern British Career Women Converting to Islam

Eve Ahmad

Much of my childhood was spent trying to escape Islam. Born in London to an English mother and a Pakistani Muslim father, I was brought up to follow my father's faith without question. But, privately, I hated it. The minute I left home for university at the age of 18, I abandoned it altogether.

As far as I was concerned, being a Muslim meant bearing the word 'No' over and over again.

Girls from my background were barred from so many of the things My English friends took for granted. Indeed, it seemed to me that almost anything fun was haram, or forbidden, to girls like me.

There were so many random, petty rules. No whistling. No chewing of gum. No riding bikes. No watching Top of the Pops. No wearing make-up or clothes which revealed the shape of the body.

No eating in the street or putting my hands in my pockets. No cutting my hair or painting my nails. No asking questions or answering back. No keeping dogs as pets, (they were unclean).

And, of course, no sitting next to men, shaking their hands or even making eye contact with them.

These ground rules were imposed by my father and I, therefore, assumed they must be an integral part of being a good Muslim.

Small wonder, then, that as soon as I was old enough to exert my

independence, I rejected the whole package and turned my back on Islam. After all, what modern, liberated British woman would choose to live such a life?

Well, quite a lot, it turns out, including Islam's latest surprise convert, Tony Blair's sister-in-law Lauren Booth. And after my own break with my past, I've followed with fascination the growing trend of Western women choosing to convert to Islam.

Broadcaster and journalist Booth, 43, says she now wears a hijab head covering whenever she leaves home, prays five times a day and visits her local mosque 'when I can'.

She decided to become a Muslim after visiting the shrine of Fatima al-Masumeh in the city of Qom, and says: 'It was a Tuesday evening, and I sat down and felt this shot of spiritual morphine, just absolute bliss and joy.'

Before her awakening in Iran, she had been 'sympathetic' to Islam and has spent considerable time working in Palestine, 'I was always impressed with the strength and comfort it gave,' she says:

How, I wondered, could women be drawn to a religion which I felt had kept me in such a lowly, submissive place? How could their experiences of Islam be so very different to mine?

According to Kevin Brice from Swansea University, who has

specialized in studying white conversion to Islam, these women are part of an intriguing trend.

He explains: 'They seek spirituality, a higher meaning, and tend to be deep thinkers. The other type of women who turn to Islam are what I call "converts of convenience". They'll assume the trappings of the religion to please their Muslim husband and his family, but won't necessarily attend mosque, pray or fast.'

I spoke to a diverse selection of white Western converts in a bid to re-examine the faith I had rejected.

Women like Kristiane Backer, 43, a London-based former MTV presenter who had led the kind of liberal Western-style life that I yearned for as a teenager, yet who turned her back on it and embraced Islam instead.

Her reason? The 'anything goes' permissive society that I coveted had proved to be a superficial void.

The turning point for Kristiane came when she met briefly dated the former Pakistani cricketer and Muslim Imran Khan in 1992 during the height of her career. He took her to Pakistan where she says she was immediately touched by spirituality and his warmth of the people.

Kristiane says: 'Though our relationship didn't last, I began to study the Muslim faith and eventually converted. I'd been out interviewing rock stars, travelling all over the world and following every trend, yet I'd felt empty inside. Now, at last, I had contentment because Islam had given me a purpose in life.'

'Despite my lifestyle, I felt empty inside and realized how liberating it was

to be a Muslim. To follow only one God makes life purer. You are not chasing every fad.'

'I grew up in Germany in a very religious Protestant family. I drank and I partied, but I realized that we need to behave well now so we have a good after-life. We are responsible for our own actions.'

For a significant amount of women, their first contact with Islam comes from dating a Muslim boyfriend. Lynne Ali, 31, from Dagenham in Essex, freely admits to having been 'a typical white hard-partying teenager'.

She says: 'I would go out and get drunk with friends, wear tight and revealing clothing and date boys.'

'I also worked part-time as a DJ, so I was really into the club scene. I used to pray a bit as a Christian, but I used God as a sort of doctor, to fix things in my life. If anyone asked, I would've said that, generally, I was happy living life in the fast lane.'

But when she met her boyfriend, Zahid, at university, something dramatic happened.

She says: 'His sister started talking to me about Islam, and it was as if everything in my life fitted into place. I think, underneath it all, I must have been searching for something, and I wasn't feeling fulfilled by my hard-drinking party lifestyle.'

Lynne converted aged 19. 'From that day, I started wearing the hijab,' she explains, 'and I now never show my hair in public. At home, I'll dress in normal Western clothes in front of my husband, but never out of the house.'

With a recent YouGov survey

concluding that more than half the British public believes Islam to be a negative influence that encourages extremism, the repression of women and inequality, one might ask why any of them would choose such a direction for themselves.

Yet statistics suggest Islamic conversion is not a mere flash in the pan but a significant development. Islam is, after all, the world's fastest growing religion, and white adopters are an important part of that story.

'Evidence suggests that the ratio of Western women converts to male could be as high as 2:1,' says Kevin Brice.

Moreover, he says, often these female converts are eager to display the visible signs of their faith – in particular the hijab – whereas many Muslim girls brought up in the faith choose not to.

'Perhaps as a result of these actions, which tend to draw attention, white Muslims often report greater amounts of discrimination against them than do born Muslims,' adds Brice, which is what happened to Kristiane Backer.

She says: 'In Germany, there is Islamophobia. I lost my job when I converted. There was a press campaign against me with insinuations about all Muslims supporting terrorists – I was vilified. Now, I am a presenter on NBC Europe.

'I call myself a European Muslim, which is different to the 'born' Muslim. I was married to one, a Moroccan, but it didn't work because he placed restrictions on me because of how he'd been brought up. As a European Muslim, I question everything – I don't

accept blindly.

'But what I love is the hospitality and the warmth of the Muslim community. London is the best place in Europe for Muslims, there is wonderful Islamic culture here and I am very happy.'

For some converts, Islam represents a celebration of old-fashioned family values.

'Some are drawn to the sense of belonging and of community – values which have eroded in the West,' says Haifaa Jawad, a senior lecturer at the University of Birmingham, who has studied the white conversion phenomenon.

'Many people, from all walks of life, mourn the loss in today's society of traditional respect for the elderly and for women, for example. These are values which Muslim have to live by,' adds Brice.

It is values like these which drew Camilla Leyland, 32, a yoga who lives in Cornwall, to Islam. A single mother to daughter, Inaya, two, she converted in her mid-20s for 'intellectual and feminist reasons'.

She explains: 'I know people will be surprised to hear the words "feminism" and "Islam" in the same breath, but in fact, the teachings of the Koran give equality to women, and at the time the religion was born, the teachings went against the grain of a misogynistic society.

'The big mistake people make is by confusing culture with religion. Yes, there are Muslim culture which do not allow women individual freedom, yet when I was growing up, I felt more oppressed by Western society.'

She talks of the pressure on women to act like men by drinking and having casual sex. 'There was no real begin a relationship, that is a commitment of intent.'

Growing up in Southampton – her father was the director of Southampton institute of Education and her mother a home economics teacher – Camilla's interest in Islam began at school.

She went to university and later took a Masters degree in Middle East Studies. But it was while living and working in Syria that she had a spiritual epiphany. Reflecting on realized she wanted to convert.

Her decision was met with bemusement by friends and family.

'People Camilla's faith remains strong; she no longer wears the hijab in public. But several of the women I spoke to said strict Islamic dress was something they found empowering and liberating.

Lynne Ali remembers the night this hit home for her, 'I went to an old friend's 21st birthday party in a bar,' she reveals. 'I walked in, wearing my hijab and modest clothing, and saw how everyone else had so much flesh on display. They were drunk, slurring their words and first time, I could see my former life with an outsider's eyes, and I knew I could never go back to that.

'I am so grateful I found my escape route. This is the real me – I am happy to pray five times a day and take classes at the mosque. I am no longer a slave to a broken society and its expectations.

Kristin Backer, who has written a book on her own spiritual

journey, called From MTV To Mecca, believes 'the new breed of modern, independent Muslims can band together to show the world that Islam is not the faith I grew up in – one that stamps on the rights of women.'

She says: 'I know women born Muslims who became disillusioned and rebelled against it. When you dig deeper, it's not the faith they turned against, but the culture.'

'Rules like marrying within the same sect or caste and education being less important for girls, as they should get married anyway – where does it say that in the Koran? It doesn't.

Many young Muslims who have abandoned the "fire and brimstone" version they were born into have re-discovered a more spiritual and intellectual approach, that's free from the cultural dogmas of the older generation. That's how I intend to spend my life, showing the world the beauty of the true Islam.'

While I don't agree with their sentiments, I admire and respect the women I interviewed for this piece.

They were all bright and educated, and have thought long and hard before choosing to convert to Islam – and now feel passionately about their adopted religion. Good luck to them. And good luck that sums up the difference between their experience and mine – choice.

Perhaps if I'd felt in control rather than controlled, if I'd felt empowered rather than stifled, I would still be practicing the religion I was born into, and would not carry the burden of guilt that I do about rejecting my father's faith. ● (YMD)

An Honourable Farewell

March 4, 1992. Muhammad Shareef, an unlettered cycle mechanic, waved his son, Raees, goodbye as the latter drove on his motorbike to the railway station, to catch a train to Sultanpur. Shareef, a resident of Faizabad, a small town in UP known more due to its proximity to its twin town of Ayodhya, was proud of Raees, the first in his poor, uneducated family to have become a doctor.

Shareef got worried when he did not receive a call from Raees inform him whether he'd reached Sultanpur. After a few days spent waiting for that call, Shareef went to a police station to report about his missing son. A month later, the police told him about an unclaimed body that had been found near the railway tracks in Sultanpur. The police had buried the body but kept the clothes – a striped shirt and a trouser. The tailor's tag on the bloodstained shirt said it had been stitched in Faizabad. Shareef was called to identify it. It was same shirt he saw 21-year-old Raees last wearing.

As much as his son's mysterious death haunted Shareef, so did the fact that he had not been able to bury him with this own hands. So, on that day in April 1992, Shareef took a vow: "I decided to take care of dying people and to perform the funeral rites for those who had nobody to bury or cremate them," he says, as he shows us a framed picture of his son. The striped shirt Raees was wearing in the photo is

Irena Akbar
the same ill-fated one, says a teary-eyed Shareef.

More than 18 years on, Shareef has performed the funeral rites of over 1,500 unclaimed bodies – 1,000 Hindu corpses and the rest Muslim – and has attended to several thousand destitute patients in the emergency ward of the district hospital in Faizabad. He gets up at 5 a.m. every day, packs food and goes to the hospital to feed the destitute patients and assists nurse in attending to them. He then goes to his cycle repair shop, which earns him Rs 6,000 a month, with which he feeds his family of five members. He is back in the hospital for another round of nursing. In between, he receives phone calls from the police, asking him to help them perform the funeral of an unclaimed dead person.

The police have given him a mobile phone to help them. Whenever there's a call, he shuts his shop, collects the shroud and takes his cart to the police station. There, he gets a letter from the police, authorizing him to perform the funeral rites. After that, he lifts the corpse, puts it in a sack, takes it to the cremation ground and hands it to the priest, if the body is that of a Hindu, If the body is that of a Muslim, he takes it to the graveyard where he washes the body before wrapping it in a cloth and burying it.

A committee of 11 local businessmen donates money to Shareef when he needs it for funerals.

On an average, he needs between Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 per body, with which he buys shrouds, sacks, and wooden stacks.

After Shareef had a kidney operation two years ago, the 70-year-old found it difficult to move about. So, he bought three carts for Rs 6,000 and hired three men to help transport the corpses. He has his carts placed at strategic places – outside the police post at the railway stations in Faizabad and Ayodhya, and outside the district hospital in Faizabad.

Doesn't the sight of bodies, mostly mutilated by a road or train accident, affect him? "It always does. I have sleepless nights too, but I find the strength to carry on in the larger interest of giving someone an honourable farewell. I would rather feel the pain than let the corpse rot or have the dogs feed on it." He says.

Shareef had also buried the bodies of the militants who had set out to attack the makeshift temple at the Ram Janmabhoomi site before they were killed in an encounter in 2005, though he refuses to talk about it much, except for acknowledging that he had buried them. "I was asked by the police to do so," he says, and shows as proof a document signed by the cops authorizing the burial.

Today, there are 25 signboards in Faizabad and about four in Ayodhya, asking people to contact Shareef if they find an unclaimed corpse. He is well-known in the twin cities and is popularly called Shareef Chacha. But his two grownup sons, one a cycle mechanic and the other a driver, don't share their father's passion. So the committee that

funds Shareef's work has been trying to find people to do similar work, says SM Subhani, a member. "Only Shareef has the heart and dedication to wash a beheaded body, to assemble broken parts, to wrap them neatly in a cloth and stitch it over. I think this tradition will die with him," says Subhani. ●

(Indian Express)

Anas related to us that when the Apostle of God migrated to Medina, (and the Mahajirs had an experience of the hospitality and unselfishness of the Ansars), they, on day, said to the Apostle: "We have not seen people like them, i.e., the Ansars of Medina anywhere, (They spend generously on us) if they are well-provided, and even those that are not in good condition help us and take care of our needs. They have taken all the responsibility for toil and labour upon themselves, and, (yet), made us a sharer in the profits. (As a result of the unique selfdenial and liberality on their part), we fear that they took all the reward and recompense, (and we remained empty handed in the Hereafter)." "No," the Apostle of God replied. "It will not be so as long as you pray for them and express a sincere appreciation (of their goodness and magnanimity)."

-Tirmizi

Around the World

OIC, British Groups Join Hands

The 57- member organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) has joined hands with a British aid group to help those affected by natural calamities. The OIC signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Muslim Aid to enhance cooperation in the fields of humanitarian assistance and sustainable development. Muslim Aid is a UK – based international relief and development organization working to alleviate poverty worldwide. The charity says it believes in sustainable, local, and practical solutions to empower individuals and strengthen communities. The MoU aims to achieve the common goal of alleviating the sufferings of people on the Muslim world during natural disasters and emergency situations. ●

Euromoney's Honor to HSBC Amanah

HSBC Amanah, the global Islamic financial services business of the HSBC Group and affiliate of the Saudi British Bank (SABB) has been named for the second consecutive year Best International Islamic Bank by Euromoney magazine in its Islamic Finance Awards 2011. The awards are widely considered to be the most high profile accolades in the recognize outstanding performance, quality, service, and innovation in the sector. Besides Best International Islamic Bank, HSBC Amanah has also won the Best Sukuk House award for also the second consecutive year, in recognition of its leading role in Islamic debt capital market. ●

The West, Islam and Shariah

The Issue of Shariah is gaining momentum as increasing number of Muslims are living in Western societies. Despite its multi cultural society, the United States is the least accommodating toward its Muslim population. England, on the contrary, by accepting the presence of Muslim schools, charities, banks and Islamic arbitration tribunals has been the least biased toward its Muslim citizens. As a result, Muslims in the UK are increasingly turning to Islamic courts mainly to resolve family disputes.

Back in 2006, a study revealed that 85 unofficial Shariah courts were already operating out of mosques all over the United Kingdom. The largest of them, the Islamic Shariah Council in Leyton, set up in 1982, has handed 7,000 divorce cases. A Mufti and one of its founder explains that people who live in the United Kingdom undertake and abide by the Law of the land, but they regard those laws as administrative laws, not a divine law. The matters of marriage and divorce don't fall into the state domain. It is a religious matter. The Muslim Arbitration Tribunal has binding legal status because it operates on tandem with the British legal system and decisions challenged by the losing party will be upheld by a country court bailiff or high court sheriff. ●

An Appeal

Thanks God that Darul-Uloom-Nadwatul Ulama is engaged in its academic and religious pursuits under the patronage of Hazrat Maulana S.M.Rabey Hasani Nadwi. Because of the increasing number of students the paucity of residential accommodation is posing problem. To ease this situation, Management has decided to build a new Hostel, work has been initiated in this direction. This new Hostel will be a three storey structure with 60 rooms and three spacious Halls. Besides residential facility it will help in other literary and academic activities.

It is estimated that new construction will cost Rs. 2,35,00,000 (Two crores and thirty five lacs) and by the grace of God it will be met with the generous help of benevolent people. We hope you will come forward to help us in this direction and join hands with the Management of Nadwatul Ulama . It will help students to devote their time in studies without any distraction.

We trust that by the grace of God we will be successful in achieving our target.

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