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Limitation of Human Knowledge

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The Qur'an protests against the materialistic view of epistemology which regards human intellect as infallible and capable of encompassing all sectors or phases of reality. This concept of knowledge asserts its capacity to discern the secrets of nature as well as mysteries of the vast heavenly bodies and planetary system, lands and oceans, beings and creatures and the designs and workings of supernatural forces. It tries to plumb directly the secrets of the creation of life and unlock the mysteries of past and future. The votaries of this view of human knowledge are arrogantly proud of it although the sum total of their knowledge is no more than a speck of dust. The tragedy, however, is that this very undue arrogance, over-confidence and excessive reliance on human knowledge coupled with the contemptuous defiance and outright denial of unseen realities has been the root-cause of man's vanity and self-conceit, narrow-mindedness and fanaticism. It is, indeed, this concept of human knowledge which is responsible for belief in the primacy of matter, its indestructibility and creativeness.

It is, again, this view of human knowledge, having its roots in the aberration of human nature, which has always induced man to claim the mastership over his fellow beings and to oppress those who do not agree to this concept. All of its salient features have been brought out by the parables told in the Surat-ul-Kahf, as, for instance, its spiteful enmity with those who are blessed with a true faith and the gnosis of God, like the Companions of the Cave: its love of earthly possessions and disrespect for the poor and lowly as exhibited by the owner of two gardens: its denial of everything not adequately comprehended by the limited human intellect as illustrated by the story of Khidhr and Moses. It is not unoften that the erring knowledge of man produces an entirely false impression. Zul-Qarnain thought that the sun was setting in the spring of murky water. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

“Human beings, We created you all from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing of you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”

(Al Qur'an – 49:13)

This ayah warns mankind against the prejudices on the basis of race, colour, language, country, and nationality. These prejudices make man discard humanity and draw around himself some small circles and regard those born within those circles as his own people and those outside them as others. These circles are drawn on the basis of accidental birth and not on rational and moral grounds.

In some cases their basis is family, tribe, or race, and in some particular geographical region, or in a nation having a particular colour or speaking a particular language. Then the discrimination between one's own people and others assumes the worst forms of hatred, enmity, contempt and tyranny.

In this ayah, Allah draws our attention to three cardinal truths: (1) The origin of all of us is one and the same; (2) In spite of being one in origin it was natural that we should be divided in nations and tribes; and (3) The only basis of superiority and excellence that there is, or can be, between man and man is that of moral excellence. Thus, all men are equal, for their Creator is One, their substance of creation is one, and their way of creation is one, and they are descended from the same parents. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

“All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety (taqwa) and good action.”

(Bukhari)

Islam rejects certain individuals or nations being favoured because of their wealth, power, or race. God created human beings as equals who are to be distinguished from each other only on the basis of their faith and piety.

One of the major problems facing mankind today is social inequality. The developed world can send a man to the moon but cannot stop man from hating and fighting his fellow beings. Ever since the days of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be to him), Islam has provided a vivid example of how racism can be brought to an end. The annual pilgrimage (Hajj) to Makkah shows the real Islamic brotherhood of all races and nations, when about two million Muslims from all over the world come to Makkah to perform the pilgrimage.

In another hadith the Prophet has said: “You are all the children of Adam, and Adam was created from the dust. Let the people give up boasting of their ancestors, otherwise they will stand more degraded than a mean insect in the sight of Allah.”

In yet another hadith he said: “Allah will not enquire about your lineage on the Day of Resurrection. The most honourable in the sight of Allah is he who is most pious.” ■

Madrasas in India

The madrasa, which literally means a school for the ulema, has recently been in the news in the Indian media. There are allegations that many of these institutions have foreign funding and have become the den of activities not conducive to nation's well-being. So far no substantial evidence has been provided for any such charges. Yet, the concerted aspersions cast on their status and role in Indian society has indeed brought unnecessary bad publicity. This has no doubt caused as much concern to the community as to the government. As the state and community scrutinise madrasas, it is evident that the basis of much of the negative propaganda has been ignorance about their role in society. It is therefore imperative that we understand the historical process of the emergence of the madrasas and their objectives in India.

It is interesting that the arrival of Muslim rule in India in the 13th century did not see a sudden mushrooming of madrasas in India. In Mughal India for instance education was informal. A student who wanted a religious career would learn Persian and Arabic from the learned and pious in his family and neighborhood. Both the Quran and Hadis knowledge (manqulat) and the rational sciences (ma'qulat) he acquired in this informal way. It is to be noted that the emphasis even in a religious career was always on rational sciences as well. In fact the Mughal ulema were famous for this branch of knowledge. Mughal Delhi was regarded as an important centre for ma'qulat. It was thus not surprising that religious career did not cripple a student in the material world. Indeed those who completed scholarly training sought out official positions or grants and endowments offered by kings and aristocrats.

The tradition of combining religious and secular learning continued after the collapse of the Mughal Empire. Its best examples can be traced in Awadh (part of modern day Uttar Pradesh). Here, the Firangi Mahall madrasa combined effectively the ma'qulat and manqulat instructions. The Shiah Nawab of Lucknow patronised the madrasa precisely because it did not produce merely Sunni ulema but also offered training for bureaucrats. Preparing qazis and Muftis, the legal officials required by the court, was the speciality of Farangi Mahall. Indeed this madrasah systematised the informal curriculum followed for training ulema in Mughal India. The syllabus was called Dars-e- Nazamiya. The name was taken after Mulla Nizamuddin who was the son of the madrasah's founding member Mulla Qutbuddin. This syllabus that combines religious and secular learning has dominated religious teaching in south Asia to the present. In other words it means that the madrasas that follow this syllabus lay stress on both religious and rational sciences learning. It is therefore not surprising that the madrasas that were set up under British rule also adopted this syllabus. For instance, the Madrasa-i-Aliyah in Calcutta established under British patronage in 1780, had the Dars-e-Nizamiya as its curriculum.

After the 1857 revolt as the British state clamped down heavily on all sections of Indian society, the focus of activity for the Ulema shifted away from the big cities like Delhi and Lucknow and localised in qasbahs. It was in the qasbahs of Awadh that many new Madrasas sprung up in the late 19th century. Some of these followed the traditions of Muslim

learning set-up in the big cities and others followed more revivalist or reformist agendas. These centres were clearly responding to the challenges posed by the British government to both the community and the nation. It is here that one can see the emergence of Deoband madrasa in 1867. Maulana Rashid Ahmad, Maulana Muhammad Qasim and others set up this madrasa and used it as the base of their activity to take up the formidable challenge the British posed to the nation. They modelled their institution on patterns of the British educational institutions with which they were familiar. The goal of the madrasa was to train well educated ulema that would be dedicated to reformed Islam. Such Ulema would have many roles: prayer leaders, writers, preachers and teachers. The medium of instruction was Urdu. In its teaching style and open minded approach to learning it was broadly very much on the lines of the westernised Aligarh college and the Delhi college. Thus the madrasa had a popular appeal because it was in tune with the times. And this appeal and use of modern instrumentation was used to pursue the goal of training Muslims in religious classics so as to spread Islamic norms and beliefs that would connect them to the changed times.

These madrasas have produced eminent writers, historians and social reformers who have brought glory to the nation. Syed Sulaiman Nadwi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, Maulana Abdul Hai Hasani and Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi are some of these Madrasa products who have made a place for themselves in their respective fields.

The greatest achievement of these establishments is that they help poor and backward class of students to study and mould themselves as an asset to the society. Many a students of Madrasas later joined Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru and others in getting India liberated.

This brief trajectory of madrasa education in India reveals their very positive and outward looking attitude. It is quite clear that through history madrasas have endeavoured to make Muslims understand better the changed times through rigorous learning and accept the challenges of western modernity. Indeed it is in this role of negotiating western modernity that the madrasa could never remain isolated from the nationalist leadership of the country that had similar agendas. Thus they have been a critical bridgehead between state and society. This critical role of mediation is something that they should ideally continue to play in independent modern India as well. Most of them are already sensitive to this responsibility. It is in recognition of this responsibility that the government of India funds a wide range of madrasas every year. We hope, that they continue their constructive role in society and provide no reason for a misplaced campaign against them. ■

S.A.

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Prayer Of Tariq

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

When the young and stout-hearted Muslim General, Tariq bin Ziad, landed with his Arab soldiers on the coast of Spain he ordered the vessels in which they had crossed the Mediterranean to be burnt so that there remained no possibility of a retreat. After the command had been carried out he addressed his troops in these memorable words, "There is now no escape. The sea is behind you and the enemy is in front. By God ! You have nothing to depend upon except your own courage and fortitude." The enthusiasm of the soldiers knew no bounds as they heard the rousing ovation and their trust in God and in the strength of their own arms became complete.

Tariq realised, after he had drawn his troops for battle, that the Spaniards were far superior to them in numbers and equipment and being cut-off from home by hundreds of miles he could, also, not hope for reinforcements. His only hope lay in capturing the arms of the enemy otherwise the prospects were very dark. Tariq was worried and, in the desperateness of his situation, he could think of no other recourse than to seek Divine help by building up the spiritual stamina of his men. He placed his reliance on the help of God and took it

for granted that it was with him for he was sure of the justice of his cause. He knew in his heart that his army was the 'party of Allah' which had not embarked upon the expedition for conquest or worldly glory but solely for the victory of His Word and the defence and advocacy of His Faith. They had come out with their 'heads on their palms' to lead mankind from darkness to light and to deliver it from the over lordship of fellow-men to the over lordship of Allah, the Supreme Being, from the narrow confines of this world to the boundlessness of the Hereafter and from the tyranny and oppression of other religions to the fairness and justice of Islam ; and had the Lord of Lords, the Creator of all things, not promised victory to His bondmen who took up arms in the fulfilment of the sublime mission? And that Our host, they verily would be the victors.

The Arab General, at that fateful hour, turned meekly to God and beseeched Him earnestly for help. He was following the example of the sacred Prophet who had led the first Muslim army and, after marshalling his troops on the battle- field of Badr, withdrawn to a quiet corner, placed his forehead on the ground and cried out for Divine help. "O God!" he had said. "If these men are

killed today Thou shalt not be worshipped in the world.”

Thus, Tariq, following in the steps of his leader and master made a prayer which military commanders seldom make. They just never think of it. Iqbal has heightened the beauty of it by adorning it with the robe of poetry. His poem, Tariq ki Du‘a (The Prayer of Tariq), reads: “O Lord These bondsmen have set out in Thy path for jihad. They are the seekers of Thy Good Pleasure. They are mysterious as well as the keepers of mystery. Their true state and position is known only to Thee. Thou hast taught them high-mindedness and, now, they will not settle for less than world-leadership and Divine rule. These proud men listen or yield to no one save Thee. Deserts and rivers carry out their biddings and mountains turn into heaps of dust out of fear and respect for them. Thou hast made them indifferent to, the riches of the worlds by instilling Thy love into their hearts. But for the love of Jihad and the joy of martyrdom the kingdom of the earth holds no attraction for them. This is the magic of love. It is the ruling passion that has brought them to this remote land. It is the last wish and the greatest desire of a Muslim.

“The world is hovering on the verge of ruin. Only the Arabs, by laying down their lives, can save it from falling into the abyss of destruction. Everyone is thirsting for Arab blood and this

sacred blood alone can remove the malady. Forests and gardens, tulips and roses are pining for it to colour their cheeks. We have come to this strange country to irrigate it with our life-blood so that the withered crop of humanity may flourish again and springtime may return after the agonizing spell of autumn.”

The Ghazis, these mysterious bondsmen of Thine,

To whom Thou hast granted zest for Divinity.

Deserts and oceans fold up at their kick,

And mountains shrink into mustard seeds.

Indifferent to the riches of the world it makes,

What a curious thing is the joy of love?

Martyrdom is the desired end of the Momin,

Not spoils of war, kingdom and rule!

For long has tulip in the garden been waiting,

It needs a robe dipped in Arab blood.

“O Lord ! Thou hast Thy unique favours on these desert-dwellers and herders of camels. Thou vouchsafed them a new knowledge, a new faith and

a new way of life. Thou gave them the wealth of Azan which is the standing call of Tawheed, arousing men from the slumber of ignorance. By means of it the Arabs put an end to the death-like stupor that had descended upon the world and gave it the glad tidings of a new dayspring. Life had lost its warmth and movement and centuries had passed over it in that state. It regained its momentum, started again on its journey and attained the destination of faith and love. The crusaders do not regard death to be the end of life but the threshold of a new existence.

“O God! Grant them the dignity of faith and enmity for Thy own sake (as was revealed in the prayer of Noah: My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers in the land) so that this army may become a relentless sword and a fearful thunder bolt for heathenism and corruption and produce fear for it in the heart of the enemy.”

Thou made the desert-dwellers absolutely unique,

In thought, in perception, in the morning Azan;

What, for centuries, life had been seeking,

It found the warmth in the hears of these men;

Death is the opener of the heart's door,

It's not the journey's end in their sight.

Revive, once again, in the heart of the Momin,

The lightning that was in the prayer of Leave Not.

Wake up ambition in the breasts, O Lord;

Transform the glance of the Momin into a sword.

The prayer of the death-defying soldier was granted and the Arabs gained a magnificent victory. The Christian Spain became Islamic Andalusia and a strong Muslim kingdom was established that lasted for eight hundred years. Its downfall came only when the spirit of Tariq and his valiant companions had died out among the Moors and the high purpose that had brought them there was forgotten. The extinction of religious fervour and free-living and internecine strife not only led to the termination of Muslim rule in Spain but also imperiled the very existence of the followers of Islam in that country till not one of them was left. Such has been the way of God with those that are negligent and ungrateful since the beginning of time.

Thou wilt not find for Our method aught of powers to change. ■

Since '47, This Family has won I-Day Medal Every 25 Yrs.

- Arvind Chauhan

Lucknow: With generation after generation donning the uniform, this Lucknow family has been writing a unique script of receiving medals at every 25th year since India's independence.

The first from the family to don the uniform was Nadir Ali Khan Durrani, who joined the British-India police force as an inspector in 1914 and retired in 1948. He was the recipient of the King's Police Medal in 1929 and Indian Police Medal in 1947, both for gallantry. In 1948, he received the Indian police independence medal.

After him, his son Group Captain Shahid Ali Khan Durrani, who was commissioned into the Indian Air Force in 1958, received a medal on the 25th Independence Day in 1972. Shahid(87) a Vishisht Sewa Medal awardee as also the Asiad Vishisht Jyoti from the President of India for exemplary organisation of the Ninth Asian Games in New Delhi, was also the manager of the Indian cricket team to Australia and New Zealand in 1980-81. He retired in 1985. After Shahid, his son Lieutenant Colonel Shahzad Salim Durrani (55) got commissioned into the Rajputana Rifles regiment in 1987 and received a medal on the 50th Independence Day in 1997. He boasts of four commendations for gallantry — one from the COAS and three from the General Officer Commanding in Chief. Now Shahzad's 25-year-old son, Lieutenant Shahnawaz Ali Khan Durrani, who got commissioned last year in November in the Rajputana Rifles, from the Officers Training Academy, Chennai, received medal on the 75th Independence Day.

He is the ninth family member and fourth generation stepping forward to carry forward the family tradition and legacy of service to the nation.

The other members of the family who have received Independence Day medals are Shahzad's cousin Brigadier Rehan Durrani and Colonel Yasar Khan who received medals in 1997 and 2022, respectively.

Lt Col Shahzad Salim Durrani, said: "Every youth of the country should join the armed forces. There is no service better than this. ■

(The Times of India 17-08-2022)

System of Education For Muslims In India

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi*

Mankind has the status of Allah's deputy on earth and is thus charged and with the responsibility of walking in all commandments and justification and to establish a system of leading life strictly in accordance with the directives of his Creator, for with purpose proper education and guidance is the basic requirement. In fact, since the very genesis, learning was ordained as a must. Word of Allah in the Holy Book is eloquent: "And Adam was taught about the nomenclature of all the exists," an emphasis on the superiority of humankind over the Angels, by virtue of learning and knowledge. It has also been made clear that there is a well defined mode of life prescribed for the man, whatever is the span of his sojourn of earth, which is not to be whiled away in pleasantries. Development of mental faculties and character traits of a person are initially molded by the environment in which one is nurtured since the very inception. An infant brought up in a jungle with animals as the only companions, would imbibe all habits and demeanor of animals, deprived as it would be of any sort of planned education or guidance or even human example. Such cases are on record, not only in ancient history but quite recent ones.

As already mentioned, in the

* Rector, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.

development of a person, the first influence is of environment, not only domestic but also contiguous surroundings. It is a matter of common observation that a person by virtue of innate human faculty, without any formal education, is well versed in the language of his clan and also develops similar habits and behavior. Next influence is of the system of schooling, leading to canalization of natural talents and attainment of higher capabilities, which would not be possible by unguided observation and imitating examples.

However, the quality of environment, parental guidance character and habits of elders are the basic imputes for the nascent brains, in the absence of which no orchestrated system of education would really be on value.

All nations entitled to the sobriquet of 'developed' have a clear concept and have a well developed and organized system of education, treating an uneducated person as utter liability and parasite to the society. So much so that parents in Europe, neglecting this aspect are liable to face prosecution. Someone has narrated a case of a person convicted of a heinous crime. Facing execution, who desired to see his mother as a last wish, apparently in

filial affection. As the mother came close, the son bit off her ear in disgust, affirming that it was she who neglected his education through overindulgence, which launched him on the path of crime.

Though it may be a fable, the moral is good enough for hammering in the pertinent point.

Muslims, on the contrary, fell from their exalted position by and large, upon relegating the need for character building and education to the lowest slot in the list of priorities.

The constitution of our country, through a secular system guarantees not-interference in religious matters and also the freedom to each community for arranging education to their masses in line with their own faith and philosophy. The institution run under state control do impart education free of any religious hue, in principle at least. Yet there is a sinister design at foisting the tenets of one religion over all others. Considering government managed institutions inadequate for this purpose, schools have proliferated with syllabi laced in Hindu mythology. Economic help is provided to lure students in larger number, who are brain-washed methodically, to transform their faith and concepts. History holds enough testimony to the fact that by lack of proper guidance and teaching, the next or may be the one after, generation would undergo a sea change, becoming

oblivious to Islamic faith and character. A case in point is that of the area which was once Turkestan, where perennial absence of preachers has rendered people almost totally ignorant of Islamic beliefs and principles.

Whatever adherence and devotion to Islamic principles and mode of life persists in our country is the outcome of efforts and attention of our progenitors, whose life was spent in preaching as well as setting personal example. Educational institutions, large and small, aided by congregational discourses have been instrumental in sustaining at least some semblance of true religion, despite disruptive tendencies. If the present generation do not carry on the mission in word and deed, the future, to say the least, may be bleak. In some areas, groups of Muslims, entirely confused and ignorant of tenets, already exist. It is none of their faults but of those preachers and men of knowledge who failed to reach into those pockets. Instances of people mixing idolatry with Islamic practices, adopting non-Muslim names and devoid of even basics of religion, abound.

The task of passing on the correct message and its implications for perpetuating the true spirit is specially daunting in our country. Mere wishing and hoping for the best would be a mere dream. The style of teaching and syllabi adopted by a majority of the institutions aim at weaning away the pupils from

Islamic faith and culture, while the rest are, at best, in different to this aspect. It is high time that Muslims take a cue from the Jews of America, have a firm grip over economy and administrative machinery, the main reason their highly organized system of education.

Maulana Ali Mian (RAH) would often quote an example from Hazrat Yaqub, who on his death bed summoned all his sons and inquired as to whom they would worship after his departure. This is a loaded query, coming as it does from a holy prophet, addressed to a group descended from three generations of prophets, as it emphasizes the intensity of adherence to Unity of God and that prophet Yaqub

would ensure adherence to it before going into eternal resting place. In Hazrat Maulana's opinion, the faith should be so ingrained that a person, even in his dream seeing someone trying to sway him, would wake up in awe and offer apology to Almighty.

To sum up, the need of the hour is to arrange and organize and propagate proper education and training for the future generations, from grass root-level upwards, for which establishment of madrasas is the main requirement as these form the nursery for inculcating the true beliefs and act as a solid foundation. The reward is with the Almighty, ours is to act. ■

**“And be not infirm, and grieve not,
you have the upper hand if you are
believers.”**

(Al-Qur'an 3:139)

**“O ye who believe! Endure outdo all
others in endurance, be ready and
observe your duty to Allah, in order that ye
may succeed”.**

(Al-Qur'an 3:200)

The 'I' In India

Reform the institutions and therefore empower individuals, the country will be in a different league

If your eye is on India - the nation is 75 today, such occasions provoke looking back and looking ahead - focus on the 'I' in India. 'I' for the individual. 'I' for institutions. Independent India gave every individual the right to vote, and created one institution with a narrow remit, the Election Commission, for this purpose — and democracy took deep, and possibly permanent, roots. Independent India denied most individuals the right to conduct their economic affairs freely, and created many institutions with expanding remits — and socialism and its attendant economic perversions also took deep roots, which are frustratingly difficult to remove. That the world's largest democracy and the world's fastest growing major economy is merely a lower-middle-income country on its 75th birthday is because in economics, India went wrong with the 'I'. Reforms partly corrected this colossal mistake, and, for millions of Indians, the results have been life changing. The old economy saw an entrepreneurial transformation. The new economy is very possibly creating an entrepreneurial revolution. Extreme poverty, once the world's idea of India, has vanished. The middle class, once vanishingly small, has vastly expanded.

But in their economic life individuals are still fettered by numerous badly run institutions. To take the biggest of many examples: an under-staffed judiciary has become an economic growth constraint thanks to sweeping, economically irrational rulings; an under-staffed but barely accountable bureaucracy still rules over an empire of 'permissions' and 'clearances'; and the political system is fundamentally incapable of correcting the first two wrongs because politics is becoming ever-more focused on collectives, not individuals. When votes are sought by invoking communities, castes, linguistic groups, whether via rhetoric or rewards, neither individuals nor institutions need be priority areas. Pundits, whether in academia or the media, have become habituated to assessing political astuteness by a political party's ability to attract electoral loyalties of communities who never voted for them. That's why even in a brutally competitive electoral system, politicians get away by spending too little to provide quality education and healthcare to individuals. That's why the stark and increasingly disturbing fact of too few regular, non-farm jobs is not a front-and-centre issue in elections. ■

(Editorial, The Times of India 15-08-2022)

A Few Words With Students

- S. Bilal Abdul Hai Hasani Nadwi*

The education system of religious institutions differ from other institutions. Madaris are not only to accord certificates and degrees. It has not ever been their main aim. It is unfortunate that today students have deemed Madaris as like those of government colleges and universities. They enroll in Madaris with a view that they may get certificates and earn worldly benefits. That is why today no fruitful results are visible from Madaris.

The road to Madrasa is not so easy. It demands struggle and sacrifice. Basically, the main plank of Madaris is to achieve the pleasure of Allah. A Madrasa student gives rather than he takes. Well-known Islamic scholar Maulana S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi described Madaris as the forts of Islam and the Power House of knowledge from where the entire nation learns the mode of living and the system of education. It is time students must inculcate in their minds that seeking knowledge in Madaris is not the task of left hand. They will have to gird up their loins to achieve it cutting of all unnecessary activities. If any student's intention is something else after taking admission in Madrasa, it would be better for him to change his decision

forthwith.

It is very regretted that students passed a long period in Madrasas and are oblivious from their sole aims. They have no particular target of life and sometime their intention itself is bad. If asked even those students who have immense religious passion and spirit, they will also say that their main purpose is to serve the religion. While service to religion is not main objective but the sole aim is to achieve pleasure of Allah. For which all endeavors and sacrifices are laid. The service to religion is the source to attain the pleasure of Allah. But they regard the source as the main destination.

Generally speaking, students don't determine the destination of their life during schooling. So, they seem very confused and miserable after passing out from Madaris. When they go to impart education in a Madrasa and get meager salary and don't support themselves financially and leave the same saying that after earning more wealth they will serve the religion well but generally it doesn't happen.

It is a well-known saying that who goes to catch blanket, the blanket itself catches him. It is said that two friends were walking and observing natural scenes on a river bank. Meanwhile, they

* *Nazir-e-Aam, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow*

saw a blanket floating on the river. One said, "Stop here I bring the blanket". Accordingly, he dived into the river and reached the blanket and stuck to it. When his friend called him. There was no answer. The blanket caught hold of him. Hence, which he thought as blanket, it was not the blanket but the same was bear which held him down.

Aimlessness, indecision, procrastination and lack of proper upbringing are big stumbling blocks in one's career. Students must take into account their resources as well as aptitude while taking the crucial decision about their career. Their ambitions and desires should also match their abilities and aptitudes.

It is generally said that those who

attach to the religious institutions, their lives are full of various difficulties and they can not attain real peace of life. But the fact is that if they may strive with true religious spirit, honesty and integrity, after passing short difficulties, easiness and a host of opportunities will become their destiny and abundant bounties begin to shower on them. It is true that if anyone has true passion Allah helps him in many ways. Allah doesn't put His slaves in difficulties and afflictions beyond their strengths. And about whom it is heard that Allah put them in severe trials and troubles and they suffered a lot in their lives. Indeed they reached their highest position of faith (Iman). Obviously, we don't have the same. ■

(English Rendering: O.R. Nadwi)

The Essence of the Surat-ul-Kahf

'There is no strength save in Allah' carries the essence of the Surat-ul-Kahf ... The Prophet of Islam and every believer reciting the Qur'an has been called upon to place implicit reliance in God in every affair instead of relying on his own resources. Every intention and hope for the morrow has thus to be made dependent on the will and pleasure of God.

"And say not of anything: Lo! I shall do that tomorrow, Except Allah will. And remember thy Lord when thou forgettest, and say: It may be that my Lord guideth unto a nearer way of truth than this."

(Al-Kahf: 24-25) One would verily not bow in submission before the outward material causes, nor rely on those who appear to possess the means nor even on his own whims, desires and caprices if he ascribes every favour to the beneficence of the Merciful Lord. Except if Allah wills or whatsoever Allah may will might appear to be two commonplace traditional phrases often repeated mechanically by force of habit, but these are really very significant, pithy and meaningful expressions which cut at the very root of blind faith in one's own capacity or material resources. ■

The Passing Away of Maulana Mahmud Hasan Hasani Nadwi

- Mohammad Aslam Siddiqui*

Maulana Mahmud Hasan Hasani Nadwi, prominent Islamic scholar and maternal grandson of Maulana Sani Hasani elder brother of Maulana S.M.Rabey Hasani Nadwi, Rector Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow and President All India Muslim Personal Law Board passed away on August 12, 2022 after a prolonged illness in Lucknow. He was 52. His sudden demise saddened all. He was a multi-faceted personality, a friend to many, an excellent legal mind, an accomplished Journalist, and a noted writer. He was a man of angelic qualities and a paragon of morality. He met everyone cheerfully. He always kept himself busy in academic and Dawah activities. Truly speaking, he was a kindhearted, self-conscious, righteous, generous, God-fearing and pious man. Decidedly, his demise is a great loss to Nadwatul Ulama and a personal loss to Hasani family. Scion of an illustrious Syed family which produced a galaxy of Islamic scholars and spiritual preceptors and played significant role in the field of education and reformation.

He was born on July 22, 1971 at Takiya Kalan, Raibareli, U.P. (India). He had his elementary education at home

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and got higher education at Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama where he did Alimiat and Fazilat in 1990 and 1992 respectively. He also did one year Diploma Course of Al-Mahadul Al-Aali Liddawati wal Fikril Islami. After completing his education at Nadwa, he served as teacher for several years in Madrasa Ziaul Uloom, Raebareli. Later on he associated with Maulana S.M.Rabey Hasani Nadwi and helped in his literary work and enjoyed full confidence and trust. Besides, he taught how to write "Urdu Essays" at the Department of Journalism and Languages, Nadwatul Ulama for about seven years. He also served as Assistant Editor of Fortnightly Tameer-e-Hayat (An Urdu wing of Nadwatul Ulama) for more than one decade. He carved a niche in the arena of journalism. Because of profound and deep knowledge of Urdu language and History, he candidly shed light on every subject at length. The most striking aspect of his life is that he valued every moment of his life. That is why despite all preoccupations and responsibilities he spared time for writing and authored several books within a short span of time. His academic work is multisided. Some of his major publications are as follows. (1) Hayat-e-Shah Abrarul Haque, (2) Tazkirah Maulana

Muhammad Yunus Jaunpuri, (3)Tareek-e- Islah- o-Tarbiyat, (4)Farishta Sifat Insan Sawaneh Falsafi-e-Islam Maulana Abdul Bari, (5) Tazkirah Maulana Zubair Hasan, (6) Sawaneh Maulana Syed Abdullah Hasani Nadwi, (7)Tazkirah Maulana Abdul Bari Nadwi Bhatkali, (8)Mizab-e-Rahmat (An Anthology of poems of Maulana Sani Hasani), (9)Bi Ayesha, (10)Hadiya-e- Durood- o-Salam and the like.

It is significant to note that apart from four great personalities of Nadwatul Ulama like Maulana S.Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Maulana S.M.Rabey Hasani Nadwi, Maulana S.M.Wazeh Rasheed Hasani Nadwi and Maulana Hamza Hasani Nadwi, he also remained in touch with the noted scholars of Deoband and benefitted from them. He also gained benefits from renowned scholars of the Islamic world like Allama Yusuf Qardhavi, Shaikh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghudda, Shaikh

Mohammad Awwama and various prominent scholars of Saudi Arabia.

On his death various condolence meetings were held in which glowing tributes were paid to him. Besides, a host of persons sent condolence messages to Maulana S.M.Rabey Hasani Nadwi expressing their grief to him.

He is survived only by a daughter and wife. His funeral prayer was led twice. Maulana Dr.Saeedur Rahman Azami Nadwi led his funeral prayer at the premises of Nadwatul Ulama and Maulana S.M.Rabey Hasani Nadwi at Takiya, Raebareli and buried in his ancestral graveyard there. Thousands of his admirers from various parts of the state thronged to attend the last rites of the late Maulana. May Allah forgive his shortcomings and lapses and grant him an elevated position in Jannat al Firdaus! Aameen! ■

“Thy duty is only to convey the message”.

(Al-Qur’an, 42-48)

**“As for those who believe and work
righteous deeds, they will have
(for their entertainment) the Gardens of Paradise”.**

(Al-Qur’an, 18:107)

“Propagate my teachings even if you know only one verse”.

(Hadith)

The Role of Muslim Women in Indian Freedom Movement

- Mohammed Raziul Islam Nadwi

History records past developments and talks about personalities and characters related thereto. It tells us how the developments took place and what role the various personalities and organisations played therein. It is therefore necessary that historiography be factual and not manipulated. But unfortunately for quite some time history is being rewritten brazenly in our country. The developments that are well acknowledged are being changed, and the personalities and organisations whose contributions are well-known are being erased, and those having played no considerable role are being highlighted. This is the general scenario; however, the national history of the last two hundred years is in danger nowadays.

The English came in India as merchants, established East India Company and promoted their business at the hilt; but gradually their political interest and influence went on an increase. On one hand the Mughal administration started weakening while on the other the East India Company took roots in the Indian soil. In the middle of the 19th century the Delhi and Awadh governments were uprooted; this created a revolution against the English. Although some historians dubbed it as

'revolt', in reality it was the first war of independence, which all sections of the country had fought together against the English usurpers.

The followers of all religions, especially Hindus and Muslims, participated therein; nevertheless, if seen justifiably, the role of Muslims in this struggle for freedom was the most important and their sacrifice unparalleled. This was all but natural 'cause the Muslims had been deprived of governance due to the British power and dominance. Therefore, they were bubbling with the emotions of rage and restiveness; and the English too took them as their enemy number one.

Therefore, when the English were out for revenge, they targeted the Muslims most, massacred them, sent them on the gallows, usurped and looted their properties, left no stone unturned in torturing them. But how strange it is that efforts are being made to depreciate this bright history of Muslims for quite some time. The great Muslim personages who had sacrificed their all and even laid down their lives are being forgotten, so much so that textbook chapters on them are being dropped. Contrary to it, the personalities who had not played any considerable role in the struggle for freedom or had been the yes-men of the English, are being

highlighted in an unprecedented manner.

The Ulama played the most important role in the freedom struggle; they not only provided proper guidance for the Muslim Ummah at such a delicate time but also actively fought against the English and even laid down their lives. The English had no sooner established their rule in the country than they started arresting Ulama on a large scale and sent thousands of them on the gallows. Muslim traders and deep pockets opened their treasure chests to help the freedom fighters wholeheartedly. Highly educated Muslims having sidelined their lucrative posts and mundane charms rendered their services to the freedom struggle. Muslim women on one hand fought in the battlefields and on the other extended moral and meaningful cooperation to their husbands, brothers and sons so that they could struggle with utmost concentration. In the prevailing scenario when the contributions of Muslims are being negated and efforts are on to side-line them, there is need to adopt various ways to highlight their contributions.

Very little has been written on the role of Muslim women in the Indian freedom movement. The books available on Muslim freedom fighters generally mention men; they mention the role of Muslim women on a very surface level. However, there are a few articles published in magazines and journals which highlight the role of Muslim

women freedom fighters. The book which deserves mention in particular here is Hindustan ki Jang-i-Azadi mien Muslim Khawateen ka Hissa (The Role of Muslim Women in Indian Freedom Struggle) by Dr. Abida Samiuddin, Reader Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh. This book chronicles 37 Muslim women who participated in the 1857 War for Independence, Non-Cooperation Movement, Khilafat Movement and later national struggle for freedom. This is of course a very small number. There are thousands of Muslim women who played an active role in the freedom struggle.

Chronologically, the freedom movement of India can be divided in two periods – one, 1857 and later period, when the revolt was raging in the various places and armed struggle against the English was going on; and two, the period when the grip of the English had taken roots in the Indian soil and different movements were running to liberate the country from the English. In both the periods Muslim women were struggling along with other freedom fighters.

Addressing Indian women, Asrarul Haq Majaz (1911-1955) said: *Tire mâthe pe ye añchal bahut hî khuub hai lekin / tû is añchal se ik parcham banâ letî to achchhâ thâ* (How nice this scarf looks on your head, but/ it would be better if you make a flag out of it). Muslim women not only made flags out of their scarfs as and when needed but also fought with guns and swords in their

hands, rode horses, and proved their worth by fighting against the enemies in battlefields.

In the 1857 and later period, many Muslim women participated in the war. They donned men's clothes to participate in sword fighting, killed many enemies and were killed, many were arrested and hanged or burnt alive. On many occasions they displayed greater bravery than that of men fighters. There were many women who were widowed, whose children were killed, houses burnt, properties looted – but they never looked back and remained steadfast in the war against the enemies.

On one occasion, Col. Hudson said: "When the women of the country are so venturesome and patriotic, the British rule here will depend only on the treachery of few traitors craving for some wealth or jagir."

When there was complete chaos in Delhi, a woman named Nazneen belonging to a well-to-do family of the city joined the fighters' army and was deputed as guard of the city-wall. She was well-versed in gun pointing and sword wielding. While guarding the city-wall, she was shot at and martyred.

An unnamed woman wearing green burqua, carrying sword and gun, and riding a horse used to exhort the fighters to attack the British forces, and also fought herself. She used to appear on a horse and after the attack would disappear. One day she fell off the horse

and was captured. She was sent to a prison in Ambala in July 1857 and now it is unknown as to what happened to her.

Asghari Begum (b. 1811) of Thana Bhawan, who was mother of Qazi Abdur Rahim, the revolutionary leader), fought against the British forces. She was captured and burnt alive.

Habiba Begum (b. 1833) of Muzaffarnagar was captured while fighting; the British forces sent her and her sister on the gallows.

Two hundred fifty-five women of Muzaffarnagar were shot dead; 11 women, including Raheemi Khatoon, were hanged till death.

Haji Begum (d. 1859) of Sasaram was well versed in horse riding. She along with other fighters fought valiantly against the British forces.

In the saga of the war against the Britishers there is the mention of a courtesan named Farhat Jahan. Charged with a sense of patriotism, she covered her face, kissed the sword and rode into the battle. At last, she fell victim to the shot of Gen. Hudson.

There was another courtesan, Azizun Nisa (or Azizun Bai) of Kanpur. When the fire of revolt against the Britishers reached Kanpur, she threw her anklet and took up the sword. She prepared an army of women; these women having disguised in men's clothes and with swords in hands went out to help the fighters; Azizun, riding the

horse, would be leading this army. They would move along the streets and lanes and cantonments, carry provisions for the fighters, and spurred the fighters on to fight. At last, she was captured. When a list of revolutionaries was prepared, the name of Azizun was at its top. Gen. Havelock tried to make her confess so that she might be released, but she replied: "I would prefer to die to seeking forgiveness." At last, she was shot dead.

In the 1857 War of Independence, Begum Hazrat Mahal (Muhammadi Khanum, 1820 - 7 April 1879), the harem Begum of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Lucknow, is the most famous Muslim woman fighter. She had exemplary leadership talent. She put strong resistance against the British forces and continued doing so for a long time. When, after the revolt in Meerut, the flames of revolution reached Lucknow, she displayed her exceptional talents. The British authorities sent Nawab Wajid Ali Shah to Calcutta (now Kolkata) but Begum Hazrat Mahal stayed put in Lucknow. She gathered a large number of fighters in North India. Among them was Maulana Fazl Haq Khairabadi, who along with his comrades, after the exile of Bahadur Shah, had joined the army of Begum Hazrat Mahal.

Unlike Delhi which the Britishers had captured quite easily, Lucknow proved to be tough for them. Begum Hazrat Mahal fought them there quite valiantly. Donning men's clothes, turban

on the head and sword in the hand, riding a horse, she, like a ferocious lioness, would attack the British forces and disrupted them, row after row. Seeing her intrepidity and valiance, W.H. Russell, in his book *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, writes:

"This Begam exhibits great energy and ability.... The Begum declares undying war against us. It appears, from the energetic character of these Ranis and Begums, that the zenanas and harems a considerable amount of actual mental power and, at all events, become able intriguantes. Their contests for ascendancy over the minds of the men give vigour and acuteness to their intellect."

J.C. Marshman, in his book *The History of India*, writes: "The resistance the revolutionaries put in Lucknow was so strong that the British forces had never encountered, so much so that such resistance was not put even in Delhi. The presence of Begum Awadh goaded the revolutionaries greatly. Very extraordinary, alert and active woman."

It is an important historical incident that no sooner Major William Stephen Raikes Hodson (1821-1858), who was head of the Intelligence Wing of the British army and who had killed three princes of last Mughal king Bahadur Shah Zafar, had reached Lucknow than Begum Hazrat Mahal, with her astute war strategy, got him arrested and hanged. (to be concluded) ■

Saffron Search For Muslim Vote

- Hilal Ahmed

The assertion that Pasmada Muslims, the most deprived sections of Muslim society, want honour (samman) not affection (sneh) shows that BJP's enthusiastic attempt to attract Pasmada Muslims into the Hindutva framework is not a simple and uncomplicated question of political strategy.

In a recent meeting organised by All Indian Memon Conference in Mumbai, a few leading Pasmada leaders, including former MP Ali Anwar Ansari, made it clear that BJP should have to recognise the specific concerns of Pasmada Muslims for any meaningful discussion on their backwardness and marginalisation.

It is worth noting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a very important observation about the Pasmada Muslims during BJP's recent national executive meeting in Hyderabad. According to media reports, Modi urged the party workers to reach out to Pasmada Muslim communities to strengthen and expand the party's support base.

Two questions are relevant here: are the factors that compel BJP to redefine its political attitude towards Pasmada Muslim communities? And, what are the specific issues and concerns of Pasmada Muslims, which, in a way, make BJP politically uncomfortable?

Electoral logic of the charitable state: There are at least two important considerations that BJP cannot ignore. First, BJP's politics of affirmative action has

evolved into what I call the charitable state. Modi government represents a state that is not committed to offer welfare services as any kind of political duty. Instead, it recognises citizens as labharthis or beneficiaries and bargains with them in the realm of competitive electoral politics.

Pasmada Muslims constitute a very specific category of labharthis. They are socially backward, culturally subjugated and economically marginalised. It is much easier for BJP to reach out to these Pasmada labharthis, especially in northern states. BJP has tried this strategy in the recent UP assembly election.

Danish Azad Ansari, the only Muslim minister in the Yogi Adityanath cabinet in UP, has also made this point to explain BJP's Pasmada policy. He has said: "Pasmadas making for a big proportion of schemes like scholarship schemes, Awas Yojana, PMJVKY, there is a growing trust for PM Modi and CM Yogi and the recent by-poll wins in Azamgarh and Rampur validate this."

Ideology of Indigenoussness:

Second, there is an ideological consideration as well. Hindutva politics recognises two categories of Indian Muslims:

- Foreign Muslims, who came from outside the subcontinent and established powerful Islamic empires;
- Converted Muslims, the indigenous Hindus, who were forced to embrace Islam.

This classification, interestingly, is

often ignored by the Hindutva elite, especially when all Muslims are asked to prove their patriotism. In recent years, Hindutva politics has tried to address this ideological inconsistency.

Mohan Bhagwat's three lectures on Hindutva in 2018 and his conclusive statement that "DNA of all Indians is the same, irrespective of religion" underline that Hindutva politics is keen to accommodate Muslims, especially the most backward Muslims, into its 'one nation one people' schema. That may be the reason why the rather polemical and provocative Ghar Wapsi project, which aimed to reconvert Muslims into Hinduism, was abandoned.

Is it possible for BJP to smoothly address the concerns and anxieties of Pasmanda communities, especially knowing the fact that it has not yet received expected electoral support from those groups?

Ali Anwar Ansari's triple problematisation:

The founder of All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, Ali Anwar Ansari's open letter to the PM is very relevant here. Ansari, who has coined the word 'Pasmanda' to describe the caste-based exploitation and social stratification among Muslims, offers us a constructively critical evaluation of BJP's attitude towards Pasmanda groups. He makes three crucial points.

- It is demanded that a nationwide caste census must be conducted in order to ascertain the socio-economic status of Pasmanda communities. Ansari, it is worth noting, played a significant role in mobilising all parties in Bihar, including BJP, to ask for a proper caste

census. The reiteration of this demand poses a challenge to BJP's rigid stand on this question.

- He problematises the communal nature of the Scheduled Caste category Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians, legally speaking, are not entitled to get SC reservation. Ansari argues that the SC category needs to be completely secularised to include all Dalit communities; and at the same time, there should be an increase in the SC quota to avoid possible internal contestation amongst deprived groups.
- Inadequacy of the contemporary affirmative action policy framework is also interrogated. Ansari highlights the fact that privatisation of the economy has affected the Pasmanda artisan communities in a significant way. In such a scenario, he asks the PM, "Will you implement the quota system in private sector? If not, then how and why should Pasmandas trust aap ki sarkar?"

Ansari's critical assessment of Modi's statement validates the fact that the marginalisation of Pasmanda Muslims cannot be addressed merely by taking out a few Sneh Yatras. If BJP is really serious about expanding its social base among deprived Muslims, it has to concentrate on those structural issues that produce and reproduce social inequalities and communal stereotypes. ■

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The Importance of Secular Justice In Islam

- Musheer Husain Siddiqui*

“And when ye judge between people that ye judge with justice”.

Islam is a complete code of life. It is a religion which dominates man's entire life, a man meets its legislation at every step, in short it is a code which governs every aspect of life- be it religious, intellectual, moral, practical or any other.

According to Islam the multitude of people, who collectively form a society, are off-sprigs of one parentage, Allah (SWT) says; “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. Indeed Allah is knowing, aware”. As such they all are equal by birth. There is neither a difference of high and low, nor of pure and impure. People of every color, tribe and race are equal in status and rights. There cannot be any distinction among them because of any peculiarity of color, race, country or language. Only one thing can be used for discrimination among them and it is Islam.... There is a group of men who have faith in the religion of Allah, and another group which does not have faith in it. The former is called Islamic society and the latter is known as un-Islamic or infidel society. Thus on the basis of faith

and religion emerge two permanent societies. Naturally Islam has separate injunctions for each of them. As far as non-Muslims society is concerned it is the essence of teachings that its members should be treated in usual manner.

In Islam God, Allah is the Lord, the King, not only of Jews, Christians or Muslims but Lord of all the creation and the Universe. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all mankind. Similarly His last prophet (peace be upon Him) is the mercy for all the Worlds.

Secular justice in Islam can be defined easily and in short in the light of the Holy Qur'an, as said;

“Indeed Allah orders justice and good conduct”. ...or as said;

Prophet Muhammad has been sent as a mercy to all the created beings. (Not only for Muslims)

(Even before prophethood, Muhammad S.A.W. had set an example of secular justice at the event of “Hilf-ul-Fudul”

There are four sources of Islamic Law, the two principal sources from whence Islamic Law has been drawn are (I)The Qur'an (II)The Tradition, and the other two are the Qiyas and the Ijma.

Islamic laws which are clearly stated in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith are

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eternal and unchangeable. They are valid for the times and their obedience is but essential. Even the slightest change is not possible in them. Neither a Caliph has the authority to make a departure from them for the affairs of the state nor does any ruler has the power to deviate from them.

Islam provides justice to all, whether Muslim or Non- Muslim, no person or authority, howsoever high, can claim any privilege or immunity which is not allowed to all the citizens.

In some states those in power can claim certain privileges and immunities for themselves or for their specific citizens, but Islam does not permit the same. Islam believes in providing justice to all human beings, without discrimination to Jews, Christians, Buddhists or Hindus.

To understand secular justice in Islam, Prophet's statement about his beloved daughter is more than sufficient, as He said, "Even if Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad had committed a theft, I swear by Allah, I would have cut off her hands".(Bukhari)

The rightly guided Caliphs have also set a lot of examples to provide secular justice to the people. They accorded justice to all, without discrimination to caste, creed, colour and region. As in an inaugural address caliph Abubakr (R) said to the people, 'Obey me, if I am right; set me right if I am in the wrong". Likewise Hadrat Umar (R)said; "In Islam no one can be imprisoned without due course of justice". (There are many more examples

of secular justice provided by Hadrat Umar) Hadrat Ali said to the people, "You may live wherever you like; the only condition between us being that you do not indulge in bloodshed".

If a caliph is required by the court in any case, he would appear before it in the same way as others do. Similarly if he is held guilty in any case by the court, he shall have to undergo the punishment awarded to him.

The caliph does not have the power to stop the enforcement of punishment for such sins as have been expressly stated in the Qur'an and the Traditions. If theft is committed the hands of the thief shall be chopped off. One who commits adultery shall be scourged with stripes or stoned to death. One who makes a baseless accusation of adultery against someone shall have to bear eighty strips. The murderer, who has not been forgiven by the heirs of the victim, shall be executed. In an Islamic state, a Governor or head of the state is not empowered to hear an appeal of mercy in such cases.

There are many examples of secular justice in Islamic history, where not only caliphs but a number of Muslim rulers have chosen the Islamic path to provide justice to the people of their country.....Many Muslim rulers are alive in the history, for their secular justice.

In fact Islam provides social and secular justice to everyone and favors peace and harmony in a state as well as in the world.

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Error Of Remission

Gujarat government's decision to grant remission of sentence to 11 lifers convicted for mass murder and gangrape in the Bilkis Bano case raises several questions. True, this May the Supreme Court had ruled, without going into the merits of the case that the Gujarat government must decide on the convicts' freedom based on a 1992 policy that allowed remission for those who served 14 clear years of their life term. But this made it a matter of discretion for the state, and there were enough grounds for it to apply the discretion the other way.

First, there's an SC verdict, Laxman Naskar vs Union of India, in which the court ruled that the state must determine "whether the offence is an individual act of crime, without affecting the society at large" before granting remission. Surely, the horrific nature of the crime and the tragic context – 14 people including several women and Bilkis's daughter were massacred and a pregnant Bilkis herself was subjected to gangrape during the 2002 Gujarat riots – made the Naskar judgment relevant here? Second, in June, Union home ministry guidelines on remission clearly stated that life convicts and rapists were not to be granted special remission.

The Naskar judgment and the MHA guidelines should have provided more than enough ground for the Gujarat government to keep the 11 lifers in jail. That it chose to do otherwise seems even more of a blow to natural justice given what Bilkis Bano had gone through after her trauma. There were attempts to destroy evidence in the case, for which doctors and police officials were convicted. The trial had to be shifted to Mumbai to allow Bilkis to depose safely. In 2019 SC had belatedly granted her Rs 50 lakh compensation, recognising the injustice dealt to her at various stages of her long ordeal. The question of judicial review of the Gujarat government's decision is complicated by SC granting discretion to the state. But that such a review would be ideal is not in the slightest doubt.■

(Editorial, The Times of India, 18-08-2022)

Teacher's Day

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Teacher's Day is observed on September 5, every year. In Hindi, a teacher is called "gu-ru", "Gu" means darkness and "ru" means light. So, a teacher is one who leads to light from darkness.

Guru-Shishu' relationship is like that of parents and their children. Like a father who loves his sons and daughters, in the same way teacher should love his pupils. Accordingly a great responsibility lies on the teachers. To a great extent future of students depends on their preceptors and instructors.

It is teacher who creates inclination and avidity amongst students and provides them an incentive for performing good deeds and baffles them from devilish acts. "In every religion teacher is put at high pedestal. So is in Islam. It gives much importance to them. The prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said : "I have been sent as a teacher. He further said : "I have been sent to complete good manners."

In the words of Saint Kabir "If the entire land surface of the world were turned into pens, they would not suffice to describe the greatness of a true Guru."

It is unfortunate that today this noble profession has lost its glory. Teachers have almost lost their honour and dignity by involving themselves in unholy and obnoxious activities. Due to some felonious and callous incidents of theirs, people have lost faith in "Guru-Shishu" relationship."

We may recall the recent incident of 16 year old girl who was raped by the principal and his colleague of a Govt. School in Delhi. Such incidents have been a permanent feature in our daily newspapers. Besides umpteen cases of their inhuman punishment are also quite common.

According to a newspaper reports, Brijesh Prajapati, a class VI student in kakaraiya primary School, Farrukhabad, UP, was found chatting in the class. It incensed his teacher so much that he beat him to death. Arpit Kavadia, a class XII student in Udaipur died after his teacher hit him repeatedly as Arpit's legs were dangling out side his school desk. This has offended the teacher. Prasad Naskar, a class VII student of a higher secondary school in Baruipur was brutally beaten by his headmaster for not turning up in school uniform. The headmaster left the boy in an unconscious state.

No doubt, on account of moral debasements and lack of proper training, such heinous crimes and hair raising incident have become the order of the day.

It is time teachers must cultivate good qualities and sublime norms and set themselves as a true guru only then celebration of "Teacher's Day 'will be meaningful and appropriate. ■

Only Education Can Help Fight Communalism

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Education is an essential tool for understanding the realities of life. It is back-bone of the nation. No nation can progress sans this asset. All religions emphasize on acquiring Knowledge. Ironically in spite of its importance, scant attention is paid in this direction.

Time has come when we start spreading education and motivate others to achieve this precious essence without which our life is bleak and meaningless.

Human beings considered superior to other creatures of Allah by virtue of knowledge.

Emphasising on the importance and significance of education, vice president Hamid Ansari has rightly said that to combat the ghost of communalism, people of the country would have to equip them with the weapon of education. If all get educated, surely there will be communal harmony and peace in the nation. Education also plays a vital role in the development of the country. We will have to educate every person if we want to become a developed county.

Here, it is significant to note that Islam has made education mandatory for its adherents. Even the first revelation sent to prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by God was concerning acquiring

knowledge.

The holy Quran says: "Read in the name of thy Lord who created man, out of a leech like clot: Read and thy Lord is most bountiful. He who taught the use of the pen, taught man that which he knew not". (S. 96A.1-5)

It further says: "God brought you out of the wombs of your mother knowing nothing, but gave you the faculties of hearing, and perception. Would you not thank Him? (16:78)

The age in which Prophet Muhammad was sent was actually the age of ignorance. It is obvious that without knowledge ignorance and stagnation cannot be dispelled. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has laid great emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge. The prophet said: "Seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim man and woman".

"Seek Knowledge from cradle to the grave". "Acquire knowledge even if one has to go to China."

Noted scholar KK Usman has precisely said: "Prophet Muhammad for the first time in the history of Arabian peninsula made knowledge an essential tool for understanding realities of life. The importance which the Quran attaches to knowledge can further be explained by the frequency with which it

has used the 'word ilm (knowledge). According to one estimate, it has been used 750 times in the Quran.

It should be kept in mind that Islam always emphasizes on acquiring profitable and advantageous knowledge. Prophet Muhammad's supplication is as follows: "O Allah, I seek your refuge from a knowledge that does not benefit, from a heart that does not fear, from a soul that is not satisfied,

and from a prayer that is not granted."

Swami Vivekananda says: "What is education? Is it book-learning? No. Is it diverse knowledge? Not even that. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education. Mahatma Gandhi held same views regarding education. He said: "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever" ■

What is Islam?

Al-Islam, the name of the Muslim's religion, literally means resignation to the will of God. This name of the religion was announced in Surah 5, verse 3, of the Holy Qur'an. This verse was revealed to Prophet (PBUH) during his last pilgrimage to Mecca. A part of the verse reads: "This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you and have chosen for you as religion 'al-Islam'. It is wrong to call Islam Muhammadanism.

Islam preaches humanitarianism, universal love, universal benevolence, aims at universal fraternity and rejects all concepts of racialism and sectarianism.

The Qur'an enjoins preaching and persuasion, and strictly forbids compulsion and violence in the conversion of people to Islam. This precept is set forth with the utmost precision in the Qur'an. "Let there be no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth made distinct from the erroneous one" (2:256). The charge that it was the sword that brought about the rapid spread of Islam now no more stands. It has been refuted by a large number of eminent non-Muslim writers. Carlyle has exploded it. Sir Edwin Arnold in his work "The Preaching of Islam" has proved convincingly that the spread of Islam was due to its simplicity and rationality. **Mr Gandhi has affirmed the same view" ■**

(An Epitome of The Teachings of Islam)

Hindu - Muslim Unity

- Syeda Saiyidain Hameed

The Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1931 led to a release of political prisoners and to Gandhi's attendance at the Round Table Conference. The British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, announced the Communal Award which introduced separate electorates for depressed and backward classes and reservation of seats for Muslims in every province. Gandhi, in Yeravada Jail, undertook a fast-unto-death against this award. The award was equally unacceptable to Azad being contrary to everything he had ever wanted for the Muslims. Civil Disobedience was launched throughout the country, even as Gandhi was marched back to prison in January 1932. People in large numbers courted arrest. Azad was arrested in February 1932 and detained in Delhi Jail. This was his fourth prison sentence.

The Government of India Act 1935 was promulgated, paving the way for the first elections. It provided for provincial autonomy while reserving special powers for the governors. This effectively meant that democracy could function in the provinces only so long as, and to the extent that, the governors permitted. In *India Wins Freedom*, Azad writes that at the centre the position was even worse. It was a weak federation, sharply inclined in favour of the princes and others with vested interests who would be expected to side with the British. Regardless, he felt that the Congress should participate in the elections. General Elections were held in February 1937. Over 54 per cent of the

electorate went out of the 1581 seats in the Provincial Assemblies, Congress won 711.

Having secured 'an overwhelming majority', Azad wanted the Congress to form governments in the provinces because its failure to do so would result in less desirable elements assuming power and then speaking on behalf of the Indian people. While Congress was sorting out its internal differences, interim ministries were formed in the other provinces by non-Congress and anti-Congress parties. Finally the various Congress factions came together accepted Azad's view and their ministries were formed.

Azad writes that he was in charge of parliamentary affairs in Bengal, Bihar, UP, Sind and the Frontier. This was the first time the Congress has become responsible for governance and people were waiting to see whether or not it would live up to its professed national character. The Muslim League did not miss any opportunity to criticize the Congress severely for being a national party only in name. It accused the Congress ministries of committing atrocities against the minorities, the Muslims in particular. While Azad denied that there was any truth in these allegations, he was chagrined at two incidents which smacked of communalism. They are referred to in *India Wins Freedom* as involving F.C. Nariman and Syed Mahmud, two stalwart leaders of the Congress. The incidents are

given as examples of the communal character of some people in the Congress.

In one case, Nariman, a Parsi, was the obvious choice for leading the Provincial Legislature Party in Bombay. In the other, a Muslim, Syed Mahmud was the obvious choice for becoming the Chief Minister of Bihar. In both cases the Congress compromised, with the preference given to Vallabhbhai Patel for Bombay and to Rajendra Prasad for Bihar. These instances prove, writes Azad, that 'Congress did not come out full successful in its test of nationalism'. There is wistfulness in his as a national organization and given opportunity of leadership to men of different communities', but it did not live up to its professed ideals.

There was, however, one individual, besides Gandhi, who Azad felt could have prevented this trend had he lived longer: Deshbandhu C.R.Das. What C.R.Das did in Bengal to solve the communal problem is seen by Azad as a model which should have been replicated in the rest of the country. His high regard for Chitranjan Das is expressed in several of his writings. The problem of minorities was handled by Das in a manner that the Muslims of Bengal had no hesitation in recognizing him as their leader. Azad writes how Das was able to overcome their fears and apprehensions. He recognized their need to feel economically and politically empowered. First, he said that unless the Muslims were properly represented in public life and services, there could be no true democracy in Bengal. Second, he

announced reservations in various spheres for the Muslims until such time that they could compete with other communities on equal terms. This announcement evoked a hue and cry, and many Congress leaders accused Das of partisanship and opportunism. But he did not budge from his original stand, and ultimately the strength and sincerity of his purpose won him the support of the Bengal Congress.

'I am convinced', Azad writes, 'that if he had not died a premature death, he would have created a new atmosphere in the country.' By implication, then, there was no one else in the Congress who had the sensitivity on the one hand and the clout on the other to champion the cause of the Muslims. The Muslim League and other communal parties were now working on fertile ground. The vessel of a united which was to flounder ten years later was beginning to show cracks; and although Azad may have seen it coming, he was hoping that the tide would turn.

Although Azad had presided over the Special Session of the Congress as early as in 1923, surprisingly, it was not until 1937 that he was elected a member of the Congress Working Committee. This was, presumably, to fill the seat vacated as a result of the death of Dr Ansari in the same year. With Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad, he was appointed to the Parliamentary Board, known as the Party High Command. He was elected as the Congress President in 1940 due to several reasons. He had played a pivotal role as a negotiator and mediator first between the No-Changers and Pro-Changers in the

1920s, and then between the rights and leftists in the 1930s. Above all, the growing alienation of the Muslims made him a natural choice for the post of President.

It was as the Amir of the caravan of Muslims, leading his followers on the path of Congress, that he spoke to the quom (nation) in the speeches and writings of this period. With the exception of Tarjuman-ul-Quran, Azad did not write anything during the decade of the thirties which had a literary or philosophical import. Two of his speeches which are preserved in Khutbnt-e-Azad are to Jamiat Tabligh Ahle-Hadith (1934) and Hindustani Committee, Bihar (1937). One manuscript of an unpublished article 'National Tehrik' is all the material that is available from this decade.

From his position at the helm of decision making in Congress, Azad saw, with growing consternation, the justifiable alienation and fear of the Muslims. In an unpublished and undated manuscript of an article entitled 'National Tehrik' Azad discusses several current issues concerning the Muslims and the Congress. From internal evidence it appears that the document was written in the first half of 1938. In it he first traces the origin of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha; the latter, he writes, was established as a reaction to the former. Prominent Hindus like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya declared the Mahasabha a 'deadly movement'. Regardless, it gathered strength during the post-Khilafat period, when Hindu-Muslim unity started to wear out.

He repeats his original advice that

in this struggle, the Muslims should join forces with the Hindus. He suggests that while they maintain their unique identity as Muslims as well as Indians, they should not allow the bond that connects them with crores of Muslims of the world to become submerged in any other identity. It is imperative, he writes, that every moment they should be vigilant of protecting their dual identity namely that to Sampooranand's statement in the U.P. Assembly, in which he said that he wanted to see no distinction between the Hindus and Muslims in matters pertaining to education and culture, Azad declares it to be unacceptable for the Muslims, and against the Congress principles. In support of his argument he uses the Protection of Minorities Resolution of the Karachi Congress 1931, in which the Muslim identity was recognised as a distinct factor in Indian polity. The Calcutta Congress Resolution which fortified the Karachi Resolution, he says, was written by him. The import of this was to assure the Muslims that the purpose of Congress is not to submerge the Muslim identity in the composite Indian nationality.

In keeping with its avowed objective, he writes, Congress has declared that it will promote the language and the culture of minorities. Accordingly, Urdu will take its place by the side of Hindi wherever it is the official language. One may, as aside, recall that the issue of language, which became increasingly important to him from now on, was raised a year earlier in his address to the Hindustani Committee, Bihar. In that he identified Urdu as the language which, since the end of

the seventeenth century, was spoken in all parts of India, and consequently used by the British for army. Calling it the quomi zuban (national language), he said that until that time it was called Hindvi, and there was no difference between Hindi and Urdu. The difference was between Hindi and Rekhta, the former was the everyday spoken language and the latter was the Persianized scholarly language. It was Mir Amman, who distinguished Urdu from Hindi when he was called to Fort William College, Calcutta, by John Gilchrist. He evolved a clean and flowing language in which he wrote the classic, Baagh-o-Bahar. The importance of Urdu as a national language is a dominant theme in both the speeches. That until this point he had the confidence of receiving his party's support on this issue, is evident from the statement that if any province not accord Urdu its rightful place, it could be compelled to do so.

The question before the Muslims, he writes, is: what should they do given the current scenario? First, they should 'shout aloud' that they are not prepared to become submerged in Hinduism. Second, they should recognize the fact that the years of living together have created certain common features between them and Hindus. Third, they should operate from a base of confidence, rather than from suspicion and weakness. Referring to the British ploy of convincing Muslims that they need a third force to protect themselves from the Hindu onslaught, he says that it is hardly necessary to tell the Muslims that this 'third force' will not be an impediment to the Hindus gaining

power but certainly will cause harm to their own progress. He expresses confidence in a bright future for the Muslims in India, by virtue of the fact that they 'occupy every inch of the road between Khyber and Constantinople'. According to Azad:

So far, the Muslims have generally left the impression that if they participate in the freedom struggle they are somehow obliging the Hindus. Murmurs are heard—'during the Khilafat, we made the Congress', or 'during Non-Cooperation Muslim boys left the educational institutions (Aligarh) but what did the Hindu boys (Benaras) do?' As if the benefit of that sacrifice has accrued only to the Hindus and now they should somehow pay for it.

Azad suggests here, that the benefits accrued to both Hindus and Muslims, but the Muslims asserted that they had done all the work and others were reaping their harvest! So far as the Muslim League is concerned, he writes, he tried to offer them a share in the provincial governments, provided they accepted three conditions. First, the goal, of complete Independence, second, joining forces with the Congress, third, assigning to the League the protection of the Muslim rights.

The presence of Jinnah, he wrote, was inimical to the League's acceptance of the Congress proposals. His own efforts at affecting reconciliation between the two parties, he confesses, were not acceptable to a majority of the Congress Working Committee:

Only Gandhiji supported me. At last we

began talks with Mr Jinnah, about including the League members in the governments and, thereby, removing a great obstacle from the path of a unified struggle. It is a pity that the League brought up the question of status and ruined the negotiations. How could we accept their idea of declaring the League and the Congress as communal parties of Muslims and Hindus respectively? Congress is a national party and wants to remain national... We (Muslims) should also take into account whether it is better for us that Congress calls itself secular rather than calling itself communal?

From the above it becomes clear that Azad was not getting much support from his colleagues, Patel, Rajendra Prasad and others. Regardless, he commanded seniority and respect, given the fact that he had been associated with older veterans like Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das. He was, therefore, able to carry his in the teeth of opposition. The Congress did not fall into the trap of declaring itself a communal party.

The other aspect of his concern was: what would be of the greatest advantage to the Muslims, a communal Congress or a national Congress? In terms of what was best for the Muslims, he did say that if their rights could be better protected by separating from the Congress he would not hesitate to do so., His presence in the organisation was for the benefit of the Muslims. And he was convinced that outside the Congress, their rights could not be adequately safeguarded. He reminded them that there

was a time when the Muslims considered the Congress a band of rebels. They had never thought that this outlawed party could one day form the government. There was a time when they had aligned themselves with the British for fear of the Hindus. But the ground reality today was different:

Even if all the Muslims of India say to the Britisher, do not leave this country, we will help you, he won't stay. When his own vessel is caught in a whirl, how can he help another's sinking ship?

For this reason, he writes, even the powerful and titled zamindars (landlords) today are sympathetic to the freedom struggle. Although theirs were the sticks that were raining blows upon the heads of the freedom fighters, while they sat smugly in their mehfil and poked fun at freedom struggles.

What Azad intended to do with this piece of writing is not clear. It was never published in a journal nor distributed as a pamphlet. Was it meant as an analysis of the options available to the Muslims and of the implications of each option? He admits to having received complaints during the recent party elections that at the lower levels of the organization, all kinds of machinations are at work to keep the Muslims out of Congress. But he asserts that despite the fact that there were certain communal elements in it, at the markaz (apex) the Congress was entirely non-communal. He therefore concludes that it is in the Muslim interest to align itself with the Congress.

On the question of forming governments in the provinces, he explains

that the Congress has done so as part of a much larger purpose. If the establishment of a democratic government had been the sole purpose, then Muslim League members would have been admitted at any cost. But the goal being purna swaraj or mukammal azadi (complete independence) it is possible that the burden of ministries may be cast off at any time. At such time, if people who have been taken in are undisciplined or weak, they may become an impediment in the realization of the goal. At the same time, he strongly advocates the principle that Congress should form the government only if it has a clear majority. For example, in the case of Assam, he writes, he opposed the formation of the government although he was told that 'Congress would get the majority later'. He said that he wanted to 'tell the world that we do not want to run after offices. If the League wants to form the government, let it. We have not taken a contract for forming governments'.

The same situation arose in Sindh. The Muslim League's provocative behaviour had spoilt the atmosphere to the extent that the Congress wanted to support the Allah Bakhsh government. Even Patel had promised to support it. But Azad writes that he stuck his ground, saying that the League could go ahead and make 'one lakh governments'. This was a time when the Congress could impress upon the world that it had agreed to form governments on the basis of certain avowed principles. Azad himself always respected the show of majority. Aruna Asaf Ali recalls that when the

communists won the elections in Kerala in 1955 Azad was adamant that they should form the government, regardless of the slim majority with which they had won. He said, 'Agar ek vote sey bhi unki aksariyat ho to hukumat unhi ki honi chahiye' (Even if they get a majority by one vote, they should still form the government).

Despite the dissensions within the party, so far, Azad had been able to affect a reconciliation without compromising any of the principles. The two instances he gives in this article are about matters in Punjab and Sindh concerning the cultivators who happened to be Muslims and the landlords who happened to be Hindus. In the case of Sindh, the Hindus were opposed to asking for statehood because they felt that it would not be able to bear its own financial burden. After it got statehood and the question of levying taxes arose, the Hindus refused saying that the Muslims should take the responsibility for their decision. Sir Ghulam Husain conceded the Hindu demand and increased the aabpaashi ke narkh (charges for irrigation). The cultivators revolted and his government fell. Next, Allah Bakhsh faced a similar situation; aided and abetted by the Governor and communal Hindus he too declared an increase. The Congress decided to withdraw its support because Allah Bakhsh's move to burden the cultivators was against its principles. The Muslim League saw this as a golden opportunity to form the government in Sindh. At a meeting in Karachi, it communalized the issue and made such provocative

speeches that the Hindu members of the Congress were thrown into the lap of the communalists.

The view gained ground that no matter what, the Muslim League should not be allowed to form the government. Supporting Allah Bakhsh, however, would have meant taxing the poor cultivator and deviating from the principle espoused by the Congress. But even principled men like Sardar Patel were convinced by the Congressmen from Sindh that Allah Bakhsh had to be supported. Azad writes that regardless of the rumblings within Congress, he could not accept compromise on the principle. Ultimately, Congress had to concede his point and the increase in mehsul (tax) was postponed forthwith. He ends this part on a note of regret that no one applauded this decision of Congress; neither the press nor the public. While the Muslim League continued its slander, the communal Hindu remained infuriated with the Congress stand.

Besides the Hindu-Muslim question, the document contains Azad's views on the Muslim princely states, Wardha scheme and religious education for Muslims, and the false propaganda of Muslim League. It ends abruptly with the comment that the Muslims must not lose sight of the markazi taqat (central power) of the Congress. The import of this as stated earlier, was to vindicate the Congress in the eyes of the Muslims and impress upon them that staying with it would be to their greatest advantage. It was a fitting prelude to his address to the Ramgarh Congress in March 1940.

War was the topical issue when Azad was elected the President of the Congress in 1940. At the Tripura Session in March 1939, Congress had passed a resolution dissociating itself from both imperialism and fascism, and thereby from Britain which has consistently aided Fascist powers and helped in the destruction of democratic countries'. Gandhi's growing despair at the impending disaster and the consequent rift in the Congress is recorded in India Wins Freedom. Azad writes that Gandhi pressed him again and again to lend support to non-violence at any cost, even at the cost of India's freedom. But Azad could not bring himself to endorse non-violence as a matter of creed: 'For me non-violence was a matter of policy, not creed'. On 3 September 1939 Viceroy Linlithgow announced that war had broken out between His Majesty and Germany. 'In the case of India, the Viceroy on his own declared war on Germany, without even the formality of consulting the Central Legislature', writes Azad. Thus India was 'unceremoniously dragged into the war', causing mental distress to Gandhi which brought him to a 'breaking point'.

The Congress Working Committee met in Wardha a few days later and passed a resolution which was a clear statement of its attitude to war. It asked the British government to specify its war aims with regard to 'democracy and imperialism and the new order which it envisaged'. Azad felt that this resolution would one day occupy an outstanding place in history because while it originated in India it represented a larger populace.

In October, Linlithgow made a statement which Azad found 'long-winded' and 'tiring' and which declared Dominion Status to be the goal of the British policy in India as stated in the Preamble to the 1919 Act and now embodied in the Act of 1935. The Congress Working Committee rejected the statement and called upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations in eight provinces. By November the Ministries had resigned and Jinnah had declared 23 December 1939 as the 'Day of Deliverance and Thanksgiving'. Azad summarizes the events of this period in his address to Ramgarh Congress, in March 1940.

The fifty-third session of Congress was held one day later than scheduled, due to heavy rainfall. Azad faced the critical task of affecting reconciliation among the warring factions within the Congress. Without losing sight of the ultimate goal of Purna swaraj (complete independence), the question of participation in the war had to be addressed. Azad spoke in simple language to hundreds of delegates who had thronged to hear the President speak at a moment when the country seemed poised on the hinge of freedom. Azad began by reviewing the War Resolutions that had become an integral part of the annual Congress proceedings, due to the impending clouds of war. The first such review, he said, had taken place at the Lucknow Congress in 1937. All these resolutions stated India's rejection of Nazism, Fascism, and Imperialism. They had been dispatched to the British Government.

The British, he said, had always excelled in the art of political expediency. In the first war, which started in a corner of the Balkans, Britain and France raised the slogan for the rights of small nations. After the war, flushed with victory, they changed their tune. They watched in silent approval, while unrestrained dictatorships, based on brute forces, challenged the peace and freedom of the entire world. When the small nations began disappearing from the map as free countries, due to the Nazi ambition, they readily assisted in their burial. It was only when the menace approached their own territories that they raised slogans of freedom, world peace and democracy.

When India asked the British to declare their war aims, it became evident, he said, that their lofty objectives of freedom and democracy were confined within the geographical boundaries of Europe. The people of Asia and Africa were not expected to have similar aspirations. Reiterating the stand he had taken earlier, he declared that this exclusivity has always been a creed of all of Europe:

Although these war aims were articulated by a British spokesman, they represent the mentality of entire Europe, which the world has known for two hundred years. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the principles of individual and collective freedom were regarded the exclusive rights of European countries and that too only of the Christian nations. ■

Around the World

Xi, Putin to attend November G20 Summit In Bali: Report

Chinese and Russian leaders Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin will attend November's G20 summit in Bali, a longtime adviser to the Indonesian president said. Andi Widjajanto, former cabinet secretary and unofficial adviser to President Joko Widodo, said the two leaders would join the summit. Widodo told Bloomberg News that both leaders had given him their assurances. Indonesia presidential officials did not confirm the report. The Chinese foreign ministry did not comment.

A Kremlin spokesperson declined to comment to Bloomberg, but another official familiar with the situation told the news agency that Putin planned to attend. The trip would be Xi's first time outside China since January 2020. US President Joe Biden is expected to attend the G20 summit but the White House has not said whether he will meet Xi. Chinese officials are reportedly making plans for a November meeting in Southeast Asia between Xi and Biden, according to a report in the Wall Street Journal.

A spokesperson for the White House National Security Council reiterated that Biden did not think Putin should attend "as he wages his war against Ukraine". But if Putin did, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy — who Indonesia has invited — should do likewise, the spokesperson said. ■

Crimea: Drone Shot Down Over HQ

MOSCOW/KYIV, UKRAINE: A drone was shot down over the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea fleet in annexed Crimea, a local official said.

"The drone was shot down just above the fleet headquarters" in the city of Sevastopol, city governor Mikhail Razvojaev wrote on Telegram, blaming the attempt on Ukrainian forces.

"It fell on the roof and caught fire," he said, adding

that there was no major damage or victims.

It was the second assault of its kind against the fleet headquarters in less than a month, after a drone attack on July 31 in its courtyard wounded five people and led to the cancellation of planned Fleet Day celebrations.

It was also the latest attack to target Russian military infrastructure in Crimea, a Black Sea peninsula that Moscow seized and annexed from Ukraine in 2014. ■

Report: Gandhi Statue In NYC Vandalised In Possible hate Crime

New York: In a possible hate crime, a group of six unidentified persons destroyed a handcrafted statue of Mahatma Gandhi with a sledge hammer at a Hindu temple in New York City after vandalising it earlier this month.

India on Friday strongly condemned the "despicable action" and took up the matter with the US authorities to ensure those responsible for the act are held accountable.

The New York City police department in a statement said it was reported to police on August 16 at approximately 0130 hours that "a group of six unidentified male individuals" damaged and vandalised "a religious statue with a sledge hammer in front of Tulsi Mandir located at 103-26 111 Street". "The male individuals then fled toward Liberty Avenue and entered two vehicles, a white Mercedes Benz and a dark color possibly a Toyota Camry with possible, taxi/livery sticker on the back passenger window," it said, adding that the miscreants were approximately aged between 25 to 30 years.

The NYPD has asked for the public's assistance in ascertaining the whereabouts of the miscreants and urged anyone with information related to the incident to call its Crime Stoppers Hotline or submit their tips at Crime Stoppers website. ■

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