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The Quranic Dictum

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

If human beings subjugate themselves to the supremacy of material things and become slaves to their selfish desires, life on earth will become hellish and unbearable. Man has to remember that his place in the scheme of creation is that of God's vicegerent. As the Quran bears testimony, Allah ordered the angels to bow down in front of man as a mark of respect. This clearly establishes that it is highly humiliating for man, God's deputy on earth, to bow down in front of anybody except his Creator. Had there been any such scope, Allah should have allowed man to bow down in front of the angels as they carry on Allah's orders on the earth: they, for instance, bring rain and make the wind blow. By making the angels bow down in front of man Allah clearly revealed His will that the world has been given to the care of man as His vicegerent and that he himself is created for the worship of Allah the Almighty. Man must look at his present miserable lot and tell himself that he is supposed to do better. He must rise to his appointed position as Allah's vicegerent, take none else except Allah as his Lord, and save himself and the world from eternal suffering. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

"Those who disbelieve in the Message of the Prophet say: 'This (Criterion) is nothing but a lie which he has forged with the help of others'. Such have indeed resorted to a grievous wrong and sheer falsehood. They say: 'These are merely fairy tales of the ancients which he has got inscribed and they are then recited to him morning and evening'."

(Al-Qur'ân – 25:4-5)

It is intriguing that during the lifetime of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him), none of his enemies ever asserted that he had acquired the substance of his teaching from Bhuhayrâ the monk whom he had met in his childhood. Nor did they ever say that he had taken over all his teachings from Christian monks and Jewish rabbis during the trade journeys he made in his youth. This is understandable because they knew that the Blessed Messenger did not undertake those journeys all alone but went along with the caravans. Even if they had levelled such a charge, they would have been refuted by many of their own people. Everyone in Makkah had seen him live in their midst for many years. Hence such a charge would have been violently rejected by the people. For if he had really received all the information from Bhuhayrâ the monk, either when he was 12, or 13, or 25 years old when he went on these trade journeys, then why had no one ever heard anything from him throughout these years about any of the matters which form part of the Qur'ân? ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Abu Yaala Ma'qil bin Yasar relates that he heard the Holy Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) saying: "A person who is appointed in authority over people and he betrays them will not be allowed to enter Paradise after his death."

(Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith implies that a person who is appointed to look after the affairs of a state, province, district or city is expected to discharge his duties and obligations in a proper manner and with a sense of trust and responsibility. He should do justice with all sections of society. He should take into account their needs and try to make proper arrangements for them, by all possible means. He has to provide people with at least three basic needs – bread, clothes and house. He, who does not live up to these expectations, betrays his people. Generally, those who run the affairs of a state deviate from what is expected of them. They run the country contrary to the oath they take while ascending to the throne. They take up authoritative responsibility only to amass more and more wealth. They take least care of the poor masses. Such rulers should take a cue from the destruction of Bani Israel who used to let off a wealthy, influential person if found committing a crime, and punish a weak person for commission of crimes.

On the other hand, the ruler who lives up to the expectations of his subjects has been given good tidings of forgiveness in the Hereafter. ■

Editor's Note

TABLIGHI JAMAT-TRUTH AND FICTION

It is believed that second largest congregation 'Ijtima' of Muslims after the Haj gathering in Saudi Arabia is held every year in Bangladesh. An estimated thirty lacs Muslims from all over the world including Europe and America attend this assemblage.

Tablighi Jamat which has its Markaz (head-quarters) at Delhi organised the first 'Ijtima' (congregation) in 1966 in the then East Bengal and since then it has assumed an international significance and is held every year in Bangladesh soon after the I'dd and before the Haj. As a prelude to this grand conclave in Bangladesh Tablighi Jamat holds such Ijtimas in India as well at different places. In 1996 one was held at Padrauna near Deoria district of eastern Uttar Pradesh. Normally organisers of these Ijtimas shun publicity and avoid contract with the media. Newsmen themselves ignore them because they do not get anything 'news-worthy' in the proceedings to report. However, the Ijtima at Padrauna did find mention in the news dispatches in a section of the Press. Since million of Muslims from all over the country had gathered to a place close to the Indo-Nepal border it provided a good background to file a spicy story about the Ijtima. It was linked with ISI activities and branded an extension of their field. Not content with it even it was alleged that arms were distributed amongst the participants. Though such charges cast aspersion on the working of our Police and Intelligence agencies, the idea of spreading such mischievous accusations worked well in widening the gulf of distrust between two major communities in the country viz Hindus and Muslims.

Tablighi Jamat which has its headquarters in Basti Nizamuddin in New Delhi, is a popular name amongst Muslims while non-Muslims may be ignorant of even its existence. It does not indulge in mundane matters as such it has least concern with political affairs. Neither it interacts with politicians nor allows their platform to be used for political ends. The main thrust of its working is to make a Muslim understand the Islam and learn the lessons from holy Quran and Hadith which help them in growing up as a God fearing, true patriotic and honest Muslim. In fact, the whole philosophy of the Jamat revolves round the perfectness in faith and altruism. They work for Divine pleasure and reward in the world hereafter.

About five kilometers away from the main Delhi there is a historical building known as Chaunsath Khambha near the mousoleum of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia. In 1876 there lived a saint, Maulana Mohammad Ismail. Originally he belonged to Jhan jhana in Muzaffarnagar district of D.P. but had settled down in Delhi. He had made it a habit to help poors mostly labourers from Punjab (Now Haryana area bordering Delhi by offering them water, eatables and sometime shelter. Muslims amongst them were also made to understand basic principles of Islam. In the process he established the Bangle wali Masjid cum Madarsa nearby. After the demise of Maulana Ismail in 1898 the responsibility of running the Madarsa first fell on his elder son Mohammad Mian and then on Maulana Mohammad Ilyas. In Madarsa a few students from Mewat of Gurgaon district, who came from the parents deeply involved in criminal and anti-social activities, were admitted with the view of reformation. Since then it became a Centre of Reformation of Muslims and also of 'Tabligh' (preaching). Except the Mazar of Hazrat Nizamuddin and a few houses around it and this Bangle wali Masjid the whole area was a thick forest and presented a desolate and segregated area. In this natural set up of serenity and peace Maulana Ilyas with his devotion and unflinching love to God attracted a good number of students from Gurgaon, mostly of the Mewat region The Madarsa has now become a

Centre of reformation of rut crude and those with criminality in their blood. Mewat was mostly a Muslim populated area but they were ignorant of their religion and had no concept of sins and virtues. Maulana Ilyas thus got a barren though fertile field to make furrows of knowledge. Thus this mosque became the Institution of behavioural correction and Centre of preaching of Islam. This is now known as the Markaz of Tablighi Jamat.

Maulana Ilyas started sending small groups of his disciples to Mewat to live with local populace and thus impress upon them the importance of a pure and peaceful life. It had the sparkling effects Mewatis who had attained notoriety of dreaded criminals started responding of this Dawat (Invitation) and hordes and hordes of Mewatis started coming around Maulana Ilyas and adopted the path of life laid down by Islam-peace, love and tolerance.

Gradually this reformation programme was introduced in other parts of the country. Muslims in small groups spread out through the nooks and corners of the land persuaded Muslims to give up those practices and habits which are forbidden in Islam to follow the path of virtue. Tablighi Jamat is not an organised body. Neither it has any membership nor governing body. Still it has been attracting millions of Muslims who come to Markaz for their own purification and with the aim and determination to carryout the work of reform in the Muslim society. They avoid conflict, arguments and discussions with followers of other faiths and convictions Jest that may hurt their sensibilities. They do not hold any secret conclaves. In their sittings they read holy Quran and discuss the underlying message. Anyone irrespective of religion and faith can attend their 'Ijtimas' or group discussions to benefit with the discourses. The main theme of their mission revolves round the following passage from the holy Quran :

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the world.

Most gracious, Most Merciful. Master of the Day of Judgement.

Thee do we worship. And thine aid we seek.

Show us the straight way. The way of those on whom thou has bestowed Thy Grace. Those whose (portion) is not wrath.

And who go not a stray.

Those who offer themselves for this correctional behaviour stay for a few days in Markaz and thereafter are sent out in small group along with an Ameer (who leads the caravan) to spend their days and nights in prayers and tabligh (preaching good things to others). In the last half a century this work of tabligh has spread out in other parts of the world. Small groups known as 'tablighi jamat' visit Europe, USA, Africa and most of the Asian countries.

To accuse such meek, weak and devoted persons of conspiring against the country of their own is to say the least a sin. They are true Muslims loyal to their motherland and devoted to God, fostering brotherhood, combating evils in society and imbibing patriotism to build men and women of steel character. Do they need arms to inculcate these virtues among the fellow citizens? ■

S.A.

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The Role of 'Ulama' in Changing Times

-S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Afterwards We made those whom We chose of Our servants the inheritors of the Book, Then of them there are some who wrong themselves, And of them there are some who keep the middle path, and of them there are some who go ahead, by Allah's leave, in virtue. That is indeed great grace.

(al-Fatir 35:32)

A faith, divine teachings, a call to truth or noble ideals cannot and do not exist in a vacuum. Without role models in blood and flesh, high ideals cannot be sustained. This is amply borne out by the history of religions and morality. Had this not been the case and had it been in accord with human nature and divine laws scriptures would have descended on mountain tops with the proclamation that people should draw on these. This has not been the case, though. Allah first sends down His messengers. They are blessed with revelation. Messengers are the very embodiments of the divine message. Once 'A'ishah was asked to relate the Prophet's conduct. In reply she said: ('He demonstrated what the Qur'an is.' The Qur'an is the best commentary on his life and morals. Allah gave another special favour to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), in the words of Shah Waliullah, by making his advent universal. He brought up an entire community to promote his message. Accordingly, the Qur'an also speaks of the

advent of the Muslim community in the following passages: *And thus We have made you a community justly balanced, that you might be witnesses to mankind and that the Messenger might be a witness to you. (al-Baqarah 2:143) And: You are the best community ever sent forth to mankind. You enjoin good and forbid evil and you believe in Allah. (Al 'Imran 3:110)*

Hadith conveys the above message more emphatically, telling Muslims: "You have been sent down for making ease, not for erecting hurdles and hardship." Many Companions are on record as transmitting similar ideas. When the Persian commander asked Rub'i ibn 'Amir, the Muslim emissary, as to why the Muslims had approached Persia, his reply was in line with the Prophet's teaching: "Allah has sent us to you that by His command we may free men from their bondage to fellow human beings and make them submissive to Allah." This brings home the point that messengers are the prerequisite for a faith. A messenger should have a community trained and guided by him. These conditions were met in the case of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions. This arrangement should be in place until the Last Day.

It is evident from the Qur'anic verse quoted at the outset of this section

that successors to the Prophet and bearers of the Book will last to the end of time. Islam is the destiny of mankind, for it embodies divine teachings. In one *Hadith* the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) makes this observation: "In every generation there will be just, pious people as the bearers of faith. They will avoid all extremism and accretions in matters of faith and refute the baseless notions of ignorant people." (*Mishkat*)

'*Ulama*' perform a very significant and delicate duty. Those charged with this role have indeed an onerous responsibility. On realising its magnitude one may feel so overwhelmed as to give up eating and drinking. '*Ulama*'s conduct keeps the masses on the straight way. It binds them to faith and its articles. '*Ulama*'s lapses conversely can have a disastrous effect. It can weaken their link with the public. Their immoral deeds may cause degeneration in the whole community, pushing it to declines materialism, this-worldliness, lust for power, gratification of base desires and selfish motives. As a result, the community is liable to disintegrate into numerous divisions and sub-divisions. It can adversely affect the fate of the entire country and future generations. Religious institutions, including mosques might be afflicted with such decay and decline. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is on record as saying: "Remember, there is a piece of flesh in the body; if it is sound, the whole body functions well. However, if it is diseased, the entire body will be damaged. This piece of flesh is the heart."

'*Ulama*' occupy the same position in the life of the community as the heart in the body. Any disorder affects the body and so the community. It is worth clarifying that the reform of the community is not the responsibility of any particular group or institution. Rather, it is the role of all '*Ulama*'. If their morals are weakened by worldliness and their links with Allah are not strong enough, the masses will exceed all limits. There will be all-round corruption and degeneration. The fate of faith is linked with the role and conduct of '*Ulama*'. The moral health of a society and a country is in the hands of '*Ulama*'. If '*Ulama*' are derelict, faith will naturally grow weak. No oratory or political order can then salvage such an ailing society. Even if an Islamic state resolves to arrest moral degeneration, it cannot be successful without the active support of '*Ulama*'.

To use an analogy, reference may be made to the small driving machinery or speedometer which monitors the speed and direction of a massive ship. Any disorder in it can lead the ship astray by hundreds of miles. As already stated, '*Ulama*' should serve as the compass for the community. They should always be engaged in performing their duty. Providing they maintain a strong and close link with Allah, act sincerely, actively discharge their role and are characterised with the features special to the successors to Allah's Messengers, the future of faith is secure. Without this, no measure can ensure the spread of faith. ■

We and Our Duty

- Navaid Alam

As Muslims, it is our firm belief that this life is a transient phase in the journey towards a permanent abode in the last and the lasting stage, *Akhirah*. The smallness of this world in its magnitude, longevity and pleasures compared to the life of the hereafter would be sufficient reason to renounce this world. However, as children of Adam, *alaihissalam*, we are in a trial of how we live this life. Our actions and reactions to the situations that life presents together with the set of beliefs that we hold will determine our fate in the hereafter. It is this aspect that gives this world the importance it has.

"(I swear) By the time. Verily! Man is in loss, except those who believe and do righteous deeds.." (Surah al-Asr, Ayah 1-3)

We are to live this life and involve ourselves in it to the extent and within the limits that God has ordained and His last Prophet, *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, has shown through his noble example. This is an essential ingredient in the formula of success that God has outlined in the Qur'an. However, our actions are influenced by forces within ourselves as well as those from outside. The struggle for good has many foes. It is not sufficient that we think ourselves safe within the confines of personal piety. The wax-coating of piety

will melt away in the blistering heat of a satanic summer. The only solution, then, is to change the environment we live in.

Another reality of the life of this world is its inequalities. God has bestowed His bounties on different people in different measures. Some are rich while others poor, some strong and others weak, some healthy while others not. An aspect of wisdom behind this is the creation of human brotherhood through interdependence. We are required to share, those that have, giving to those that don't. Another aspect is test – will we give?

We, as Muslims, have been given a bounty that surpasses all others – that of faith. While other bounties have limited utility and bounded by life itself, this is one that will continue to benefit us throughout our journey. The message of Islam, of which we are the bearers, is the key to success in the test of this life. And as with all other bounties of Allah, this too must be shared. But given the disproportionate importance and benefit of this, the responsibility on those who bear it is also exponentially higher. It would be one of the greatest crimes to let the children of Adam, peace be upon him, pass through this life in ignorance and end up on the Day of Judgment in ignominy.

"And whoever desires other than Islam as religion – never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers."(Surah Ale-Imran, Ayah 85)

How can we live this life unconcerned about the fate of those we sincerely believe to be our brothers in humanity? How is it that we show concern for a person when he gets hurt or is ill and rush to offer help in whatever capacity we can but show no concern about the impending and unavoidable chastisement that awaits him in the hereafter? Did we not grieve when we saw the tragedies that unfolded during the tsunami that hit us several years ago? Are we not shaken when we see an accident on the road? Does not the sight of a laborer lying under his cart on a rainy night touch our heart?

It does and it should, for this is the essence of humanity. This is how we are; this is our nature – our *fitrah*. But if the tribulations of this short life are the cause of such concern, should not the tribulations of that limitless life be the cause of much greater concern? Should not we be spending each day anxious and concerned about the fate of our family, friends, neighbors and colleagues? Have we considered how many have cried for us, struggled and even given their lives that the message of God may reach us? The question we need to ask ourselves is how many tears have we shed for those we love, how many times have we asked God for their guidance and how many times have we

talked to them about God? Do we not owe this to them and to the bond of friendship we share with them?

"It may be that you (O Muhammad!) are going to kill yourself with grief, that they do not become believers."
(Surah ash-Shu'ara, Ayah 3)

The message of Islam that we bear is a trust that must be passed on. Allah has entrusted this to us and he will hold us accountable for it. *Tabligh*, conveying the message of Islam and *Da'wah*, invitation to Islam, is a personal obligation on each and every Muslim. We are required to call whomever we can in whatever capacity we can to Allah. This call, this counseling towards the Truth is the third essential ingredient in the formula of success. It is not a matter of choice but incumbent upon us as is prayer, fasting, charity, pilgrimage and many other commandments of Islam.

"... and counsel each other towards the Truth (i.e. Islam and its commandments) and counsel each other towards patience and perseverance." (Surah al-Asr, Ayah 3)

Unfortunately, this remains one of the most neglected duties. The number of Muslims actively involved in conveying the message of Islam to non-Muslims remains a minuscule figure, whereas the demand for such workers is at an all-time high. Several reasons can be cited for its non-observance. A large number of Muslims are, perhaps, not even aware that it is their duty; at

best they might consider it a nice-to-do thing. Some others lack the knowledge of Islam and they think that it is the job of those who possess high levels of knowledge namely the scholars. Then there are those who are too hesitant to bring up such topics for discussion for fear of being accused of fundamentalism or losing the company of their friends or, perhaps, even the fear of legal implications.

There is no denying that knowledge is an important element in this exercise, for you should know what you are inviting others to. But with certain precautions, such as not speaking about that which you are not sure of, almost everyone can do this job. Also, if a person really has very little knowledge or feels that he does not have the ability to convey; can he not find someone else who does?

"Convey from me even if it be a single verse..." (Hadith, al-Bukhari)

Sometimes fear can prevent us from this noble act. If the fear is of the law, then it must be realized that most societies have come to accept freedom of expression as a human right. The constitution of our country allows everyone to practice and preach the beliefs they hold. On the other hand, if the fear is of receiving undesirable labels then it must be kept in mind that labels and stereotypes among the public are due to the lack of interaction with people. If our character and relations with others are good then most people are highly receptive.

It has been observed from practice that *Da'wah* is not as difficult a task as many think it to be. Most non-Muslims are very receptive and some highly appreciative when we bring up the topic of God for discussion. All it needs is a little knowledge, some orientation and a lot of enthusiasm. And by the grace of Allah, a lot of Muslims today are realizing their duty and coming forward for this most important work. Several organizations and dedicated individuals are conducting such orientation workshops to teach an effective methodology of *Da'wah*. These workshops focus on the importance of *Da'wah*, impart the minimum knowledge that it requires, create and enhance the skills required for it and provide an opportunity to hone the skills through practice.

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best..." (Surah al-Nahl, Ayah 125)

Now, it is our duty to throw away the covers of solitude and move out in to the world and become the means through which Allah may shine the light of His guidance upon mankind. Guidance is not in our hands, it is the sole prerogative of Allah; however, we do have the ability to attempt to convey His message to mankind and it is this that we will be questioned about. May Allah help us realize its significance and make it easy for us. *Ameen.* ■

(Courtesy: Young Muslim Digest)

An Important Hadith for Husband-Wife Relationship

- Akhtar Hussain

Muslims claim to love *Rasul-ullah* (saws). Many prove that by keeping beards, using *miswak* and wearing pants above ankle. No doubt all these are *sunnah* and practicing any *sunnah* is commendable and will be rewarded. But it is equally important that one should be keen to follow the Prophet's example in interpersonal relationships with others: wife, children, relatives and fellow Muslims. These same people beat and mistreat their wives and children and even slap on the face which in Islam is strictly forbidden even for animals.

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet said, "If I were to order anyone to prostrate himself before another, I would have ordered a woman to prostrate herself before her husband." [At-Tirmidhi] However, although some have declared it *Sahih* on the basis of similar *ahadith*, some others have declared it weak. In fact, Tirmidhi himself calls it weak after quoting it in his *Sunan*.

Whenever I ask in a gathering about the above *hadith*, everyone says he has heard it. But when I ask about the *hadith* concerning eleven women, not a single person would have heard of it. The *hadith* about *sajdah* and the common people's saying: "A man should kill a cat on his wedding night so that wife should be terrorized to fear the husband," has done

great harm to the relationship of the spouses.

The following *ayah* from *Surah Rum* in the Qur'an and the *hadith* of Muslim emphasizes the importance of the husband and wife relationship in Islam.

"And among His Signs is this that He created for you wives (spouses) from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are, indeed, signs for people who reflect." (The Qur'an, 30: 21)

Jabir reported that Allah's Messenger said: "Iblis places his throne upon water; he then sends detachments (for creating dissension); the nearest to him in rank are those who are most notorious in creating dissension. One of them comes and says: I did so and so. And he says: You have done nothing. Then another says: I did not spare so and so until I sowed the seed of discord between a husband and a wife. The satan goes near him and says: 'You have done well.' [A'mash said:] He then embraces him." (Muslim)

The *Hadith* of the Eleven Women

Muslim narrated the following *hadith*:

Narrated 'Aisha: Eleven women sat (at a place) and promised and contracted

that they would not conceal anything concerning their husbands.

The first one said: "My husband is like the meat of a lean weak camel which is kept on the top of a mountain which is neither easy to climb, nor is the meat has fat, so that one might take up the trouble of fetching it."

The second one said: "I shall not relate my husband's news, for I fear that I may not be able to finish his story, for if I describe him, I will mention all his defects and bad traits."

The third one said: "My husband is a tall man; if I describe him (and he hears of that) he will divorce me, and if I keep quiet, he will neither divorce me nor treat me as a wife."

The fourth one said: "My husband is a moderate person like the night of Tihama which is neither hot nor cold. I am neither afraid of him, nor am I discontented with him."

The fifth one said: "My husband, when entering (the house) is a leopard, and when going out, is a lion. He does not ask about whatever is in the house."

The sixth one said: "If my husband eats, he eats too much (leaving the dishes empty), and if he drinks he leaves nothing, and if he sleeps he sleeps alone (away from me) covered in garments and does not stretch his hands here and there so as to know how I fare (get along)."

The seventh one said: "My husband is a wrong-doer or weak and foolish. All the defects are present in him. He may injure your head or your body or may do both."

The eighth one said: "My husband is soft to touch like a rabbit and smells like a Zar'nab (a kind of good smelling grass)."

The ninth one said: "My husband is a tall generous man wearing a long strap for carrying his sword. His ashes are abundant and his house is near to the people who would easily consult him."

The tenth one said: "My husband is Malik, and what is Malik? Malik is greater than whatever I say about him. (He is beyond and above all praises which can come to my mind). Most of his camels are kept at home (ready to be slaughtered for the guests) and only a few are taken to the pastures. When the camels hear the sound of the lute (or the tambourine) they realize that they are going to be slaughtered for the guests."

The eleventh one said: "My husband is Abu Zar'ah and what is Abu Zar'ah (i.e., what should I say about him)? He has given me many ornaments and my ears are heavily loaded with them and my arms have become fat (i.e., I have become fat). He has pleased me, and I have become so happy that I feel proud of myself. He found me with my family who were mere owners of sheep and living in poverty, and brought me to a respected family having horses and

camels and threshing and purifying grain. Whatever I say, he does not rebuke or insult me. When I sleep, I sleep till late in the morning, and when I drink water (or milk), I drink my fill. The mother of Abu Zar'ah and what may one say in praise of the mother of Abu Zar'ah? Her saddle bags are always full of provision and her house is spacious. As for the son of Abu Zar'ah, what may one say of the son of Abu Zar'ah? His bed is as narrow as an unsheathed sword and an arm of a kid (of four months) satisfies his hunger. As for the daughter of Abu Zar'ah, she is obedient to her father and to her mother. She has a fat well-built body and that arouses the jealousy of her husband's other wife. As for the (maid) slave girl of Abu Zar'ah, what may one say of the (maid) slave girl of Abu Zar'ah? She does not uncover our secrets but keeps them, and does not waste our provisions and does not leave the rubbish scattered everywhere in our house."

The eleventh lady then added, "One day it so happened that Abu Zar'ah went out at the time when the milk was being milked from the animals, and he saw a woman who had two sons like two leopards... (On seeing her) he divorced me and married her. Thereafter, I married a noble man who used to ride a fast tireless horse and keep a spear in his hand. He gave me many things, and also a pair of every kind of livestock and said, 'Eat (of this), O Umm Zar'ah, and give provision to your relatives.'"

|She added, "Yet, all those things which my second husband gave me could not fill the smallest utensil of Abu Zar'ah."

'Aisha then said: Allah's Apostle said to me, 'I am to you as Abu Zar'ah was to his wife, Umm Zar'ah.'"

If we contemplate on this *hadith*, we learn the following important lessons:

- ♦ Women do talk about their husbands more than men talk about wives
- ♦ Some husbands are going to be very bad, and some excellent, and others in between. It describes the entire spectrum of husbands in the society.
- ♦ Notice that the name and identity of the bad ones is not exposed, whereas the good ones are mentioned by name.
- ♦ If someone has 5-6 daughters he should not expect that all their husbands will be excellent.
- ♦ If husband is not good, women should be patient hoping for reward from Allah. At the same time, they should work on improving them.
- ♦ Observe the honesty and fairness of the last woman who praises her ex-husband even after he divorced her.
- ♦ The most important lesson for all husbands is the concluding sentence of the *hadith*. The Prophet has praised and endorsed the behavior and pampering of Abu Zar'ah. ■

Safeguards Against Violation of Human Rights in Islam

- Shaikh Shaukat Hussain

The various protections provided by Islam against the violation of human rights are unique in nature. These protections or safeguards follow from the very nature of the Political System of Islam. The various safeguards which Islam provides against the violation of human rights are:-

Sovereignty of God

First and the foremost basis of the Islamic Political System is the sovereignty of God. This is also the first safeguard against the violation of human rights. This concept erodes the very basis of rule of man over man which has always been the basic cause of the violation of human rights. All the men of the world are regarded as subjects of that real sovereign. No man, class or group of men has right to make other men to follow them. None has superiority over other except on the basis of virtue. The essence of the *Tawheed* as a working idea is equality, solidarity and freedom. Each and every man including those who are responsible for collective affairs of men are accountable to the Almighty for violation of any of His injunctions. This concept of accountability before Almighty for the violation of limits provided by Him make each and every Muslim to avoid any violation of these rights. A man can evade the accountability before any sort of human authority but he cannot do so before the

Authority of God. This concept makes each and every person having faith in Islam to have regard for these rights at whatever position he may be. One more dimension of this concept of Sovereignty of God is that Muslims in their individual capacity as well as their collective institutions are bound to forbid any sort of violation of human rights. Thus, an Islamic state cannot remain silent on the violation of human rights in other states as the Islamic state does not recognise the National Sovereignty of any state which bars any such intervention. The Islamic State is bound to oppose tyranny, oppression and discrimination wherever it may be.

Caliphate of Man

As mentioned earlier that in Islam none has a superiority over other except on the basis of virtue. It is only the virtuous men who are entitled to administer the collective affairs of Muslims as trustees of the Caliphate. Since all the men who are faithful to Islam are vicegerents of Allah they entrust it to the virtuous men among themselves. They have to act as viceroys of Allah and have to do all their activities in accordance with the law provided by the real Sovereign. They cannot ask the people to follow them in defiance of the Divine Guidance. They can never change, amend or restrict any of the rights provided by Islam.

The Concept of Trusteeship of Caliphate

The third important safeguard against the violation of human rights in Islam is the concept of Trusteeship of the Caliphate. This concept of Trusteeship follows from the Qur'anic injunction that whatever is in this world with men actually belongs to the Almighty and those hold it are mere trustees each and every one is responsible in accordance with the quantum of the responsibilities which he holds. This fact was stated by the Prophet (PBUH) in the following words:

"Each one of you is a guardian and will be questioned about his wards. Thus, the leader who is the guardian of his followers will be questioned about them. Man is the guardian of his wife and children and will be questioned about them. Wife is the guardian of her husband's house and his children and will be questioned about them".

From this concept the trusteeship follow important concepts that is (a) The accountability of the responsible persons of the state before the Almighty in the life Hereafter and (b) Accountability of the responsible persons of the state before the citizens of the state.

Sanctity of Human Right

Fourth important safeguards which Islam provides against the violation of human rights is the concept of sanctity of these rights. The *Qur'an* says that whosoever kills a human being (without any reason) like man slaughter or

corruption on the earth, is as though he had killed all mankind.

Islam has given these rights maximum importance. Islam regards human rights to be more sacred than worship.

The Prophet (PBUH) once while performing *Tawaf* and addressing the Kaba said:

"How pious you are, and how beautiful is your atmosphere, how great you are and how much sacred is your status, but by God in whose hands is the life of Muhammad(PBUH), the sanctity of life, property and honor of a Muslim is much more than your sanctity before God."

A Perpetual Shariah

The above conceptual safeguards find way in practice in the form of a guide which the Almighty has provided for mankind in the form of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. The Quran and Sunnah which are the basic sources of the Islamic constitution provide a detailed code of rights and duties of men. These are unchangeable and unamendable. These sources of *Shariah* have also provided the limitations of the rights. They have provided the limitation of the extent to which the state owes its obedience. Those who violate the Divine limits have been labeled as infidels and *Kafirs*. Since the rights provided by Shariah do not change with the change of Governments therefore they are not subject to any change. In fact Islam has provided a perpetual code of life. The Government which ceases to act in accordance with it ceases to be Islamic.

“Who so judgeth not by that which Allah revealed; such are wrong doers”.

“Who so judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed; such are disbelievers.”

Best Interpretation and Exemplification

The human rights provided by Islam are not subject to unguided and unrestricted interpretation of the courts. The courts cannot change these rights by way of interpretations or legal jugglery. Islam has not only provided the code of human conduct in the form of the *Qur'an* and the words uttered by the Prophet(PBUH) but set an ideal example of observance of these rights in the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The way in which the Prophet (PBUH) acted while paying regard to these rights is the best exemplification and interpretation of *Shariah*. All are bound to follow the way the Prophet (PBUH) exemplified and interpreted the Divine Guidance.

An important factor to be taken into consideration is that the prophetic period covers twenty three long years beginning from a single person explaining his mission to his wife, graduating into a long and bitter persecution of the band upholding the revolutionary ideology, inception of a primitive city-state based on Islam and its culmination into the sprawling Islamic state of Arabia interacting with powerful and not so powerful empires and nations. The Prophet(PBUH) was called upon to interpret and implement the *Qur'anic* human rights to nearly every strata of society.

The sanctity and commitment of the interpreter along with the vast arena of his functioning leave practically little possibility of loopholes available to interpreters. This is the internal integrity of the *Sunnah*.

As for its being practically operative, its unambiguous incorporation as the infallible interpretation of and supplement to the *Qur'an* and availability of its historical text whose authenticity is upheld by the most rigorous scientific critics provide two logical basic requisites of legal status and practical availability.

Besides the life of the Prophet (PBUH) the period known as *Khilafat-e-Rashida* (righteous Caliphate) was the period during which a state was run fully in accordance with the tenets of Islam.

Conditional Obedience to the State

Limitation to the extent of which the subjects of an Islamic State owe obedience to the state are also provided by Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said:

“In collective matters Muslims should listen to and obey the orders of responsible men, agreeable, distasteful, provided the orders are not sinful. But when they are ordered to disobey God they should not carry them”.

The Hadith quoted above clearly implies that as soon as the state violates the Divine limits it owes no obedience. When it violates any of the human rights provided by the *Shariah* none of its subjects is bound by its orders (which are

against the *Shariah*). As this violation of Divine limits proceeds beyond a certain limit Muslims are asked to revolt against it and elect a new Government. Something of the sort was reminded by Caliph Hazrat Abu Bakar to his subjects in the following words:

"Obey me as long as I obey Allah and his Prophet(PBUH). When I disobey Him and His Prophet(PBUH) obey me not."

Islam, by providing the conditional obedience to the state, provides a great safeguard to human rights. This provides a strong basis to the subjects against the violation of these rights. It was the result of this very spirit that ordinary people objected to the rulers without any hesitation.

Unanimity of Purpose

One important safeguard which Islam provides is the unanimity of purpose between state and its subjects. The state and the subjects are not two warring parties. One striving for collective good while the other for individual welfare. The rights here are not of defensive nature against the authority of the state. Here, both the state as well as individuals, have the same purpose i.e. to fulfill the will of God. The purpose of the state here is to vindicate the rights of those who have been deprived of them. In the words of Caliph Hazrat Abu Bakr which he uttered as the head of an Islamic state, "the weak among you shall be strong with me till his rights have been vindicated and strong among you shall be weak with me till, if God wills, I have taken what is due from him." The

sphere of activity of the state as well as the individuals has been provided by the Qur'an and exemplified by the Prophet(PBUH). None can violate or go beyond these limits. In fact the rights which Islam provides are the duties which Allah provides for men to be observed against each other for which each and every one to fulfill his duties against others. The *Qur'an* mostly emphasises the duties rather than rights because these duties themselves constitute the right of others.

Education of the Society

An important safeguard which Islam has very much laid stress on is the education of the society regarding its rights and duties. Education is the real guarantee for human rights. They may be legally recognised and may have fool proof interpretative armor, but ignorance of the people about their rights may bring them to naught. State controlled formal education, specified and molded by ideological proclivities and political requirements is bound to be wanting in this role. In Islam education is a religious duty and right which can be supported by formal structures but not limited by them. The second important factor is the integrative approach of Islam. The corpus of human rights does not remain a legal or philosophical treatise meant only for jurists and intellectuals but finds its way as sacred literature and holy discourses to the literate and illiterate masses who are instructed in it in places of worship and theological schools, read and repeat it as a meritorious exercise and recite its portion in the five daily prayers. How potent

this education with a religious dimensions can be understood from the following excerpt of Kalim Siddiqui's *Function of International Conflict*.

"In 1964 the regime (Ayub Regime of Pakistan) promoted the National Press Trust, other news papers that remained outside the net had to take into account the 'Defence of Pakistan Rules, the security of Pakistan Acts and the Press and Publications Ordinance. They also had to consider the fate of those who failed to comply. How then was the process of political communication to take place the trust owned papers found a solution to the problem of expression. They began to print sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on appropriate religious occasions. These sayings were to compensate for the inability of the press to launch a frontal attack on the regime which they thought was an intolerable dictatorship on 1327 anniversary of the slaying of Imam Hussain a grandson of Holy Prophet (PBUH) the *Pakistan Times* reprinted extracts from Imam Hussain's speech to his companion before they went into battle hopelessly outnumbered by the enemy. The head line was. 'And Now the Time Has Come.' The extract read, "listen oh you people; the Prophet of God (PBUH) has said that he who sees a ruler perpetrate acts of tyranny and transgress the boundaries prescribed by God, and establishes the rule of sin and oppression and yet does nothing to thwart him whether by word or by deed shall not be blessed by the Lord with a happy abode in the Hereafter."

Duty of Amar Bit Maroof wa Nahi Anil Munkar

Islam has enjoined upon the 'faithful' that it is their duty to forbid evil and promote virtues. Islam, by enjoining this duty makes society vigilant against the state and all others who violate the Divine limits. A man who dies while defending his rights has been accorded the status of a martyr. The Prophet(PBUH) has said that the most excellent *Jihad* is to declare truth in face of a despotic and oppressive power. At another place the Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said, "Whosoever of you sees evil with his eyes should stop it with his hand and if this is not possible (at least) hate with all your heart. But this is the weakest state of faith (reported by Abu Said Khudri).¹ Hazrat Ibrahim bin Maisara reports that the Prophet (PBUH) has said that whosoever honoured an innovator helped in destruction of Islam." It was this attitude of Islam, as explained by the above traditions, which encouraged even ordinary people to put objections in the face of the great rulers. Throughout Muslim History it has been this education of Islam which made the Muslims fight against the colonial imperialism of the Western powers in the first half of this century. Islam has and still is the source of inspiration for Muslims in their against any form of tyranny and oppression. ■

Women: Towards Reconciliation and Liberation

- Tariq Ramadan

What sometimes favoured open and flexible interpretations in Islam related to people's common good and interest (Al Maslaha) may, in the case of women, have had exactly opposite consequences: when taking into account the often static customary practices of the societies for which law scholars issued rulings — and by which they naturally were often influenced — it became natural to issue restrictive, sometimes partial and biased interpretations of the Texts. This was because of the influence of cultural context on the reading itself. The Texts' higher, universal ends were then restricted by the closed prospects of cultural singularity, which drew on the latitudes offered by constant awareness of customs and of the Al Maslaha in support of its own legitimacy. Access to the power of knowledge, to intellectual and financial autonomy, to the job market, and to political choice and commitment, was often restricted and denied, not in the light of the Texts alone, but through the decisive refraction of cultural contexts. Male and female fuqaha' (experts in Islamic jurisprudence) as well as anthropologists, historians, sociologists, and ethnologists (again, both women and men) must work together in an extensive process of critical studies, reinterpretations, and analyses of the societies for which, and in which, the Texts are to be understood and implemented. A corpus of higher objectives (and the corresponding applied

ethics) must be established before any circumstantial analysis of Texts and environments to avoid running the risk of being misled by the letter of some texts or the cultural shackles of past or contemporary societies. Only in this way can the deductive work of implementing injunctions become meaningful: being faithful to the message without fearing to disturb social frameworks, power relationships, and the traditional roles placed on women as a result of partial understanding of the message.

One should begin by clearly defining the fundamentals and order of discourse about women. The approach through objectives does not allow us to overlook speaking about women's being, their spirituality, autonomy and responsibility, and the essential and social meaning of womanhood. Men, fuqaha', can sometimes touch on those dimensions, but it is women who must, from within, refuse to accept that religious discourse about them should be merely legal and, in effect, curtailed, since it deals with interpersonal relations without elaborating anything about womanhood. Therefore, the first liberation that should be worked out, and that can lead the whole community of believers the world over to evolve, consists of producing a discourse on womanhood that restores the link with meaning rather than single-mindedly focusing on norms. The spiritual awakening and revival that run through

Muslim majority societies and elsewhere, and in which women are particularly active agents, require new discourse about the meaning of faith, worship, freedom and social commitment.

This is why the discourse must rely on in-depth studies of all the dimensions of women's being. This means, beyond norms, raising such issues as the acquisition of knowledge (about Texts and all the other sciences) for women; the meaning of their dignity and welfare in all that has to do with their minds, hearts and bodies; their inalienable autonomy and the essence of their freedom in the mindscape of social representations as well as in group structures, without overlooking the question of the essence of womanhood and related factors. The initial liberation process is demanding.

Even before turning to the issues of social discrimination and power structures in human groups, earlier reflection about faith, spirituality, and the quest for meaning is required. Nothing, or very little, is said and worked about the issue of the meaning of the quest and of the encounter with a spirituality that should be a promise of liberation and autonomy. The higher objectives of ethics, about the inner being, require educating the conscience, respecting the being's dignity, and seeking inner balance, love, sincerity, humility and contemplation. This is an invitation to elaborate a fundamental, feminine philosophy of being, of autonomy and of freedom likely to deal with both the most rigid traditional representations and the most modern subjective projections.

Reflection about women as subjects must be combined with fundamental reflection about women's being itself. The latter determines the essence of womanhood in its dignity, while the former grants women the means to be free. The point is not only to fight discrimination, although this struggle is imperative, but also to make society change in the light of the questions today's women ask about themselves and ask societies about the quest for meaning, their welfare and the freedom of their being.

Much has been said in the West about Muslim women's dress, intended by the latter as an expression of modesty and by some, in modern societies, as a sign of discriminatory submission. Often in reaction, Muslim institutions or scholars have been seen to offer dress as the ultimate expression of faith or as an act of resistance against western cultural imperialism. In all cases, the debates have reduced the meaning of modesty itself in the order of means and ends. In the spiritual order, in reflection about being and freedom, understanding the meaning of modesty (whether for men or for women) cannot be limited to the issue of visible modesty in dress. The latter must be part of a much more fundamental approach integrating the meaning of spiritual, psychological and intellectual modesty along with modesty in dress. At a time when women are too often confined to either strictly normative or mainly aesthetic representations, this reflection about the essence and meaning of modesty smacks of protest and liberation. Resistance begins in such depths.

This does not prevent fundamental reflection about social questions; quite the opposite. For reasons that have to do with being, conscience, but also simply physiology, women relate quite specifically to life, commitment, children and education. Never have our societies been in such urgent need of this feminine input in approaching some issues that are indeed broader than the "mere" question of women. Yet one of women's major contributions to their cause may well lie, not merely in resisting the discriminations and alienations that directly affect them, but in their specific way of approaching the social crises that involve all of us. Here again, the issue should be approached from the source, which may result in a new way of defining the priorities of social and political commitments. This means starting by refusing to enter men's political universe by approaching politics in the same way as men do.

From the point of view of the fuqaha', of men and of women themselves, the priority is to get rid of social and media representations about the "West", which restrict debates to the issues of models or forms. Thus, the western cultural model is seen to require resistance through emphasis on an "Islamic answer" essentially relying on the formalism of social roles or of dress. The answer is insufficient; it can be observed every day. Far from any formalism, then, or rather in opposition to all formalisms, commitment for the recognition of women's being and involvement must start by questioning goals and not only perceptions. Prior to any collective, social or political commitment process, women

must, along with men, determine the outline of a religious and humanist understanding and discourse reconciling women with their function as free, autonomous and responsible spiritual agents. By relying on this approach, which rereads the Texts in the light of higher goals, it becomes possible to think about women's presence and major contributions to the development of contemporary societies while undertaking reforms of the discriminations they continue to suffer. We must clearly refuse to accept that a woman with the same training and skills as a man should experience job discrimination or be paid only 70 per cent of a man's salary, that she should be barred from responsible posts because of being a woman, that pregnancy should be considered a handicap or that she should be compelled to submit to the male imagery that still dominates the job market. Fuqaha' legal councils including women scholars, specialising in Texts as well as in the study of social logistics, must speak out on those questions of rights, justice and equality. Women must struggle against all formalist dictatorships: both those that impose the headscarf without belief in the practice coming from the heart and those that imagine all objectified female bodies fit into a size six dress; those that compel women to stay at home for religious reasons and those that send them back home after the age of 45 for aesthetic reasons. ■

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India Needs Real Democracy

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

India is a democratic country. Here parliamentary form of the government is based on democratic principles. It is one of the largest democracy in the world. The term democracy is derived from the two Greek words 'demos' and 'kratia'. These two together mean 'authority of the people'. Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of USA, has precisely defined democracy. He held democracy as 'the government of the people, by the people and for the people'.

Being citizens of a democratic country our role becomes highly crucial. Moreover, we have a pluralistic society, people of different caste, creed, religion, language and culture live together as one nation. A vast country, India's main plank is its national integration: all initiatives in the country should, therefore, focus on this reality and be done irrespective of any parochial consideration.

In his book "India's Foreign Policy" Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India writes: "The Preamble of our constitution states: we, the people of India, having solemn resolved to constitute India into a sovereign Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens: Justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality them all fraternity assuring the dignity of among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation".

Despite this fact minorities are confronted with a host of difficulties and problems regarding their religious issues and affairs. In a democratic country, if people's feelings are hurt and they are deprived of their fundamental rights and basic amenities of life,

it is nothing but a travesty of democracy.

Being Indians, it is imperative for us to maintain its unity, integrity, and democratic values and norms by fostering national integration and propagating the message of humanity throughout India. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has rightly said: "I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I never surrender this claim". (Presidential Address, Indian National Congress. Fifty 'third Session, Ramgarh, March 1940) He further said: "If an angel were to descend from the high heavens and proclaim from their heights of the Qutub Minar, "Discard Hindu-Muslim unity and within 24 hours Swaraj is yours", I will refuse proffered Swaraj but will not budge an inch from my stand, the refusal of Swaraj will affect only India while the end of our unity will be the loss of the entire human world".

M.K. Gandhi says: "My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. That can never happen except through non-violence". (Harijan, 18-5-40)

He further says: "True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village". (Harijan, 18-1-48)

Needless to add that members of Parliament (MPs) are expected to play a leading role in bringing about democratic values in the country. They are representatives of their respective constituencies. They should be honest, straightforward, candid and bold.

Interestingly, politicians try to surpass each other as to how to reach the spot of incident to gain political mileage. Instead attention should be paid by them as to how combat terroristic and disruptive forces which threaten the country's unity and integrity and try to rip the social fabric of the country to shread. Every party strives to strengthen its own vote bank instead of taking interest on national issues.

It should be kept in mind that India has far lagged behind due to corruption, scam and other so-called unfair and unscrupulous acts economically and financially. We know well who are responsible for it.

The most unfortunate part is that political parties exhibit disloyalty and dishonesty and show negligence and lethargy in country's progress and prosperity. Arvind Kejriwal former Chief Minister of Delhi has precisely stated: 'Time has come to question representative democracy and move towards direct or participatory democracy in some measure on critical issues, an MP should consult the people of his constituency through Gram Sabhas and Mohallah. He should present the voice of his people in parliament and not his High Command's wishes. People should be able to recall him if he did not do that. On many occasions, there is a serious conflict between the desires of the people and the wishes of the party High Command. Today, it is the wishes of the party High Command that prevail. In true democracy, it is the wishes of the people of India that would prevail'.

No doubt, to a great extent the future of the country depends of our legislators and politicians. If they mend themselves and perform their duties with integrity, the country will make progress. No development will occur in the country sans their integrity and honesty.

We may recall here late Rafi Ahmad Kidwai. M.H. Kidwai writes: "Till the first general

election of 1952 the country was facing the worst food problems. There was acute shortage of food-grains. The Food Portfolio was the most difficult one and had proved to be the graveyard of reputation of many stalwarts in the past. Rafi Ahmad was given this portfolio in May 1952 and he performed the miracle within a short time. Instead of shortage there was a plenty and abundance of food-grains, prices began to fall and control was withdrawn and the whole situation was miraculously changed. The solving of the food problem of the country was the greatest achievement of Rafi". (Muslims and India's Freedom Movement, P.160)

Let us recall the pray of noted poet Rabindranath Tagore for building up India a true nation.

"Where the mind is without fear
And the head is held high
Where the world has not been broken up
By narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth.

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection.

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom my Father
Let my country awake."

It is unfortunate that India's democratic values and norms are fading day by day. Regionalism, castisms, favouritism and groupism raising their ugly heads to distort the social fabric of our beloved mother land. No doubt, these are negative tendencies that cause conflicts, clashes and communal riots in the country. Besides they diminish national feelings and damage our national cherished desires.

In short, we can not achieve all this, until and unless we work together to make India a democratic country in true sense. ♦

Women's Dignity, Right and Empowerment

- Abdul Hannan

The society has made significant progress during the last 50 years. Women like men have come forward though not equally though. The oppression that is being unleashed on people particularly women has a foundation. The oppression is not descending from the sky. The ideological foundation for the persecution on women by men and at times by women themselves is the belief originates from some erroneous ideas prevailing in society. And on this belief rests the whole edifice of oppression, deprivation and disrespect towards women.

If we want to eliminate persecution on women from our society, it can be done within the parameter of Islam. Those who have revolted against Islam could not last long and are not able to sustain. With all humility I would like to say that if we can move ahead within the framework of Islam then it will be good in all respects. I firmly believe that there is such a framework in Islam, which can ensure the progress of women.

I am not in favour of distorting Islam nor am I inclined to giving temporary interpretation of Islam. In true sense, Islam has empowered women and Islam has upheld respect for women. Islam has ensured right of women. What could be the basis or "ideological foundation" on which depends the fundamental equality of men and women? God has not created all human beings with similar appearance. Two persons are never equal in every dot

or in all respects. One person is different from another in terms of his weight, height, colour, education etc. But basically every human being is equal - equal to Almighty Allah. The following four arguments prove this:

1. Allah had made it very clear that real human being is Ruh. We call it soul or spirit. The real man is not body. The body will perish in the grave. Those who believe in Islam know that fundamental element of man is Ruh. Allah created all human beings and their Ruhs (spirit) at the same time, created them the same way and asked them a single question. All men and women gave the same answer. The Holy Quran says: When the Lord drew forth from the children of Adam them. Testify concerning them (saying) "Am I not you Lord (Who cherishes & sustains you?) They said: "Yea! We do testify!" (Al-A'araf: 172)

It means all men and women reached an agreement on one point that is, "You are our Lord agreement were made with men or with women. So, the first word about our ideological foundation is that the real human being is the Ruh (spirit) and all spirits are equal. Any other inequality or dissimilarity, if any, is insignificant or very small compared to the equality of human soul or spirit.

It means that the spiritual personalities of a human being are the same and as human beings all are equal.

This is the fundamental foundation of equality among men and women.

2. We, men, boast of our physical structure as superior to that of the women and think that perhaps God has created us better mould. But God has made one thing very clear in the Holy Quran that there is, of course, some difference between all human beings but everyone is "the first class" and superb. In Surah Al-Teen Allah says: "We have indeed created the human beings in the best of moulds." He did not say that the men only were created in the best of moulds. It means there is difference in our appearances and in our structures. But everyone is excellent and first class.

So, to establish the fundamental equality of men and women or to launch a new movement for say or the humanity at large men should not say that the structure of women is bad. Those who are believers must not say this. This is the second proof of basic equality among men and women. I say "basic" because there would remain some minor differences between men and women.

3. Allah clearly says: all people belong to one family of Adam and Eve. In Sura Nisa Almighty Allah says:

"O mankind! Reverse your Guardian Lord, Who created you from a single person, Created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain Scattered (like seeds) countless men and women."

It proves that we belong to a single family. We are children of Adam. In the Holy Quran Allah addressed the human beings as, "children of Adam" many times.

As the children and parents together make a family, similarly all human beings together make a family in the eyes of Islam. The family of human beings in the eyes of Islam. The family of human beings is above all other families. It means that our fundamental honour and dignity is the same. There may be some differences on minor issues but worldly dignity is not real dignity. The only foundation of respect to Allah is 'Taqwa' (obedience to Him).

Allah has never said that men are more respectful to Him or women are less respectful to Him. He says, only those who obeys Him is respectful to Him.

If this were the foundation of respect to Allah, then does the difference created by men matter at Allah? Allah says He never differentiates one person from person except on Taqwa or piety or obedience to Him. So we are children of one family and our fundamental dignity is the same. In Sura Huzurat, (Verse 13) Allah says:

"O mankind! We created You from a single (pair) Of a male and a female, And made you into nations and tribes, that You may know each other (Not that you may despise each other). Verily the most righteous of you in the Sight of Allah is (the person who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge And is well acquainted (with all things)." Allah says in a verse of Surah Al Nisa.

"Fear Allah through who you demand your mutual (rights) And (revere) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you."

Allah says clearly, "revere the wombs." While commenting on this verse a famous islamic scholar of Egypt. Syed Qutb writes: These words were never written in any other literature in the world prior to The Holy Quran. He said in a detailed commentary of this verse that all human beings are essentially equal. But among them, women are superior in a sense. Because by revering the wombs Allah has in fact asked us to respect mothers and respect the women as a whole. So this proves the equality of our basic social status. This is the third proof of our new ideological foundation.

4. At the time of creation Almighty Allah said, "I will send into the world my representatives." Allah did not say that He was sending women or men. He did not even say that He was sending human beings but called them his representatives. The entire human race is His representatives irrespective of the sex. But it is true that if we commit sin, commit crime, commit murder, carry out oppression, and lose our faith in Him then we will lose our status as Khalifa. But basically we all are the representatives of Allah. (Quran 2:30:35:39)

All empowerment lies with this status as Khalifa. No one can perform one's responsibility as Khalifa each man or woman must have some authority. The foundation of woman's empowerment lies with this Khalifat lies the foundation of empowerment of all women and men the poor and weak. So this is the 4th proof of fundamental equality between men and women. Islam wants that every person

should be empowered. But if women stand deprived now, they should be empowered first. If men are deprived any time, they should be empowered.

We must think first about anyone who is deprived; at present we must put in efforts for the empowerment of women. But, what should be stay at home? If any women freely decides to stay at home, she has rights to do so. It is applicable to a man also. But Almighty Allah has never said that women will have to stay at home and will not be able to do anything outside responsibility to women as well as men. In Sura Tawba Allah says, men & women has six responsibilities:

"The believers, men and women, are protectors of one another. They uphold what is just, and forbid regular charity and obey Allah and His Messenger." So the six responsibilities are:

1. They uphold what is just;
2. They forbid what is just;
3. They observe regular prayers;
4. Practice regular charity;
5. Obey Allah; and
6. Obey His Messenger.

This verse says, men and women are protectors (Wali or Guardians) of one another. Some people say that women cannot be guardians, Through these instructions Allah has recognized the participation of women in all good activities. Allah has declared that He will shower blessings on those who will perform these responsibilities. ■

Maintenance

- Syed Athar Husain

A husband is legally bound to maintain his wife during the subsistence of the marriage in accordance with his means and position in life. The right of the wife to maintenance is subject to the condition that she is not refractory or does not refuse to live with her husband without a lawful cause such as non-payment of dower. (AIR 1935 Lah. 902- Mohd.Ali Vs. Mst. Ghulam Fatima; AIR 1943 Sind 65, Mst. Khatijan Vs. Abdullah).

If the wife is a minor so that the marriage cannot be consummated, there is no legal obligation on the husband's part, according to the Hanafis, to maintain her.

Desertion without leaving any means of support to the wife or family entitles the wife to a separation.

A divorced wife is entitled to maintenance during her period of probation (*iddat*). In case of divorce the wife cannot re-marry a second time for three months and in the case of death of the husband for four months and ten days. This period is called *iddat*. Because of this condition, she is entitled to get maintenance for this period: ILR 1955 Hyd. 418 Mohd. Shamsuddin Vs. Noor Jahan Begum).

If the husband fails to pay prompt *Mahr* on the demand of his wife (AIR 1946

Pat 469: Najmunbibi Vs. Sirajuddin; AIR 1956 Raj 102: Amir Mohd. Vs. Mst. Bushra) or due to his cruel treatment, the wife leaves his society (AIR 1943 Sind 65: Mst. Khatijan Vs. Abdullah) she is entitled to maintenance.

The wife may sue for maintenance either in the civil court or apply (in the absence of a special contract) to the Criminal Court for an order under Secs. 125 & 126 of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973.

An order of maintenance in the case of divorce ceases to be operative after the expiry of the women's period of *iddat*.

Nafqa (maintenance), in the language of the law signifies all those things which are necessary to the support of life such as food, clothes and lodging. The subsistence of wife is incumbent upon the husband irrespective of her religion. In determining the quantum of maintenance, regard is to be given to the status and condition of both the parties. If the parties be both wealthy, he must support her in an opulent manner; if both be poor, the husband is

required to provide for her accordingly; if he be rich and she poor, he is to afford her a moderate subsistence such as is below the former and above the latter.

If a woman refused to surrender herself to her husband on account of non-payment of dower, her maintenance does not drop and is still incumbent upon the husband.

If a wife is disobedient or refractory and goes abroad without her husband's consent, she is not entitled to any support from him until she returns and makes submission.

The maintenance of the wife's servants is also incumbent upon her husband provided he be in opulent circumstances.

If the maintenance of a wife is decreed by a Qazi or Court at a time when the husband was poor but afterwards becomes rich, she can sue for a proportionate addition to her maintenance, and a decree must be given in her favour.

Mohammadan Law also provides that if a man gives to his wife one year's maintenance in advance, and then dies before the expiration of the year, no claim lies against the woman for restitution of any part of it.

If a husband absents himself, leaving his effects in the hands of another, his wife is entitled to get maintenance out of the husband's effects. In fact, children and parents of the absentee will also get maintenance out of the assets.

If the separation originates with the wife from anything grave imputable to her like apostasy or illicit connection or dalliance with another person, she has no

claim to maintenance during the *iddat*. But if the separation originates from something which cannot be imputed to her as a crime, as in the case of the separation demanded by her on account of iniquity, she remains entitled to maintenance during the *iddat*.

In a recent case of Criminal Appeal, Mohd. Ahmad Khan Vs. Shah Bano Begum and Others, (AIR 1985 SC 945), the Supreme Court held that the Quran stipulates maintenance of a wife beyond the period of *iddat* and indirectly till she marries, if she is unable to maintain herself. She is entitled to maintenance after the expiration of the period of *iddat* under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and it saw no conflict between the Muslim Personal Law and provisions of Section 125 Cr. P. C. The whole judgment is based on an averment of D. F. Mulla in his Principles of Mohammadan Law made on page 302. In the main para 279 on the subject of Maintenance on divorce, Mr. Mulla says, "After divorce, the wife is entitled to maintenance during the period of *iddat* (q) of S. 257. If the divorce is not communicated to her until expiry of that period she is entitled to

maintenance until she is informed of the divorce." On page 302 Mr. Mulla says, "Where an order is made for the maintenance of wife under Section 488 of the Cr. P. C. and the wife is afterwards divorced, the order ceases to operate on the expiration of the period of *iddat*." This is a statement of fact and interpretation of law but Mr. Mulla gives his own views and

apprehension when he adds: "The result is that a Mohammadan may defeat order made against him under section 488 by divorcing his wife immediately after the order is made." He, however, reiterates the provision of law when he says, "His obligation to maintain his wife will cease in that case on the completion of her *iddat*."

The Quranic text cited is verse 241 of Surah 2. The Supreme Court cited the translation of the verse by Abdullah Yusuf Ali 'The Holy Quran, Text. Translation and Commen-tary' page 96. The Arabic text is "Walil Mutallaqat-e-Mataum bil Maroof; Haqqan Alai Muttageen". Abdullah Yusuf Ali translated it as: "For divorced woman, maintenance (should be provided) on a reasonable scale. This is a duty on the righteous."

Translation of the word *MATA* as maintenance by Abdullah Yusuf Ali is clearly wrong. Almost all other translators have translated it as provision. The Supreme Court has itself mentioned the translation of this verse by Mohammad Zafrullah Khan 'The Meaning of the 'Quran' Vol.I, published by the Board of Islamic Publications, Delhi, the Running Commentary of the Holy Quran' 1964 Edition by Dr. Allama Khadim Rahmani Nuri, the 'Meaning of the Glorious Quran, Text and Explanatory Translation' by M. Pickthall and -The Quran interpret' by Arthur, J. Arberry which translate the word *MATA* as provision and not maintenance'. Why in the face of as many as five con-current translations. The Supreme Court chose to depend upon the

solitary translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali has not been mentioned. Yusuf Ali was an officer of the Indian Civil Service who did a very useful work in translating the Holy Quran in two volumes in a language almost akin to Biblical language but he was, not a great Arabic scholar. Apart from the translations cited by the Supreme Court, I am citing a few more translations:

In the first translation of the Quran in the English language by George Scale brought out in 1734. He translated the verse 241 as follow: "And unto those who are divorced, a reasonable provision is also due; this is a duty incumbent on those who fear God."

Rev. J. M. Rodwell in his translation entitled 'The Koran Translated' translates this verse under Chapter: The Cow, page 364. as follows:

"And for the divorced let there be a fair provision. This is a duty for those who fear God."

Dr. Syed Abdul Latif in his book Al-Quran rendered into English, which is based on the Tarjumanul Quran of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, translates as under:

"And for the divorced women let there be a fair provision. This is an obligation on those who are mindful of God."

The Supreme Court saw no distinction in the English words 'maintenance' and 'provision' and equated one with the other. The Oxford Dictionary gives the meaning of 'Maintenance' as

maintaining or being maintained, provision of enough to support life and the word 'maintain' as furnishing with means of subsistence. It is an action continued over a period of time. The Chambers Dictionary says that maintain means 'keep up', 'support' and by maintenance is meant 'maintaining' or subsistence. The Oxford Dictionary says that provision means provided amount of something and the Chambers Dictionary says it is providing amount of. One can make provision for a day, a week or a month, but maintenance is a long drawn process extending over a period of time, may be the whole life or several years. When the Holy Quran is to be interpreted the word '*Nafaqa*' and '*Mata*' should have been examined and for that purpose standard Arabic lexicons should have been examined and not the English words maintenance and provision. The word provision used for *Mata* is a very poor translation. Rendering the depth and shade of meaning of words of one language into another language or finding equivalent is a difficult task and so many English translators have confessed that the Quran is not translatable. They have entitled their translations as interpretations. For example, there is no word in the English language for the Arabic and Urdu word *Ishq*. It can be understood only by adding an adjective as intense or poignant love. Likewise, there are so many words in Urdu like *Muhabbat*, *Ulfat*, *Shafqat* etc. for the English words love and affection, but they all have different shades of meanings. Can anyone translate the words 'shades of meanings' adequately

into Urdu or Hindi?

In his Commentary entitled Tafsir-e-Qadri, Maulana Fakhruddin has translated *Mataun* as "to bestow something which may profit her" and the word *Bil Maroof* on an average scale neither less nor excessive". (pages 65. Vol. I.)

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi in his Translation of the Holy Quran has translated the verse as to extend some benefit on the usual scale to divorced women."

In the Translation of the Quran by Muhammad Ali (p.66). It has been said, "Give the divorced wives something in accordance with usage. In the Hindi Translation brought out by Maktabh Al-Hasanat, Rampur it has been said "give them something of use in the approved way" (page 68).

Analysis of the translation made by Yusuf Ali will also reveal its incorrectness. In the verse previous to 241 Le., in verse 240 the word '*Mata*' has been used. Yusuf Ali has translated the verse as follows:

"Those of you who die and leave widows should, bequeath for their widows a year's maintenance and residence."

Firstly, the language used is incorrect for how can anyone who dies, make any bequest. It can be done before death overtakes him. Then he has used the word residence when the text says '*ghaira Ikhrāj* which means without asking them to quit the residence. The result may be the same but the translation is patently

incorrect. In the verse 241 the word *Mata* is qualified by '*bil-marooif*' which means well-known or customary. How can maintenance for a divorced woman be *bilmarooif*, i.e, well known and customary when maintenance differs from family to family, depending upon the financial position and means of the husband and the way of living of the family. In verse 7 of *SurahAl- Talaq*, the Quran directs: "Let him who hath abundance spend out of his abundance, and let him who hath his resources straitened, spend according to what hath been given him." In verse 241 the word *Mata* has a different connotation and in Arabic as in some other languages, a word can have several connotations.

According to the ruling of the Supreme Court, if a divorced women decides not to marry at all. She will have to be maintained for life by her erstwhile husband who might have re-married and have a full family of his own. If the divorced woman marries after several years of the divorce she will have to be maintained but there is clearly against the command of God. Says the Quran: "And for such of your women as have no recurrence of menstruation, if they have led you so to presume, the prescribed time of waiting is three months, as also for those who have not had their courses. For the pregnant woman, the prescribed time will be till they lay down their burden. This is the command of God which He hath sent down to you. Lodge them (in the period of waiting) where you yourselves live in and harass them not in any manner. And if they

are pregnant, meet their incidental expenses till they are delivered of their burden." (Q. 65 : 4-6). The ruling makes maintenance incumbent upon the husband for life or till she remarries but the Quran fixes it for three months for a woman who is not pregnant and till the delivery of the child if she is pregnant. The direction given in the first verse of the Quran and the fact that the divorced woman should not be expelled from the house and they should not themselves depart relates to revocable divorce.

In the case of irrevocable divorce, the wife is entitled to get maintenance and residence till the expiry of the period of waiting (*iddat*) according to the Hanafi doctrine. All the four schools of Muslim law are agreed that there is no question of maintenance after the period of *iddat*. In the whole history of Islamic Jurisprudence not one Mujtahid said that maintenance would be payable after the *iddat*.

Maintenance during the *iddat* is provided for there is possibility of pregnancy and the woman is not free to remarry. But after the expiration of the period, the erstwhile husband and wife have become complete strangers to each other and they are free to marry anyone else they like. It is illogical to insist that the husband should go on maintaining a stranger. In discussing such points it is presumed that the woman is the wronged party while in fact the cause of divorce may be wholly imputable to her, examples of which have been given before.

In all important Arabic lexicons the word *Mata* means temporary gain or benefit. The Qamus-ul-Quran al Wajuh wa an-Nazair published in Beirut gives the meaning of the word *Mata* as *Munafah* 'or profit or gain.

Mufradat of Imam Raghīb Asfahani defines the word more precisely as something given to a divorced woman from which she can derive benefit. *Nafaqa*, according to it, means living expenses.

Tartibul Qamus Vol. IV published in Egypt says that Maintenance is something given to a woman after divorce during *iddat*. Al-Qamus-ul 'Asri i.e. Modern Dictionary from Arabic to English defines *Nafaqa* as expenses, outly cost or expenditure on living and *Mata* as effects or goods.

Advanced Twentieth Century Dictionary by Dr. Abdul Haq gives the meaning of maintenance as what is overdue to support life i.e. *nan nafaqa*, *Guzarah*, and his Standard Urdu-English Dictionary gives the meaning of *Mata* as goods, valuables, effects, chattels which can be any article.

In no period of Islam right from the period of the Prophet, his Companions and their successors till date, *Mata* has been taken to mean maintenance. It is only in the nature of a parting gift given to the erst-while wife. Imam Razi writes in Tafsir Kabir that *Mata* covers only articles of temporary benefit given as parting or consolation gift. There are several precepts of the Prophet that *Mata* should

be given even by those in straitened circumstances and it may be a few seers dates, some clothes or grain if they cannot give anything better.

The word '*Mata*' has been used in four verses of the Quran and in three of them husbands have been directed to give '*Mata*' to their divorced wives or it has been declared a right of the divorced woman.

The first one is verse 236 of Surah Cow. Even Abdullah Yusuf Ali has translated the word '*Mata*' as gift. His translation reads:

"There is no blame on you if you divorce women before consummation or the fixation of their dower; but bestow on them (a suitable gift), the wealthy according to his means and the poor according to his means; a gift of a reasonable amount is due from those who wish to do the right thing."

(Q 2: 236)

The second verse is verse 49 of Surah 33. It has been translated by Yusuf Ali as follows:

O ye who believe! When ye marry believing woman and then divorce them before you have touched them no period of *iddat* have ye to count in respect of them.

So give them a present and set them free in a handsome manner.

Dr. Syed Abdul Latif's translation runs as under:

“O ye who believe when ye marry believing woman and divorce them before consummation, ye have not to wait the full term of normal waiting, but give them some gift and release them (from the marriage contract) in an honourable manner.”

Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi in his Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran has translated verse 241 as below:

“And for the divorced women shall be a reputable present, a duty on the God fearing.”

The third verse is 241 of Surah 2 which has already been discussed above. It is most surprising that Abdullah Yusuf Ali having translated the word '*Mata*' as gift in other verses committed the gross error of translating the word in this verse as maintenance,

In case of divorce before consummation but fixation of *mahr*, even the amount of *mahr* is reduced to half. But where *Mahr* had not been settled the divorcee is entitled to get gift and there is no waiting period and as no *Mahr* was fixed, the husband is not liable to pay any *Mahr*.

In case, of divorce given after consummation of marriage, the husband has to give full *Mahr* and is responsible for maintenance as well during the period of waiting. Verses 4 & 24 of Surah 4 have commanded payment of the dower.

Tafsir Mazhari (Vol. I, p. 316) and Ruhul Ma'ani have explained that the

divorced women mentioned in Q. 2 : 241 are those who have been mentioned in verse 236 of the Surah. The author of Lisan-ul-Arab has also stated that *Mata* is semi-obligatory in certain kinds of divorce but it is only a one-time gift and not like maintenance payable over a period of time. To infer otherwise is to import one's own ideas and wishes into the meaning of the Holy Quran.

It is unfortunate that the case was not properly conducted on behalf of the appellant. Thus, it was not brought out that:

- (1) Divorce is of several kinds. In some cases like apostasy, unfaithfulness etc. of the wife it is semi-obligatory. The legal effects of various kinds of divorce are different, while the ruling makes no distinction and covers even those types where even *Mahr* is not payable.
- (2) The meaning assigned to the word *Mata* by Abdullah Yusuf Ali in his translation of verse 2: 241 is patently wrong and is disproved by his own translation of the same word at other places. All other translators and lexicographers have given it the meaning of one-time present and it is clearly distinguishable from maintenance which is to be paid regularly over a period of time. Standard Arabic lexicons should have been produced to show the meaning of the word *Mata*.
- (3) The plea of All India Muslim Personal Law Board as mentioned on page 951

of AIR that the exhortation is to Muttaqueen, that is to the more pious and the more God-fearing and not to the general run of the Muslims was absurd. God has commanded that payment of *Mata* is an obligation on those who are mindful of God. *Taqwa* means fear of God or to be mindful of God. Piety or righteousness is the result. Clear meaning of the last sentence is that one should obey the command if he is mindful of or fears God. Those who do not fear God can do anything they like. It is not that the command is applicable only to good people. Commentaries written by Tabari, Baidhawi, Zamakhshari, Ghazali, Jalaluddin and Fakhruddin Razi and some other standard translations made by highly talented Ulama in Urdu should also have been produced. The Quran is not an easily translatable book and one has to be an Arabic scholar of merit fully acquainted with the Quranic phraseology before he attempts to make a translation.

Maintenance of minor children

Maintenance of children is incumbent upon the father only where they possess no independent property. The father is also responsible for maintenance of infant children. There is no obligation upon the mother to suckle child at the breast. It is the duty of the father to provide a wet nurse who is to stay with or near the mother. He cannot hire his own wife for the purpose but may hire one of his other

wives, if any.

Maintenance of parents

It is incumbent upon a man to provide maintenance for his father, mother and grandfather and grandmother if they happen to be in circumstances necessitating it. The fact that they may be belonging to different religions makes no difference.

Except his wife, children, parents, grand-children and grand-parents, a man is not obliged to maintain other relations belonging to other religions.

Maintenance is due to a relationship within the prohibited degrees in proportion to inheritance. A poor man is under no such obligation except in the case of his wife and infant child. A father and mother must provide maintenance to their adult daughters and also to disabled adult sons, in proportion to their respective claims of

inheritance.

In the event of divorce whatever has been given to the wife by his parents and whatever might have been given to her by her husband, all belongs to her and she can take them with her.

The verse 20 of Surah 4 commands:

“If you wish to dispense with a wife for the sake of another, and if you have given her a talent of gold, do not take back aught of it. Would you have it by slandering her or charging her with an open sin.” ■

The Glorious Qur'an

— Abdul Aziz

Distinctive features of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the most sacred Book in the world. The Qur'an is the word of Allah; the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. It has been sent down to guide man for all times to come.

The Qur'an is Allah's greatest blessing for us. It is the Light with which to find our way to success and salvation. It is the healing for our inner sicknesses. It is the healing for the ills of the world. The Qur'an tells us of our Creator. It tells us of His Attributes. It tells us how He rules over the entire universe. The Qur'an is the heart of Islam. It was revealed through the angel Jibra'il to Allah's Messenger.

Beginning of sending down the Qur'an:

The first Revelation of the Qur'an began in the month of Ramadan. It took place about thirteen years before al-Hijrah (July or August 610). There is, however, no agreement as to the exact date.

The Angel Jibra'il:

It was the Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Power); one of the last ten nights of Ramadan. Allah's Messenger was then forty years old. At that period of his life, solitude had become dear to him. He used to withdraw himself to a solitary place. He would take with him provisions and devote a certain number of nights to the worship of Allah. Then he would return to his family, and sometime on his return, he took more provisions and went again to the mountains.

The angel appears:

It was one night towards the end of Ramadan, when the Prophet was alone in the cave, that the angel Jibra'il came to him and said: 'Read!' and the Prophet said, 'I do not know how to read,' whereupon as he himself told it: The angel took me and pressed me in, his embrace until I felt all strength leave me, then he released me and said, 'Read!' I answered, 'I cannot read!' This was repeated thrice. The angel then said, Allah's Messenger, recited the verses after Jibra'il and felt as though the words were written on his heart. These were the first revealed verses of the Qur'an.

The Prophet, was greatly troubled. He left the cave. When he was half way down the slope of the, mountain, he heard a voice above him calling, 'O Muhammad! You are the Messenger of Allah, and I am Jibra'il!'

The Prophet raised his eyes heavenwards and there was the angel, filling the whole horizon. The Prophet stood gazing at the Angel, then he turned away from him, but whichever way he looked the Angel was always there, astride the horizon.

The Prophet went home; 'Cover me! Cover me!', He said to his wife Khadijah.

The Qur'an - protected by Allah from all corruptions:

The Qur'an is the uncreated word of Allah. The Qur'an, final message to Man, is exactly the same in its present version as it was at the time of the Prophet .

The Qur'an is the Book of Hidayah, the Guidance for man. Its authority is final. The Qur'an has come down to us complete. No changes have been ever made in it. Nothing of it is missing. No additions have been ever made to it. No part of it is forgotten. The Qur'an is protected by Allah Himself from all corruption. It is the only Revealed Book in the world today, preserved in its original form. It is free from all distortions. It is precisely in the wording in which it was sent down upon the Prophet. The text of the Qur'an has remained free from all alterations, additions or deletions. Since it was revealed, there is no other instance of any book, of whatever description, which has been preserved over such a length of time.

Surahs of the Qur'an:

The Qur'an is made up of 114 Surahs of unequal length, the first Surah being Surah al-Fatihah. Surah literally means eminence of high degree. Every Surah of the Qur'an begins with the verse except the ninth: Surah Tawbah. The longest Surah of the Qur'an is Suratul-Baqarah (The Cow). It has 286 Ayaat, and the shortest Surah is Suratul-Kawthar which has three verses. The Qur'an is divided into 30 Ajza (parts) and 6236 verses. Surahs revealed when the Prophet was living in Makkah are known as Makki, and those revealed in Madinah are called Madani. The last verse revealed shortly before the Prophet's death is:

It was revealed in Arafat in the afternoon of Friday, the 9th of Zul Hijjah, 10 H.

The collection and compilation of Qur'an:

The Holy Qur'an was revealed in portions. Each and every word of the

Qur'an was recorded as soon as it was revealed to Allah's Messenger. Zayd bin Thabit used to record them exactly under the guidance of the Prophet. He would read back to Allah's Messenger what he had recorded. Every single verse or part of it and every Surah that was revealed had its own place in the Holy Book. The whole Qur'an, in fact, was arranged by Allah's Messenger himself under the guidance of Jibra'il.

The Qur'an existed in an ordered form in the memories of companions in the life time of the Prophet. Many of the Muslims memorised the Quranic verses immediately after they were revealed. Some of the famous Huffaz (Sing. Hafiz - person who memorised the Qur'an) were: Mu'adh ibn Jabel, Abu'd Darda, Abu Ayyub and Ubayy ibn Ka'b -

No complete written copy of it existed at the time, nor could such a copy be made while the Prophet was alive and still receiving Revelation. The Prophet recited every year in the month of Ramadan, in the presence of the angel Jibra'il, the portion of the Qur'an till then revealed. In the last year of his life Jibra'il asked him to recite the whole of it twice. Shortly after the death of the Prophet, Umar suggested to Abu Bakr that the Qur'an should be compiled in one volume. Zayd bin Thabit was instructed by Abu Bakr to collect the Qur'an. Zayd collected it from various written materials and the memories of people. The standard copy thus prepared was kept with Abu Bakr, Umar and then Hafsah, one of the widows of the Prophet. Uthman ordered copies to be made from this standard copy. These standard copies were then sent to different parts of the Islamic state. One of the original

copies from Uthman's 'time still exists today at Tashkent (USSR).

A few virtues of the Qur'an:

Qur'an is the truth. It is the source of all good. The one who recites a letter from the Holy Book is rewarded ten times over it. Allah's Messenger is reported to have said, "The best of you is he who has learnt the Qur'an and then taught it."

'Shall I not teach you the greatest Surah in the Qur'an, said he, and then taught al-Fatihah and described it as 'the great Qur'an I have been given.' (Bukhari) 'Surah al-Fatihah is a healing for every sickness.' (Darimi)

Once Allah's Messenger said, 'The like of Surah al-Falaq and an-Nas have never been seen' (Muslim)

'Is any of you incapable of reciting a third of the Qur'an in a night?' Recite al-Ikhlās, for it is equivalent to reading a third of the Qur'an (Bukhari)

'Recite the two radiant ones - al-Baqarah and al-Imran for they will come on the Judgement Day like two clouds, or two shades; or two flocks of birds, pleading for their companies. (Muslim)

'Satan flees from a house in which Surah al-Baqarah is recited (Muslim) About Surah al-Fath the Prophet said, "I like it more than anything under the sun." (Bukhari)

'Whoever recites Surah al-Waqi'ah every night will not go hungry'. (Baihaqi)

'Whoever recites Surah al-Kahf on a Friday, light will shine brightly for him till Friday that follows it.' (Hakim)

'Memorize the Qur'an, for Allah will not punish the heart which contains the Qur'an. (Sharh as-Sunnah)

'Read the Qur'an, for on the Day of Resurrection it will come interceding for its companions.' (Muslim)

Etiquettes of reciting the Qur'an: (Adab at-Tilawah)

1. Approach the Qur'an with a strong Faith. It is the word of Allah.
2. Recite the Qur'an merely to seek Allah's pleasure.
3. Do not use the Qur'an to secure worldly things - fame, money, name or any other worldly gain.
4. Before starting the recital, you should seek refuge with Allah from Satan the rejected, saying: Recite before every Surah except for Surah Tawbah.
5. Recite the Qur'an with Tartil. Read it distinctly, without haste, in proper tone and pronunciation. It comes in a Hadith, 'Beautify the Qur'an with your voices.'
6. Spend some time everyday with the Qur'an. Listen attentively whenever the Qur'an is being recited.
7. Memorize as much of the Qur'an as you can.
8. Have Wodhu. Recite the Qur'an with full attention and humility with your face turned preferably towards the Qiblah. Use Siwak. The place where you sit should be pure.
9. Ask Allah for His help and guidance. Allah's Messenger is reported to have said, 'One who is skilled in reading the Qur'an is with the noble, virtuous angels who bring down the revelation; one who falters while reading it and finds it hard to read correctly, will have a trouble reward - for reading and for striving. (Bukhari) ■

Around the World

EGYPT DEATH SENTENCES 'A MOCKERY OF JUSTICE': UN

A group of eight United Nations (UN) human rights experts on 31 March urged the Egyptian authorities to quash the 529 death sentences announced in Egypt last week and give the defendants new and fair trials, so as to ensure respect of international human rights law. On 24 March, 529 individuals were sentenced to death in Egypt on charges related to the events leading to the ousting of the government of President Mohammed Morsi in 2013. At least 600 more individuals are currently under trial for similar charges.

The UN experts said. They also expressed deep concern about numerous procedural irregularities reported during the recent proceedings, such as limited access to lawyers, trials in absentia, or the mass imposition of the death sentences. ■

Slaughter Ban

Europe has largely accepted Islam and Muslims. Muslims are fast growing community there. A 2006 study says Denmark has some 115 mosques, with some of them among the most beautiful ones in the world. Several Muslim schools there teach Arabic and Islamic studies. Ritual slaughtering is banned, but import of *halal* or *kosher* meat continues. It is not against Islam, the government has clarified. The rise of right-wing politics is, however, a matter of concern to Muslims as much as to the European culture. Slaughter-ban comes as a boon too – spurring Muslim nations to start their own industries. ■

Hamdard University

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Saudi Arabia has ordered a financial assistance of five million US dollars to Hamdard University in India to fund the university's educational projects, including a medical college, which will be named after the king, the Saudi Press Agency reported recently. The vice-chancellor of the university thanked King Abdullah for his generous donation to the university and said it would help the university expand its medical research and services. ■

TURKEY'S PEACE PROCESS KEY TO ERDOGAN'S PRESIDENTIAL HOPES

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan will be banking on Kurdish support if he bids for Turkey's presidency in an August election and is likely to use his party's strong showing in local polls as a mandate to advance peace talks with Kurdish militants. Erdogan's AK Party emerged well ahead of rivals in municipal elections on 30 March, increasing its share of the vote including in parts of the Kurdish-dominated southeast. The outcome has bolstered his hand in a peace process in which he has invested much political capital despite staunch nationalist opposition. Erdogan has made no secret of his desire to run for Turkey's first directly-elected presidency in four months' time. But he could face a united front from opponents who fear his victory. Support from Kurds, Turkey's largest minority, accounting for around a fifth of the population, could see off that opposition and help give him the simple majority needed to win in a first round, Erdogan's advisers say. ■

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