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The Quranic Dictum

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

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

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

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

"Show us the right path, The path of those whom Thou hast favoured;

Not (the Path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray."

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

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Wisdom of Qur'an

Did they not see that it could not reply to them a word, and it did not have power for harm or good to them?

Commentary: (Sura Ta-Ha 89)

That is, was the lowing of the calf enough for the Israelites to conclude that it had divine powers? Could they not see that beyond lowing it could do nothing else? Did it answer any of their questions? Did it utter a word? Did it sent Revelation? (Au.)

Indeed, Harun had told them earlier, 'My people you have been put into a trial therewith, and surely your Lord is the Most Merciful; therefore, follow me and obey my command.

Commentary: (Sura Ta-Ha 90)

Although short, this sentence is rich in meaning. Harun first criticized the Israelites for their calf-worship by saying, "My people! You have been put into a trial therewith"; then he invited them to know and understand their Lord God by saying, "and surely your Lord is the Most Merciful"; then, thirdly, invited them to ponder over his own Prophethood by saying, "therefore, follow me"; and, finally, invited them to follow the Law by saying, "and obey my command"

We may remind at this point that the epithet "Al- Rahman" has another meaning of "Al-Aziz", (the Most Powerful) which seems better suited to this verse (Au.).

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

1. Aishah (ra) said: "The Messenger (saws) used to fast until we thought he would never break his fast, and he would not fast until we thought he would never fast. I never saw the Messenger of Allah (saws) fasting for an entire month except in Ramadan, and I never saw him fast more than he did in Shabaan."

- Sahih Bukhari

2. When Allah's Messenger (saws) was asked, why he fasted so abundantly in the month of Shabaan, he said: '(Shabaan) is a month to which people do not pay attention, between Rajab Ramadan and it is a month in which deeds are lifted up to the Lord of the worlds. I like for my deeds to be lifted up when I am fasting.'

- An-Nisa'ee, see Saheeh al- Targheeb wa'l- Tarheeb, p. 425

3. Abu Hurayrah (ra) reports from the Prophet (saws) thus: 'Do not pre-empt Ramadan by one or two days, except for those who have the habit of fasting regularly, in which case they may fast.'

- Sahih Bukhari

4. Allah's Messenger (saws) said: "On the 15th night of Shabaan, Allah, the Exalted, looks upon His slaves (with Mercy) and forgives everybody except the disbeliever and he, who holds malice for anybody."

- Bayhaqee, Ibn Hibban and Tabarane

5. Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "Start fasting on seeing the crescent (of Ramadan), and give up fasting on seeing the Crescent (of Shawwal), and if the sky is overcast (and you cannot see it), complete thirty days of Sha'ban."

- Sahih Bukhari

Islam And The Protests

Of late, anti-Islam forces have heightened their campaign of maligning the religion, its ideology and also prophets. The issue is so sensitive that inspite of observing patience often the rage against such attempts come out on road. Though most Muslims feel insulted by a film trailer that disparaged the Prophet Mohammad or by presenting his caricature in cartoons, many are embarrassed by the ways this anger is displayed. But we justify this anger because of the feelings that such acts of blasphemy carry political overtones. Jews and Christians are blatant enemies of the Muslims. On September 11, the film "innocence of Muslims" was shown in Cinema across the United State without any reservation or restriction by the government but one may recall that U.S. rained missiles on Iraq in 2003 when a woman in Baghdad named Liala Al-Attar drew a cartoon of the then U.S. President George Bush.

It will be quite hurting to see or hear any obnoxious comment on Islam, its holy book or prophets. Muslims all over the world are unhappy on such reckless actions. Freedom of speech is not to abuse or malign anyone particularly religious personalities. Some restraint is needed. The person who indulges in blasphemy, no doubt, deserves severe condemnation but assault on innocent people is certainly an act which Islam does not permit. As with these incidents of what Muslims believe as Western attacks against their beliefs instead of indulging in wanton attacks unconcerned ones, anger should be directed to the perpetrator of the crime.

In many countries laws exist against blasphemy but we hardly hear of their strict implementation. In Muslim countries recent furore has boosted moves to strengthen such laws. Recent call given by the Imam Kaba Sheikh Saleh Mohammad Bin Altalib that at an international level a law be framed which may prove deterrent to violators of law, needs serious attention. Spreading and propagating ones own ideology or belief is no crime but in the heat of passion targeting other religions or calling names of their prophets is unethical and not palatable to those towards whom such acts are directed. Some governments have proposed counter-offensives to such nefarious acts. The Gulf State of Qatar has come out to spend 450 million dollars to sponsor a three-part epic film on the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBH). The Grand Mufti of Egypt plans to launch an international "Know Mohammad" campaign to correct misinterpretation of him. All these efforts are laudable but will mischief mongers stop at that. Still Muslims should use latest electronic devices to counter hate campaign against Islam and educate and inform about Islam. Reacting violently to any insult to Islam is not the right response to all those suffering from Islamophobia.

Islam stands for peace and tolerance. Prophet Mohammad (PBH) preached us to be sensible and tolerant. Let his wish prevail.

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A Successful Life

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Whoever does good, whether male or female, while he or she is a believer, We will give him a good life and We shall certainly pay them a reward in proportion to the best of what they did.

(al-Nahl 16:97)

The above verse should draw our immediate attention. For Allah makes mention of men and women separately with reference to their good deeds. Women are promised the same reward which is held out to men. Both are told about the immense benefits of doing good. It is common knowledge that good deeds are beneficial. Yet this verse brings home a special point which has gone largely unnoticed. Of course this has been memorised by numerous people. 'Ulama' have elucidated its meaning in their own ways too. Nonetheless, the glad tidings implicit in the verse have not received due attention. Allah promises that whoever does good, whether male or female, will be blessed with a successful life. All the striving in the world in countries as diverse as the USA and Indonesia and in the Muslim world from Morocco to North Africa, Yemen and Malaysia is directed at the same goal of achieving a successful life. Much time, energy and resources

are spent on identifying the key to a happy life. For everyone seeks it. It has been the subject of intense debate at educational institutions and specialised centres. Leading authors reflect on this issue. Furthermore, it lies at the core of politics, elections, democracy and the media. Each institution of public life claims that it will direct society to happiness and success.

Allah announces such glad tidings in this verse, proclaiming that whoever does good will be rewarded with a successful life. It is, nonetheless, subject to the condition that one's good deeds should be in accord with His command and will. These should fit in with the Prophet's teachings and the *Shari'ah*. Needless to add, these should follow the Qur'anic code, which is the final divine message. If this condition is met, Allah will bestow a good life upon believers, including the life of this world. This promise is not specific to the Hereafter. The divine promise is of a good, successful life. All worldly pursuits, including education and obtaining higher degrees are focused on the same goal of achieving a successful life. Men and women opt for different professional careers to achieve the same end.

It is everyone's dream to secure a hefty salary, a sprawling house, an expensive, luxurious car for transport and entitlement to air travel. Those who enter politics aim at becoming members of parliament, and even heads of state. All this is done in order to enjoy a comfortable life. Happiness is an oft-repeated expression. It is an antonym for sorrow and misery. Significantly enough, Allah has guaranteed in the above verse a happy life for everyone. He declares that the way to it however consists in doing good. If one performs good acts in line with His commands such a person is bound to be blessed with a happy, successful life.

Allah's promise is above and beyond doubt. Yet Allah has assured us that He will certainly reward such men and women who do good with a successful life. As we noted earlier, all human beings exert themselves day and night to secure a happy life.

Some interpret a happy life only in terms of a high salary. However, this is not true. Everyone so remunerated with a hefty salary does not necessarily lead a happy life. Rather, there are numerous examples that contradict the above proposition. Many people receiving a good salary lead miserable lives. They suffer from ill-health, family feuds, emotional imbalance, or nervous breakdowns. Some are even afflicted with insecurity or

psychological disorders. Despite their high income, palatial houses and impressive cars they do not and cannot enjoy life. They are unable to appreciate the real bounties of life. This is a point worth considering. For Allah states that whoever abides by His commands, the *Shari 'ah*-, and the teachings of His Messenger, disregarding local customs and traditions, will enjoy a happy life. One should not be concerned with social norms nor about whether one's actions will be met with public approval or not. Likewise, one should not be carried away by such worldly considerations as wealth and honour. One should not hanker after these. On the contrary, all one's actions should conform to the commands of Allah and His Messenger. In marriage, the upbringing of children, and one's daily life routine he should strictly follow the *Shari 'ah*, Prayers should be regularly offered. Values such as modesty, chastity and respect for others should flourish. One's conduct should not betray pride, self-projection, squandering or un-Islamic practices. One's actions should not be for the sake of pleasing others. Allah's pleasure should be one's only concern.

If one leads one's life along these lines, Allah promises one happiness and success. Numerous examples bear out this truth. Those who followed the *Shari 'ah* and acted in accordance with the directives of Allah and His

Messenger led enviable lives. It emerges from the study of *Hadith* that these noble souls disregarded ancestral customs and traditions and adhered only to the Islamic model. They listened only to what Allah and His Messenger told them. All the individuals, families, communities and countries that followed the Islamic model tasted happiness and success. They enjoyed a Paradisal life in this world itself. For their conduct was characterised by mutual love, and the discharging of obligations towards others. They did not usurp anyone else's rights. Nor did they look down upon others. They did not indulge in vanity. Nor were they drawn towards illegitimate sources of income. On the contrary, they reposed their trust in Allah, offered prayers regularly and thrived only on a lawful income. They made sure that no illegitimate income could be ascribed to them. Those who follow such a code of conduct lead a happy, carefree life. Their modest houses are better than palaces. For those subsisting on unlawful earnings undergo much torment and suffering. Notwithstanding their outward opulence they lack basic human values. Their life is marred by marital discord, family tension and lack of values such as sympathy and kindness. They do not help the weak and the poor. Rather, all of their time, money and energy are wasted on making a grand show.

Allah has provided every male and female with the opportunity to enjoy a happy, successful life, if they adhere to the *Shari 'ah*, obey Him and act on the Prophet's teachings. Doing so, they can attain the heights of spiritual development and happiness. Let us be reminded that this opportunity is not exclusive to men, it is open in equal measure to both men and women. ■

Demonstration of Islamic Equality and Fraternity

The *Hajj* is a victory for Islamic nationalism over racial, linguistic or territorial nationalisms for which a large number of Muslim countries also have, unfortunately, fallen. It is a proclamation as well as a most impressive manifestation of Islamic nationalism. On reaching there, the Muslims cast away their national or local garments which differentiate them from one another and to which some of them have become attached to the extent of being clannish and parochial, and put on the national robe of Islam, called *Ihram*, and they all sing the same song of humbleness and submission.

O God! Here I am ! Here I am in Thy presence! Thou hast no partner! Here I am! All praise is for Thee and from Thee are all blessings! To Thee alone belongs Power and Rule! Thou art without partner!. ■

(Continued from page 28)

but the Creator and Master of man Himself Who is well conversant with man's needs and dispositions. Hence, the articles, whether of Faith or Practice, prescribed by Him through His Prophet have fully taken into account the benefits and interests of human beings, particularly when the Entity of the Almighty Providence Himself is the One Who has created each and every one and He Himself only knows well the dispositions and requirements of each and every one. His wont is Mercy and Magnanimity and He has even defined Himself to be so. He says:

(Will not He Who has created knows? He is subtle, the Aware) *(Al-Mulk, ' 14)*

These are the precepts and concepts holding which aloft, Islam made its outset and up-till the Domsday followers of Islam and the believers are under command to keep complying with them.

At all events, the chain of the phenomena of sending the Prophets that had been started for the purpose of conveying this message and the Divine call to man was culminated and taken to its climax with the advent of Prophet of Allah, Hazrat Muhammad (SAW). It is this very Prophet of the last phase (SAW) who had this religion of truth, the responsibility of whose propagation he was entrusted with, progressed and promulgated, after having made strenuous struggles and strifes and having endured great agonies and afflictions. Ultimately he had himself acquitted of his obligation, after having got it reached to the point of perfection. In its process, his endurance, fortitude, compassion and pity for humanity, probity and wisdom got fully demonstrated. And whoever, and as and when, got in accord with his mission and message, gave, too, emulating the above mentioned virtues of the Prophet (SAW), the proof of his endurance and perseverance on the path of the truth.

It was decreed by Allah Almighty that this mission was to be fulfilled, and the Prophet and whoever happened to be following in his footsteps had to endure all sorts of torments and tortures in fulfillment of this mission. Moreover, it was not only the reform of the people of Makkah and its surroundings that they had to be content with. Instead, it was the reform of the entire world that was to be had in view as the main objective. They were assured by Allah Almighty of His Help in their efforts to have this mission performed. The verdict was:

(If you succour Allah, He will succour you and make your feet firm.) *(Mohammad: 7)*

Hence, he (SAW) and his followers had to endure, at individual level, during his 13 years long missionary work in Makkah, all sorts of persecutions. And, then, for having the job carried out collectively, the nearby city, Madinah Tayyabah, known then as Yathrab, had to be adopted as a base. And, because of it getting adopted and after that its people had extended their full cooperation, this city was made by Allah Almighty, in view of various peculiarities it had, the hub of the missionary work. That is, the reinforcements for the expansion of the missionary work were to be dispatched constantly from here and the entire world was to be called towards accepting this order of life favoured and approved by Allah Almighty. And, when the tenure of his holy life, during which he had his responsibility fulfilled up to the extent of the fixed target, got close to its end, it was proclaimed that:

(This day I have perfected your religion for you and have completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you ISLAM as religion.) *(Al-Maida: 3)*

Hajj: A Fundamental Obligation

- S. Sulaiman Nadwi

Hajj is one of the fundamental parts of 'Ibadat in Islam. It is not a new institution but the first and old mode of worship whereby mankind could develop God-consciousness in him. The word Hajj means, literally, repairing to a place for the sake of visit (*al-qasd li ziyarah*), and in the terminology of the Islamic Shariah, it implies repairing to Bait-Allah (the House of Allah) to observe the necessary devotions (*iqamat-an-li-nusuk*) in the sacred places in the Holy Makkah.

Arabs has its own history of the various stages of human progress. In the days of Ibrahim Khalil (peace be upon him) it became the abode of a family of preachers of religions. During the period of Isma'il (peace be upon him) its population consisted of a few camps and huts only but gradually it developed into a big religious city and after the Prophet hood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) it became the religious centre of the Muslim world.

In the beginning the practice in vogue was that in every habitation, two houses of special kind were built, one of them was palace of the king of that habitation or fort and the other was the *ma'bad* (the place of worship) of the Kahin. Almost every population had its

idol star or deity which was thought to be its guardian and protector and that guardian idol or star was worshipped by that population. The courtyard of the *ma'bad* (the place of worship) was called *Dar-ul-Aman*. All the sacrifices and nadhrs etc. Offered to these deities and agricultural proceeds were collected there. With the extension of the hold of a habitation there was also an increase in the area of worship of these idols and deities.

Ibrahim's (peace be upon him) native city was Iraq. He was the first mawahhid (believer in One God) in the world who raised his voice against the worship of the sun and the stars and called the people to submit to One God. His relatives and other people persecuted him so much that he was constrained to leave his native city. After travelling through different countries Ibrahim (peace be upon him) turned towards the borders of Arabia and Syria. He got his nephew, Lut (peace be upon him) and his son, Ishaq (peace be upon him) settled in Urdunn (Jordan) and kinan (Palestine) and his other two sons in Madyan, situated on the Red Sea which even today is called Mdyan bearing his name. He (Ibrahim) got his son Isma'il (peace be upon him) settled down in the valley of Faran. All those places were situated on the highway

where there was always great rush of trading caravans who went to Hijaz and Yemen from Egypt and Syria and vice versa.

There were two main aims and objects of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) in settling his progeny in such a way; firstly, they would not find any difficulty in getting corn and other necessary goods as long as the trading caravans are coming and going and could participate in commerce and secondly, these national highways were the best preaching centres for propagating the pure monotheistic religion of Allah or in other words, Tauhid. Here they could spread the true religion by keeping themselves away from highhandedness of the wrathful and tyrant idolaters and star worshippers of Iraq and Syria.

Baitullah

Wherever Ibrahim (peace be upon him) felt the need he raised a stone reciting the name of Allah and enclosed that place for sacrifice and prayer. In the Torah mention of three such places called Bait Allah (House of Allah has been made.

The same kind of places of worship and Houses of Allah were also built by Ishaq, Yaqub and Musa (peace be upon them). Dawud and Sulaiman (Allah be pleased with them) also constructed Bait al Maqdis which was the Qiblah of Bani Isra'il.

It is thus clear that Ibrahim (peace be upon him) (and his progeny usually

built such places of sacrifice and Houses of worship. One such House known as the ka'bah or Masjid-i-Haram, also called Masjid-i-Ibrahim is in the centre of the city of Makkah. During the three thousand years since it was first built, the ka'bah was demolished several times, but each time was rebuilt at the same site for the same purpose. The Prophet Ibrahim and his son Isma'il (peace be upon them) built it, as the first sanctuary on earth dedicated to the worship of One God. The story of the building of the ka'ban has been related in the Holy Qur'an thus:

And remember Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace be upon them both) raised the foundations of the (Sacred) House, (saying): Our Lord, accept it from us, for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing, Our Lord, make us those who submit to Thee and our descendants a people, who submit to Thee. And show us our rites and forgive us. Indeed. Thou are the Forgiving, the Mercy-Giving.

Remember We made the House a place of gathering for men, and of security. And you take the Station of Ibrahim as a place for prayer. And we covenanted with Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace be them both) that they should sanctify My House for those who circumambulate it, and retire to it for devotion and for those who bow or prostrate themselves (there in worship. (92: 125)

The Sacrifice of Isma'il and its Conditions

We have already discussed this subject in detail in the introductory note to Vol. I of *Sirat-un-Nabi*. The fact that God had ordered Ibrahim to sacrifice Isma'il and not Ishaq (peace be upon them) stand irrefutably proved by the Holy Qur'an. In the Torah we also find that Abraham had prayed to God in these words: Oh, that Isma'il (peace be upon him) might live in Thy sight. In answer to this prayer God ordered Ibrahim (peace be upon him) in a vision to sacrifice his son. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an:

And he said: Lo! I am going unto my Lord Who will guide me.

My Lord! Vouchsafe me of the righteous. So we gave him tidings of a gentle son.

And when (his son) was old enough to walk with him, (Ibrahim) said: O my dear son; I have seen a dream that I must sacrifice thee. So look what thinkest thou? He said: O my father! Do that which thou art commanded. Allah willing, thou shall find me of the steadfast. Then when they had both surrendered (to Allah), and he had flung him down on his face, We called unto him: O Ibrahim! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision. Lo! Thus do We reward the good. (37: 99-105)

And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. (37: 107)

And on Ibrahim's followers too this sacrifice was enjoined in the same sense, i.e. showing physical submission and sacrifice in the shape of the sacrifice of an animal.

We must remember that according to the Torahs, the word, 'sacrifice' was synonymous with the word, 'dedication'. Suppose this word was used for a boy in connection with a place of worship, it would mean that the boy was to be cut off from the family and reserved for the service of the temple. But when the same word was used for animals, it meant that those animals were to be slaughtered as an offering to God. So had God decreed in the Torah: For all the first-born among the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast. The man who was dedicated to God would let his hair grow; only when he had reached the holy place of worship could he get himself shaved.

The Basis of the Religion of Ibrahim is Sacrifice

According to the Holy Qur'an and the Torah the basis of the religion of Ibrahim (peace be upon 'him) is sacrifice and this sacrifice was the characteristic feature of his prophetic mission and spiritual life. He (Ibrahim) showed extraordinary perseverance and stood the test through which he had to undergo due to which he and his progeny was immensely blessed and rewarded by Allah. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an.

And recall the time when his Lord put Ibrahim to the test with certain commandments and he fulfilled them. He (Allah) said: Behold! I am going to make thee a leader of mankind. (2: 124)

Indeed We chose him in the world, and in the Hereafter, he is surely amongst the righteous.

And when his Lord said to him: Submit, he said: I submit to the Lord of the worlds. (2:130,131)

We called unto him: O Ibrahim! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision. Lo! Thus do we reward the good. (37: 105)

The Muslims remember the amazing acts of Ibrahim's (peace be upon him) submission and devotion to Allah, the one being running into the fire reposing complete trust in God and secondly, his readiness to offer his son as sacrifice for the sake of his Lord and send blessings on him every now and then five times daily in prayers.

O God, bless Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his descendants, as Thou didst bless Ibrahim and his descendants.

Explaining the purpose of animals sacrifice the Holy Qur'an says:

Their flesh and their blood reach not Allah, but the devotion from you reacheth Him. Thus We made them subject unto you that ye may magnify Allah that He hath guided you. (22: 37)

Ibrahim (peace be upon him) resolved to slaughter his loving and only son in obedience to Allah's command

and the next moment should have witnessed the deed done, Allah called to him:

O Ibrahim! Thou hast indeed shown the truth of the vision. (37: 104,105)

Thus Ibrahim (peace be upon him) set an example of total obedience, submission and loyalty to his Creator and Great Master in negation of his own desires, feeling and sentiments which has no parallel in the history of mankind. He submitted his will to the Will of Allah. The sacrifice of an animal was only a reflection of his loyalty, devotion and submissiveness to Allah.

Islam Demands Sacrifice

Islam means resignation to the Will of God. It implies complete submission to Allah's commands. The sacrifice given by Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace be upon them) proves, beyond any shadow of doubt, that they were the true and loyal servants of Allah. In appreciation of the sacrifices of Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace be upon them), Allah, the Exalted, named this sentiment of theirs of resignation and surrender to His as Al-Islam. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an.

Then, when they had both surrendered (unto Allah) (37: 103)

And who can be averse to the religion of Ibrahim, but he who infatuated his mind. Indeed We chose him in the world, and in the Hereafter, he is surely amongst the righteous.

And when his Lord said to him: Submit, he said: I submit to the Lord of the worlds. (2: 130-131)

In fact the religion of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) is based on Al-Islam i.e. resignation and surrender (to Allah). Ibrahim (peace be upon him) prayed Allah again and again.

Our Lord! Make us submissive unto Thee and of our progeny a community submissive unto Thee and show us our ways of worship, and relent towards us. Thou art the Relenting, the Merciful.

Our Lord! And raise up unto them a messenger from amongst them who shall recite unto them —Thy revelations and shall teach them the Book and the wisdom and shall purify them. Verily Thou art the Mighty, the Wise. (2: 129) And who else can he be than Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) since he alone was raised up from amongst the progeny of Isma'il.

The fact that messenger here implies the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) only is borne out by the Bible: I will raise up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him (Deut, 18: 18). The phrase from their brethren, clearly means the descendants of Isma'il for had it referred to the descendants of Ishaq (Bani Isra'il) the

expression could have been something like it: From amongst you.

Place of Sacrifice

In the Torah the place of sacrifice is given as Moriah. The Jews claim that this was the place where Solomon had constructed his temple (in the Torah called by the name of the House of God). The Christians say that Moriah was the place where Jesus had been crucified. European scholars disagree with both. Sir Stanley says: Abraham rose in the morning, came out of his tent and reached the place where God had ordered him to. But this was not the mountain of Moriah as the Jews hold, nor was it any place near the church of the holy sepulcher. Such a view is more far-fetched than that of the Jews. Still more far-fetched seems to be the belief of the Muslims who consider the mountain of 'Arafat to have been the place. Perhaps the place was somewhere on the mountains of Jerezium and this place looks very much like place of sacrifice. This statement discredits the claims of both the Jews and the Christians. As to the Muslim's claim let us look into its validity. Some translators have translated the Moriah to be a place of high firs, the elevated ground or the place of dream. Those with a better judgment have believed it to be the name of a place. They did not translate it, letting it stand as it was. As time passed, careless translators put in Morah for Moriah, the more so because Hebrew script has

almost a similar written form for both the words. The torah mentions Morah has situated in Arabia: And the came of the Madyans was in the north in a valley by the hill of Morah.

Considering all the facts and circumstances we may assert that Marwah, not Morah or Moriah, is the name of the place and this Marwah is a Makkan hill where the Hajis (pilgrims) perform the sa'l. The Arab tradition, references in the Qur'an and the definite indications in the traditions are all so consistently with the hypothesis that a coincidence with so great a coherence would be unimaginable, unless the hypothesis were a fact. Let us thrash it out further.

There is a tradition to the effect that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) pointed towards Marwah and said: This is a place of sacrifice, and all the hills and vales of Makkah are the places of sacrifice.

In the days of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) animals meant for sacrifice were slaughtered not in Marwah but in Mina, which is three miles from Makkah.

Yet the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) designated Marwah as the place of sacrifice. This the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did because Ibrahim (peace be upon him) offered the sacrifice there.

The Holy Qur'an says:

Then their place of sacrifice is the Ancient House, Bait-al-'Atiq. (22: 29)

An offering to be brought to the Ka'bah. (5: 95)

Marwah is situated just in front of the Ka'bah and very close to it. The verses quoted above show that the original place of sacrifice was the ka'bah and not Mina. But when the number of pilgrims increased the boundaries of the ka'bah extended up to Mina.

Makkah and Ka'bah

The ka'ba is the oldest and most venerated of all the houses of worship. It is a culminating point of one's highest hopes, favours and blessings of Allah. It has been the place of worship and God - consciousness since the creation of this world. The highly eminent prophets of Allah visited it and it has been the Qiblah of the worshippers even before the construction of Bait-al-Maqdis. In the Qur'an it has been said by Allah.

Surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakka blessed and guidance for the nations. (3: 95)

In the Torah too we find the following verses:

Blessed are the men whose strength is in thee,

In whose hearts are the Highways to Zion;

As they go through the valley of Bakka,

They make it a place of springs;

The early rains also cover it with pools,

They go from strength to strength

.....

In this psalm, the word Bacca or Bukka refers to no other place than Makkah.

The ka'bah, as the Holy Qur'an says is the Bait-at-Atiq (the ancient House). It is said that Adam first erected it. It was demolished several times at the hands of nature or men long before the advent of Ibrahim, even its foundations were not traceable. When Ibrahim (peace be upon him) gave the message of *Tauhid* (Oneness of God) in this all-pervading dismal darkness of ignorance and polytheism, the Almighty instructed him to rebuild the Ka'bah. Ibrahim and his son, Isma'il (peace be upon him) found out the old foundations of the ka'bah and started constructing a small square-shaped House. The story of the building of the ka'bah has been related in the Holy Qur'an thus: And when Ibrahim and Isma'il raised the foundations of he (Sacred) House (2: 127). When the House was completed, the divine message came: Do not set up aught with Me and purify My house for those who make the circuit and stand to pray and prostrate themselves. And proclaim among men the pilgrimage; they will come to thee on foot and on every lean camel arriving from every remote path. (22: 26, 27)

Ibrahim (peace be upon him) tried to raise his voice in the land of

Chaldeans but he had to face burning fire. He came to Egypt and Philistines, but nobody cared to listen to him. In short, wherever he opened his lips in praise of One God his voice was lost in the din of idolatry. At last he chose the uninhabited and barren desert of Hijaz where the means of communication were utterly wanting. Abraham's (peace be upon him) voice could not have crossed the walls of the temple, but, no, it travelled East and West and North and South.

Hajj Commemorates the Sacrifice of Ibrahim (peace be upon him)

When the construction was complete, Ibrahim (peace be upon him) ordered Isma'il (peace be upon him) to bring a block of stone, which might be placed at a point from where the people could start going round the ka'bah. In the history of Makkah, this incident is mentioned thus: Then Ibrahim asked Isma'il (peace be upon him) to bring a stone which he could fix at a place from where the pilgrims could start going round.

When the construction of the ka'bah was complete, it was necessary that some God-conscious person should devote whole of his life to the service of God. Such a dedication was termed sacrifice in the law of Ibrahim (peace be upon him). The Torah makes use of this phraseology on numerous occasions. In the Sahih al Bukhari, we find that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to

see dreams (vide chapter, How the Divine Revelation started). Dreams are sometimes allegorical, Such as Joseph (Yusuf) had seen the stars, the sun and the moon prostrating before him. In short, Ibrahim (peace be upon him) dreamed that he was slaughtering his son with his own hands.

He did not take it to be symbolical, and decided to slaughter his son, Isma'il (peace be upon him).

Ibrahim (peace be upon him) had every faith in his own firmness and devotion, but he had to know if the fifteen years old boy could bear it. He wanted to have his consent, and therefore, addressed his son in these words:

O son, I saw in a dream that I should offer thee in sacrifice, consider then thou seest. Resolutely the son replied: O my father, do what thou are commanded, it God pleases, thou wilt find me of the patient ones. (37: 106,108)

And lo, there stood a ninety year old man, his sleeves upturned, his hand holding a knife, to slaughter the darling son, the light of his eyes, the boon granted in answer to praying lips. And there lay a blooming youth, brought up in the loving arms of a loving father; but now the loving arm of the same loving father descending on his throat with a deadly weapon. The angels, the heavens and the whole universe, witnessed the scene and were stunned.

Allah all of a sudden called a vice on High:

O Ibrahim, thou hast indeed shown the truth of the vision, thus do We reward the doers of good. (37: 109,110)

The firmness, the determination and the astonishing self-sacrifice shown by the son, really deserved to be commemorated for all time to come.

The Facts about Hajj

The whole ceremony of Hajj is commemorative of Hadrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and his family's devotion to God, the Almighty. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not introduce it as a new institution but purged it of all evil practices and made it an obligatory act of piety by which one can develop God consciousness.

It is rightly said that Hajj is the perfection of faith since it combines in itself all the distinctive qualities of other obligatory acts. It represents the quality of *Salat* since a pilgrim offers prayers in the ka'bah. It encourages the spending of material wealth for the sake of the Lord, the chief characteristic of *Zakat*. When a pilgrim sets out for Hajj he disassociates himself from his hearth and home, from his dear and near ones to please his Lord. He suffers privation and undertakes the hardships of journey a lesson we learn from fasting and *l'tikaf*. In Hajj one is trained to be completely forgetful of material comforts and pomp and show of worldly life. One

has to sleep on stony ground, circumambulate the ka'bah, run between Safa' and Marwa, and spend his night and day clad in simple pilgrim's dress. He is not even allowed to get his hair cut or trim his beard. In short, he is commanded to abandon all sorts of comforts for the sake of Allah and submit himself before his Lord, the ultimate aim of the life of a Muslim.

Just as Hadrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him) had come running to the House of Allah in response to Allah's call, a pilgrim visits the ka'bah reciting these words loudly:

Here I am at Thy service, O Allah;
here I am at Thy service,

Here I am at Thy service, O Allah,
here I am at Thy at service, here I am
at Thy service. There is not associate
with Thee; here I am at Thy service,
Verily all praise and grace is due to Thee
and the Sovereignty (too). There is no
associate with Thee. "

For the Muslim, visiting the ka'bah, whether it is for the first or the tenth time is a profound awe-inspiring experience. The worshipper enters the *sacred Mosque* with a supplication of God's peace and blessings. Looking beyond the throng of pilgrims and the patterns of columns and arches into the vast open courtyard, he catches a glimpse, with a tremor of awe and excitement, of the solitary black-draped ka'bah which is the centre of every Muslim world. After performing a brief Salat of "greeting" of the mosque, he

makes his way toward the ka'bah through the vast array of Muslims of every place and race on earth in order to perform the first of the pilgrim's rites, that of tawaf or circumambulation.

The worshipper is to start the circumambulation from the corner of the ka'bah in which the Black Stone is embedded. He joins the host of Muslims circling the House and pouring out their hearts in supplication to Him. Moving in that sea of worshippers, a deep sense of his smallness and insignificance comes to him. He realizes that God alone is great. Here, under the blazing sun of Makkah, making his circuits around God's Holy House as he repeats the solemn, fervent supplications of the pilgrim, he has a sense of realization of his own nothingness, his utter dependence on his Creator in face of God's ineffable glory and majesty, and that one day he will come before Him to receive His judgment and the recompense for all he did. While circumambulating the ka'bah a pilgrim kisses the Black Stone as the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) kissed it on the Farewell pilgrimage. It is revered as the only remnant of Ibrahim's (peace be -upon him) building but just as the ka'bah is an object of reverence but not of worship so too is the Black Stone and because the Prophet's peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) lips touched it, all pilgrims do the same. After completing seven circuits of the Sacred House he

may spend as much time as he wishes in making supplications to God in the immediate vicinity of the ka'bah, and before he leaves he prays two Rak'ahs of Salat. He will then go to the spring of Zamzam, situated underground within the compound of the Sacred Mosque very close to the ka'bah to refresh himself with water. He then goes to a nearby area within the compound of the Sacred Mosque to perform the next rite of Hajj. This is known as Sa'i, that is hastening between two hillocks of Safa' and Marwa separated now by a long marble lined corridor, in commemoration of Hajira's (Hagar's) hurried search for water at this site. The worshipper walks and during part of the way may break into a run, seven times between the two rock-mounds, situated about a quarter of a mile apart, glorifying and supplicating God. Between the marble arches he catches glimpses of the adjacent courtyard of the Sacred Mosque. At the centre of it stands the black draped ka'bah around which like an endless river flowing on and on day and night since remote antiquity supplicants from every corner of the world, clad in the simple pilgrim's dress move in utter absorption with God, hymning His praises and calling on His name. One who has visited the Sacred House leaves it with an intense longing to return to it again and again and with a vivid understanding of why the ka'bah is indeed the focal point of the earth for the worship of Allah, the praised and

Exalted, and the centre of love in the life of the Muslim individual and community.

Pilgrims may arrive in Makkah to perform their tawaf or sa'i either immediately before the days of Hajj or earlier. However the climax of Hajj occurs on the ninth day of Dhul Hijjah, the Day of 'Arafat. The Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) stressed the essential nature of this day's observance saying that one that had been present at 'Arafat would have performed Hajj. 'Arafat is the name of a vast plain some miles outside Makkah; it is treeless and barren without any shelter from the blazing desert sun and encircled by stark jagged purple black rocks. Millions of pilgrims move there during the morning of the 9th of Dhul-Hijjah. After the noon and afternoon prayers have been performed together in the shortened form recommended for travelers, the people have had a chance to eat and rest. During the afternoon up to sundown, all these human beings who assemble here, from every land and belonging to countless races and cultures, are completely absorbed in supplications to God, Most High, glorifying Him, affirming their utter helplessness and dependence on Him, yearning for His forgiveness, enduring all the fatigues and difficulties of the travel and the pilgrimage itself with its severe climate and hard conditions. The vast, otherwise empty plain is filled with tents and millions of pilgrims, tired and

disheveled and totally humble before their Creator standing with hands raised in supplication, many weeping in the intensity of their awe and devotion to Him. Near Mount of Mercy, a hill in the middle of the plain the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) delivered his Farewell pilgrimage address to his people.

As soon as the sun sets the exodus of the pilgrims from 'Arafat begins. Their next station is Muzdalifa, a barren rock wasteland, a few miles closer to Makkah, where they perform the sunset and night prayers together, spending part of the night resting after the fatigues of the day and engaged in supplications to God. Here they also gather a number of pebbles to be used for stoning three stone columns representing Satan which have stood since ancient times in the village of Mina, to which all the pilgrims go after their brief halt in Muzdalifah, to live for the next two and a half or three days, in a vast tent city before they complete their pilgrims rites and disperse.

These stone pillars stand at the sites where the Satan appeared to Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace be upon him) in remote antiquity, tempting them to disobey Allah when Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was talking his son to be scarified at God's command. On each of the three days of sojourn in Mina, countless numbers of pilgrims go to the columns, stoning them with the pebbles they have collected to symbolize their

of Satan in the endless human struggle against evil promptings and temptations.

After the first stoning following the Prophet's peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) example and injunction, the pilgrims slaughter an animal in commemoration of Ibrahim's sacrifice a sheep in the place of Isma'il (peace be upon both of them); part of meat is used to feed themselves and their group, and the rest is distributed among the poor. During this period the pilgrims also return briefly to Makkah to perform their final circumambulation of the ka'bah. The pilgrim's home during the mina is a tent shared with other pilgrims, he spends the time in making daily trips for stoning, praying and reading the Qur'an and listening to talks about various aspects of Islam, visiting his fellow pilgrims or resting. Before sunset on the third day or the following morning he leaves Mina and his pilgrimage is now complete.

In addition to its unique spiritual aspects, Hajj is also remarkable, as we have seen that it brings together from every part of earth such an immense diversity of human beings, who in spite of vast difference of culture and language, form one community (ummah), all of them professing and living by the same faith and all devoted to the worship of the same Creator. "Down to the ages," says Professor Hike "this institution has continued to serve as the major unifying influence in Islam

and the most effective common bond among the diverse believers. It renders almost every capable Moslem perforce a traveler for once in his lifetime. The socializing influence of such a gathering of the brotherhood of believers from the far quarters of the earth is hard to overestimate. It afforded opportunity for Negroes, Berbers—Chinese, Persians, Syrians, Turks-rich and poor, high and low to fraternize and meet together on the common ground of faith” (History of the Arabs p. 136)

Reforms in Hajj

The obligatory nature of Hajj is quite distinct from other *ibadat* (acts of devotion). The Arabs were practically ignorant of the times and articles of prayer and did not know how it was to be observed. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) taught them gradually to pray. There was no concept of *Zakat* among the Arabs. Therefore, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) first impressed upon the minds of the people to do good charitable acts and exhorted them to charity, *Sadaqa* and spend for the sake of Allah to help the poor and the needy before *Zakat* was made obligatory on them. There have been various changes in the nature of fast since the Day of *Ashura* till Ramadan. But the rites and formalies of Hajj were already long in vogue in Arabia. There was, however, a change in the concept and the way of performance of Hajj. In other words, the

Holy Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) purged it of all polytheistic and evil practices which had crept into it and made it an act of piety by which one can develop God consciousness.

The detail of these reforms is given below:

1. The real purpose of worship is to remember Allah, seek forgiveness from Him and to glorify Him. But the custom of the pre-Islamic Arabs was to gather themselves in large number at Mina after the performance of Hajj and extol the greatness of their tribes and the greatness of their ancestors. As the whole Hajj rites were purified of all un-Islamic practices, the aftermath of the pilgrimage was completely spiritualized and the pilgrims were instructed to hymn the glory of Allah.
And when you performed your holy rites (of Hajj) remember Allah, like your remembrance of your forefathers—even with a yet keener remembrance. (2: 200)
2. When they offered the sacrifice of an animal, they rubbed the blood of that animal on the walls of the ka'bah to please God. It was also the practice of the Jews that when they offered the sacrifice they sprinkled the blood of the animal on the altar and burnt the flesh of the animal. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be

upon him) put an end to both these practices. It was ordained by Allah” the Exalted, in the Holy Qur’an:

Their flesh and their blood reach not Allah, but the devotion from you reacheth Him. Thus have we made them subject unto you that ye magnify Allah that He hath guided you. (22: 37)

Explaining the aim and object of sacrifice on this day of commemoration of the amazing sacrifice of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) it was said that it is to feed the poor and the needy.

3. It was the custom of the people of Yaman that when they used to come for Hajj, they did not bring enough provisions for the journey. They said that they depend on God. On their arrival in Makkah they used to beg the people. So the following verse of the Holy Qur’an was revealed:

And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best provision is to be dutiful to Allah.

4. Excepting the Quraish, who their standard of distinction over the tribes of Arabia, all other tribes performed the Tawaf of the Ka’bah naked. For this purpose a wooden plank was placed in the ka’bah where all the people put their clothes after taking them off. The only thing which could cover their nakedness depended upon the

generosity of the Quraish, that is, some cloth was given by the Quraish specially for the purpose of Tawaf but those who could not get the benefit had to perform the Tawaf in a naked state. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) absolutely forbade this evil practice.

Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported: On the Day of Nahr (10th of Dhul-Hijjah) in the year prior to the last Hajj of the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) when Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) was the leader of the pilgrims in the Hajj he sent me along with other announcers to Mina to make public announcement. No pagan is allowed to perform Hajj after this year and no naked person allowed to perform the Tawaf around the ka’bah. Then Allah’s Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) sent’Ali (Allah be pleased with him) to read out the surah Bara’a (At- Tauba) to the people; so he made the announcement along with us on the day of Nahr in Mina: No pagan is allowed to perform Hajj after this year and no naked person is allowed to perform the Tawaf around the ka’bah.

5. The haughty and the self conceited Quraish who took pride on their being the custodians of

the ka'bah, stayed at Muzdalifa and thought it below their dignity to proceed on to 'Arafat along with other pilgrims. The Qur'an strikes at the basis of their pride by telling them that they must seek Allah's pardon for this sin of theirs and proceed on to the place where all the pilgrims are required to proceed and stay and consider themselves at par with other Muslims without any distinction of race or social status. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an:

Then press on from where the people press on, and seek forgiveness from Allah, verily Allah is All-Forgiving and All-Merciful. (2: 199)

In the pre-Islamic days Hajj had lost its religious and spiritual significance. It was nothing short of a big fair or festival in which all categories of people participated in every kind of indecency, for instance, indulging in foul talk or foul pursuits, in wrangling and quarreling etc. Islam ordained that Hajj, being a sublime act of devotion, should be performed with a keen sense of piety and fear of Allah. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an:

The pilgrimage is (to be performed in) the months well known, so whosoever undertakes the duty of pilgrimage in them, should not indulge in lewd talk, nor in ungodliness nor in wrangling during the pilgrimage and whatsoever good ye do Allah knows that: (2: 197)

There were two groups of people among the pilgrims: the one said that those who returned from Mina performing the Hajj in the three days of Tashriq, following 'Id-ul-Adha committed a sin, the latter said that those who delayed their stay in Mina were sinful. The Holy Qur'an said:

And remember Allah during the appointed number of says and whosoever hastens on in two days he is involved in no sin, and he who delays, there is no sin for him either; this is for him who is God fearing and fear Allah and know (for certain) that verily unto Him you shall be gathered: (2: 203)

Some persons had innovated Hajj of silence. After assuming Diram they did not speak to anyone. 'Umar (Allah be pleased with him) met such a woman who was keeping silence. On questioning the cause of her silence he was told that she was in a state of Hajj of silence. He forbade her to do so saying: This is an act of ignorance.

Abu Hurairah (Allah be pleased with him) reported: Allah's messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) found an old man walking between his two sons supported by them, whereupon Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: What is the matter with him? He (narrator) said: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) they are his sons and there is upon him the fulfillment of the vow (to walk on foot to the ka'bah, whereupon Allah's

Messenger (peace and blessing be upon him) said: Rida, old man for Allah is not in need of you and your vow.

'Uqba bin 'Amir reported: My sister took a vow that she would walk bare-foot to the House of Allah (ka'bah). She asked me to inquire from Allah's Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) about it and he said: She should walk on foot and ride also.

Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) saw a man driving sacrificial camel. He (the Holy Prophet) said: Ride on it. The man said: It is a sacrificial camel. The Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) said: Ride on it. He (the man) said: It is a sacrificial animal. The Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) said: Ride on it. And on the second or third time the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) added: Woe to you.

When the Ansar returned after Hajj they did not enter the doors through which they went out for Hajj. The idea behind it was that they were not fit entrances for them being burdened with heavy sins. So they entered the houses from the back of the houses and thought it to be the act of great piety. The Qur'an points out their mistaken notion and says that it is through real piety and fear

of Allah that a man becomes virtuous and devoted servant of Allah:

And is no virtue that you enter the houses from the rear but the virtue is of him who guards against evil. Hence enter the house from their doors and fear Allah so that you may prosper. (2: 189)

While performing the Tawaf (circumambulation) it was a practice that a person to show himself sinful and guilty, put a string in his nose which was held and drawn by the other person. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) saw a person performing Tawaf in this way. He got his nose string cut.

Ibn'Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) reported: While the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was performing the Tawaf of the ka'bah, he passed by a person who had tied his hands to another person with a rope or string or something like that. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cut it with his own hands and said: Lead him by the hand.

Ibn 'Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) saw a man performing Tawaf of the ka'bah tied with a string or something else. So the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) cut the string.

In the earlier days the Muslims were under the impression that since pilgrimage was an act of religious devotion, it was, therefore, not proper to do anything worldly during this sacred journey. The Qur'an removes this wrong notion from the minds by telling them that it is no sin if they do some trading during the Hajj season.

There is no fault on your part if you seek bounty from your Lord: (2: 198)

There were two groups, those who used to refrain from Tawaf between Safa and Marwa in the pre-Islamic Period and those used to perform the Tawaf. The Ansar used to assume Ihram for worshipping an idol called Manat before they embraced Islam, and whoever assumed Ihram (for the idol) did not consider it right to perform Tawaf between Safa and Marwa. When they embraced Islam, they asked the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) regarding it, saying: O Allah's Messenger! We used to refrain from Tawaf between Safa and Marwa. So Allah revealed:

Verily (the mountains) As-Safa and Al Marwa are among the symbols of Allah, and whoever performs the Hajj to the ka'bah or performs Umra it is not harmful for him to perform the Tawaf between Safa and Marwa. (2: 158). ■

Vice-President visits Islamic seminary

Vice-President M. Hamid Ansari visited the century-old Islamic seminary Darool Uloom Nadwatul Ulema on Sunday.

During his stay at the seminary, he exchanged pleasantries with the Rector, Nadwa College and President, All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), Maulana Raabe Hasani Nadwi.

Going down the memory lane, both Ansari and Nadwi shared the memories of the past.

Along with the Maulana, several other dignitaries and clerics were present in the meeting with the Vice-President. They had a detailed discussion over the present condition of countrymen, especially the Muslims.

The Vice-President showed interest in the working and development of the Seminary. He wanted to know the number of students studying and the areas they belonged to.

He was surprised to know that students, counting about 5000, came to the seminary to acquire education from different parts of the country.

After the meeting, a 850 page book titled '48 years: Shabqaton ke Saaye' penned by Principal of Darool Uloom Nadwatul Ulema, Maulana Saeed-ur-Rehman Azami Nadwi, was released by the Vice-President.

As a token of respect, Maulana Raabe Hasani Nadwi gifted Ansari his book *Yaadon ke Chirag*. This book contains write-ups on 100 intellectual personalities.

Due to paucity of time, the Vice-President was not able to interact and meet the students of the seminary.

For students, visit by the Vice-President was a matter of pride. Students were seen craning their heads out of their hostel rooms to get a glimpse of the Vice-President.

"The Vice-President has surely honoured us by visiting the college. His visit comes as a feather in the cap of the history of Nadwa which always has been a respectable institute in the political circles as well as in the eye of educationists" they said. ■

(Courtesy: The Pioneer, 19.9.2012)

Call Towards Morality and Message of Humanity

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

Apart from calling the people towards purification of creeds, the Prophet (SAW) called them with all his might and main towards having good morals. He said to them: 'Do evolve in yourselves the humanitarian characteristics. Do adorn yourselves with virtues of being compassionate towards the humanity, having mutual commiseration and feeling of fraternity. Do refrain from hurting others and shun all such acts as lead to depravation. Be kind and polite to everyone.' He told them how it is that Allah Almighty comports Himself:

(Those who are merciful are dealt with by the most merciful the superb and the sublime. Be merciful to those who are on earth, you would be dealt with mercy by one who is in the heavens.)

He brought the moral teachings and instructions contained in the holy Quran as well as those conveyed to him directly to the people's notice. The injunctions which the previous people were given through their respective Prophets were accorded recognition, simply by getting mentioned in the holy Quran, as ways practicable for all times to come. They, too, were conveyed to the people by the Prophet (SAW). The first and foremost message and teaching among the moral injunctions given in these (Quranic) verses is that of '*Tauheed*' and of worshipping the One and the Only Allah. Alongside it, instructions are also there to acquire morals that are good, righteous and indicative of humanitarian compassion. By way of instance, verses of the Sura '*Isra*' are reproduced hereunder:

(And thy Lord has decreed that you should

worship none but Him and show kindness to parents; and if either of them or both of them attain old age with thee, say not unto them: pooh! And browbeat them not, and speak to them a respectful speech. And lower unto them the wing of meekness out of mercy, and say: Lord! Have mercy on the twain as they brought me up when young. Your Lord is the best knower of what is in your souls; if you have been righteous, then he is unto thee penitent, forgiving. And give thou to the kinsman his due, and also to the needy and wayfarer; and squander not in squandering. Truly the squanders are the brethren of the devils, and the Devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord. And thou turnest away from them awaiting a mercy from thy Lord which thou hippest, then speak to them a gentle word. Let not your hand chained to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its extremity, lest you sit down reproached, improvised. Verily thy Lord extends the provision for whom He will, and measure it out, He is in respect of His creatures Aware, Beholder. Kill not your offspring for fear your want. We provide for them and for yourselves; their killing is great crime. And do not approach adultery; it is ever a abomination and vile as a pathway. And do not kill anyone whom Allah has forbidden except by right, and whoever is killed wrongfully, We have surely given his of - kin authority; so let him not exceed in killing; verily he is succoured. And do not approach the substance of an orphan save with what is best, until he reaches the age of strength. And fulfil the covenant; verily the covenant shall be questioned about. And give full measures when you measure, and weight with an even balance, that is good,

and the best interpretation. And do not thou go after that of which thou hast no knowledge verily the hearing and the sight and the hearts, each of them shall be questioned about. And do not thou walk on the earth struttingly, verily thou will not by any means rend the earth, nor canst thou attain the mountain in stature. Each of these! Their vice is to thy Lord ever detestable. That is part of that wisdom which thy Lord has Revealed to thee. and set not up thou along with Allah another God, lest thou be cast into Hell reproved, damned.)

(*Al-Israa* : 23-39)

These were the matters conveyed, under the religion of Islam, by the holy Prophet, Mohammad (SAW), to the inhabitants of Makkah. Thereafter, the attention of the Arab, in general, was drawn towards them. And, then, they were assigned the responsibility of having them conveyed to the peoples upcoming in future up till the Doomsday.

They were told that Islam comprises the creed and the practice both. Details of the creed have been mentioned above. In respect of practice, subject to this creed, four kinds of practices have been specified. Taken all together they make the five pillars that Islam stands on. The first one is the creed that comprises Faith in *Tuheed* (unity of Allah), *Risalat* (Prophecy or the mission of the Prophet), *Akhirat* (The Hereafter), Divine Books, Angels and the Fate. This is the first pillar of Islam. The rest four pillars that pertain to practice consist of: *Namaz* (prayer), *Roza* (fasting), *Zakat* (almsgiving), and *Haj* (pilgrimage). These five pillars have been described in the Prophet (SAW)'s tradition thus:

(Islam is founded on five basics: 1: To bear witness that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad (SAW) is His Prophet. 2: To establish *Namaz*. 3: To pay *Zakat*. 4:

To perform *Haj* of Allah's house. And 5: To observe fast during the month of *Ramadan*.)

It was clarified that these were merely the essential deeds of worship and obedience. After having them performed, the life should be adorned with good morals and virtues. Tyranny, iniquity and vices should be refrained from.

It is this message of Islam that was consigned to the Prophet (SAW) in culminated and perpetual form and the success was made restricted, up till the Doomsday, within only the sphere of injunctions and 'instructions imparted by him (SAW). It was proclaimed that:

(The religion that has Allah's consent is Islam.) (*Aal-e-Imran*:19) Furthermore, it was also proclaimed that:

(And whosoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him and in the Hereafter he shall be of the lost.) (*Aal-e-Imran* : 85)

Thus, it has been made explicitly evident that the recourse to salvation rests only with the pursuance of teachings and instructions imparted by Islam. If anyone wanted, abandoning them and taking to any other course of action, to achieve success and salvation in the Hereafter, he would not be able to achieve that objective. He would simply fail. All these instructions and injunctions were conveyed by Prophet Mohammad (SAW), as best as he could, to all the people who came in contact with him. Whichever of them were possible to be demonstrated in practice were demonstrated practically, too, by him (SAW). Thus, this treasure of teachings and instructions and the Prophet's exemplification is spread over, and covers, all the aspects of human life. It is a bounty conferred on man by none other

(Continued to page 10)

Essence of all the Scriptures

- Muhammad Kunju Salim

There are indications that one hundred and four Scriptures were delivered to mankind from time to time. Adam had received ten Scriptures, Seth fifty, Enoch thirty, Abraham ten, Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad one each. Those received by Adam, Seth, Enoch and Abraham were inspired pamphlets (Sahifa) and the others were inspired Book (Kitab). The former, so believe the devout Muslims, were lost to mankind, the latter are even now preserved but some of them not in its original purity. The inspired Books are Pentateuch (Taurat) of Moses (Sura LIII.37, LXXXVII. 18) David's Psalms or Zabur (Sura IV.161 & XVII.57) the Gospel or Injil of Jesus (Sura V.50, 110 and L VII.27) and Al-Quran of Muhammad. The Islamic belief is that the first three Books lost much of their originality.

Al-Quran is a quintessence of all Scriptures and Islam is perfected with the preaching of Muhammad for in the Quran Allah says, "This day have I (Lord) perfected your Faith unto you, and fulfilled My mercy upon you, and appointed Islam for you to be your Religion."

Quran is to the very syllable "the word of God" (Kalam Allah) and the Book is called the "Book of Allah" (Kitab Allah). The Sacred Text is popularly known as 'Quran' meaning 'Recitation'. The book is also reputed to have fifty five other names.

Al - Kitab	=	The Book
Al - Mubin	=	The Enlightner
Al - Qra'n	=	The Reading
Al - Karim	=	The Good
Al - Kalam	=	The Word
Al - Burhan	=	The Proof
An - Nur	=	The Light
Al - Huda	=	The Guidance
Ar - Rahman	=	The Mercy
Al - Furqan	=	The Distinguisher
Ash - Shifa	=	The Health
Al - Mu'izah	=	The Sermon
Az - Zikr	=	The Reminder
Al - Mubarak	=	The Blessed
Al - Ali	=	The Lofty
Al - Hikmah	=	The Wisdom
Al - Hakim	=	The Philosopher
Al - Muhaimin	=	The Preserver
Al - Musaddiq	=	The Establisher of Truth
Al - Habi	=	The Rope
As - Siratul Mustaqim	=	The Straight Path
Al - Qaiyim	=	The Strong
Al - Qaulu'l Fast	=	The Distinguishing Speech
An - Naba'ul Azim	=	The Exalted News
Al - Hasanu'l Hadis	=	The Good Saying
Al - Masani	=	The Repetition
Al - Mutashabih	=	The Uniform
At - Tanzil	=	The Revelation
Ar - Ruh	=	The Spirit

Al - Wahy	=	The Inspiration
Al - Arabi	=	The Arabic
Al - Basair	=	The Enlightenment
Al - Bayan	=	The Explanation
Al - 'Ilm	=	The Knowledge
Al - Haqq	=	The Truth
Al - Hadi	=	The Guide
Al - Ajab	=	The Wonderful
At - Tazkirah	=	The Exhortation
Al - Urwatu'l Wasqa	=	The Firm Handle
As - Sidq	=	The Righteous
Al - 'Adl	=	The Justice
Al - Amr	=	The Order
Al - Munadi	=	The Preacher
Al - Bushra	=	The Glad Tidings
Al - Majid	=	The Exalted
Az - Zabur	=	The Psalm
Al - Bashir	=	The Herald of Glad Tidings
An - Nazir	=	The Warner
Al - Aziz	=	The Mighty
Al - Balagh	=	The Message
Al - Qasas	=	The Narrative
As - Suhuf	=	The Pamphlets
Al - Mukarramah	=	The Excellent
Al - Marfah	=	The Exalted
Al - Mutaharah	=	The Purified

The Arabic route of the word Quran is from Qara, the first verse-revealed to the Prophet (Sura XCV) meaning 'to recite'. Hence Quran means 'A Recitation' especially meant to recite during religious functions. It is also called Al-Quran al-Majid (The Glorious Quran), Al-Quran Ash-Sharif (the Noble Quran) and Furqan (Distinguisher). Or, simply Al-Ki'ab (the Book).

The Traditionalists believe that Al-Quran is 'uncreated' and is eternal and it existed in the heaven (Sura XLIII,3, XIII,39, ILS) in a form written by God before it was lowered to the lowest heaven. They say that the Quran was written on the Preserved Tablet (Al-Lawh-Al-Mahfuz) (Sura LXXXV 22) and it was brought down and kept in Baitul Izza (Mighty, House) in the lowest heaven nearest to earth on the Night of Decree (Laylatul Qadr). Some say, the entire Quran was lowered all at once while others say, part by part, to the extent of verses for one year's revelation was brought down at one time. It is from Baitul Izza that Gabriel (Sura 1.191) brought it to the Prophet verse after verse, revealing the entire book in twenty-two years or a little more of his prophetic career. It is probable that Gabriel brought down to the Prophet only the meaning of Al-Quran and the proper wording to those meanings might have been given by the Prophet himself.

If the whole Text is uncreated, doubted some, what about the statements and reports purported to have been said by the Prophets, human beings and even by Satan which are quoted at random in the Sacred Text. To this, the Traditionalists found an answer. Quran undoubtedly is God's uncreated word, but the words of Moses, Pharaoh and Satan are created so far they are concerned. However the reports as reproduced in the Quran are the words of God and so uncreated.

At the time of the Prophet's death, there were 1,44,000 Sahaba (Companions) who had actually lived with the Prophet at least for some time. Many of them were experts in the knowledge of the Quran. Until the death of the Prophet, there was no necessity to codify it. However, after the battle of Yamama just one year after the Prophet's death, an unusual situation arose when many of the Quran reciters were killed. Accordingly, the first copy of Quran was compiled by Zaid, one of the principal amanuensis of the Prophet. Within fifteen years during the rule of Uthman, the third Caliph a revision was necessitated for Quran differing from the authentic copy existed in different parts of Arabia. Again, Zaid made a scrutiny of all these unauthorised versions and made an authentic one. When it was ready, all the unauthorised copies were destroyed. It is truly astonishing that Quran retained its original purity during all these centuries. Ever since that day, not a word is changed. It is read and re-read by millions of people all over the Islamic world with solemn piety and devotion.

"This Book (Al-Quran) is a veritable proof from your Lord, a guide and a blessing to true believers."

"When the Quran is recited, listen to it in silence so that Allah may show you mercy. Remember your Lord deep in your soul with humility and reverence. and without ostentation: remember Him morning and evening. and do not be neglected." (Sura VII. The Heights|Al-Araf)

All the Suras begin with the ejaculation "Bismillah" except Sura IX probably because it appears as a continuation of the previous sura. It is translated as, "In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful" or "In the Name of Merciful and Compassionate". The ejaculation "Bismillah" is very important in the life of a Muslim. He utters it before all ceremonies, before he eats, bathes, when he undertakes a journey. He says it whenever an animal is slaughtered otherwise the meat is unlawful to eat.

Quran is revealed in Arabic and recorded in Arabic. And the Arabic of the Quran is by turns "striking, soaring, vivid, terrible, tends and breathtaking." Its "flashing images and inexorable measures go (directly to the brain and intoxicate it."

Fatiha or the Opening Sura also called the Chapter of Thanks giving is the essence of Quran and is recited in every worship and on every important occasion. In reality, it is a prayer, exordium. It is held in high esteem that hardly a function both public and private passes without recitation of Fatiha. Its importance is stressed in Al-Quran. In Sura Al Hejr XV, it is said: "We have given you the seven repeated verses. and the Glorious Koran." Sura Ya Sin XXXVI, is called the Qulbul Quran. (the heart of the Quran). Many of the Quranic verses have special importance. Reciting the Ayatul Fath or the Verse of Victory (59th verse of Suratul Anam-VI) constantly will fulfil one's desire. And ayatul Hifz or the Verse of Protection (Sura 11.256, Sura XII.64,

Sura XIII.12, Sura XV.1? and Sura XXXVII.?) are considered protective in nature and many devotees write them in amulets for wearing on their persons to escape from evil spirits and evil eyes. If a person repeats Ayatul Kursi or the Verse of Throne (Sura 11.256) after each worship, nothing prevents him from entering Paradise. The twelfth verse of Sura (Ayatul Mawaris)-IV is the foundation of Islamic Law. Similarly, there are verses denoting Allah's names and His qualities and they are par excellence. Ayatul Kursi has a charm of its own. The following is Pickthall's English rendering of it.

"Allah! There is no God save Him, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him. Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His knowledge saw what He will. His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and He is never weary of preserving them. He is the sublime, the Tremendous," (Sura II. 255)

Meccan and Medinan Suras

The verses received by the Prophet prior the Hijrat constitute the Meccan Suras. In fact, it includes all pre-Hijra Suras whether the Prophet received the revelation in Mecca or elsewhere. While the Medinan Suras are post-Hijrat. In contents, they differ very much for

Meccan Suras have plenty of striking imagery. They deal with the reality of a future life, of Paradise and hell, of the Last Day, resurrection and the Judgement. On the contrary, Medinan suras are prosaic. They mostly deal with the state and its working, about the various battles fought in the early days of Islam etc. The Book as a whole is so sacred that no grown up Muslim dare to touch it without first taking the ablution.

The complete Book consists of some 62391 verses (Ayat) arranged in 114 Suras (not exactly chapters). Literally Sura means a row, an order or anything in series. Some of the suras are short: the smallest sura only three verses and the longest (Sura entitled Cow) has 286 verses. The arrangement of the suras appears to have no chronological sequence, the longest suras appear in the last next to the Opening Sura (Al-Fatiha) and short ones in the beginning. Every sura has a title; most of these titles have a bearing with the text of the sura. Some of these titles have a mystery of their own for they remain unexplained. There are in all 29 suras beginning with similar titles. 'For example. A.L.M. of Sura 2. Some commentators say "A" stands for Allah, "L" for Latif (Gracious) and "M" for Majid (Glorious). Another opinion is that it meant for Ana' Llahu A'lamu (I am the God who knoweth). Some others say that it is a mystery not meant to understand. Similarly, the title 'Ya Sin' (Sura XXXVI) is unexplained. Al Baizawi says that it means Ya Saiyd (O Saiyid);

Jalan says that God only knows its meaning.

The Quran is absolute. Its words, whether secular or spiritual are faithfully followed by the people of the Prophet. As seen earlier, it prescribes its votaries certain acts to perform such as prayer, alms-tax, fasting etc. It has also negative precepts, such as prohibition of wine, Games of chance, accepting of usury, eating swine's flesh and carrion etc. Perhaps no piece of legislation has ever succeeded to the extent of Quran, in eliminating many of the social evils. Drinking wine, lending money for usury and games of chance are taboo in the Islamic world and most of the Muslims follow these precepts so faithfully that they lead a perfect life. They are good people. Quran reprimands its followers from entering a house without permission. "Greet each other, seek the permission and then enter" is the golden rule prescribed for the votaries of Islam to enter a house. Making others know your presence is so important an act that it is known as Istizan (Sura XXIV.27-29). Similarly, there is the Quranic injunction how to greet a person (Sura XXIV. 61) and how to return a greeting (Sura IV. 88). Combined with these Quranic injunctions are scores of Prophet's practices which together form a perfect system of man's conduct towards God and towards fellow beings. Quranic prescription containing laws governing man's conduct towards God is called Ibadat and that governing human relations is called Mu'malat. The entire Islamic world consider Al-Quran as a miracle-as the only miracle the Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH) had as a proof of his apos-tleship. To show its superiority, the enemies of Islam were challenged to compose one chapter similar to Quran and despite their best efforts, they could not bring forth a sentence equivalent to any of the Quranic verses. This speaks of its greatness.

Quran is for the entire mankind. It undoubtedly recognises all the Prophets. It says; We sent before you other apostles to their people. (Sura The Greeks 30) This theme is repeated in several passages. The reader who likes to know them may read Sura 2,10, 11, 12, 19,26,27, 28, 29, 34, 37, 40, 42, 43, 51, 54, 57, 59,61, 68, 69, and 79.

Al- Quran is the essence of all the scriptures; a sum total of wisdom and knowledge of all previous revelations. Its basic teaching is to bring the mankind to submit to the Lord of creation for which it prescribes certain duties. Five of them are most important whose faithful performance makes a man what he is and what he ought to be. Those who keep away from them are sinners; severe punishment is waiting upon them. Quran gives a graphic account of punishment for the wrong and eternal bliss for the righteous. Provided for the Servants of Allah are mansions and "by their side sit bashful dark-eyed, as chaste as the sheltered eggs of Ostrich."(Sura The Ranks 3). "Reclining upon soft couches they will gaze around them; and in their faces you shall make the glow of joy. They shall drink of a pure wine, securely sealed, whose very dregs are musk (for

this let all men emulously strive); a wine tempered with the waters of Tasnim, a spring at which the favoured will refresh themselves." (The Unjust. Sura 83) Who then are the righteous? "The true servants of the Merciful are those who walk humbly on the earth and say: 'Peace!' to the ignorant who accost them; who pass the night standing and on their knees in adoration of their Lord; who say: 'Lord, ward off from us the punishment of Hell, for its punishment is everlasting: an evil dwelling and an evil resting place,' who are neither extravagant nor niggardly but keep the golden mean, who invoke no other god besides Allah and do not kill except for a just cause, (manslaughter is forbidden by Him), who do not commit adultery (he that does this shall meet with evil. His punishment shall be doubled on the Day of Resurrection and in disgrace he shall abide for ever-unless he repent and believe and do good works, for then Allah will change his sins to good actions. Allah is forgiving and merciful. He that repents and does good work truly returns to Allah), who do not bear false witness and do not lose their dignity when listening to profane abuse, who do not turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the revelations of their Lord when they are reminded of them, who say: 'Lord, give us joy in our wives and children and make us examples to those who fear you.' These shall be rewarded with Paradise for their fortitude. There, they shall find a welcome and a greeting, and there they shall abide for ever, a blessed dwelling and a blessed resting place." (Al-Furqan, Sura 25)

On the Resurrection Day, all the evil doers shall collect to receive the reward of their misdeeds. A voice will cry: Cast into Hell every hardened unbeliever, every opponent of good works, and every doubting transgressor who has set up another god besides Allah. Hurl them into the fierce, tormenting flames." (Qaf. Sura 50). And ever hungry Hell will ask for more and more sinners. There, in the Hell, all the wicked, the sinners and the Disbelievers will receive a stern punishment. The hell fire would scorch their faces and they would writhe in pain. To add to their misery, scalding water as hot as molten brass would be given to them for drinking and fruits of Zaqqum-tree which sprouts out from the interior of hell having fruits like devil's head for food.

The teachings of Al-Quran are sincere, frank, direct and appealing. The warning contained in Sura 80, "He Frowned" which refers a minor event in the Life of the Prophet who rebuked a blind man who had come to the Prophet for guidance, is an all time lesson for the Muslims. Quran also gives a vivid description about the creation and the Day of Judgement. Allah has created the heavens in six days and then ascended His throne, ordaining all things." Then He has created man *from* potter's clay and the Jinn from smokeless *fire*. (The Merciful, Sura 55). He has given the bounties of the earth for the full enjoyment of human beings but with a warning not to go astray and become atheist or idolaters. Each man is attended by two

keepers, one sitting on his left and the other, on his right recording everything spoken and done by him. Not an atom's weight in earth or heaven escapes God's knowledge, not there is any object smaller or greater but is not recorded. On the Judgement Day, this Book will be produced. No soul shall bear another's burden and that each man shall be judged by his own labours. "On that day the Trumpet shall be sounded and you shall come in multitudes. The gates of heaven shall swing open and the mountains shall pass away and become like vapour." (The Tidings. Sura 78) The righteous get the book in their right hands and the condemned would receive it in their left hands. And for the Servants of Allah, Paradise will be brought close to them God will say: "Enter in peace. This is the day of immortality. There they will have all that they desire."

The melody of the Quran is superb, especially when it is heard wafting through the still night its music dives deep into the heart. The real achievement of the Quran is its telling manifold ideas in each Sura so that the readers are not tired of reading the same theme over and over again. The Quranic words are selective and apt giving a true picture of what they meant. They are forceful and authoritative when ownership is concerned, as in "We are the Heir of all things;" frightening when the Day of Judgement and Torments of Hell are described; tempting and even sensual when the Bliss of Paradise is told. Harsh to Unbelievers, Sinners, thieves and wicked, Kind to Orphans and slaves,

Quran promises rich reward for all good works. It forewarns that "actions as small as a grain of mustard seed shall be weighed out." (The Prophet, Sura 21) Another astonishing fact about Al-Quran is its simplicity. Its allegories, allusions and similes are everyday talks that even an illiterate desert wanderer can easily grasp it as in "Barren soil yields poor fruit". Every desert dweller knows what grows below his feet. Again, the works of Unbelievers are compared to mirages which fool the thirsty travellers. No Arab need to be told what mirage is! At the same time, it is a great warning to those weary travellers who are in pursuit of knowledge not to be fooled by the mirages. "On that day we shall roll up the heaven like a scroll of parchment." (The Prophet, Sura 21). By this single sentence, God's Authority, His Power and Strength is well established. Now let us see, how God's omnipresence is expressed in Quran. "If three men talk in secret together, He is their fourth, if four, He is their fifth, if five, He is their sixth, whether fewer or more wherever they be He is with them." (She who Pleaded, Sura 58).

The early Arabs who were passionate lovers of poetry were intoxicated in its sublime beauty. It is narrated that Prophet Muhammad used to recite it in an appealing voice, often emphasising the words so that his listeners become attentive. Whenever he was reciting the verses depicting the torments of hell, his voices went up and low, often raising his fingers for emphasis. His immediate successor, Hadhrat Abu Bakr could seldom read the Quran

without shedding tears. There are now many who could recite it in the same strain, as the stalwarts of Islam could do it, not long ago.

The healing powers of Quranic verses are unsurpassable, believes the orthodox, and in sickness, many of the passages are read to the patients. Verses of the Throne (Ayatul Khursi) excell all others and its recitation has special merit. Devout Muslims recite it as often as possible. Some others write it in amulets and carry it on their person. Muslim physicians (Hakim) write it in plates with black ink obtained from burnt rice and make a potion of it with water to be given as a sure panacea for insomnia, fear etc. Surprisingly, many find solace in it. It is said that the Prophet left Mecca on a crucial night unnoticed by the guards who had cast a net of themselves around his home to kill him, by reciting the first few verses of Surah Yasin. Suddenly they were seized in a coma, insensitive to the surroundings, and Lo! the Prophet had fled through the very eyes of his enemies. They shook themselves out of the seizure when the Prophet was safe in the darkness.

When this book was being written, a devotee had confessed to me that he had won the love of his enemy by a short course of reciting constantly Sura Yasin. The modus operandi of this unusual devotional exercise is like this: Arising from his sleep at 2 a.m. every day, he used to have his normal ablutions, and read Surah Yasin from beginning until the first occurrence of the word 'Mubeen' (verse) and then re-read it from the

beginning until he read the second 'Mubeen' (verse). Again he turned back to the beginning and read the text until the third 'Mubeen' (verse). This was repeated eight times as there are seven Mubeen in Surah Yasin. This was followed by a special prayer and Du'a. He continued this exercise for forty days and at the end, he had indication that he had won the war without firing a single shot. His former enemy is now his best friend.

No Muslim ever touches the Quran without legal ablution. It is always kept on the top. Reading it on any day is meritorious; however reading it on auspicious days like Friday, Monday and Thursday has special rewards. With moderate speed, one can read a Juz a day covering the whole book in 30 days. On rapid reading, many complete it in a week.

Many are the Quranic verses often quoted:

"Evil shall recoil on those that plot evil." (Sura 35 The Creator). "Truth has come. Falsehood has vanished and shall return no more." (Sura 34 Sheba)

"To *your* Lord *you* shall all return." (Sura 32 Adoration)

"God is close to him than the veins of his neck."

Requit evil with good."

"No soul shall bear another's burden and each man shall be judged by his own labours." (Sura 56 Star)

"Finest of all garment is the robe of piety." (Sura 7 The Heights)

The Practical Approach to Islam

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

To have a clear concept of Islam, one should know what it exactly means. Islam means complete submission to the will of Allah. It is the religion prescribed by Almighty Allah. It is a practical religion. Its teachings encompass the whole gamut of human beings. All acts of ours should be to seek the pleasure of Allah and maintaining peace must be our ultimate responsibility accordingly.

In Islam, purport of worship (Acts of devotion) is quite wide. Every act performed with pure intention, is called ibadat (Worship). If one's intention is not pure, that work cannot be termed as worship. We may recall prophet's admonition regarding intention. The holy Prophet (PBUH) said to the people who had left their homes and migrated to Madina. "Each person will get the reward of his intention; whose migration is for Allah and His Messenger, his reward is with Allah. As for him whose migration is for the world or for a woman to marry her, his migration will be rewarded for that he intended. Therefore, every action which is done to please Allah, in obedience to His command called ibadat (Worship). Verily the reward of actions depends upon intentions."

It is evident from the above saying of the Prophet that we should start performing any act with sincerity of heart and good intention. We should not have expectation of cheap publicity or praise from others.

Being a practical religion, Islam does not approve of celibacy and monasticism. It is related in the Traditions that Uthman b. Ma'z came to the prophet with the request that he should 'be spared from society's bondages and allowed to become a monk (Rahib). The Prophet replied: "The retirement of my people is to sit in a corner of the mosque and wait for

the time of prayer".

Noted Islamic scholar Syed Sulaiman Nadwi says: "The majority of religions considered that piety and God-consciousness of man lies in leading' a solitary and lonely life in a cave or den or a jungle severing all social connections with the world, in the sight of Islam, this concept of ibadat is absolutely wrong as ibadat in Islam is another name of fulfilling the rights which a man owes to his family, to his community, to the state and the humanity at large. So a person who sits in a corner, cut off from all social activities does not discharge the duties assigned to him by Allah, the Almighty and this act of his does not deserve any praise or approbation. The true concept of Islam is that a man while living in a society of multitude of men and relatives should lead a full-fledged life and discharge the duties which he owes to each individual with a keen sense of responsibility. He who shuns his responsibilities and adopts an evasive attitude towards them retiring to a lonely corner is a defeated and, coward soldier. The followers of Islam are valiant and light-spirited soldiers who know no defeat. They are God-fearing and God-conscious and they do not forget Allah in the thick of battle and in the busiest hours of their lives. Briefly speaking, Islam does not teach its followers lethargy and escapism from duties, but earnestness, zest and vigour and its motive is to strive and strive hard". (Siratun Nabi, Vol-5, p-22)

It should be kept in mind that Islam is a just, moderate and balanced religion. There were companions of the holy prophet (PBUH) who, under the influence of Christian monks or on account of their natural trend had adopted celibacy and austere way of life depriving themselves of worldly comforts and

luxuries. The holy prophet (PBUH) dissuaded them from this act saying: This is not the shariah with which I have been sent, someone among the companions of the holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "I will not marry women; someone among them said: I will not eat meat; and someone among them said: I will not lie down in bed. He (the holy Prophet) praised Allah and glorified Him and said: What has happened to those people that they say so and so whereas I observe prayer and sleep too; I observe fast and suspend observing them; I marry woman also? And he who turns away from my sunnah, he has no relation with me".

Mr. Abdul Hamid Farid has rightly said: "Islam is against asceticism, monasticism and the hermit life. In order to attain moral and spiritual perfection, the Muslim's head and heart must be disciplined under the strain and stress of worldly life. Muslims must meet one another, and they do meet in mosques, five times a day. No one can learn the art of wrestling and can become a perfect wrestler without practising with other wrestlers. Likewise, not human being can learn the art of attaining virtue and repelling temptations without living in the midst of society". (An Epitome of The Teachings of Islam, p:7)

Abdullah b. Amr reported that the messenger of Allah said to me: Abdullah b. Amr, it has been reported to me that you observe fast during the day and stand in prayer during the whole night. Do not do that for your body has a share of its own in you, your eyes have a share of their own in you. Observe fast and break it too. Fast for three days in every month and that is a perpetual fasting. I said: messenger of Allah, I have got strength enough to do more than this, where upon he said: Then observe the fast of David (peace be upon him). Observe fast for one day and do not fast on the other day. And he (Abdullah b. Amr) used to say: Would that I had availed of this concession."

The holy Qur'an vividly says: "Allah tasketh not a soul beyond its scope" (2:286)

and again "Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you" (2: 185)

Needless to add that there is no restriction 'of the place of worship in Islam. The entire earth belongs to Allah. Hence everywhere one may say one's prayer at the time of worship. The holy Prophet said: "I have been conferred upon somethings which were not granted to anyone before me that the earth has been made sacred and pure and mosque for me and when ever time comes for prayer, pray there for that is a mosque for you".

In short, Islam is an innate religion. It is compatible with human nature. It is a religion of equilibrium between the body and soul Almighty Allah says: "The nature made by Allah in which He has made man; there is no altering in the ways of Allah. That is the right religion." (30: And again "The same religion has He established for thee sent by inspiration to thee. And hath We enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus namely, that your should remain steadfast in religion, and make no division therein; to those who worship things other than God, hard is the (way)". (0 42: 13) Only Islam can solve the hydra-headed' problems of the modern age. The need of the hour is that we must follow this approved religion of Allah in letter and spirit. The holy Qur'an says: " O you who believe! Enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and do not follow the footsteps of the evil one; for he is to you an avowed enemy" (2: 208). It is true that when we enter to the fold of Islam completely, nothing wrong can be committed by us. After all, the real purpose of Allah, creation of mankind and jinn is worship (Ibadat). The holy Qur'an says: "I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship me" (51 : 56). May Allah give us strength to comprehend true meaning of Islam and to conform to teachings and instructions of Islam as Allah asks His beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to speak. "Say Lo! My worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds" (6: 162).

Around the World

Pakistan presents a picture in contrast

ISLAMABAD: For four days, Pakistan has defied doom s day predictions of going up in flames over the anti-Islam film *Innocence of Muslims*. Pakistanis have protested across the country but they have been peaceful and no incidence of violence has been reported from anywhere on this count.

When Egypt and Libya were rocked with violence on Wednesday, the general apprehension was that things could get worse in Pakistan where the U.S. embassy has been set afire once. But, all institutions appear to have worked quietly to ensure that protests remain peaceful. On Wednesday itself, the government condemned the film through a statement issued by the Foreign Office. The following day, the political class got its act together and unanimously adopted a government-initiated resolution condemning the film. Meanwhile, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) "proactively blocked" access to the anti-Islamic video available online via YouTube. All service providers were asked to immediately block the video. Though the country has seen raging debates whenever PTA has blocked content online, this time round the ban was quietly accepted by even the keenest advocates of free expression.

All the while, social networking websites — a major platform of

discourse-were awash with messages advocating calm with many pointing out that the best response would be to ignore the film. Their basic submission was that protesting against it violently would only perpetuate the stereotype of Muslims that the film was trying to project. The preemptive measures notwithstanding, the arrival of Friday brought along with it fears of an outburst after the *juma* prayers and security was strengthened accordingly. While security had been tightened around the U.S. and Western diplomatic missions in Islamabad on Thursday itself, many of them gave the day off to their staff for fear of being targeted.

Advisories were issued to foreigners to avoid crowded places.

The precaution appeared in order as many religious organisations - the Jamat-e-Islami and Jam'at-ud-Dawa included - called for protests around the country after Friday prayers. People did protest though not in large numbers. Barring attempts to barge through police barricades, the day passed off peacefully and even the day after - when protests continued in West Asia and North Africa - peace prevailed.

The media also weighed in. Though it was unclear whether television channels were advised by the powers that be to refrain from whipping up passions as is wont, most networks played down the global protests. ■

(Courtesy: The Hindu)

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