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Religion as Guardian of Life

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Time is a proportionate and balanced mixture of stability and change, stagnation and movement. If it loses either of these characteristics, it will lose its relevance. Islam as a religion accepts this fact and is ready to make necessary accommodations, but it holds the position that as religion it has to guide life, not simply follow it. Religion, as Islam pleads, does not have to passively approve all changes. It is not lifeless like the needle of a barometer which moves up or down mechanically to measure the pressure of the atmosphere, or a weather-cock fixed on the top of a building which moves to show the direction of the wind. The function of religion is not simply to acknowledge and show the changes which are occurring at a time. Its obligation is to check whether a change is healthy or unhealthy, constructive or destructive. It has to evaluate the effect of a change on mankind at large and on its promoters in particular. It judges all pros and cons of a change before it approves it. It, therefore, will discourage a change if it is destructive. It may even oppose the latter kind.

At this point we can see a clear difference between religion and morality. Religion feels obliged to oppose wrong inclinations, whereas morality simply identifies them. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

“Against these they had no grudge except that they believed in Allah, the Most Mighty, the Most Praiseworthy, to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. Allah witnesses everything. Surely those who tormented the believing men and the believing women and then did not repent, theirs shall be the chastisement of Hell, and theirs shall be the chastisement of burning. As for those who believed and acted righteously, theirs shall be Gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the great triumph.”

(Al-Quran – 85:8-11)

These verses bring to light an important fact of human life. The fact is that whenever and wherever believing men and believing men are harassed, subjugated, maimed and killed at will, it is only because of their unflinching faith in God the Almighty. It is only because they make concerted efforts to lead their life and shape their families and society at large in accordance with the Divine Will. And while doing so they have to act upon the Divine injunction of *amr bil maroof* (inviting people to virtues) and *nahi anil munkar* (forbidding them from vices). It is but natural that this endeavour of believers comes in contrast with the interests of those who are given to corrupt practices, who have sold their souls to the Devil and who have forgotten the Day of Judgement. And as a result, the conflict takes place.

Here the Qur'an presents two distinct results of the conflict: those who torment believers for their righteousness will eventually earn the Divine Wrath and the oppressed believers will be rewarded with Paradise. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Muaz bin Jabal relates that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said: “Listen! The mill of Islam is moving now. So you follow the Book of Allah wherever it leads you to. Listen! If the Book of Allah and power (governance) get separated from each other, you support the Book of Allah. Listen! Such leaders and rulers will rule over you as will devise laws for you; if you accept their laws and decisions, they will put you onto the wrong path, and if you do not accept them, they will kill you.” The Companions asked: “What should we do in this situation?” He said: “You should do exactly the same as did the companions of Isa (Jesus): they were torn apart with a saw, hanged to death. To lay down one's life in obedience to Allah is better than leading a life in disobedience to Allah.”

(Tabarani)

This hadith provides a candid, principled guideline for believers to follow whenever they come in face with some difficult times. It also highlights the importance of the Book of Allah, the Qur'an, in the life of believers. The Book is the ultimate guide, the final say in all matters and spheres of life. We can compromise with anything but the Book of Allah. This trial comes when we face the laws and decisions taken by the powers-that-be in conflict with the Book of Allah. In this situation we have to stick to the Book of Allah even when we have to lay down our lives. ■

SYRIAN TURMOIL

Ever since King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan was dethroned and Russian influence gripped the nation a chain of events in Muslim countries began recording disturbing situation. Established and prospering Islamic nations have become the targets of so called powerful American and European powers. Those who think themselves trustees of the Nuclear power started threatening small and weak nations that they should not dare to become strong. They destroyed Iraq, a progressing and developing country on false pretext that the ruler of Iraq Saddam Hussain had acquired nuclear weapons. In spite of his denial and offering facilities to make necessary inspections U.S. and allied forces forced him to surrender and finally hanged him on frivolous charges. Iraq under the stooges of super powers has now become a battle ground of sectarian groups and peace has vanished.

Egypt about a year back established a democratic government duly elected by the people but it was not

allowed to function and army pestered by outside forces took over the reign throwing the President into prison.

Now Syria, a country carved out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire is in lime light these days. Here the atrocities of the present ruler has reached such an extent that thousands of Syrian men, women and Children died after bombardment on their shelters. It is said that now chemical weapons are being used against them rendering them physically impaired and killing them in great agony. The deep sectarian divide between Alawites and Sunnis, Druze and Christians have worsened the situation and no amicable solution is in sight. If U.S.A dares to intervene there then Syria will become the hub of massacre and cruelty. A political solution is the need of the time. In the past Tunisia and Libya where these so called super powers intervened peace has not been restored as yet. ■

S.A.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF JUSTICE IN SOCIETY

-S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Allah enjoins justice, performing duties for only Allah's sake, giving help to kith and kin, forbidding evil, obscenity and oppression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed.

(*al-Nahl 16:90*)

The above verse forms part of the Friday Prayer sermon. Every week Muslims listen to this. However, since most of us (Indian Muslims) do not know Arabic, we fail to reflect on its meaning and message. We take worship only as a ritual, without drawing any lesson from it. Nor do we care to consult '*Ulama*' on its import.

The verse does however encapsulate a comprehensive code of conduct, full of directives. The first and foremost divine command is to do justice. The Qur'an does not specify any particular mode of justice. Rather, its directive is in the absolute, general form. Each one of us should practise justice and do good. On the issue of giving financial help, however, the Qur'an draws a line of demarcation. One should help one's kith and kin. These ties of kinship encompass one's relations with one's family, one's neighbourhood, one's countrymen, and one's colleagues. Elsewhere the Qur'an instructs that the starting point should be one's close relatives; one should then move on to help others.

The next directive is to shun everything that is obscene, immoral and evil. One should avoid bad conduct as

well. All these directives are issued for man's admonition. In our times, the dispensation of justice is selective. We seek justice only when it concerns us, our relatives, our co-religionists and our tribe or community. We want justice in our favour. However, we are lukewarm to the demands of justice, if it involves some stranger. If we are not to achieve any material benefit, we are not keen on doing justice. Likewise, for fear of criticism too, we stay away from doing justice lest it damage our reputation. In practising justice we are driven by the concerns of our family and our country.

It is hard to do justice just for the sake of doing justice. Man thus finds it difficult to practise justice in accordance with divine commands. One might recognise some truth. However, it may still not be easy for one to act on this. Only such servants of Allah are committed to justice in an absolute sense who fear Allah and who have love and respect for humanity. For they believe that the whole of mankind represents Allah's family.

It is recorded in *Hadith* that all creatures belong to Allah's family. By this definition, all human beings are members of the same family. Let us be reminded that this is the Islamic position on the issue. It goes without saying that Islam makes no compromise on its doctrine of monotheism. It rejects all that runs counter to its main article of faith - the Oneness of Allah. Notwithstanding its extreme

sensitivity to the issue of monotheism, Islam looks upon the whole of humanity as Allah's family. This is a very significant point. One-third of the Qur'an is devoted to the doctrine of monotheism. *Surah al-Ikhlās* is designated as equal to one-third of the Qur'an. It reads as follows: *Say [O Prophet]: He is Allah, the One. Allah, the Self-Sufficient. He does not beget. Nor was He begotten. There is no one equal to Him. (al-Ikhlās 112:1-3)*

Islam regards all human beings, irrespective of their faith, country of origin, race or colour, as members of Allah's family. He sustains all of us. Allah's favourite servant is not the one who worships Him most. Rather, He loves him who does good to his family members. Had the Qur'an declared Muslims as members of His family, it would have been perfectly understandable in view of Islam's insistence on monotheism. However, Allah's designation includes all human beings, without any distinction of faith.

Allah has not charged anyone in particular with the duty of dispensing justice. Justice is an obligation incumbent on everyone. Those dispensing it may be Hindu or Muslim by faith. However, the real virtue is justice which does not need any label.

Allah commands that justice and good be done. This is an absolute command. Justice is not to be done only to Muslims. We are asked to praise Allah Who is the Lord and Sustainer of every living being. He is not the Lord of Muslims alone. The Qur'an does not restrict Him to Arabs or followers of any particular faith. Rather, He is the Cherisher of everyone.

He has made available the benefits flowing from the sun, the moon, the solar system, trees, mountains, rivers and animals to everyone. His justice is equally beneficial for everyone. He does not profess and practise justice on a family, or faith community consideration. This explains the note of universalism in the Qur'anic assertion that justice and good should be done in an absolute sense.

At another place, the Qur'an instructs Muslims that their hostility towards another faith community should not distract them from the dictates of justice. For justice is identical with God-consciousness which should permeate Muslims' conduct. Their differences with any group or community should not prompt them to do any injustice to them. Whenever there called upon to dispense justice, they must fulfil its demands. This will win them Allah's pleasure. This also constitutes obedience to Him.

Let it be dearly understood that justice should be freely available to everyone, no matter to which faith or country they belong. For this is the command of our Lord, Cherisher and Creator. His directive is that no discrimination should mar our conduct. We should not give preference to anyone.

Allah's explicit command is that justice should be dispensed. It should be the hallmark of Muslims. Apart from doing justice, the Muslim should give above and beyond what is one's due. Even if someone acts unjustly towards us, we should do justice to him. This is the type of excellent conduct which the Qur'an promotes. ■

A COMPREHENSIVE DESCRIPTION OF SUBLIME MORALS AND NOBLE TRAITS OF THE PROPHET (SAW):

-S.M.Rabey Hasani Nadwi

The sublime morals, noble traits and great qualities of the Prophet (SAW) have been mentioned in a very comprehensive and declamatory style by Hind Abi Hala (RAA) (who was the son of *Umm-ul Momineen*, Hazrat Khadeejah- RAA and the maternal uncle of Hazrat Hasan and Hazrat Hussain- RAA): To quote him verbatim:

“Ridden with anxiety of after-life, the Prophet (SAW) would remain all the time engrossed in pondering over matters related to the Hereafter. That would usually go on, on end. It appeared as he was never at rest. Often, he (SAW) would keep silent for long, He would never speak needlessly. When he would begin talking, he (SAW) would utter each and every word well enunciated. Same way he would bring his speech to end. Whatever he said ‘it was always very distinct, articulate and to-the-point. It would be neither unnecessarily prolonged, nor too much succinct. He (SAW) was mild-tempered and soft-spoken. He (SAW) was neither rude, nor discourteous. Neither he humiliated anyone, nor would he like being humiliated. A good thing given him would be highly appreciated by him. He would make much of it,

howsoever little it might be (even if it were so little as could not be easily seen) and would not deprecate it. As to items of food and drink, he (SAW) would neither find faults with them, nor applaud them. He (SAW) would never get angry about anything mundane and whatever pertains to this world. But, whenever any obligation towards God was not duly met, such would be his indignation as could not be faced by anyone till he would have it made up for. For wrongs done to his own person, he would never get angry, nor would seek revenge there-for. When he (SAW) pointed out something, he did so with his whole hand. When he (SAW) was amazed at something he had his hand turned over. While talking, he (SAW) would have the palm of his right hand touched by the thumb of the left hand. Angry and displeased with something, he would have his resplendent face completely averted; pleased and joyful, he would look downwards. His laughter was mostly but a smile and that was when his auspicious teeth which were as neat and clean as hailstones would be visible.”

A family-member and one of the persons closest to the Prophet (SAW),

Hazrat Ali (KAW) had best means and opportunities of knowing all about him (SAW). He was also a keen observer of human psyche and mores and manners. In addition, he had the gift, most of all others, of defining, describing and portraying a thing or character in all its vividness. About the 'sublime morals' of the Prophet (SAW) he says:

"He was predisposed to refrain from unseemly language, reviling and deeds shameful. In no wise he said or did anything improper. He never raised his voice in a market place; nor did he return evil for evil. He was given, rather, to forgive and forget. Never in his life he laid his hands on anyone save in a fight for the sake of Allah; nor did he strike ever any servant or a woman. I never saw him exacting retribution for any offence or excess excepting when the honour of God was concerned or the limits set by Him were transgressed. In the latter case, no doubt, he (SAW) would be more enraged than anybody else. If he had the choice between the two courses, he would choose the easier one. When he came to his house, he behaved like a commoner, cleaned his garments, milked the sheep and performed the household chores.

"The Messenger of God was not given to idle talk and spoke only when it was a matter of concern to him. He comforted people and did not make

them disgusted. If a man of rank or nobility called on him from another tribe, he showed him due honour and had him appointed to some respectable post. He would be cautious in making comments on the people without having them deprived of his affability and courtesy. He kept his companions always posted with the events and happenings and used to keep enquiring about their welfare.

"He commended and supported what was good and denounced and depreciated what was bad or vile; strengthened the one and weakened the other. He was always moderate and uniform in his dealings without there being any shift or change in it. He never allowed anything to escape his attention lest others should become negligent or get distracted. He took care to possess the means for meeting every contingency. In keeping the Truth upheld, he would neither lag behind nor would cross the limits. Those who used to be in his proximity were always the virtuous and the elite of the people. The best in his estimation was the one who was the most benignant and courteous to all. The most esteemed in his eyes was the one who excelled others in benevolence and kindness and doing favours to others. The Prophet (SAW) would stand up with the name of God on his lips and so he would be when he sat down. Wherever he went, he sat down in the rear and

instructed others to do the same. He paid full attention to all of his audience and those attending his meetings. So much so that everybody thought that none else attracted his notice more than he did. If anybody had him detained or kept talking to him about any of his affairs, he (SAW) would listen to him patiently and gave heed to him until he himself had his talk finished and got departed. If anybody asked for something or wanted his help, he never allowed him to leave without disposing of his business or at least comforted him with words kind and sweet. Such was his grace and kindness to one and all that everybody took him as his father. In regard to what was right and proper he regarded all on the same plane. His were the gatherings of knowledge and edification, of seemliness and modesty, of earnestness and probity. Neither anybody talked in a loud voice nor censured others, nor cast aspersions on anybody, nor found faults with others. All were equal on even ground and only those enjoyed a privilege who were more pious and God-fearing. In his meetings, the elders were held in reverence, the youngsters were treated kindly. Those in need were given preference by all. The wayfarers and strangers were afforded protection and looked after.”

Hazrat A' li states further:

“Of cheerful disposition, the Apostle of Allah was always bright and radiant. He was tender-hearted and sweet-tempered, not stern by nature. He never spoke harshly, nor was he accustomed to speaking loudly, nor to saying anything unseemly or lewd; nor he found fault with others. He was not stingy or miser. If he did not like something said to him, he simply ignored it and would not even respond to it. From the three things he had always kept himself entirely cut-off: one, quarelling; the other, hauteur; and the third, indulging in useless and futile pastimes. And, he had also kept the people always spared from three things: he never spoke ill of anyone, nor maligned anybody, nor pried into anyone's failings. He gave tongue only to the things that were decent. When he spoke, all those present listened to him attentively lowering their heads as if birds were sitting on their heads. Others spoke only when the Apostle had finished his talk. Nobody joined issue with others in his presence. When anybody said something others kept quiet until he had finished his talk. Every one was paid the same attention when he spoke as was paid to his predecessor (that is: he would be given full opportunity to present his case and would be heard with same equanimity and composure as his predecessor.) He (SAW) laughed at whatever would make others laugh; and would be amazed at whatever made others

amazed. He would put up with the rudeness of the wayfarer and stranger with patience and tolerance and listen to all sorts of such demands until his companions would have the attention of such a person diverted to themselves (in order to save him—SAW—from further strain). He (SAW) used to say: 'Whenever you come across some one needy, do help him'. He lent ears only to such tributes as were moderate enough. He never interrupted nor cut in the talk of others; unless, of course, he got to exceeding the limits. In that case, he would bid him to stop or he himself would leave the place. And, his prattle would come to an end.

"He was the most generous, large-hearted, truthful, clement lenient and amiable. One who saw him for the first time was overawed, but when one kept his company and came to know him intimately, he would get infatuated by him. The ultimate that anyone trying to define and describe him could say is that: 'I have never seen anyone like him, neither before seeing him nor thereafter.'

Sall-all-Allah-o Ala Nabeeyina
Wa Sallam

(May Allah have His Peace and Blessings on His Apostle).

The Almighty Allah had adorned His Prophet (SAW) with all the vestments of beauty and perfection.

He had made him (SAW) the most beautiful and charming embodiment of love and charm, awe and splendor, elegance and grace, all blended into a single, harmonious whole of his personage. Says Hind Abi Hala: "He was very self-respecting, graceful and splendid — pleasing to the eyes set on him. His face has the brilliance of a full moon."

Complete Humanness, Equilibrium and Poise:

One of the Prophet's grandsons (son of his daughter, Zainub -RAA) was on his death-bed and about to breathe his last. His daughter had him sent for along with the message that the child was about to expire and it would be kind of him if he could come over for a moment. He (SAW) came over. He was accompanied by his companions, Hazrat Sa'd bin U'badah, Ma'az bin Jabal, Ubai bin Ka'b and Zaid bin Thabit (RAA). He (SAW) took the child in his lap. He was in the agonies of death. The affectionate (maternal) grandfather's eyes got brimmed with tears. One of the companions (Hazrat Sa'd bin U'badah - RAA) was there. He got to saying: "You, too, get so moved?" He replied: "I am human; I, too, have love in my heart. One who lacks that cannot be human. This is the compassion vested by Allah in the hearts of His servants whom He wills. Verily God shows compassion to those who are compassionate."

Likewise, his infant son, Hazrat Ibrahim, was to expire. He came over and seeing him he said: "My eyes are moist; my heart is sad. But, with my tongue I would utter only what would please my Providence. We are grief-stricken by your separation, O Ibrahim!"

Incidentally, there was sun-eclipse at the same time. People started saying: It appears to be the effect of the demise of the son of magnificent Prophet. Coming to know of that, the Prophet (SAW) said: "Look! the sun and the moon are all bound to obey Commands of Allah. They go by the system set (by the Creator) for them. They do not get affected by anybody's death or birth."

Just think it over! How magnificent an instance it is! On such an occasion, one usually is pleased with the notion that he and his son were accorded importance. 'Without any suggestion from us, they, on their own, were doing so. It is to our advantage. So, let them do so.', one would say. But, no! that was not the way the Prophet (SAW) thought. He (SAW) did not tolerate that a slightest denus made in the creed of anyone, that anyone deems, anyone else than God the one who affects the sun and the moon, the earth and the sky.

That was the instance of an occasion of grief. Let us have an instance of an occasion of jubilation

also. The Prophet's (SAW) beloved cousin (uncle's son), Hazrat Jaa'fer (RAA) arrived in Madinah, getting back from Ethiopia where he was on migration. He (SAW) was very delighted to have met him. In the meantime, the good news of a victory of Muslims also reached him. The two delightful things coming together, the Prophet (SAW) said: "I can't tell which of the two delights is greater to me than the other."

Now look at this comprehensiveness itself of the Prophet (SAW). Recall that he was a human. Under the urge of the humanness, he was delighted at the return of his beloved kin from his long-term exile. It was the proof of his being a perfect human being. Side by side, being the Prophet and head of the Muslim community, he was equally delighted at the victory of the Muslims. It was quite realistic of him that he (SAW) took both the two delights into account. Thus he (SAW) treated the delight he had, in his capacity as the head and leader, as was it due; and, side by side, treated the urge of the fraternal and kinship love as per its due.

Graciousness, Tolerance and forbearance:

In his good manners, benevolence, magnanimity and modesty, the Prophet (SAW) was the precursor, torch-bearer and role-model

for the entire humanity. This fact is affirmed by Allah Almighty Himself. He says:

“(And verily thou art of a high and noble disposition.)

The Prophet (SAW) himself said as follows:

(My Lord Himself disciplined me and disciplined He me well.)

Hazrat Jabir(RAA) is quoted to have said: “the Prophet (SAW) said:

(Allah raised me for the culmination of moral virtues and righteous deeds.)

Once when Hazrat A'isha (RAA) was enquired about the character of the Prophet (SAW), she replied:

(His character was the Quran.)
(Or, in other words: he was just the Quran personified.)

In fact, the level of forbearance and forgiveness, patience and tolerance, graciousness and magnanimity that had been maintained by him (SAW) is hard to be perceived by the best of the acumen of the intelligent and is far beyond the reach of the imagination and phantasm of the poets and bards. A few more instances are given below:

A sample of the Prophet (SAW)'s kindness and graciousness towards even the greatest enemy was the treatment he meted out to the leader of the hypocrites, Abdullah bin

Ubai bin Salool. He was the person who publicly used terms of flagrant animosity against the Prophet (SAW). He was always taking part in clandestine intrigues hatched against him (SAW). All the Muslims were fully aware of this misdemeanor of him. When, after his death, he was lowered down into the grave, his son, Abdullah bin Abdullah, who was a thorough believer and totally loyal to, and having love for, the Prophet (SAW), desired from the Prophet (SAW) to do some favour to his deceased father. Thereupon, in regard to his (Abdullah bin Abdullah's) being a perfect believer and in deference to him, he (SAW) condescended to the extent that he (SAW) came over there and ordered the body to be taken out. Then he placed it on his knees and dropped some saliva from his mouth on it and had it donned with his shirt.

Hazrat Anas bin Malik is reported to have said: “Once I was walking with the Prophet (SAW). He was then having a mantle made in Najran on. It had coarse fringes. On the way, a nomadic Arab met him. Getting hold of his mantle, the nomad pulled it hard. Lifting my eyes I saw that the pull of the mantle had caused bruises on the Prophet's neck. The nomad was saying: ‘O Mohammad! Have the orders issued for some of the God' wealth that you have with you to be given to me'. The Prophet (SAW)

turned his face towards him and laughed. He had the instructions issued that he be given (what he wanted).

The Prophet (SAW) had once taken some loan, through the mediation of Hazrat Bilal (RAA), from a Jew, Zaid bin Saa'na. The Prophet (SAW) used to take such loans in order to extend aid to the destitute, when he himself did not have anything with him. This loan, too, was taken to help out an indigent person. A period had also been agreed upon for the return of the loan. But, that man, before the expiry of the stipulated term, came to him (SAW) and demanded the payment. Not only that, holding by his fist the garment that the Prophet (SAW) had on, he pulled it hard off his shoulder and addressed him rudely, saying: "You, the son of Abdul Muttalib, do much of dilly-dallying." He had, in this way, taunted not only the Prophet (SAW) but his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, too. Not to speak of the Prophet himself as he was, of course, adorned with very sublime qualities, but his grandfather, too, was distinguished, among his peers and equals, in good qualities. One can, therefore, imagine how much hurt he (SAW) must have felt on that remark by that Jew! So, Hazrat U'mar RAA) rebuked him and, paying him in his own coin, talked to him in rude terms. But, the Prophet (SAW) kept smiling.

He said to Hazrat U'mar: "U'mar! This man and I both deserved to be treated differently by you. To me, you ought to have given the counsel to make the payment at the earliest: and to him you might have counseled to be polite in making the demand." Then, (addressing the Jew) he (SAW) said: "There are still three days left before the due date expires." Anyway, giving instructions to Hazrat U'mar to repay him the loan, he ordered him to give him twenty Saa's more than due to him. That excess payment was to compensate for the scare caused to him by the reprimanding words used by Hazrat U'mar against him. This attitude of the Prophet (SAW) impressed that Jew so much that he embraced Islam.

Clemency towards Animals:

The Prophet (SAW) commanded to be merciful to animals, too. Shaddad bin Aus reports the Prophet (SAW) as saying: "God has commanded us to be nice and gentle to each and everything. So, if you are to slaughter an animal, do it nicely. One who is about to slaughter must have his chopper ready in advance." (That is: must have the blade of the chopper sharpened in advance and should not flaunt it in front of its face lest the animal should get restless). The animal to be slaughtered must be given rest.

Hazrat Ibn-e-A'bbas (RAA) reports that a man had a goat laid on

the ground to slaughter it and then started sharpening his knife. When the Prophet (SAW) saw this, he said to him: "Do you want to kill it twice? Why did you not have your knife sharpened before having it laid on the ground?"

Hazrat Ibn-e-Masw'ood (RAA) narrates that: "we were, in company of the Prophet (SAW), on a journey. He (SAW) went into isolation for a while for some of his personal need. In the meantime, we saw a small bird. It had its two chicks with it. We got the two chicks caught. Seeing that, the bird started fluttering its wings. The Prophet (SAW) came back and asked: 'Whoever has distressed it by having its chicks snatched away from it?' Then he commanded to have the chicks returned. There we saw a colony of ants. We got it burnt. He (SAW) did not like it and asked: 'Whoever has got it burnt?' 'It is we', we said. He said: 'The 'right to torture with fire is exclusively held by the Lord of the fire.'

The Prophet (SAW) commanded the venerated companions to keep the animals provided with fodder and water and forbade them to harass and overburden them. He declared that keeping the animals from what hurts them and putting them at ease were meritorious acts and brought those who performed them nearer to Allah. To elucidate how meritorious these acts are he (SAW) cited examples:

"Hazrat Abu Hurairah reports that a man was on journey to somewhere. En route, he felt very thirsty. He caught sight of a well in front of him. He climbed down into it. When he came out of it, he saw a dog licking the mud because of the intensity of the thirst he felt. He said to himself: 'The condition that I was in because of the thirst, it is the same condition which this dog is in.' So, he climbed down into the well again, had his legging filled with water and clutching it with his teeth came up and out of the well. Then he let the dog drink it. Allah Almighty graced this act by him with His Acceptance and granted him His Forgiveness." The people asked him (SAW): "Is there merit in respect of beasts and animals, too?" He (SAW) replied: "There is merit in respect of every creature that has a heart throbbing."

Hazrat A'bdullah bin U'mar (RAA) has reported the Prophet (SAW) to have said: "A woman was subjected to Retribution merely because she had denied her cat food and water; nor she set it free so that it could satisfy its hunger by taking worms and insects."

Suhail bin Amr reports that the Prophet (SAW) came across a camel so famished that its belly had shrunk to its back. Seeing it, he (SAW) said: "Have the fear of Allah in regard to these dumb creatures. If you ride them, ride them gently. If you slaughter them

to eat the meat from them, slaughter them when they are healthy.”

Hazrat Abu Hurairah narrates that the Prophet (SAW) said: “If you go to any verdant place, do not deny the camel their due over the ground. And in case you go to any arid land, had it crossed over fast. If you have to camp somewhere for the night, do not camp on the road, since it is frequented by animals and insects and worms take shelter there.”

Graciousness towards Enemies:

When on occasion of conquest of Makkah, the place whose people had continuously for 13 years persecuted him (SAW) and his companions to the utmost extent till ultimately he had to part with it and where he (SAW) was now entering as victor and conqueror, and came face-to-face with them, he asked them: “O people of Quoraish! What do you expect me to do with you now?” “For the better we expect”, they said, “You are noble of heart and a noble brother and also the son of a noble brother.” He said: “I say to you today what Yusuf (AS) had said to his brothers:

(No blame on you today. You are all set free)

When the victory operation was over a general amnesty was granted by him(SAW) to all the people barring nine extremist culprits who were permitted to be killed for their grave

crimes even if they were found hidden under the curtains of Ka’ba. These included either someone who had, after having confessed Islam, turned apostate; or someone who had killed some Muslim by fraud; or someone who had made of insulting and slandering the Prophet (SAW) through his poetic compositions a means of his and- others’ enjoyment and had put them into circulation. Among them was A’bduallah bin Sa’d bin Abi Sarh also who had turned apostate. There was, among them, l’kramah bin Abu Jahl who had, because of his malice towards Islam and its dominance and because of his fear for his life, gone to Yemen leaving his homeland behind. But, after his flight, his wife sought quarter for him from the Prophet (SAW). The Prophet (SAW), knowing well that he was the son of his stauhchest enemy on the face of earth, granted him the quarter. And, on his arrival, he (SAW) rushed towards him to receive him and express his joy in such a way as made the mantle he was having on removed from his body.

Among them was also Wahshi (the vassal of Jubair bin Muti’im), the assassin of his beloved uncle, Hazrat Hamza. He had helped, by having him assassinated, in getting his lever chewed. He had been allowed by the Prophet (SAW) to be killed in Qasas (requital). But, when he professed Islam, the Prophet (SAW) accepted his

conversion to Islam.

One of them was Hubaar bin Al-Aswad. He was the person who hit the Prophet's daughter, Hazrat Zainub (RAA), on her side with a spear as a result of which she fell off the camel she was riding on to a rock and suffered a miscarriage. He had thereafter fled away. Later, he got converted to Islam.

There were songstresses, Sara and one or two more, who used to keep singing the verses composed to lampoon the Prophet (SAW). Quarter was sought for them also from the Prophet (SAW). He (SAW) granted them also the quarter and both of them later converted to Islam also.

A man, U'mair bin Wahab by name, had come to Madinah under a conspiracy to assassinate the Prophet (SAW). Hazrat U'mar (RAA) could read the airs on his face. He caught him by his throat and brought him, keeping him held the same way, to the Prophet (SAW). The Prophet (SAW) said: "U'mar, leave him alone. And, you Umair, come close to me." Then he (SAW) asked him: "What is the intent you have come with?" He said: "To get my son released". The Prophet (SAW) asked: "Why are you then having the sword slung on your shoulders?" He said: "What purpose did the swords serve, after all, in the battle of Badr?!" The Prophet (SAW)

said: "Is it not so that you and Safwan, while in Hajar, have hatched a conspiracy to assassinate me?" Hearing what the Prophet (SAW) said, U'mair was flabbergasted. He said spontaneously: "Mohammad, you are undoubtedly the Prophet. By Allah, except Safwan and me no one had any knowledge of this matter." Hence, he had Islam embraced. The Prophet (SAW) said to his companions: "Teach your brother the religion. Make him learn the Quran by heart. And, set his son free." The Quoraish who were eagerly waiting for the news of getting the Prophet (SAW) assassinated at the hands of U'mar' heard the news, instead, of the latter having embraced Islam.

Safwan bin Umayyah had fled away, on occasion of conquest of Makkah, towards Jeddah in order to go from there, by boat, to Yemen. So, U'mair bin Wahab came to the Prophet (SAW) and made the submission that: "O Allah's Prophet! Safwan bin Umayyah is the chief of his community. Out of fear from you, he has fled away towards the sea. Having learnt that, the Prophet (SAW) granted him, too, the quarter. Hazrat U'mair requested the Prophet (SAW) to furnish him with a written note to that effect for his (Safwan's) assurance. Thereupon, the Prophet (SAW) gave him his turban as a token and sent him back after Safwan. He took Safwan over at the

sea-coast and told him that the Prophet (SAW) had granted him the quarter. 'Now get yourself rescued from (eternal) perdition', he added. Safwan said: 'I fear for my life.' He said: 'The Prophet (SAW) is very tolerant and forbearing'. Hence, Hazrat U'mair brought him along back to Makkah. Presenting himself before the Prophet (SAW), Safwan said: 'This man here thinks that you have granted me the quarter.' The Prophet (SAW) corroborated the statement made to him. Safwan sought two months respite from him (SAW). He (SAW) granted him four months respite.'

'Who can save you now?':

When the Prophet (SAW) was on his way back from *Ghazwa-e-Zat-er-Riqua a'*, he (SAW) made a halt at noon to take rest at a place where were lot of acacia trees. The people made for those trees and the Prophet himself, after having his sword hung on one of the acacia trees, got to taking rest under it.

Hazrat Jabir (RAA) states that: 'Meanwhile we fell asleep. But before long we felt that the Prophet (SAW) was calling us. We saw that a Nomadic Arab was sitting beside him. He (SAW) apprised us that he was sleeping when that Nomad picked up that sword. "When I opened my eyes, he was having this sword drawn over my head and said to me: 'Who can save you now?' I said to him: 'Allah!' Behold! He

is now sitting here", said the Prophet (SAW). Anyway, the Prophet (SAW) did not punish him at all.

The Quality of Being 'the Mercy for the Worlds':

The level of passion of love and sympathy with each and everyone that the Prophet (SAW) had was extraordinarily high. The impact that this passion made on the Muslims and the orientation it gave to the minds of Muslims was uninterruptedly perceptible in the Prophet's (SAW) time and also in the lives of the later Muslims. As its fall-out, regions after regions of whatever lands the Muslim empires got extended to and wherever the Muslims got settled, got entered, on their own, on having seen those Muslims' kindheartedness and favours, into the fold of Islam. They were not forced by anyone to do so. It was so because, as per the injunctions of Islam, it is forbidden to forge anyone to convert to Islam. This interdiction is extended further to the extent that the non-Muslim citizens living under the Muslim rule would not be burdened with obligations that the Muslims are burdened with. They have always been allowed to practice their respective religions in accordance with their religious teachings even in matters which are prohibited for the Muslims. As a result thereof, whichever non-Muslim communities had the opportunity to observe these virtues of

Islam had embraced Islam.

Having embraced Islam meant that Allah alone was to be believed to be one's lone and sole Providence and Master. His commands conveyed to him through His Apostle must be obeyed. The transgressions and moral and sexual waywardness that were being perpetrated in pre-Islamic life must be stopped. Hence, the people who embraced Islam kept their practices mended accordingly. The human comity got thus reformed a lot. A lot of such virtues as were vividly demonstrative of sublime human traits and characters were instilled. It may be assessed and appreciated by having a look at the pre-Islamic society which was marked by the ethnical inequities and the bloody carnages perpetrated by those in power, the powers that be, and which make the man shiver when he reads them in the annals of history. In the regimes governed by Islam even 1 % of all that did not take place even in the event of war and battles. When the Romans captured Jerusalem after having fought for it, they shed so much blood of Muslim rulers and the Muslim people that their horses were knee-deep in blood. But, when the Muslims recaptured it later, they pardoned off the Christian rulers who were in occupation of it. It is what the English historian, Stanley Lane Pole, himself, has confessed.

In each and every society of pre-Islamic days, whether it were under the Roman empire or the Persian one or the one of the Indian sub-continent or of the adjoining regions, the treatment meted out to womenfolk was so iniquitous as is hardly meted out to even the beasts. They had no right of inheritance. Nor were they equal in rights to their brothers. There was no safeguard for their honour and chastity. They were made to serve, in their own houses, like the servants and slaves are made to serve. And, if they became widow, they were deemed even ill-boding. On their birth, the family members got struck with grief. Many a people had them killed even before their coming of age. Those who were not killed were meted out the treatment mentioned above.

It is Islam which, on its advent, proclaimed the womenfolk entitled to be treated with honour and respect. It made them entitled to a share in inheritance, in the legacy left by their parents on their death. Ill-treatment of women simply because of their being the women was declared totally unlawful. In the days of Ignorance, women while menstruating would be rendered untouchable by the society. No one would come close to them nor would sit close by. Islam had this practice totally abolished. Barring the cohabitation, coming close to women in their state of menstruation in all other matters was declared absolutely

permissible. Prior to Islam, women were kept reduced to the status of show-pieces. Their job was to seduce others with their body and dresses, be the source of feasting the eyes with their adornments and ornaments and be the tools of entertainment for the men-folk. It is Islam which, on its advent, strictly prohibited this malpractice. It ordered that, if the womenfolk, out of necessity, had to be amidst men not closely related, they must have themselves clad in loose apparels so that the lecherous glances are not directed towards them.

Likewise, women are mentioned, side by side the men, wherever instructions regarding matters of worship et cetera are enunciated. They, too, are provided opportunity to attain highest levels of spirituality and religious merits. However, as much differentiation as is warranted by the physical and congenital difference between the two sexes and is necessary and illeivable has, of course, been maintained. The holy Quran has the following statement made:

(And the believing men and believing women are friends one unto another: they command that which is reputable and restrain from that which is disreputable, and establish prayer and give the poor-rate and obey Allah and His apostle. Those! Allah will surely show mercy

to them; verily Allah is Mighty, Wise.)

And

(Whosoever worketh righteously, male or female, and is a believer, We will surely quicken him to a clean life, and will surely recompense them their hire for the best of that which they have been working.)

And also that:

(I let not the work of a worker amongst you to waste, man or woman, one of you from the other.)

On occasion of the *Hajjat-ul-Vida* 'a (the Valedictory Haj), the Prophet (SAW) exhorted as follows:

(Take this exhortation from me in respect of women: be nice to them. you have had them under Allah's security and have made them legitimate for you by the Word of Allah.)

Thus, the woman, in her constitution, is a little different from that of the man. It makes her weaker than the man. Keeping that in view, and, in order to have safeguards against the man making misuse of this disparity, some rules have also been formulated. For example: She should not travel all alone; she must be accompanied by her husband or some uterine kin. In return for obtaining right to use her by making her one's wife, it is made

mandatory to give her, in cash or kind, a gift of alimony. He is not permitted to appropriate the wealth and property that she owns. Only she has the right over whatever she owns. The husband has no right over it. Prior to her getting married, the onus of the expenditure on her is laid on her parents. In their absence, it is laid on her closest kin. After her getting married, this responsibility is to be borne by her husband. Thus the wife herself has not been assigned the responsibility of meeting her own expenses. She would, however, in exchange, be the mistress of the house and assistant to her husband. She would bear the responsibility of the household affairs and looking after the children. The mandamus is:

(The woman is to bear the responsibility of looking after her husband's household.)

On separation from her husband, in case of divorce from him, she would revert back to the charge and responsibility of her parents.

The consequent effect of the values of mercy, compassion and humanitarianism enforced and promulgated by Islam was that wherever the Muslims adorned with these values went, they brought about a world of change in those places. All the iniquities and aggressions perpetrated owing to the class disparity between man and man or the sexual

disparity between man and woman or the disparity between the ruler and the ruled or those committed on occasion of military conflicts or committed just for the sake of fun and enjoyment were all exterminated. Even the people who did not embrace Islam, too" got influenced in some way or other by these reforms. The non-Muslim societies, too, took to emulate, to some extent at least, the reformed practices of these places. There were some practices in the past adopted just for the sake of entertainment or by way of sport, wherein creatures other than the man were subjected to brutality. Making the man and the beast confined within a well-like enclosure they were set against each other and made to fight to the death to the amusement of a vast assembly of spectators. It was not felt at all necessary to be kind in any way to the animals. All these beastly acts underwent an exceptional change subsequent to the advent of the Prophet Mohammad (SAW) and as a result of his teachings and practical examples of morals set by him. And, thus, his coming into the world happened to be the mercy not for the Muslims only, but, in addition to the mankind, for all the creatures on the earth. That is what the holy Quran has referred to when it said:

(And We have not sent thee except as a mercy unto the Worlds.) ■

HOW TO RETAIN OUR SPIRITUALITY AFTER RAMADAN

-Shahnaaz Bemath

We enrolled in a 30-day course called "Ramadan" to attain *Taqwa* (Fear of Allah *ta'ala*). It was a time of renewal and re-establishment of our commitment to our Beloved Allah and His beautiful Deen, Al-Islam. *Al-Hamdulillah!* Many have graduated with flying colours - embracing positive *deeni* (Islamic) changes in their lives. Now is a crucial time to put it into practice.

We fasted, gave charity, read the Qur'an Kareem and performed the night prayers, especially the last ten nights, standing in prayer before Allah *ta'ala*. We avoided gossip, slander and every evil that would invalidate our fasting. But now that Ramadan has bid us farewell, many of us, regrettably, will put the Qur'an Kareem back on the shelves, will suspend fasting until next year and will abandon the night prayer. This is not the way it should be, because all of these acts of worship carry rewards and are of benefit to us throughout the year, in addition to the fact there is no divine prescription limiting them to Ramadan.

What is it that happens in Ramadan to make you so motivated

to change your life around and how can you get that spirit back to make long lasting, sustainable changes in your life? What is it that Allah *ta'ala* puts into your life to enable you to make all those changes during Ramadan? If we could examine that, maybe we'll find clues to work out how we can make the Ramadan spirit last for more than 30 days, so you can make major sustainable changes in your life!

RAMADAN CHANGES

1. Purpose: Allah *ta'ala* gave us an amazing purpose, a powerful reason for fasting, He says it so beautifully in a *hadith qudsi*: "All the deeds of the son of Adam are for Him: the good deeds will be multiplied ten times to seven hundred times, except fasting, which is for Me and I will reward it accordingly." (*Al-Bukhari and Muslim*)

Al-Hamdulillah! He gave us all hope of His reward for abandoning food, drink and intimacy for His sake during Ramadan.

2. Long Term Vision: Allah also gave us a long-term vision of what we will achieve if we follow His orders and avoid all that he has forbidden. He will

grant us, according to our intentions, the highest place in Jannah.

3. Structure and organization: Allah gave us clear rules and a daily structure for Ramadan to give us a specific rhythm throughout the month - with a few exceptions and some flexibility such as a change in the pattern of the days for the last 10 nights - but there are definite targets that we have to reach throughout.

4. Challenging and Slightly Unrealistic Goals: Non-Muslims often look at what we do in Ramadan and say that we are being extreme, that we shouldn't be as harsh on ourselves as we are. But we are able to rise above their criticism and not pay attention to what they say, because we know that Allah *ta'ala* never requires us to do anything that would be harmful or beyond our capacity. We are convinced of the value and benefits of our fasting and *qiyaam* and this conviction enables us to stretch ourselves.

5. Balance: In Ramadan, it's not only our bodies that are cleansed through fasting, our spirituality too is improved through increased Salaat and reading of the Qur'aan Kareem. Our finances are cleansed through Zakat, our social

relationships are improved through coming together for Iftar, and our social contribution is increased through extra Sadaqah. The Ramadan spirit is developed through a balanced increase in every area of life, with each aspect having its own timing, amount, and purpose. In welcoming Ramadan and bidding it farewell, there are some points of reflection for the faithful: Is there for us in fasting an abundant portion of effort to reform ourselves and mend our ways? Yes! It is indeed an excellent period of reflection over the sincerity of our intentions and appropriateness of our deeds and acts of worship.

A whole new beautiful chapter in our lives opens- of peace, happiness, blessings and mercy with an elated feeling of spirituality, connecting with Allah *ta'ala* and being immersed in His love. Fear Allah *ta'ala* as He should be feared for, the fear of Allah *ta'ala* is the best treasure of our lives. Obey Allah *ta'ala* and keep away from His restrictions and prohibited boundaries. If you are able to do this, you will achieve His pleasure and be saved from His torment. On tasting the sweetness that comes with obedience, there is no desire to return to any form of disobedience.

A sinful desire is like a rose from afar. We get allured by its fragrance, become blinded by its beauty, and overlook the thorns. Don't allow Shaitan to be an anchor and halt your spiritual journey. Raise the sails of *Iman* to reach the beautiful shores of Jannah. Would you rather invest for short term pleasures and benefits, or would it be more sensible to invest for everlasting returns and eternal benefits? Don't let the chains of desire (*nafs* and *shaitan*), bind you to *dunya* whilst restraining your soul from pursuing Jannah. May Allah *ta'ala* make our hearts the throne upon which our *Iman* will sit, and let it rule over our *nafs* and prevent it from trying to enslave us.

Ways to maintain the good habits you picked during Ramadan

* **Make Du'a:** It was Allah *ta'ala* who gave you the strength and ability to keep the good habit in Ramadan, and only He can help you maintain it afterwards. Make *du'a* that Allah *ta'ala* helps you not only keep the habit, but that He accepts it and makes it a way for you to grow closer to Him.

* **Make it a habit:** If you want to keep good habits, you've got to make sure they remain part of your daily schedule. For instance, fasting. Our beloved

Messenger (pbuh) encouraged us to fast on Mondays and Thursdays. He said: "A man's deeds are reported (to Allah *ta'ala*) on Mondays and Thursdays and I prefer that I should be fasting when my deeds are reported." (*Tirmidhi*)

* **Evaluate yourself weekly:** This will help you see the bigger picture. You'll be able to evaluate on a more long-term level how well you've been keeping your habits in practice. You can do the same thing on a monthly and yearly basis.

* **Don't fall apart once you make one mistake:** The beauty of *Taubah* (repentance) in Islam is that Allah *ta'ala* blesses us with opportunity to always return back to Him after doing something wrong. We should remember that we are humans and that we will err. Only Allah *ta'ala* is Perfect.

* **Ask yourself why you kept the habit:** *Niyah* or intention is a key to Allah *ta'ala*'s acceptance of our good deeds. If we developed a habit to impress others, for instance, we may be able to keep the momentum for a while only, but most probably it'll wear out afterwards. But if we maintain a habit sincerely for the sake of Allah *ta'ala*, Insha Allah, not only will we be

rewarded for it, but our intention will help us maintain the necessary motivation to continue to do good.

*** Work your way up slowly:** Aa'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that the Prophet of Allah said: "Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and remember that you shall enter Paradise only through Allah *ta'ala*'s Mercy, and also remember that the most beloved deed to Allah *ta'ala* is that which is regular and constant even if it is little." (*Al-Bukhan*)

The wisdom in this Hadith is tremendous and it is one way of keeping up good habits you have picked them up in Ramadan. For example, let's say you were motivated to read Qur'an Kareem for half-an-hour on a daily basis during Ramadan. But now that it's over, you feel sluggish, lazy and want to give it up. Yet, you had wanted to maintain this habit after the blessed month was over. So, instead of trying to read Qur'an Kareem for the same amount of time, reduce the time period to as much as you are initially able to do, even if it's just ten or twenty minutes a day. If you keep up this 'ten minutes a day' habit, Insha Allah *ta'ala*, you will see the amount of Qur'an Kareem you read will increase slowly but gradually, perhaps

even surpassing your Ramadan maximum in the long-term, Insha Allah.

Be steadfast and upright upon the *Deen* of Allah *ta'ala* at all times, for you do not know when you'll meet the Angel of Death. Beware of him taking you while you are in a state of sin. Forgiveness is always billowing around us, but we must raise the sails of remorse and repentance to feel it. Now is the time to reprogramme your life, rise up and get rid of the negativities, develop your potential, plan and execute, change and get changed, and you will become one of those who gain happiness and blessings in this life and enjoy the bliss of the Hereafter, Insha Allah *ta'ala*. Be sure that reform is always possible, seek help from our loving Allah *ta'ala*, and do not feel unmotivated or lacking in strength or lose hope in Allah's infinite Mercy.

May Allah *ta'ala* accept our fasting, our Ibadah and all our righteous deeds, that our condition after Ramadan be better, that the state of our Ummah improves and that we are granted honour and strength to submit to His obedience. Ameen. ■

THE VISIONERY REFORMER

-N.I. Noorani*

Mawlana Azad was one of the great socio-religious reformers of Twentieth Century. He was born in a great family of divinity. His forefathers were mystic divines who had greatly contributed to Islamic divinity. Mawlana, from his early childhood, saw his fathers' influence on Muslim society. By virtue of his family's profession and education he was trained to be a religious scholar. But he was not as like his father and immediate preceding forefathers.

Mawlana first rebelled against his fathers' ritualistic mystic form of religion. He himself adopted a distinct course of religious reform taking the inspiration from the past and contemporary reforming movements around the World.

He had depth study on Islamic history as well as world history. Seeing the declining and deplorable conditions of Muslims across the world he devised his own course of action to improve the fate of his community; the *Ummah*. He discarded mystic line of religious practices and took up a pragmatic method in the line of prophetic mission based on exemplary instances of early Islamic traditions and the great reformers like Ibn Taimiyah. His journalistic mission from the period of

the *Lisan al-Sidque to al-Hilal-al-Balagh* and his major works like *Tazkira*, and *Tarjuman al-Quran* and other different discourses dedicated to this cause. His domain of activities was not limited to spiritual rituals, rather it was quite comprehensive and inclusive of all spheres which are concerned with human life.

It has already been stated that he was dead opponent against the religious innovation (*Bida*). He was a vigorous follower of pristine Islam as displayed by the earlier generations of Islam. He repeatedly criticized and condemned the intrusion of the manner and method of alien religions and cultures. In his different treatises and discourses in different contexts he also condemned the adaptation of the strange modes and manners of worship and rituals. It is the fact that Islam in India has been developed by different races and cultures. So, in it gathered a strange customs and prejudices which later called popular Islam. But it is not the same Islam that the earliest generations of Muslims followed. Mawlana fought against the former version of Islam; the so-called popular Islam and tried to re-establish the latter version of Islam; pristine Islam.

At a point of time Mawlana had arrived at definite conclusions on some

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fundamental issues. He wrote: "The purpose for which Islam came into the World was to command what is (recognized as) good and forbid what is (recognized as) evil; and commanding what is (recognized as) good and Jihad is two forms of the same injunction. Therefore, every effort devoted to what is right, every expenditure of resources that serves the cause of truth and goodness, every labour and burden undertaken to promote justice, all pain and suffering endured in the body and the mind which striving in the way of God, all the fetters and shackles of the dungeon that bind hands and feet in punishment for proclaiming the truth every scaffold to which the beauty of truth the love of justice leads, in short, every sacrifice of life and property, every service with tongue and pen, performed in the cause of truth and justice is jihad in the way of Allah."

Mawlana expressed his understanding of Islam more categorically in these words: "Islam does not commend narrow mindedness and racial and religious prejudice. It does not make the recognition of merit and virtue, of human benevolence, mercy and love, dependent upon and subject to distinctions of religion and race. It teaches as to respect every man who is good, whatever be his religion, to let ourselves be drawn towards merits and virtues, whatever, the religion or the race of the person who possesses them.

..... But above and beyond this law of universal good will, and I do not hesitate to own it even in this age of hypothetical impartiality, is the Jihad of helping the cause of justice, worshiping Allah and establishing right-mindedness and justice. Islam teaches us that the purpose of the creation of man is that he should represent God on earth, and keep burning the torch of truth and light."

Mawlana expressed his idea of reform endeavour, "Muslims today do not need to lay new foundation or to exercise ingenuity. They have only to revive and reaffirm what has been commanded. (There is no reason why we should feel distraught over the new houses to be built; we need only to settle down in the dwellings we have for shaken) This is the difference in principle between my conviction as regards what is to be done and the methods of my contemporaries."

Mawlana was attracted to reform initiatives of his contemporary socio-religious reforms and the great reformers of Islam, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Md. Abduhu, Rashid Rida, Ibn Taimiyah, Shah Walliullah of Delhi were the inspiring figures for forming his own reform zeal. His vision of reform had been adequately displayed in his *Lisan al-Sidque* and *al-Hilal & al-Balagh* journalistic mission and his introspective biography, *Tazkirah*. He was more ideologue than activist. Since his journalistic activities of *Lisan al-Sidque* he had consistently developed

his vision of reform. He illustrated his vision of social reform of objectives of *Lisan al Siddque*. To awake the community from a long slumber of ignorance and confused in customs and prejudices in the name of religion and family tradition.

In his first journalistic adventure Mawlana launched a complete journal *Lisan al-Sid que* when he was only 15th years old. In the first issue of this journal (20th November 1903), he elaborated his objectives of publication of the journal: 1. Social reform i.e. reform in Muslim society and customs. 2. Promotion of Urdu. 3. Propagation of literary taste, particularly in Bengal. 4. Criticism i.e. objective reviews of Urdu publication.

Then he elaborately discussed his vision of reform. Mawlana observed that due to historical process and social ethos, the customs and usages of Muslims in the 19th century had lost their pristine Arab simplicity and Iranian polish. He analyzed the causes of the corruption and distortion that had crept into those customs and usages and suggested remedial measures. Mawlana expressed his opinion, "Adherence to customs and usages has given birth to many evils in India but unfortunately, to date, no one has attempted to eradicate them and this virus continues to spread in the nation. Some people maintain that other reforms are more urgent. They feel that if society becomes hostile to social

reforms and starts to suspect the motives of those who try to affect them, their efforts in this direction would be doomed. The possibility is that the more urgent reforms will never get underway.

Other people believe that when education becomes widespread and modern ideas filter down the social strata, people will automatically start thinking about reforms. It is therefore premature to introduce that at this moment. These beliefs have prevented the introduction of social reforms. Silence of the physician and ignorance of the patient has, unfortunately, made the disease incurable. If we persist in this attitude, the disease will develop immunity to every treatment and the best of the physicians will be unable to cure it."

Mawlana, in this elaborate discussion, identified the contentious areas to reform. He specified the social evil and customs which led the community to fall and decline. Later, in describing the objectives of *al-Hilal* he pointed out his vision of reform (*Al-Hilal*, September, 8, 1912). He highlighted the objectives saying that the basic tenets of Islam is based on Tawhid. It teaches us to believe only in God and submit only before God. None is worthy of submission and humility, none whose domination and greatness is beyond question and none is worthy of fear. He repeatedly called his community to adhere to the pristine Islam and discard the so-called popular Islam of Indian

edition.

In major parts of *Tazkira* Mawlana presented a comprehensive guideline for socio-religious reform of the community. It was intended to write an auto-biography but he deliberately avoided to disclose his personal details and used the opportunity to dwell on the causes of deplorable condition of the *Ummah* and prescribe the way to salvation via social and religious reforms. In this long discourse he lambasted the time-server u'lama who were one the major causes of the decline of this community.

Mawlana in *Tarjuman* was wholly dedicated to the socio-religious reform of the community. He wrote: "I could not remain unconcerned about the kind of work while I considered most important at the time for the Muslim community. As the time passed, the thought of the indispensability of the work became unbearable for me. I felt that if not done by me, it may be a while before anyone else would attempt it." Mawlana interpreted the Quran in the spirit of reform the Muslim community. He believed it was the best instrument which could easily influence the spirit and mind of Muslims irrespective of their affiliations and schism.

During the period his internment at Ranchi Mawlana attempted to translate his vision of socio-religious reform. He tried to eradicate the superstition, prejudices and innovative

rituals (Bid'a) etc and attempted to reform the religious education.

Islam had always been an essential element in Mawlana's life. But it was not blind following of the ancestors or the prevailing customs and conventions. Mawlana wrote: "Under normal circumstances, religion is what we inherit from our forefathers as part of a legacy. I got mine in this way. But I was not satisfied with the beliefs of my ancestors since my thirst proved to be more than could be quenched by them. I, therefore, felt constrained to set aside traditional beliefs and dogmas and to find out a way of my own Progress along such a path is invariably attended by doubts and ends in disbelief and denial. Instead of forging ahead we get bogged down in the middle. Our only reward is utter dismay and disillusion. Such was my own experience, but I never faltered in my quest for truth and forged ahead until I got the better of my frustrations and misgivings. At last, after passing through a period of intense mental agony, I reached a stage, when, all of a sudden, I became aware of a change coming over me, leading to a complete reversal of my attitude. A new horizon opened before my eyes. At present, there is a wide variety of religions—there is one which we inherit from our forefathers and are quite content to follow. There is another which many by termed geographical religion..... But to resume our analysis of some of the existing religions, there

is in existence a religion whose only purpose and justification seems to be to lend it name to facilitate the filling up of requisite forms by the masses during census. Yet again, one comes across a religion so crippled by customs and so embarrassed by conventions that it is just a bundle of rituals, so to speak, and nothing more."

In reply to a letter to Ghulam Rasul Siddiqi from Mumbai on November 3, 1956 Mawlana asserted that the concept of religion should not be the basis of inherited belief rather it should be based on documents and proofs.

Mawlana believed the Quran was the source of all wisdom and its utility and context is eternal. In reply to a letter Mawlana said that the religion has not lost its utility and importance in the age of Atom. Mawlana repeatedly mentioned his experiments and was proud of whatever he achieved through the exercise of his intellect and his discerning judgment. He never ceased to scoff at the conformist disposition of his co-religionists. In his close friend, Abdur Razzaque Malittabadi's words:

"As regards religion, the Mawlana resolutely stood the convictions of his God-fearing and enlightened ancestors whom he considered to be inviolable and sacrosanct. In belief he never deviated from this path but in practice he was very liberal. In India those following their

enlightened ancestral path are known as Ahl-e-Hadith, in Arab Countries, Salafi."

Mawlana enumerated his perception of religion vividly in his magnum opus, the commentary of Sura al-Fatiha. He wrote: "Few things have been given as much prominence in the pages of the holy Quran or as often repeated as the fact that the purpose of revelation was not to found, establish, or give birth to a new religion. There is little doubt that the Quran expressly forbids and disallows any kind of isolation or separation of religions into mentally antagonistic units or groups. This is the one and only path from the beginning shown by the founders of all religions. And the object of the object of the holy Quran was to acknowledge, equally, all the prophets and holy Books. The Quran avers that there is only a single God-the eternal truth-and there is one true gospel. If we believe or have faith only in our own prophet, to the exclusion of other messengers of God, our action will amount to both acceptance and rejection of the same truth embodied in the Supreme Being, for ultimate source and fountainhead of all truth is one and only one."

According to his conception Islam is that Muhammad is the messenger of God and last in the line of apostolical succession. After him there will not be any prophet or prophets, no divine revelation in the form of Holy Scripture, nor be any new

religion with distinct doctrine or mode of worship. The holy Quran unequivocally declares that it is the completion of the divine revelation and Islam is the sum total of all other religions, it enshrines the essence of each one of them.

Mawlana's interpretation of the Islamic term 'Kuffar' reflects his eclectic views of religious faith. The attribution of 'Kufr' (infidelity) has often been the cause of bitter controversies and hate-psychosis leading to trouble relations among non-Muslims, even within Muslims. Having realizing the significance of the term 'Kuffar', Mawlana said: "I have dwelt upon the matter at some length because I intend to bring home to my readers the actual meaning and sense of the word Kuffar (Pl. of Kafir) as used in the holy Book. It is the pagans of Mecca, people who would not believe in the unity or oneness of God who stood in open defiance of Islam, and condemned the teaching who are referred to as 'Kafirs'. They were just a band of savages who had terrorized innocent believers by their brutal acts, a gang of evildoers who thrived on falsehood, treachery and deceit..... It is used to mean the pagans of Mecca who vehemently opposed the idea of one God, and fought tooth and nail to discredit Islam, where as the term Ahl-e-Kitab (the followers of Holy Scripture) has been used to denote the Jews and Christians, who have always been given preferential treatment in the

Holy Quran."

He emphatically denounced the prevailing views of the 'u'lama on fine arts. They held the opinion that it is not compatible with the temperament and spirit of Islam. He dealt on music in detail in GK Letter-No. 24. He proved that there is no actual prohibition on music. Rather its prohibition is due to the extreme steps which the jurists have taken to prevent its abuse, Mawlana understanding and interpretation of Islam could not be appreciated by his contemporaries as they were too obsessed with their obscurantist orientation of thinking. Mawlana was very much pragmatic and had a positive perception of life. It exposes in the following words of his own: "How strange that religion, philosophy and ethics, want to solve the problem of life, and yet all three have developed a bias against life. It is usually thought that the more a man goes about with a solemn face and restrained emotion, the more of a religious, philosophical or ethical type he is, as if for both learning and holiness a mournful life is essential..... In the World of religion and spirituality, dry asceticism and a repressed personality are so highly valued that no one can imagine a smiling face going with a devout temperament and concern for the truth. Godliness and a dour nature have become almost synonyms."■

EGYPT NEEDS GLOBAL INTERVENTION

-Mahboob A. Khawaja

To accelerate a workable solution, the global community of nations should exert diplomatic pressure and the use of force to stop the civilian bloodbaths in Egypt, suggests MAHBOOB A. KHAWAJA.

Egyptian military junta, historically hated and feared, appears to have gained the upper hand in cold blooded massacres of the innocent civilians demonstrating against the perpetuated military brutality – a threat to global human conscience that must be challenged with intervention to bring it to an immediate halt. After one year of political optimism and emerging hope for peaceful transformation of the anarchy-infested institutions, under democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi, Egyptians were moving towards a rational path of democratic change and development. Out of nowhere, Egyptian Generals seem to have gone paranoid and more of incoming signal from the US Government that evolving democracy was not befitting to the American policies and practices in the Arab Middle East.

President Obama and others of the military-industrial complex in Washington view continuing conflicts and social-economic and political

disruptions as necessary to their short and long terms aims of the foreign policy in the Arab world. They need ruthless authoritarian dictators as has been the case over half of a century to succeed and be in place for the US policy attainment at the cost of ruthlessness and military coups – a vision of America-led success leading to political destabilisation and vicious degeneration of the Arab societies. This corresponds to overwhelming militarisation goal – a warrior's dream of glory and triumph to make the Arab-Muslims subservient to the western political mastery.

Simply, history cycle is repeating itself and nothing else. With exception of the politically elected Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leaders, all other Arab rulers who call themselves 'leaders' are devoid of knowledge, foresight and wisdom to assess the complex phenomenon of political change dominating the Arab world. Most of the contemporary oil-pumping Arab rulers are uneducated and self-centred maniacs lacking any viable political acumen and vision of the real world future. In all of their pursuits, they are subservient to the Western Masters involved in extending massive security and secret police

apparatus to protect their dwellings and one-sided governance from the concerned masses in the region. Arab masses are fully awakened after prolonged neo-colonial darkness and do foresee their political future away from the conflicting political time-zones of the Arab authoritarianism.

Why the military coup in Egypt after an elected democratic Government? All available evidence suggests that it was a foreign instigated military intervention against the Egyptian people. Its immediate aim was to destabilise Egypt and perpetuate another political crisis beside Palestine, killings in Syria, instability in Yemen and already down to their knees the oil exporting Arab rulers, to make them all subservient to the US wild dictum and to fix their minds and crush their spirit ever to challenge US-Israel in the Middle East.

Egypt was politically incapacitated by the continued authoritarianism. But President Morsi was on a right course to rebuild Egyptian economy and political institutions. Undoubtedly, nobody else could have done better than the Muslim Brotherhood which is a well-established organisation for over 80 years to pursue a Welfare State in Egypt. There is no other party or leader in Egypt to exhibit any miracles and benefits to the masses out of nowhere. If one claims to have done unthinkable,

it is false and delusional of the resources and capacity of Egypt.

So why a military coup under foreign dictates? Opportunist military dictators do not build progressive societies nor contribute to sustainable political change and people's emancipation. Today's Egypt under military rule is no exception to this sickening cruelty by man against man. Egyptian Generals do not represent an invincible army but a camouflaged combination of in-house corrupt and divided apparatus, often looking to opportunism of their own to control and manage the Egyptian economy.

It is widely known that many Egyptian political elite including the Generals own or have investments in the construction and developmental projects being carried out with foreign assistance. America provides some \$1.3 billion annual aid to the Egyptian development projects and military institutions. John Grant ("Despite Having Wringing, Cairo Massacres Suit US Policy." OpEdNews: 8/17/2013) illustrates the contemporary face of the Obama administration on the current Egyptian political turmoil:

"President Obama's "condemnation" of the Egyptian military's massacre of civilians sounded like obligatory ass-covering.... The sense of absurdity in the air takes one back to the halcyon days of Richard Nixon and his

“credibility gap,” which now seems like child’s play. Incredibly, even John McCain has a more critical analysis of the Egyptian coup.... We have repeatedly called on the Egyptian military and security forces to show restraint,” he told the press. It was like the US was saying to General Sisi, “We wish you could be nicer.... Having watched two-faced US operations for decades now, I tend to lean toward the latter. That is, that policy formulators in Washington and Tel Aviv have concluded that an Egypt cleansed of Islamic influence is in their interests. So, therefore, it’s necessary to crank up instruments of public relations like Earnest Josh to run interference with reality.”

The daily planned massacres of the people cannot go unabated and unchallenged; otherwise, it is a burden on the civilized human conscience. After all, what is the role and importance of the UNO and its Council responsible for global peace and security matters. Those occupying the five major powerful seats in the UN Security Council must initiate immediate actions to stop this bloody unwarranted human carnage. So far, the UNO appears to be a silent spectator on the major political issues involving the peace and minds of global mankind.

Some of the Arab rulers enriched with wealth generated by oil

exports, and more precisely, equipped with small wisdom and big mouth make sluggish statements encouraging the Egyptian Generals to crackdown on the public and to destroy the well-organised publicly supported Muslim Brotherhood. They rejoice that General Sisi has geared to dismantle the democratically elected Government of Egypt as it offers encouragement to all the authoritarian rulers to maintain their grips over new emerging public awareness and the movement for political change and reformation across the neo-colonial dominated Arab governance.

If these rulers were wise and farsighted, they should have welcomed the peaceful change in Egypt and the election of President Morsi – a man of intellect and futuristic imagination for political change. If rationality is to assert its place, President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood had inherited essentially a corrupt culture of governance overthrowing more than sixty years of military governance. It was unthinkable that the phenomenon of peaceful change could produce positive economic and political results overnight for all the Egyptians. Egyptian youths and the ordinary folks showed marvellous imagination and courage to overthrow Hosni Mubarak and to get rid of the oppressive military control over the civilian life.

Jacob Heilbrunn (“Obama’s

Egypt Address: A License to Kill": Information Clearing House: 8/17/2013) provides a critical insight into Obama's mind how he sees the US half-heated cynical engagement in the whole affair:

"If he was ever apprehensive, Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi can relax. Obama spoke but he did not speak a language that the generals will interpret as anything but a license to kill. So much for Obama's lofty expressions about a new beginning in his address to the Muslim world in Cairo in June 2009....

"What Obama's foreign policy appears to amount to is abdication, a passive surrender to events. Egypt is not Syria. America has long been directly, intimately engaged in its affairs. But Obama is acting as though he's an innocent bystander, wringing his hands over the terrible things he's witnessing but incapable of actually trying to influence events. No doubt Obama was right to state: "America cannot determine the future of Egypt." But this is a straw man. Who said America could determine its future? What it could have attempted to do was nudge Egypt toward compromise. Now it may be too late. Obama may have acted like he was putting Egypt on notice, but the only thing the Generals will end up noticing is his passivity."

America is becoming irrelevant and its global importance in political affairs is diminishing fast, observed the internationally reputable scholar Noam Chomsky because America acts contrary to the interests of its own people ("The U.S. Behaves Nothing Like a Democracy, But You'll Never Hear About It in Our 'Free Press'." Information Clearing House: 8/17/2013):

"American power is diminishing, as it has been in fact since its peak in 1945, but it's still incomparable. And it's dangerous. Obama's remarkable global terror campaign and the limited, pathetic reaction to it in the West is one shocking example. And it is a campaign of international terrorism – by far the most extreme in the world. Those who harbour any doubts on that should read the report issued by Stanford University and New York University, and actually I'll return to even more serious examples than international terrorism....

"Well, another important feature of RECD is that the public must be kept in the dark about what is happening to them. The "herd" must remain "bewildered". The reasons were explained lucidly by the professor of the science of government at Harvard – that's the official name – another respected liberal figure, Samuel Huntington. As he pointed out, "power remains strong when it remains in the

dark. Exposed to sunlight, it begins to evaporate.... As I mentioned, Obama's now conducting the world's greatest international terrorist campaign – the drones and special forces campaign. It's also a terror-generating campaign. The common understanding at the highest level [is] that these actions generate potential terrorists. I'll quote General Stanley McChrystal, Petraeus' predecessor. He says that "for every innocent person you kill", and there are plenty of them, "you create ten new enemies".

All the monsters of history are to be found among the absolute leaders exercising absolute power in disregard of the interests of people. Military intervention and its anarchy turned insanity is unmindful of the innocent massacres in the streets of Cairo. Military dictators have replaced Pharaoh to make Egypt a land of unpredictable warring people. It makes no sense why the Egyptian Generals should intervene and stop a new chapter of democratic change and development in Egypt's modern political history. Continued military coups and political chaos would serve the interests and priorities of the western political masters, not the hopes of the besieged Arab people or emerging democracy.

Noam Chomsky knows what America is doing in Egypt and its short and long terms strategic aims in the

region to support Israel political supremacy over all other members of the Arab states. Arab rulers are entrapped and are willingly fulfilling the aims of the US intransigent foreign policy. They have no rational sense of time and history. They have no capacity of any kind to find a peaceful solution in Egypt or elsewhere.

To accelerate a workable solution, the global community of nations should exert diplomatic pressure and the use of force to stop the civilian bloodbaths in Egypt. It is not out of line to have the ICC threaten the military junta with charges of crimes against humanity for killings of the so many civilians. The Generals have no rational base to rule Egypt against its masses. There is no peace and no stability unless the major global powers come out to stop the vengeful bloody military insanity generating greater moral and intellectual darkness and political belligerency across the Arab world. ■

[DR. MAHBOOB A. KHAWAJA specialises in global security, peace and conflict resolution with keen interests in Islamic-western comparative cultures and civilizations, and author of several publications including the latest: Global Peace and Conflict Management: Man and Humanity in Search of New Thinking. Lambert Publishing, Germany, May 2012]

(Courtesy: Radiance)

Azan - My Spiritual Friend

-Mithun Dey

'Azan' is a voice inside my head and my heart. I have imbibed its spiritual message. I owe much to the muezzin for the introduction of such a lofty voice mainly when I stay far away from my hometown. I can't get the sound of its voice out of my mind. I take it as a sign to clear my mind and listen to the voice of divine guidance. However, I belong to a moderately religious Hindu family.

Azan in Islam has a great meaning. It is not the effortless ringing of the bell or the insignificant blowing of horns. It is intended to bring to the mind of every believer and disbeliever the essence of Islamic beliefs or its spiritual ideology. The call of the muezzin is inviting in a greater degree than the ringing of the cordial toned bell or the most precious and elaborates system of chimes. The focal intention behind the multiple loud messages of azan in every mosque is to make available to everyone an effortlessly intelligible summary of the Islamic faith.

No one woke me up when I was in Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Allahabad and many other cities. I woke up abruptly by the

spiritual voice of 'Azan'. It's my natural intuitive gift in the morning. 'Azan', the voice inside me that warns me and also gives me guidance. I get the inner voice even when I'm awake.

I am a firm believer that 'Azan' tends to speak to me when I am in jeopardy. Often I hear the voice in my dreams. Every time, I feel that the voice is within me as different spirit guides. 'Azan' often rings in my ears. I interpret this as a sign to pay attention and consciously tune in to my intuition. I listen sincerely to the voice of most beautiful and amazing 'Azan' while I am lying in bed. And, the voice is always the same coming from all over the places wherever I am.

I take this voice as my spiritual friend. I believe it is the spiritual guide for everyone. I can hear the voice of the amazing 'Azan' of the river flowing through. I feel the spiritual voice deeply in birds chirping in the sky. I also hear the voice of 'Azan' in the singing leaves. I hear it in the wind. Even I feel the voice in the blossoming flowers. ■

(The writer is based in New Bongaigaon, Assam)

Around the World

Massacre in Egypt A 'Shame for Islam and the Arab World'

Turkish leaders called the massacre in Egypt a "shame for Islam and the Arab world" on 16 August after the two countries recalled their ambassadors, with the Turkish envoy insisting that Egypt restore democracy. Meanwhile, hundreds of Turks marched to denounce the crackdown on supporters of ousted Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi. On 15 August, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Egyptian leaders should stand trial for the military's move against the sit-ins. Hours later, the two countries announced they were recalling their ambassadors for consultations. Turkish President Abdullah Gul voiced more criticism on 16 August. "I deeply feel the pain for every single Egyptian that was killed," Gul said, according to the state-run Anadolu Agency. "All that happened in Egypt is a shame for Islam and the Arab world." Egypt's Foreign Ministry had summoned Turkey's ambassador to Cairo, Huseyin Avni Botsali, as a result of Turkish criticisms. But Gul rejected accusations that Turkey was interfering in Egypt's internal affairs. "Turkey's warnings should be seen not as meddling in internal affairs, but as the sadness felt by a friend, the shock it experienced and as efforts to draw attention and to help," Gul said. Botsali returned to Turkey on Friday, telling reporters at Istanbul's main airport that Turkey hoped Egypt would "return as soon as possible to a civilian administration and to a democratic process."

Also Friday, funeral prayers were held in mosques in Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey for Egyptians killed in the crackdown. In the capital, Ankara, hundreds of people marched from a mosque toward the US Embassy and then on to the Egyptian Embassy to denounce the killings.

Meanwhile, on 16 August hundreds of Muslims demonstrated in Indonesia and

Malaysia against the Egyptian Army crackdown. In Jakarta, about 1,000 protesters converged on the United States Embassy after Friday prayers, reports said. They brandished placards reading "Stop Egypt Massacre," "Jihad for Egypt" and "Stop Killing" outside the mission as scores of riot police stood guard.

In the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur, about 500 Muslims protesters gathered after Friday prayers outside a major mosque in the suburbs to denounce the crackdown. Protesters held posters that read "Respect the people's choices, not the coup," and shouted in unison "Long live Morsi!" ■

Syria Chemical Attack Would Be 'Crime Against Humanity': UN Chief

The use of chemical weapons in Syria would constitute a "crime against humanity," UN chief Ban Ki-moon said on 23 August, adding there was "no time to lose" in investigating an alleged attack which the opposition says killed hundreds. Ban described reports of the incident near Damascus as "very alarming and shocking" and urged the regime to allow a United Nations inspection team, already on the ground in Syria, to begin a probe without delay. Footage distributed by activists showing unconscious children, people foaming around the mouth and doctors apparently administering oxygen to help them breathe has triggered revulsion around the world.

Ban's comments, at a United Nations event in Seoul, piled more pressure on Syrian President Bashar Assad after French president Francois Hollande denounced the "likely" use of chemical weapons. "Any use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anybody, under any circumstances, would violate international law," Ban said. "Such a crime against humanity should result in serious consequences for the perpetrator." "This is a grave challenge to the entire international community — and to our common humanity," he said. ■

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