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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

"They will certainly carry their own burdens and other burdens besides their own. They will assuredly be called to account on the Day of Resurrection concerning the fabrications which they contrived."

(Al Qur'an – 29:13)

In the Day of Judgement not only will the unbelievers be punished for straying from the Truth, but they will also be taken to task for misleading others. Let us, for example, consider that one commits a theft and asks another to be his accomplice in the crime. Now, the latter will not be acquitted on the mere plea that he so thieved at someone else's behest. He will be duly punished for his crime, for it is against the dictates of justice that he be exonerated and the instigator be punished in his place. The instigator, however, will receive a double punishment – for his own misdeed as well as for leading another stray.

As for fabrications, they say that if one commits a crime at someone else's behest, the former will be exonerated on the grounds that he committed the sin at someone else's instigation and, hence, the latter will be made to bear the entire burden of the sin. Secondly, they falsely promised that they would bear responsibility on behalf of those who reverted from true faith to unbelief. On the Day of Judgement when, contrary to their expectations, they will come face to face with Hell, they will not be at all willing to suffer for the sins of those whom they misled in this world in addition to suffering from their own unbelief. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Shaddad bin Aus relates that the Holy Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said, "The wise man is really one who keeps his 'self' under control and devotes himself to acts beneficial in the next world, while the foolish man is one who devotes himself to his evil desires and cherishes false hopes in his relation to God."

(Tirmidhi)

This hadith distinguishes between a wise man and a foolish man. The former realises the transitoriness of this physical world while the latter spends his life in the enjoyment of mundane pleasures.

The hadith brings into light two features of such a person who is wise, spends his life in accordance with God's commandments. One, he keeps his self under perfect control; he is not a slave to his desires. That is, he submits all his desires, wishes and dreams to the Will of Allah. The other feature is that he spends his worldly life, keeping an eye on Life after Death. He curbs his desires just to seek the pleasure of God; he also earns and spends only within the permissible limits.

Contrarily, a foolish person devotes his life to the fulfilment of his evil desires in total violation of moral codes of life. He fails to distinguish good from evil. The hadith points out the folly of such a person when he hopes that God will admit him to Paradise anyhow. Even in the so-called enlightened era of today some people are labouring under the burden of the same erroneous notions. ■

Martyrdom of Hazrat Husein

Islamic calendar begins with the month of Moharram that follows the last month of Zilhijja. So before Moharram Muslims perform Hajj, one of the five tenets of Islam. They observe the traditions of sacrifice, a way shown by the first messenger of Islam Hazrat Ibrahim, the liberator and constructor of the holy place 'Kaba'. The New Year of the Islamic calendar assumes great significance because of the confrontation of "Truth" and "Evil". Here the politics and religion came face to face. It is an admitted fact that evil forces and pious forces are running side by side so that one could differentiate between the two and realise the importance of kindness and humanity.

About 1436 years ago an undeserving and cruel person Yazid assumed power of Islamic state and became the ruler of Islamic world. He was apprehensive that his authority would not get credence without the approval and support of the kins of the last prophet. To get himself accepted as ruler and head of the religion also he sought the favour of Imam Husein the grand son of Prophet and son of the fourth Caliph Hazrat Ali. Imam Husein informed Yazid that he had no objection in his becoming ruler but he could not be accepted the head of Islam. Yazid got furious and threw a challenge to

Imam Husein. Imam Husein planned visit to Iraq and settle the issue. He reached Karbala and camped there with his family and about 70 followers. Learning the arrival of the Husein Yazid saw to it that they were put to the maximum discomfort. He manipulated that they could not get water. In that sandy land and scorching heat he confronted the Husein's party with an army of soldiers. In a fierce battle of Karbala one could imagine the plight of a three days thirsty associates of Husein. All of them were brutally massacred. There is no dearth of heinous incidents in the history but the incident of Karbala on the 10th of Moharram in 60 Hijri was the most painful and cruel work of evil forces against the humanity and religion.

Every year on the 10th of Moharram we remember that horrified incidence of the martyrdom of Husein to keep the flag of truth flying and condemn Yazid for his inhuman act. It has been rightly said:

“Qatle Husein asl mein marge Yazid hai
Islam zinda hota hai her Karbala ke bad.

S.A.

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The Glorious Qur'an-An Infallible Guide

- S.Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

"And now We have sent down a Book to you, Wherein there is admonition for you. Can you not even now understand (what you have to do)."

Surah al-Ambiya : 10

The above verse tells us that the glorious Qur'an is a clear, faithful and honest mirror in which everyone can see his image and know his position in the sight of Allah and in society. Because it describes the morals and manners, character and conduct the attributes which are desirable for all men. It contains the characteristic traits of all types of men-high and low, rich and poor, good and bad, etc.

The glorious Qur'an gives an account of the qualities and position of man as understood by a majority of 'ulama' (exegesists). Our forebears considered the glorious Qur'an as a 'living' book. They did not consider it to be a book of history or archeology which deals with the past events and peoples of former times, and that it has nothing to do with living peoples and changing times, innumerable and unaccountable types of men who inhabit the world. Everything was quite clear and well- defined for them. They used to seek guidance from the Scripture and looked for their morals and manners in this unique and wonderful book and find their true 'self' in it. If it was what it should be they used to thank Allah for that. If, on the contrary, it was other than what it should be, they used to ask forgiveness of Allah and try to mend

their ways.

This verse reminds me of Syedna Ahnaf bin Qais, who was an eminent disciple of the companion (Sahaba) of Prophet (peace be on him)-a "Taba'i" and one among the close associates of Syedna 'Ali ibn Abi Tallb, His gentleness was proverbial. But inspite of it when he got angry his sense of honour and zeal knew no bounds. It was said that when Syedna Ahnaf gets angry, one lac swords are unsheathed.

It is said that once he heard somebody reciting the above quoted verse. He was startled to hear it. He asked that the glorious Qur'an be brought to him, adding that he wanted to know his position as where he stood and with which people he bore resemblance or affinity.

He went on turning the pages of the glorious Qur'an and came across the following verses one after the other.

(1) "They used to sleep but little of the night, and ere the dawning of each day would seek forgiveness. And in their wealth the beggar and the outcast had due share"

Surah adh-Dhari yat : 17-19

(2) "Who forsake their beds to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of what We have bestowed on them."

Surah as-Sajdah : 16

Then he came across the reference to a group of people which has

been praised in the following words:

(3) "And who spend the night before their Lord, prostrate and standing."

Surah al-Furqan ; 64

(4) "Those who spend (of what which Allah hath given them) in ease and in adversity, those who control their wrath and are forgiving towards mankind; Allah loveth the good."

Surah al-i-Imran : 134

(5) "Those who entered in city and the faith before them, love those who flee unto them for refuge, and find in their breasts no need for that which hath been given them, but prefer the (fugitives) above themselves though poverty became their lot. And whoso is saved from his own avarice-such are they who are successful,"

Surah al-Hashr : 9

(6) "And those who shun the worst of sins and indecencies and, when they are wroth, forgive. And those who answer the call of their Lord and establish worship, and whose affairs are a matter of counsel, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them,"

Surah ash-Shura: 37-38

He stopped here and said, Oh Allah! 'I do not find myself among these people'. He started looking elsewhere in the glorious Qur'an. He found the description of a people as below:

(7) "For when it was said unto them. There is no god save Allah, they were scornful. And said: Shall we forsake our gods for a

mad poet ?"

Surah as-Saffat : 35-36

Then he found the description of some other people:

(8) "And when Allah alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the Here- after, are repelled, and when those (whom they worship) beside Him are mentioned, behold! they are glad".

Surah az-Zumar : 45

He also came across the people who will be questioned:

(9) "What hath brought you to this burning? They will answer: We were not of those who prayed: Nor did we feed the wretched: We used to wade (in vain dispute) with (all) waders, and we used to deny the Day of Judgement, till the inevitable came to us.

Surah al-Mudath-thir : 42-47

He stopped again and prayed, 'Oh Allah! 'I disavow such people.' He started turning the pages of the glorious Qur'an again, and came across the following verse:

(10) 'And (there are) others who have acknowledged their faults. They mixed a righteous action with another that was bad. It may be that Allah will relent toward them. Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful."

Surah at-Tauba : 102

When he read the above verse, he cried out, 'Allah be praised, I am one of them.' Let us now see our position in the glorious Qur'an seriously and sincerely- It

is a messenger of good news as well as a warner. Along with righteous people, it contains the description of infidels and atheists. It draws the true picture of individuals and communities both: It says :-

(11) "And of mankind there is he whose conversation on the life of this world pleaseth thee (Muhammad) and he calleth Allah to witness as to that which is in his heart; yet he is the most rigid of opponents. And when he turneth away (from thee) his effort in the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle; and Allah loveth not mischief. And when it is said unto him: Be careful of thy duty to Allah, pride taketh him to sin. Hell will settle his account, an evil resting-place."

Surah al - Baqarah: 204-206

Then it says:

(12) "And of mankind is he who would sell himself, seeking the pleasure of Allah; and Allah hath compassion on (His) bondmen."

Surah al-Baqarah: 207

A community has been described thus:

(13) "O ye who believe! whose of you becometh a renegade from his religion, (know that in his stead) Allah will bring a people whom He loveth and who love Him humble toward believers, stern toward disbelievers striving in the way of Allah, and fearing not the blame of any blamer. Such is the grace of Allah which He giveth unto whom He will. Allah is all-Embracing, all Knowing"

Surah al-Maidah: 54

Another community has been described thus;

(14) "Of the believers are men who are true to that which they covenanted with Allah. Some of them have paid their vow by death (in battle), and some of them still are awaiting; and they have not altered in the least."

Surah al-Ahzab: 23.

The glorious Qur'an advises to offer thanks and acknowledge obligations. It has narrated the true stories of prophets (peace be on them all) and their followers. It also frightens of the ill-effects of thankless-ness and ingratitude, pride and misbehaviour instead of humility and good behaviour:

(15) "Hast thou not seen those who gave the grace of Allah in exchange for thankless-ness and led their people down to the Abode of Loss."

Surah Ibrahim: 28

It describes the condition of a community which had been ungrateful for the bounties of Allah and they were proud of their affluence:

(16) "Allah coineth a similitude: a township that dwelt secure and well content, its provision coming to it in abundance from every side, but it disbelieved in Allah's favours, so Allah made it experience the garb of dearth and fear because of what they used to do."

Surah Al-Nahi-112

These are the specimen of human beings and their morals-examples which the glorious Qur'an has described under different nomenclatures; at some place by the name of an autocratic rulers like Pharaoh or some stubborn and perverse officials or rich men like Haman or a proud and miserly capitalist like Korah, or tyrant and oppressive community like 'Aad or expert artisans like Thamud. These are immortal symbols of different human characteristics which are not bound by time and place. They represent specimen of human weaknesses.

The glorious Qur'an throws light on the deplorable end of these individuals and communities and makes it clear that those who will follow their characteristic traits or accept them as their leaders will meet the same fate which befell these defaultant people;

(17) ".....That was Allah's way with those who passed away of old - and the commandment of Allah is certain destiny."

Surah al - Ahzab: 38

We have placed a 'mirror' in your hands. It is for you to see your image in the light of these selected verses of the glorious Qur'an-thank Allah if you find yourself among those people who were guided aright and graced with the bounties and munificence of Allah or recant and mend your ways, if God forbid, you find yourself among those people who followed their own wishes and invited the wrath of Allah here and in the Hereafter. ■

Halimah Yacob elected prez of singapore without a vote

Singapore: Halimah Yacob, a former speaker of parliament, was elected as Singapore's first woman president, after the returning officer said she was the sole candidate to qualify for the contest.

Aiming to strengthen a sense of inclusivity in the multicultural city-state, Singapore had decreed the presidency, a largely ceremonial post, would be reserved for candidates from the minority Malay community this time. 'Although this is a reserved election, I'm not a reserved president,' Halimah said. "I'm a president for everyone."

Halimah's experience as house speaker automatically qualified her under the nomination rules. Of the four other applicants, two were not Malays and two were not given certificates of eligibility:

The last Malay to hold the presidency was Yusof Ishak, whose image adorns the country's banknotes. Yusof was president between 1965 and 1970, the first years of Singapore's independence following a short-lived union with Malaysia, but executive power lay with Lee Kuan Yew, the country's first PM. The separation of Singapore from Malaysia gave ethnic Malays a clear majority in Malaysia, while ethnic Chinese formed the majority in Singapore. REUTERS. ■

(Courtesy: Times of India, 14.9.17)

Shibli As An Educationist

- Javed Ali Khan

In Indian history the post-mutiny (1857) era saw British paramountcy on a firm ground. Consequently open and hostile resistance to the colonial government was considered inexpedient and futile. Amidst such circumstances Indians of various sections, groups and classes ventured to safeguard their particular as well as general interest of the people by setting up associations, societies and organizations of various denominations. With the passage of time, in certain areas, fusion of different societies and organizations took place in order to establish unity of action and political demand. The British government viewed these developments with curiosity, but at the same time encouraged the formation of such bodies with the hope that it would draw out Indian public opinion in favour of British policies and measures. This would help formulate remedial measures and also timely checkmate any growth of insurgency. With such objectives Municipal Board and Corporations were established towards the close of the nineteenth century. With more guided political motives National Parties came into existence. 'Politics' and 'Political demands' soon emerged like new phrases in the politico-intellectual life of the Indians. It thrilled their imagination, although its definition, scope and means of presentation before the government were yet to be clearly demarcated and determined. That it evolved and developed gradually to its full implication is quite understandable.

Shibli defines 'Politics' as a demand mutually operative between the government and the subject. In no way it implies the forfeiture of the rights of the latter, and the craving for liberty and freedom cannot be construed as rebellious behaviour. According to Shibli the meaning and scope of 'Politics' begins with the evaluation of the extent of participation of the governed people in the affairs of the administration. Politics is not mere vocal utterance, it arises out of intense nationalistic feelings and has the vigour of a religious force, which is prepared for all sacrifices.

Shibli's political expressions and writings had three main objectives: the first was to infuse political consciousness among the Muslims who were considered to be politically inert; the second was to provide direction to Muslim political activities; and thirdly to promote formation of a common platform for the political aspirations of the Hindus and Muslims.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1875-76 had stirred the soul of the Indian Muslims, yet Shibli was surprised at the non-participation of the Muslims in political life of the country. He was dismayed to see that the Muslims were not even coming forward to attend the meetings of Muslim Educational Conference. In the realm of politics, Shibli, during the days of his early association with Sayyid Ahmad Khan, appears to have toed his political views. He may be having certain reservations but since his writings of this

period do not throw any specific information it is difficult to make any conjecture. However, Shibli, in later times did not agree with the views of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan that Muslims must refrain from political activities and must concentrate solely on education. Such an attitude, he believed, would keep the Muslims backward. Although a great admirer of the political acumen of Sir Sayyid, much of his differences with him grew up because his political and religious views were at variance. On account of Sir Sayyid's feudalistic mentality and excessive pro-British leanings, Shibli described Anglo-Mohammedan Oriental College, Aligarh, as Jamia Dams Ghulami. Shibli's various articles bearing political lessons had great impact upon the minds of the Indians. One such article entitled Musalmano Ki Political Karvat won him political adherents such as Mawlana Hasrat Mohani, Mawlana Muhammad Ali, Mawlana Zafar Ali Khan and Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad.

In order to arouse political consciousness among Indian Muslims, Shibli envisaged a number of programmes. For example, to impart political action and training he called upon the formation of a band of competent political workers who were to undertake the task of distributing journals and pamphlets in vernacular languages. They were also expected to organise and conduct lectures on current political issues, Educated Muslims were encouraged to emulate the examples of Hindu political activists of Gurukul Kangri, Arya Samaji Colleges and Fergusson

College because teachers of these institutions were dedicated men who had devoted their life for the uplift of their community in all walks of life.

Shibli did not subscribe to the view forwarded by a few contemporary Muslims that the Muslims would lose their distinct identity if they joined the Indian National Congress. On the contrary, he considered the Congress a vibrant force with many appreciable programmes. He held Gopal Krishna Gokhale in high esteem and supported his demand of Local Council as a helping hand in the discharge of local administration, He praised Gokhale as a selfless man, a true politician and a person dedicated to the cause of Indian politics. He called upon Indian politicians to emulate Gokhale's qualities of head and heart.

Guided by emerging political needs Shibli advised the Muslims to select able and dedicated men as their leaders who could rise to the occasion in solving the problems of the people. He asserted that the common people must not hanker after the aristocrats, who, in order to safeguard their vested interests favoured the policies of the British. Emphasizing on the importance of education he opined that its aim must not be simply to become graduates and get jobs, because such an attitude dampens the more progressive motives; it makes a person docile and narrows down his thinking and action.

A notable aspect of Shibli's thought is that he fearlessly expresses his views about the nature of British regime and the position of the Indians under it. He enumerates that although England is a

monarchical state, yet the basis of its government rests upon Parliament and democratic principles. Under such a system the governed has full right to participate in the governance of the country. The people can freely express their opinion, and can also criticize the policies of the government. Shibli avers that the nature of the British system of government provides full scope to the masses to formulate laws of governance and also to live in accordance with it. However, Shibli laments that this system was not implemented in India because of racial discrimination with the Indians. He raises the question that has not India produced great men such as emperor Akbar, Todar Mal, Abul Fazl, etc. Even in modern times there have been distinguished men such as Badruddin Tyabji, Ameer Ali, Dada Bhai Naurozji and Sayyid Ali Imam. Condemning the British policy he cites the declaration of 1858 made by Queen Victoria, which proclaimed that in the discharge of Indian administration there should be no discrimination on grounds of colour and creed. He further argues that the 'Declaration' was not merely the expression of Queen's personal will but had the approval of the British Parliament. It was therefore grossly unjust on the part of Lord Curzon not to implement it.

The policies of Indian National Congress, he believed, were not compatible with the interest of the Muslims at large. At the same time, he dismissed the claims of Muslim League as the exclusive representative of the Indian Muslim problems. Nor does he consider Muslim League as anti-Congress. In fact,

Shibli was a critic of Muslim League because he felt that it lacked proper agenda and at best could offer only piecemeal solutions to matters of political exigencies. Shibli describes League's behaviour as akin to the attitude of members of British House of Lords. He did not subscribe to the fears expressed by the Muslim League that the Hindus by virtue of their numerical superiority would overwhelm and dominate the Muslims. He also dismissed and ridiculed the concept of two-nation theory.

He praises Congress for raising the demand of self-government and other programme of national interest. He commends the political workers of the Indian National Congress for their painstaking effort in collecting information for the meaningful discussion and debate in the council. Such intensive preparation was lacking among the members of the Muslim League. This probably prompted Shibli to suggest measures for reforms. For example, he calls upon the League to bring within its fold able and dedicated political workers who could skillfully free national politics from the hold of feudal potentates and wealthy persons. Further, he advises the League to pay attention to problems of Land Holding Rights and to include in its list of demand all those programmes and proposals which were being chartered by the Congress and other moderate Hindus.

Shibli also endeavoured for Hindu-Muslim unity. He recalls the grand service of the Rajputs to the cause of Mughal Empire and highly praises their loyalty. He avers that the Mughals responded to the

Rajput gesture with equal sagacity, magnanimity and tolerance. In this context he cites one remarkable example of the Mughal emperor, Akbar. It is well known that Akbar married his son, prince Salim, to the daughter of Bhagwant Das (son of Raja Bharamal) with all royal pomp and show. But the most touching aspect of this marriage is that Akbar, one of the mightiest monarch of contemporary times, carried the litter of his daughter-in-law on his shoulder like a porter into the palace". Such display of respect and honour by a monarch is unheard of. Contrary to the debonairness shown by the Mughals, the Rajput Chiefs were known for their arrogant and overbearing nature. He cites the example of the Rana of Udaipur who would put tilak mark on the forehead by the toe of his leg, only then the aspirant person was admitted to the rank of raja. Such treatment was obviously meted by the Rana to show his exalted position and remind his subordinate of his humble position and that he owed the new position to his grace. Shibli thus tried to show that Hindu-Muslim relations rested on grounds of mutual tolerance, confidence and respect. Because of this mutual appreciation of each other needs, Rajputs under the Mughals not only participated in the administration of the country but also held key military position, something that remained unimaginable for the Indians under the British regime.

Shibli had a very sensitive soul and reacted sharply to any national and international developments, which affected the Muslims in any part of the world. In his youth he had raised fund for

the Turkish government during the Russo-Turkish War of 1875-76. For his pro-Turkish sentiments the Sultan of Turkey awarded him tamgha-i-Majidi. This made the British government suspicious of him. The mistrust was further aggravated on account of Shibli's virulent criticism of British policies and measures. Shibli was thus a constant source of annoyance to the British. But in his anti-British feelings Shibli did not go beyond a limit. At Nadwa he softened his attitude and considered reconciliation as the better part of valour. He tried to convince the British government that his main interest lay in bringing about rapprochement of thought of the East and West. Guided by such motives he forbade the publication of Mawlvi Abdul Karim's article on jihad, which bore rebellious temper.

In sum it may be said that notwithstanding Shibli's leanings towards the Congress Party as well as his appeals for identification of the Muslim interest with the Hindus in some areas, he nevertheless, felt that the Muslims should simultaneously maintain a distinct platform for reasons of their cultural background and community interest. Men such as Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad and Muhammad Ali Jauhar who were considerably influenced by him in their early life may be regarded as Shibli's political successors. It may be said that during the period of 1912-13 Muslim political actions were definitely examined and in some measure, guided by the writings of Shibli and Azad. A new era of political awakening among the Muslims was in the offing. ■

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 reprov'd, 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 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 Doomsday 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) ■

New Media in the Muslim World: Complexity of Culture, Technology and Utilization

- Hamdy Hassan Aboelenen

The old and new media in the Muslim world are in the forefront of general cultural scene as well as different institutions which affect the cultural formation of new generations. This is not due to the power possessed especially by media in this vast geographic length, but because of general conditions prevailing in most countries of the Muslim world. Perhaps the decline in the role of other institutions which are supposed to contribute immensely in the cultural formation of these generations such as educational, religious; cultural and political institutions represents one of the key features of these conditions.

When information media became popular and wide-spread in the first half of the last century, it was generally believed that information media is working in integrity with these institutions and others. The messages broadcast through the information media were produced in an area that had vast space between information media and these institutions. Therefore, weak effects of these institutions also gave the information media more influence in guiding the general thinking in the society. Hence, the social and intellectual cohesion, for instance, protects the public from becoming a prey to the effects of local information media or those coming from abroad. When this cohesion is somehow disintegrated, the public faces the media individually suffering some isolation and then its influence on them increases.

The technological evolution represents the essence of media evolution as well as the essence of resulting diverse cultural, political and social influences. The history of mass media indicates that it depended on the evolution of communication technology from the era of printing where the first forms of old media were born to the age of digital communication, when the new information media emerged. The impact of technological evolution was not confined to mere providing new channels or facilitating the access of media content to larger sectors of the public. The truth is that technology in all stages of its evolution was influencing the content of information media and levels of its potentials to influence its audience.

In the work areas of old media, it was the development of communication technology besides other factors that made it a mass media and also made the process of receiving its content a collective process under which a large number of people are exposed to a media content that is homogeneous to some extent. This collective reception imposed the public standards and prevailing social values as well as expression of the mainstream in the society. In the performance of these tasks, it was necessary for information media to integrate with other institutions in the society, regardless of the limits of this integration. Also, information media was and still working in a virtual situation that

allows interaction between different groups which make up the society. When new means of communication emerged, they due to their technological nature became individual and interactive working in a virtual situation, far away from the influence of other institutions, even in the form of advice, guidance or correction.

What combines the old and new media is that they together were the product of evolution of communication technology which exercised influence not only in providing channels but also in the nature of media content itself. It is known that technology is not something of free value and that the import of technology does not mean only the import of equipment and tools, but also the import of cultural patterns emerged in the environment of their production. When it comes to the technology of communication the influence of cultural patterns that came with the new technology is certain to increase.

Media in Muslim countries: The problem of evolution

The real problem of media in Muslim countries as well as in other developing countries is that its development as a whole is due to the external technological and non-technological factors, not in response to the local needs whereas development comes due to the internal as well as external factors. The Arab world knew of the press when it served the French purpose during its attack on Egypt at the end of 18th century. These preliminary forms of the press left with the French campaign in the beginning of 19th century. In other parts of the Muslim world, the colonial campaigns were behind the emergence of first forms

of newspapers, as is case in Indonesia, when it knew of the first forms of press through the Dutch-East India Company in the 17th century.

The information media since then is dependent on external factors at least from professional and technological aspects. In larger parts of the Muslim world, the professional standards of news media are measured by its closeness or distance from the Western standards (values of the news, arts of the media work, the concept of freedom, etc). Its technological advancement is measured with the level of its use of latest technology produced in the West, not with the level of its capability to meet the local needs. Even the Western classification of media systems in the world countries in terms of freedom is the authorized classification in larger parts of the Muslim world such as the classification of the US "Freedom House and classification of the French "Reporters without Frontiers", in spite of the flaws that these classifications have, even by the Western standards and according to the Westerners' concept of freedom. The truth is that the spread of Western concept of the press freedom has caused a lot of disturbance in the Third World's media environment.

The last three decades have witnessed tremendous developments in the media industry which left a great impact on the media in larger parts of the Muslim world. In the late eighties, Muslims showed their concerns about the technology of Direct Broadcast Service (DBS). Their main concern at that time was about the impact of incoming broadcast on faith and morals in the Muslim countries. But the past two

decades have shown that real danger to faith and morals did not come this time from the external sources but from the internal sources of the Muslim world countries themselves. What we are witnessing in the Arab world - where more than seven hundred TV channels are working on regular basis - indicates that we have decided to entertain ourselves until death, as said by one of the American researchers.

However, this change in the performance of Arab media is not due to a completely domestic condition, but rather an echo of changes in the global media industry. In the wake of globalizing the media activity, the major Western powers exerted pressures to liberate the media from restrictions and restructure its means as well as subject them to the market mechanism for political and economic reasons so knowledge turned from a service to a commodity to be manufactured according to wishes of the public and not according to their needs.

Any attempt to merely control the media performance is considered an assault on freedom and a breach of the principles of free trade as well as an attempt of exercising the political pressure. As a result, the governments in most of the Muslim countries have consented to retain only the political control of media performance as much as they can, leaving the rest to the market mechanism which made the media content failing down to the lowest.

New media and media reality in the Muslim world

The Muslim world witnessed successive waves of communication

technology which in the end created so-called new media to distinguish it from the traditional media such as newspapers and local TV channels, etc. Digital technology of communication is considered to be the decisive factor in the emergence of new media and in the change of traditional media landscape. It is now responsible for the current abundance of information, due to the provision of more multimedia and possibility of dealing easily with written texts and transmitted images.

It is a reality that technology of digital communication has brought the new information media which surprised the traditional media in the Muslim world from two angles:

First: The conditions of traditional media were not stabilized yet, when the technology of digital communication reached with its new means and methods. The traditional media had not taken its place right between the main forces affecting the formation of social and political culture, and this exposed it to many upheavals and changes. That traditional media had not crystallized the philosophy of its work in the societies in which it operates and has not yet completed its financing structure. It could not so far develop the professional standards that match the prevailing social and cultural reality and also could not cope with change in the needs of the public by the change of media environment.

Therefore, the media systems in countries of the Muslim world are a mixture of the systems which are different and even contradictory, as some of these systems are authoritarian, while others are

socialistic, and some others are semi liberal. Rather, the information system in one state is exposed to change according to the prevailing political conditions and at frequent intervals. Instead of the old media leading the incoming new media, the opposite has happened. This means that new media forced the old media to change in an unorganized way.

Similarly, the new media came with individual interactive character at a time when many countries of the Muslim world were not able through traditional media of the collective nature to crystallize the national identity and realize the social cohesion as well as to achieve the general feeling of national unity. At the national level, the massive and diverse means of communication provided by new media is not always a healthy phenomenon, as it leads to the fragmentation of public interests and breaks the bonds of relationship established by the systems of social, educational and cultural relations between the citizens of each state in a way that generates more feeling of alienation and more distrust of governments and other institutions that need the necessary consensus to be more efficient.

I do not argue the fact that diversity of opinions carried by the media is a necessity for all societies. However, when these societies lack a minimum consensus on a system of values, concepts and issues, and when the concept of citizenship becomes absent in some of its aspects or immature enough, then this diversity will never be a healthy phenomenon in all its aspects.

Second: New media came with a huge flood of information and a free flow of information became one of the key features of new global information system, at a time when freedom of expression constitutes one of the consequences which are believed to have resulted from the free flow of information. Fifty years ago, said Karl Deutche. "Knowledge is power and the advanced sources of information must be available globally, if we want the democratic societies to survive and continue. However, the problem will become more complicated when growing flood of information would lead us to the final limits of our capability to pursue this flood of information. The solution lies in taking advantage of information technology in a manner that allows effective access to information that we need to utilize it as individuals and members of a democratic society.

Technological and cultural reality of information in the Muslim world

The free flow of information in large parts of the Muslim world - Like many other societies - is today a technological reality rather than a cultural reality. Today, there are problems that obstruct free flow of information to become a cultural reality capable of developing their societies. Perhaps the most prominent of these problems is how to access information. The real significance of information flow is not in its flow, but in its access. Hence, the expected effect of information flow is to widen the gap between economic classes in the society.

Robert Reich, an economist says: "Americans no longer ascend or descend together as if they were together in a big

boat. With the new communication technology, Americans have become as if they are in many small boats. If this trend continued to the next generation, the top 20% of those with incomes in the United States will get 60% of the general income, while the bottom 20% will get only 2%. The factor that separates between economic classes in the United States is the access to information and its control.

There is another problem and that is how to use the available information. Neil Postman says, "The problem is not that we do not have much information. The problem which lies in something else is that people really do not know what to do with this information as they do not have a principle that regulates their use of this information."

Some people think that with a shift to the electronic transmission of information, the task of media will become much easier and there will be a more knowledge-based generation than the generation of traditional media but the truth is that the information age has brought a generation that is less interested and less familiar, as Times-Mirror Group report says.

Flow of information in the Muslim world is suffering from two problems together. Access to new information channels is economically costly, and level of education as well as political and cultural climate are not so capable to provide a framework for investment of this information if it was obtained.

Wherever there is illiteracy and lack of psychological climate, this climate supports the prevailing trend in the Arab world and throughout the world from within

and outside the media industry towards trivialization of information and entertainment, and pushing the public deep in a flood of entertainment items which sometimes take the form of information. This phenomenon has a political dimension in the Muslim world, like other third world countries where intensive recreational use of information media leads either to numb the sense of reality, instead of trying to understand it or to fall prey to the society's radical forces which lead it wherever they want.

Subjection of culture to technology

There are many signs to point out to the fact that technology is today one of the key factors in changing the social reality whereas technology is associated fully with the social patterns. The technological closeness created by the world powers aimed basically at achieving a cultural convergence giving triumph at the end to the Western culture as the culture of dominant forces.

The new information media provides its users with many cultures that work side by side with its original national culture. With this media, the capacity of individuals has increased to include other cultures through the Internet-based social media interaction. This suggests that many social interactions take place in the cultural contexts rather than in the context of original culture.

Some studies indicate that individual's ability of cultural interaction steadily increases as much as his culture spreads and becomes more diversified. This shows that a large proportion of social

interactions that take place on the Internet occur in the contexts of cultures rather than their happening in the context of original cultures.

Wendy Griswold suggests that individuals of different indigenous cultures produce meanings through exchange of symbols in interactive contexts that work in the context of cultures of each of them, and that these are the cultures that enable them to reach points of agreement among themselves, resulting in a behavioral effect on the indigenous culture and achieving a change in the socio-cultural situation.

The information revolution with its tools and methods known today to be the new media is another example of the Muslims' cultural subordination to modern communication technology. This technology has become one of the driving forces in shaping the contemporary culture for the generations of young Muslims throughout the Muslim world. It is well known that technology itself have a strong impact, regardless of its content. This is echoed by Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian communication scholar in the sixties, when he said, "The medium is the message."

Like others in all parts of the world, we are fascinated by the revolution of communication. We talk about it with great admiration, and did not yet know how to get to the final end of benefiting from it. We have allowed it to change many things in our life. But this admiration should not hide from us the reality of problems that accompany it. It is true that these problems will not stop its spread and reduce its use. But its knowledge has become a necessity.

Modern communication technology hides under its bright cover problems that do appear only when its means become a part of the daily social and cultural reality. The man who invented technology may become its captive, as it is influencing the pattern of his life and styles of his living, even his general culture and his view of the world around him. Regardless of the controversy about relationship between culture and technology, and whichever has more influence over the other, there is some phenomena which indicate that communication technology has become an effective factor in the prevailing culture, if not a deciding factor in some cases.

Perhaps the language is the first victim of new communication technology. The language used by youth today through the Internet and mobile messages has come up, due to the impact of means they use to convey messages. In other words, it is a technological product imposed by the means of electronic communication, and it did not show the result of factors that led to the evolution of language itself in earlier eras.

The electronic communications in the long run threaten many creative operations that prevailed in the previous times of communication, including the creative writing. With the abridgment of language and its dependence on potentials of new means of communication, the language would lose some of its functions and many of the literary arts which depend on it would disappear. Therefore, the language would become a product of technology rather than a human creativity belonging to various groups which enrich the human life with their diversity.

It is not ruled out that communication technology will impose the limits of language and number of its words and will specify the implications of its words. Three decades ago, the number of vocabulary used in telephone calls - according to the Western Studies - used to be around 5000 words. The figure fell to about 1800 in the messages of electronic communication. The average number of vocabulary used in the writing of novels fell from 10,000 to about 3500 words in the literary works published electronically.

Electronic Citizenship

In the sixties of the last century, Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian scholar, Jet out his well-known cry about the global village. He predicted that developments in the communication technology will transform the whole world into a small village where information will circulate in its various parts at a time. But the new reality though it realized that prediction, however, it was disappointing all the hopes that came with the slogan of global village.

The last 20 years confirm that communication technology did not make the world one village but re- divided it into hundreds of isolated villages. Not only has communication technology divided the world, but also it has divided one state into a set of isolated villages. The role which was carried out by the information media earlier to determine the priorities of interest and assemble the people around similar aims and objectives as well as to achieve a consensus of the nation has become doubtful today.

This new division which was brought out by the communication revolution is not

based on the geographical, religious, regional or even ethnic foundations of traditional citizenship. But it is based on a new basis which has significance in the human life. The division today is based on the desires of individual human being and his personal interests. The new information has divided the people on the basis of what they want to view or follow, regardless of their culture or whereabouts.

This phenomenon is more obvious now in areas of sports, music and entertainment. The European sports clubs have fans in all over the world who are obsessed with the players of these clubs more than their interest in the players of their local clubs. This phenomenon has prompted some communication experts to talk about a new kind of citizenship that is the television citizenship or electronic citizenship. This is a prediction that may prove to be correct or not at the same degree, due to the prevalence of cultural traditions rather than scientific theories in interpretation of relationship between culture and technology.

However, there are phenomena that deserve to be taken into consideration. When an individual spends an average five or six hours a day, shifting between the various internet sites and watching the different satellite channels, his perceptions of the world will become identical with others who move around the same websites and watch the same TV channels whom he watches. These websites and TV channels become sources capable of forming a culture for those who ate exposed to them, regardless of the state or culture which actually, he lives in.

At the same time, they become capable of creating some sort of knowledge and cultural homogeneity among their viewers for example in Argentina, Russia, the United States, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Finland and Nigeria, when they take their viewers from their local culture and put them into the culture that they spread, and their cultural ties among themselves are stronger than those ties which bind them to the local culture. Perhaps some see in these statements a kind of exaggeration but the fact is that there are evidences on this phenomenon, although the age of the Internet and satellite channels is very short and it is still difficult to determine their cultural impacts specifically.

In China and Japan, for example disappeared many traditional national cultural values of those who rely for their knowledge and entertainment more on the Western TV channels at a time when these values are still strong among those who depend more on the local channels. Rather, their perceptions of the world are less similar to the perceptions of their compatriots and more similar to the perceptions of viewers of those TV channels in other countries which are culturally different.

People and new media: Uses and gratifications

The search began to know the motives of exposure to the Internet and the effects of such exposure, when the Internet shifted from a "semantic web" aimed automatically at getting information from different sources and enabling the information search capabilities to deal with information at a large scale in order to make

the new formats of human knowledge to a "pragmatic web" aimed at achieving the human objectives of the Internet use.

This is based on the consideration that human being is the main element in this system so he is enabled to interact socially and share information. This shift to mean that human being is the basis of the pragmatic web contributed to change, the whole concept of the web, as it made the human being a constructive element in the network, instead of continuing as a mere consumer or beneficiary of its services.

Youth constitute the main audience of new information media which depends in its spread and effect on four basic factors:

First: These new technologies are now available to a large segment of the population especially the youth who have developed their abilities of using these technologies at a time when the communication infrastructure has been modernized in many countries of the Muslim world.

Second: Prospects provided by the International Information network (Internet) with all its capabilities of social networking, as well as information and news communication.

Third: The existence of real needs to use these new technologies. as it is an important factor in determining the quality and content of its use.

Fourth: Integration with traditional media which enables the new media to disseminate some of its messages to larger

segments of direct users of the traditional media, which ultimately leads to increase the number of new media users.

The Muslim world represents a unique ease of relationship between ratios of the spread of new media as well as the quality and effects of its use. The following table shows the rates of prevailing use of the Internet in the largest 10 Muslim countries compared to the world's largest internet user countries.

Iran represents a special case in the countries of the Muslim world, as the Iranian revolution in 1979 provided a unique environment for studying the impact of audio cassettes that were considered at that time an early outcome of the new media age. These cassettes broke the government restrictions on the traditional media and reported the speeches of Khorneini from the place of his exile to the Iranian people. In 2009 Iran came back to offer new evidences on the impact of new media in the death of Neda Agha Sultan during the demonstrations which erupted in the protest of Ahmadinejad's election as President of the Republic.

The social and political reality in large areas of the Muslim world provides different interpretations of new media impact on the Muslim masses. Several studies indicate that numerous means brought about by digital communication technology talking to each other, cannot cause a social or political change.

But when the quality of life becomes bad and social and political tension spreads, and when the forces of change become willing and capable of using the prospects provided by the new media in

order to stimulate change in the current social and political conditions, then only these new tools can exercise their influence in the general discourse. In addition, there is external intervention for geopolitical reasons associated with some regions of the Muslim world.

The fast spread of new information media represents a source of its strength, hence within a few years, the number of its users jumped to a large section of the population and the future is still open for it, as no means of communication could achieve this speed earlier. Within ten years, the proliferation rate of the Internet has reached more than 40% of the total population in each of Malaysia, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Morocco. The new media age with this speed represents the key of its unique strength.

It must be recognized that rapid development of this new kind of the media has surprised the media experts who could not yet developed new theories to explain this unprecedented media phenomenon in the history of media in terms of proliferation or influence. The most common theory in studying this phenomenon which itself represents a new era of media is indeed an old theory which was used with traditional means of media and it is a theory that explains the differences between the public in using the information media to satisfy the psychological and social needs in order to achieve their goals.

The new media studies from this perspective point out that with enormous diversity in the use of old and new media, many questions about the causes of individual choices for this means will remain

without definite answer.

The studies which started in the past mid-century on the uses and satisfactions indicate that motives of exposure to the media as well as satisfactions resulting from such exposure have evolved over the time. In general, the motives of exposure to traditional media were concentrated on escape from the problems of reality and venting of emotions and social use of information which they receive from the media in conversations with others, and avoidance of isolation whereas media provides an alternative company, entertainment, self-assertiveness and control of surrounding environment.

With the advent of new media especially what transpires through the Internet, there appeared new motives and different satisfactions, due to unprecedented characteristics of the new media. Studies which were conducted in nineties and later came out through the so-called "cyber communities" which, according to Coley (2006) are divided into three categories:

First: Social networking sites such as Facebook and Myspace , where young people publish their personal information in order to get new friends and maintain existing friendships.

Second: Chat systems, through which the instant messages are exchanged.

Third: Blogs which are the personal websites to present personal views, news, comments proposed links.

The new media studies focused on research into reasons behind the

widespread use of different applications of the Internet which today is the basis of new media. Apart from many assumptions in this regard, most of these studies see in the social interaction a basic function of these applications with diversity in objectives of this social interaction.

These studies combine the attention to social support through working for the need for social and psychological support to strengthen capacity to cope with problems, whether backed by professional experience where the user resorts to a source of reference that provides him with know-how in the face of problems or a support based on exchange of experiments and advices.

The fact which can be drawn from the researches of new media uses and satisfactions is that priorities of using the new information media cannot be generalized globally or at the level of one nation-state for long periods of time. The social, political and cultural circumstances have their strong impact on public in the use of these new tools. Intensive political use of new information media in some countries of the Muslim world is a natural outcome of instability experienced by these countries.

At the level of Arab or Muslim world, the political use of information media cannot be generalized as the degree, of political stability varies from country, to country. But the fact is that these methods with all their potentials are ready for this type of use at any time when political stability is exposed to tension, especially as everybody now stores the recent experiences and knows how to benefit from them and add on them.

Recommendations:

1. It is necessary that countries of the Muslim world pay attention to the issue of handling information including development of skills in new generations for use of information and training how best to benefit from available information so as to bring back the real benefit to these generations. In this regard, it is necessary that curriculum at preparatory and secondary levels includes subjects that contribute to the development of search skills for information, verification and utilization.
2. All political, religious and cultural institutions in countries of the Muslim world must realize the importance of new information media and start their actual presence on the social networks in a way that ensures their active interaction with the users of these networks and provide incentives to encourage youth to visit these sites and take advantage of information that is available there and contribute to rationalize and correct many ideas which people exchange through new information media.
3. The creation of continuous awareness among youth would make them take the best advantage of these new tools and develop their skills to use them especially with regard to verification of available information and immunize them against the negative aspects of addiction to these media tools.
4. The role of institutions concerned with the function of culture in the society is

to be activated in a way that they are able to respond to the needs of individuals and express them as well as strengthen their presence in the living situation, including the restructuring of these institutions so that they are more able to carry out their functions efficiently in their societies.

5. Traditional information media should integrate with these media tools and should not consider them as remote, isolated islands in order to achieve the necessary degree of interaction with them and secure consensus among members of the society, a consensus needed to ensure that various institutions play their role.
6. A standard is developed for media freedom that reflects the Islamic concept of press freedom in the face of Western standards of press freedom. In this regard, it is recommended to hold a workshop for representatives of various media institutions in countries of the Muslim world to improve standard and publish it in an annual report on the status of press freedom from the Islamic perspective.
7. Work on creating awareness among social institutions especially families by following up the use of these media tools by children and adolescents in order to rationalize this use. ■

(WML)

Lessons in effective Communication From the Life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

- Syed kazim

Introduction

Media is the best medium of communication for mass audience. With the help of various media like electronic media, print media and web media, the mass communication method is accomplished in a suitable way. A vast majority of people, all across the world, rely upon various sources of media for keeping themselves updated on various ongoing issues around the world.

Media plays an important role for the whole society. It gives us immense knowledge and transmits information, it raises our consciousness, it raises voice against social evils, it provides true pictures and live telecast for various events and also educates the society. Today, media has become an important part of our life as well as society. Henceforth, the role and effects of media cannot be ignored! It informs, educates and entertains people and most importantly, it helps in reforming, reshaping, educating and strengthening the society.

Prophet (pbuh) exercised significant control over media. Prophet (pbuh) was keenly aware of the influence of media over human beliefs and behaviours. At the time of Prophet

(pbuh) news travelled only as fast as a horseman. Naturally, media in the 7th century AD was comprised mostly of five modes. Firstly, word of mouth, secondly, poetry (praising or condemning a subject), thirdly, information from pilgrims and trading caravans from far off lands, fourthly, information from intelligence, fifthly, letters and ambassadors sent to the chiefs of tribes, governors and kings.

Modes of Media in the Seventh Century

The following are the ways employed by Prophet (pbuh) to use all the modes of Media which were available:

i. Word of Mouth

Word of mouth was the simplest and the most common means of communication. When Islam became strong, Prophet (pbuh) decided to make his message public and convey the message through word of mouth. He (pbuh) climbed on Mount Safa, a well-known elevation in the city of Mecca. He (pbuh) felt no fear or shame and stood on a high place. His voice resounded on the mountain and attracted the attention of the people. Large crowds from various tribes hurried toward him to hear what he was going to say. Once

the people were gathered, he (pbuh) conveyed the message.

After the Muslims won in the Battle of Badar, the Prophet (pbuh) was quick to use this victory as a means of consolidating his position in the area by disseminating this information far and wide. Prophet (pbuh) sent Zaid bin Harithah (ra) to the lower quarter and Abdullah bin Rawahah (ra) to the upper quarter to tell the Muslims of Madina of Allah's victory and of the polytheists who had been killed.

ii. Poetry

Prophet (pbuh) used poetry to demoralize the enemies psychologically. While they visited Mecca to perform Umrah (minor pilgrimage) one year after the treaty, Prophet (pbuh) used to tell Hassan bin Thabit (ra) and Abdullah bin Rawaha (ra), who were poets to go around the Kabba reciting the poems which would demoralize the enemies. The Prophet (pbuh) wisely used the opportunity of Umrah to spread the message of Islam and to weaken the enemies psychologically.

iii. Information from Pilgrims and Trading Caravans

Annual fairs and pilgrimages provided the perfect stating posts to disseminate information to a wide audience. The Prophet (pbuh) was in the habit of meeting the visiting pilgrims in

Mecca and he routinely explained Islam to them and invited them to Islam. Not only was the Prophet (pbuh) able to explain Islam to the visiting pilgrims, he was also able to gather crucial information from them about the Arab tribes all over Arabia and people from other countries.

iv. Information from Intelligence

The Prophet (pbuh) routinely sent messengers to neighbouring areas of Madina. This served many purposes such as, to inform the adjoining tribes about the positive developments of Islam in Madina so as to help them submit to Islam or at least develop friendly terms with the Muslim community, to counter any negative propaganda that may be emanating from Mecca against Islam and the Prophet (pbuh) and to keep himself apprised of material developments in the area that could have an impact on his future plans.

Just before the Battle of Badar, the Prophet (pbuh) wanted to know the number of soldiers in the Makkan army so the Muslims could plan their strategies accordingly. He (pbuh) sent a group of Muslims to find out before the battle could start. They were able to get hold of the slave of Akbah bin Abi Muait. After a conversation with him Prophet (pbuh) got an idea that the size of the army was somewhere between 900 to 1000 soldiers.

v. Letters and Ambassadors sent to the Chiefs of Tribes, Governors and Kings

Zayd ibn Thabit (ra) said, "Prophet (pbuh) ordered me to learn some words for him from the language of the Jews. He (pbuh) told me, "I take an oath by Allah that I do not trust the Jews with my letter". Before half a month could pass, I learnt the language (Hebrew and Suryani). After I learnt it, if he (pbuh) had to write a letter to the Jews, I used to write it for him and if they wrote to him, I used to read their letters for him" (Bukhari and Tirmidhi).

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) ordered his companion to learn the language of the Jews, so that he (pbuh) would be able to become secure against their plotting. Furthermore, he (pbuh) never used a non-Muslim translator, yet, he (pbuh) ordered his companion to learn the language in order to be able to translate any letter of both languages to Arabic and make sure the translation is accurate and that no one is bluffing.

On the other hand, Prophet (pbuh) wrote many letters to various kings across the world. He (pbuh) wrote a letter to the Vicegerent of Egypt, called Muqawqas, a Letter to Chosroes, Emperor of Persia, a letter to Caesar, King of Rome, a letter to Mundhir bin Sawa, Governor of Bahrain, a letter to Haudha bin 'Ali, Governor of Yamama, a letter to Harith bin Abi Shamir Al-Ghassani, King of Damascus, a letter

to the King of 'Oman, Jaifer, and his Bother 'Abd Al-Jalandi.

With respect to ambassadors, after the Aqabah Pledge with the people of Yathrib (Madina), the Prophet (pbuh) sent Musab bin Umair (ra) to Yathrib (Madina) as the first ambassador to teach the people the doctrines of Islam, give them practical guidance and make attempts at propagating the Islam among those who still professed polytheism.

Strategy of Controlling Information

The entire intelligence gathering was a private affair. Once Prophet (pbuh) told his companions to go and enquire about a rumour during the Battle of Ahzaab, "If it is true give me an enigmatic message which I can understand, and do not undermine the people's confidence; and if they are loyal to their agreement speak out openly before the people" (Ibn Ishaq).

Prophet (pbuh) had given standing instruction to his ambassadors, emissaries and an intelligence agent which was to share positive news with all present. However, news of any adverse developments was to be shared with the Prophet alone in private or in garbled language. The Prophet (pbuh) clearly wanted to control the flow of any bad news and wished to exercise control and caution as he dealt with a potentially serious adverse development. This shows how the Prophet (pbuh) controlled the flow of

communication.

Many of the closest companions of Prophet (pbuh) were left guessing about his internal deliberations. The Prophet (pbuh) himself possessed the most sensitive and most crucial information, very few of his closest aides would be aware of this development. On many occasions, the Prophet (pbuh) sent out expeditions by giving a sealed letter of instructions to the leader of the expedition with the explicit command to open the letter after two or three days of travelling in the specified direction. This served the twin purpose of keeping the mission totally secret and of ensuring compliance with the instructions by the members of the expedition (who would probably not refuse the mission in order to avoid coming back to Madina to face the ridicule of the city).

Prophet (pbuh) ordered the Muslims to complete preparations for war but did not tell them who he intended to attack. Even Abu Bakar (ra) and Umar (ra) who were very close to the Prophet (pbuh) had no idea who and where the Prophet (pbuh) intended to attack. As the preparations for an attack were being made, the Prophet (pbuh) also issued an order to keep their preparations totally secret. His goal was that the news of martial preparations should not go outside Madina.

Conclusion

The control over Media was a great asset and weapon which the Prophet (pbuh) employed very effectively. The Prophet (pbuh) was great in managing and deploying of Media. Not only could Prophet (pbuh) use Media to his great advantage, he (pbuh) also knew how and when to control the flow of negative information. He (pbuh) was keenly aware of the importance of spreading positive news about Islam and controlling and silencing the negative media that is bound to surround any burgeoning new religion. He (pbuh) was the central repository of critical and sensitive information. He (pbuh) employed a wide array of information sources to enable him to triangulate accurately the diplomatic and military state-of-affairs around him at all times.

Prophet (pbuh) was in the state of battle readiness during the Madina period. He (pbuh) knew very well that any show of weakness on the part of the nascent Islamic State in Madina would cause the Makkans to pound on him with vengeance and viciousness. Prophet (pbuh) was the guardian of this community in Madina and knew that any ill-preparedness could be seriously punished by his adversaries.

Prophet (pbuh) was very much aware of the power of Media and his successes in deploying Media to the advantage of Islam were a source of great power for him and placed a critical role in his eventual success which happened in a span of just 23 years. ■

(YMD)

Prophet Ibrahim (asws): The Friend of Allah (swt)

- Amaatul Hakeem

Every human soul has a connection with his Lord. Some are sensitive enough to perceive it, while others spend all their lives without realizing the bond. Allah (swt) does not move away from His slave, but we distance ourselves from Him by disobeying Him, and fail to fulfill the purpose of our birth.

Tests and trials are a part of our lives: they are the doorway to feel the presence of our Creator. The faster we realize His presence, the more secure we feel from what we dread. To demonstrate this, our Creator sent His messengers, and every one of them did it with perfection and grace. To reflect, and draw lessons from these great men is a binding duty upon us.

More than 4000 years ago, in the town of Ur, in Babil, in present day Iraq, amongst idol-worshippers, appeared a boy. He was never convinced with the prevailing practices. His intelligence stopped him from worshipping that which had no power to even shoo the fly away from it, making the ability to listen and grant wishes, a never happening reality. The tender heart within, urged him to present this reality to the people around. Unfortunately, however, it was never perceived as such.

Venturing to change the perception of masses is no easy task,

for beliefs planted during childhood are like roots of a fig tree – several times deeper than the trunk outside. In such a situation, for a young boy in his adolescence, who is trying to convey the truth, losing temper wouldn't have been blameworthy. However, on the contrary, the gentle, yet coherent, words of Ibrahim (asws) to his father, who failed to recognize the truth, are a lesson for the youth.

Though father and son stood their ground, Ibrahim (asws) used a very respectful tone throughout the conversation, to address his father. This has been accurately recorded by Allah (swt) in the Qur'an in verses 41-45 of Surah 19.

Standing in the court of Nimrod, a twenty-first century youth would have found it stressful to prove himself again and again, but young Ibrahim (asws) took it as an opportunity to testify his faith. Firmness in faith combined with divine help, to enable him to win through every trial he faced.

After having won the debate, young Ibrahim (asws) was not rewarded with treasures, which he actually deserved; instead, he was now prepared for being roasted alive. The blazing fire kindled was so toweringly high that it needed a catapult to throw him into it. Ibrahim (asws) never deterred from the Unicity of God

(Tawheed) which he believed in; he never yelled, never shouted. With the strongest of trust in his Lord, he landed in the fire.

Yes, yet another lesson to learn, although being young in age and new to the lesson of Tawheed, Ibrahim (asws) had strong conviction: he believed firmly in what he said.

As we understand from Ibrahim (asws), and rest of the Prophets, Tawheed (Allah's oneness) is not just a verbal undertaking; it has to sink deep within us. It has to be reflected in every action of a Muslim. With the deep understanding of Tawheed, comes the true reliance. And Allah (swt) is the Protector of the true believers, and what a blessed Protector is He!

Scholars say trials either incur forgiveness for the sins or raise the status. Since prophets were ever innocent of committing any sin, the trials they faced only increased their status. Ibrahim (asws) was tested again; he was now, perhaps, in his eighties. Isma'il, then his only son, was a toddler.

Prophet Ibrahim (asws) was ordered to leave both Hajirah (ra) and her son Isma'il (asws) in the wilderness of the Arabian dessert. Equally strong as her husband, Hajirah (ra) demonstrated her obedience to the Lord, and never complained about her helpless situation to Allah (swt). Imploring the mercy of Allah (swt) for a difficulty is allowed but complaining

about the difficulty is not allowed.

A decade or so later, another trial came Prophet Ibrahim's way. For a man of ninety-plus years, this would be an unbearably bitter result of all his hard work, but absolutely not so with Ibrahim (asws), for he stood up, upright, to fulfill the command of his Lord with no less vigor and obedience than before. He accomplished the task he was ordered to perform, with no hesitation, no request for reconsideration from the One on high.

These trials raised the status of Ibrahim (asws) and made him the 'Khaleel' (friend or beloved one) of Allah (swt). His name – along with that of the Last Prophet – is preserved even to this day in all our prayers, unlike any other Prophet.

When we invoke peace on Muhammad (saws) in our prayers, we always mention Ibrahim (asws). It was his call – indeed, on the orders of Allah (swt) – that we have been responding to for thousands of years: the call to perform the pilgrimage to the holy house, constructed by the blessed hands of prophet Ibrahim (asws) and his son Isma'il (asws).

One is to perform the rituals of Hajj with the same devotion as Hajirah, Isma'il and Ibrahim (on them be peace) and have the hope of acceptance from Allah (swt), in the same manner in which it was accepted from the family of Ibrahim (asws).■

What Prophet Muhammad Gave Humanity in 10 Points

- Adil bin AliAsh-shaddy

Some non - Muslim westerners wonder what Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) offered to humanity. This question is raised particularly after incidents of defamation targeting the Prophet's honourable character by western media.

So, it is our duty to answer these questions and to highlight what our Prophet gave to humanity and the world. Aided and guided by God's revelation, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) contributed the following:

1. He transferred humanity from obedience and submission to other men to the worship and submission to God alone, associating nothing with Him. Consequently, humanity became free from servitude to other than God, and this is the greatest honour for mankind.
2. Through revelation-from God, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) liberated the human mind from superstition, deception, and submission to false objects of worship as well as those concepts contrary to reason. This includes the claim that God had a human son, and that *idols and stones* can harm people.
3. His message laid the foundations for tolerance among people. In the Qur'an, God revealed to His Prophet that there is to be no compulsion in the acceptance of religion.

The Prophet also clarified the rights of non-Muslims who do not wage war against Muslims and guaranteed protection of their lives, children, property, and

honour. Even today in many Muslim countries there are Jewish and Christian citizens living in peace and security, in contrast to the Spanish Inquisition when Muslims were exterminated in an ethnic cleansing that violated all basic human principles.

4. Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was a mercy sent by God to all peoples regardless of race or faith. In fact, his teachings include mercy even to birds, animals, plants, and inanimate beings. He forbade harming them without right or reason.

5. Muhammad showed unparalleled respect for and appreciation of all the prophets who preceded him, among them Abraham, Moses and Jesus (peace and blessings be upon them all). One who denies or disrespects any of the prophets cannot be a Muslim. Islam regards all of the prophets as one brotherhood, inviting people to the belief that there is no deity worthy of worship except God, who is the one true God.

6. Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) defended human rights for both males and females, for the young and the elderly, regardless of social status. He established a set of sublime principles; one example being in the speech he gave during his farewell pilgrimage in which he declared strict prohibition of transgression against people's lives, property, and honour.

He laid down these principles more than 1400 years ago, long before the world knew of the Magna Charta in 1215, the

Declaration of Rights in 1628, the Personal Freedoms Law in 1679, the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, the Human and Citizen Rights Charter in 1789, and the world- wide Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

7. Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) elevated the importance of morality in human life. He called for good manners, honesty, loyalty, and chastity, and strengthened social bonds such as being dutiful to parents and relatives, always putting into practice what he preached.

He prohibited and warned against negative behaviours such as lying, envy, betrayal, fornication, and disrespect of parents, and he treated the problems stemming from these grave social diseases.

8. Through the revelation from God, His Messenger invited people to use their minds, to discover the universe around them, and to acquire knowledge. He confirmed that God rewards such deeds at a time when scientists and intellectuals in other civilizations were suffering persecution and accusations of heresy and blasphemy, being terrorized in prisons, tortured and often killed.

9. Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) came with a revelation from God, presenting a religion compatible with human nature, a way of life that satisfies the needs of the soul and those of the body, and establishes a balance between worldly deeds and those done for the Hereafter.

It is a religion that disciplines human instincts and desires without suppressing them completely as happens in some other cultures which were absorbed with ideas contrary to human nature, depriving religious men of such

natural human rights as marriage and of such natural reactions as anger toward transgression. This led most members of these civilizations to reject religious teachings and become absorbed in the material world, which caters only to their bodies while leaving their souls in a miserable state.

10. Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) presented to the world a perfect model of brotherhood among human beings. He taught that no race is superior to another for all are equal in origin and equal in responsibilities and rights. One's degree of faith and piety is the only criterion for preference. His Companions were given equal opportunities to belong to Islam and serve the religion. Among them were Suhayb, a Byzantine, Bilal, an Abyssinian, Salman, a Persian, and many other non-Arabs.

In conclusion, each of these ten points requires further details and explanation. What Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) offered humanity is too detailed to be mentioned in this brief outline. There is also a great deal that has been said about him by objective researchers from the East and West after they studied the biography of this great Prophet.

God's Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad as well as upon all other God's prophets, his family, Companions, and followers. ■

(Taken with some modification from www.mercy-prophet.com. This article was published in 2010. Dr. Adil bin Ali Ash-Shaddy is Secretary General of the International Program for Introducing the Prophet of Mercy.)

Carnage in Myanmar

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Myanmar (Burma till 1989) is bordered by India, Bangladesh, and the Bay of Bengal (W), China (N, and NE), Laos and Thailand (E) and the Andaman Sea (S). During three Anglo-Burmese wars (1824-26, 1852, 1885) Burma fell to British India. Japan occupied Burma during World War II. Burma achieved complete independence in 1948. It consists of Seven Provinces. Its population is 5 crore 60 Lakh. Muslims are 4% there. Muslims popularly known as Rohingya community live particularly in Myanmar's north – western Rakhine State.

In 1962 Military coups took the reign of government in Myanmar. Since then a variety of atrocities and oppressions are meted out to Muslims time and again. Unfortunately, Rohingyas were declared non-citizens by law in 1982. The first free elections were held there in 1990. The National League for Democracy won majority. But army did not hand over power.

Later on Aung San Suukyi's party got landmark victory in the 2015 elections. The Rohingya community hoped for some change in the political scenario of the country. But she dashed their hopes and has gone from bad to worse. According to the UN, the Rohingya are the most persecuted religious minority in the world.

The United Nations has rightly said that the situation in Myanmar is a "text book example of ethnic cleansing" as the number of Rohingya Muslims fleeing Myanmar for Bangladesh topped 400,000. The Rohingya, a stateless Muslim Minority, have faced decades of persecution in Myanmar. They are denied citizenship, healthcare, education and their movements are heavily curbed. But since the latest upsurge in violence on August 25, hundreds of thousands have flooded across the

border into Bangladesh bringing stories of entire villages burned to the ground by Buddhist mobs and Myanmar troops. Besides hundreds of women were raped and myriads of innocent children were killed mercilessly.

The UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein accused Myanmar of waging a "Systematic attack" on the Rohingya and warned that "ethnic cleansing" seemed to be under way. "Because Myanmar has refused access to human rights investigators the current situation cannot yet be fully assessed, but the situation seems a text book example of ethnic cleansing", he told the UN Human Rights Council.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, visited a struggling refugee camp that has absorbed some of the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who fled recent violence in Myanmar- a crisis she said left her speechless. She criticized Buddhist – Majority Myanmar for "atrocities" that she said had reached a level beyond description, telling law makers she had no words to condemn Myanmar.

According to the latest estimate by UN workers in the Cox's Bazar region of Bangladesh, about 394,000 Rohingyas have arrived in just 15 days. Thousands of Rohingya remaining in the north-western state of Rakhine have been left without shelter or food, and many are still trying to cross mountains, dense bush and rice fields to reach Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries.

Refugees arriving in Bangladesh have accused the army and Buddhist vigilantes of trying to drive Rohingya out of Buddhist majority Myanmar.

"The Burmes military is brutally expelling the Rohingya from northern Rakhine state," said James Ross, legal and policy director at New York-based Human Rights Watch.

"The massacres of villagers and mass arson driving people from their homes are all crimes against humanity."

The International Criminal Court defines crimes against humanity as acts including murder, torture, rape and deportation "when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.

Recently news channel Al-Jazeera has reported that, in an open letter to the United Nations Security Council, 23 global leaders, among them 13 Noble Laureates, expressed their disappointment at Myanmar's Nobel Laureate Aung San SuuKyri for failing to stop the persecution of Rohingyas in her country.

Why has SuuKyri failed to respond to the international appeal on the issue? Is she afraid of losing support among the majority of Myanmar's population who happen to be Buddhist while the Rohingyas happen to be Muslims? The problem seems to lie in fanatic nationalism. The ethnic Rohingyas who live in Myanmar's Rakhine State, historically known as Arakan, were brought under the Burmese control at the end of the 18th century, and the 19th century. British Colonial administration legitimized it. By the middle of the 20th century the Rohingyas became part of the legitimized Burmese/Myanmar state.

It is time that UNO must ponder over the Rohingya issue and do something for its solution as early as possible. Besides 57 Muslim countries of the world should also come forward and extend their hands of cooperation for the rehabilitation and rejuvenation of the Rohingya community in Myanmar. ♦

Obituary

Lok Sabha member and former Union Minister Sultan Ahmad died on September 4, 2017, in Kolkata.

He was born on June 6, 1953. He started his political career as a Chhatra Parishad activist in Maulana Azad College, Kolkata. At 34, he was elected as Congress MLA from Entally. The two time MP from Uluberia was Union Minister of State for Tourism in the Manmohan Singh Government in 2009-12.

He was a well – known politician. He proved himself as a Philanthropist for poor and downtrodden sections of society.

In his condolence message, Maulana S.M.Rabey Hasani Nadwi, Rector, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow said that Sultan Ahmad was a popular leader of West Bengal. He took immense interest in religious, social and political issues of people. He prayed for peace to the departed soul.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and West Bengal chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed their condolences. "Saddened on the demise of Sultan Ahmad. My thoughts are with his family and supporters in this sad hour." Prime Minister Modi tweeted.

AIMPLB Executive Meeting in Bhopal

- Mahtab Alam

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) resolved to undertake a large-scale community reform programme within the Sharia to discourage instant talaq and constituted a committee to advise the method and process for doing so. The executive committee of AIMPLB met in Bhopal on Sunday September 10, 2017 to discuss the way forward on instant talaq after the Supreme Court's recent judgment on the subject.

Board members respected the SC judgment to set aside instant talaq (Talaq-e-Biddat), but recorded displeasure against the 'government's intentions' and considered it an attack on Muslim personal law to consider all form of marriage dissolution sans court intervention as unconstitutional.

In its press statement released on the day, AIMPLB said, "This stand of the present government is contrary to the protection guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. We make categorical statement that the community cannot and shall not tolerate such attack on personal law on Muslim community."

With respect to instant talaq, AIMPLB, said that the practice is 'sinful but effective' and that the board had for a long time taken steps to discourage the practice through community reform programs. AIMPLB also claimed that it had previously issued a Model Nikahnama about two decades ago and had prior to the SC judgment passed a resolution on April 16, 2017 declaring social boycott of those who will continue to practice it.

It also resolved to 'make sincere efforts' to discourage the practice on ground by advising all Qazis, Imams and Maulvis that they spread awareness to involved parties at time of marriage and otherwise.

"We record our commitment to carry forward out community reform programs on larger scale, educate the Muslim community at large and explain that pronouncing triple talaq in one sitting is not a desirable method to pronounce divorce," reads the statement.

As part of the campaign, *hundreds of women* signed a form that read: "We respect the triple talaq verdict (but) we believe in Shariat and talaq is part of it. Any restriction on it will amount to denying us our right to practice Muslim personal law as given by the Constitution, and it should remain intact." The signature drive was held during the first meeting of women organised by the AIMPLB since the Supreme Court ruling against instant triple talaq.

The campaign will also involve organising meetings of Muslim men and women across the country, after which resolutions will be passed and copies sent to the President, Prime Minister, judges, law commission and women's commission to assert the community's right to follow its personal laws.

The AIMPLB executive committee had accused the central government of trying to interfere in the community's personal laws in the guise of showing sympathy for women.

A propaganda is on for the last three years to project Muslim women as the most oppressed and unhappy, but that's not true. We are here to protect the Shariat," a woman speaker said. She referred to Muslim women who celebrated the Supreme Court verdict as "rented".

Addressing the gathering, Dr Asma Zehra, an executive committee member of the board, said that allegations were being levelled against the community's practices for some time. "A propaganda is on in the media that Muslim women are harassed and that if the laws are changed their lot will improve. We have to assert ourselves — that we don't want our laws to be changed," she said. Islam gives more rights to women than any other religion, she said, "Do we need freedom? We got it 1,400 years ago from the barbaric practices prevailing then." ■

(Mahtab Alam is a student of Department of Journalism and Languages, Nawatul Ulama, Lucknow)

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