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E-mail: [fragranceofeast1998@gmail.com](mailto:fragranceofeast1998@gmail.com)

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# The Fragrance of East

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**Ramadan: A Global Season of  
Worship and Good Deeds**

**S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi**

All these things have made Ramadan a global season and a time of grand celebration of worship, God-remembrance, recitation of the Quran, self-restraint, and piety in which Muslims—educated and uneducated, rich and poor, humble and privileged-participate like close friends and associates all over the world. Ramadan falls at the same time in every city and village in the world. Its arrival can be noticed equally in the palaces of the rich as well as huts of the poor. No one can dare do its rituals differently according to his personal understanding, nor is there any scope for a disagreement in determining the number of its days. The grandeur and beauty of Ramadan is, in fact, easily noticeable throughout the length and breadth of the Muslim world. It seems as if a canopy of effulgence and peace is raised all over the Muslim society. Even those who are slack in Fasting choose to fast in Ramadan for the fear of being alienated in the Muslim community. If for some reason they decide not to fast, they eat in the day hiding from others in shame. The sick and the traveller are, of course, lawfully exempted from Fasting. Fasting is thus observed collectively throughout the world in the same month. This creates a congenial and conducive atmosphere for the believers due to which Fasting becomes easy, hearts soften, and Muslims turn to deeds of worship and submission, sympathy and compassion with greater eagerness. ■

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### **Wisdom of Qur'an**

*O Believers! Enter into Islam wholly and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely he is an open enemy to you.*

*(al-Baqgrah 2:208)*

This verse, though brief, contains a broad message for man, especially the Muslim community. Contained in it is much food for thought, for here Allah asks believers to be imbued with Islam in full. Another significant directive is to shun Satan's footsteps in that he is man's open enemy.

Let us first explain what is meant by Islam. Many people who have not conducted a study of comparative religions fail to appreciate the fundamental truth that Islam is a set of beliefs and a complete way of life. Other religions are named after their founders or their ethnic origin. Take the example of Judaism, which is named after YeHuda, a member of the Prophet's family. Christianity owes its name to Jesus Christ. Parsis are named after Faris, the old name of Iran, which was the birthplace of their religion. None of these religions represents an extensive call to believe in God or a Way of life. Hinduism takes its name from Sindh, and Brahamanism after a particular class. Buddhism too owes its name to its founder, Gautama Buddha. So is the case with Jainism. In contrast to all these, Islam is the only faith that prescribed a way of life and derives its message from the Scripture and the Messenger. It is based solely on divine revelation. The Shariah stands for His commands. Islam is a set of beliefs and the Shariah. In this respect it is unique, distinct from all other religions. ■

### **Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)**

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of God said : "Do not be suspicious, for suspicion is the height of falsehood, nor bear a grudge or enmity against each other, nor be jealous of each other, nor indulge in back-biting, nor pry into the secrets of one another, nor try unreasonably to excel one another, nor turn your faces against each other, but O bondmen of God ! live like brothers as the Lord has commanded."

—*Bukhari and Muslim*

*Commentary:* The evils mentioned above are highly detrimental to the growth of good and friendly relations. They cause ill-will and produce bitterness in the hearts. The sacred Prophet has, first of all, spoken of suspicion which is a form of unfounded fear and misdoubt, and whoever has a suspecting nature sees viciousness in everything a man does with whom he has the least difference, and his attitude towards him is, naturally, influenced by it. The other person, too, reacts and an atmosphere of sullen malice and ill-will is created between them.

The same is the case with the other habits indicated in it. They breed hatred and enmity and leave no room for goodwill and fellowship to develop which the common religious tie demands.

Abu Hurairah relates that the Apostle of God said: "Guard yourselves against envy for envy eats up good deeds as fire eats up wood."

— *Abu Dawood*

*Commentary :* When the fire of envy burns in anyone's heart, he misses no opportunity to hurt or harm the person at the sight of whose excellence or success he feels discontented, and, if nothing else, he seeks satisfaction by slandering him and speaking ill of him behind his back, and, as we learn from other Traditions of the Prophet, the lowest penalty the envious are going to pay in future existence is that their good deeds will be allotted to those against whom they have sinned. It will, perhaps, explain what is meant by the eating up of good deeds by envy, as stated in the above narrative. ■

*Editor's Note* 

## Patriotism

It was the immense love for the country and deep rooted sense of patriotism which made all Indians cutting across caste and religion to pick up cudgels against British Raj and eventually obtain independence. In a remarkable show of unity, sans any communal regional and caste distinction Indians faced the challenges of colonial regime. Unfortunately this unity was soon threatened by divisive forces organised around caste and communal lines. Seeds of discontent were sown, Muslim League came into existence in 1906 and in reaction Hindus formed Hindu Mahasabha. A handful of misguided and short-sighted Hindus and Muslims started promoting these communal outfits. A sense of nationalism and feeling of unity which the Congress Party had been able to infuse amongst the Indians was badly shattered. In 1947 India did get Independence but it was not the India that Gandhi, Maulana Azad and Nehru had envisaged.

The creation of a separate Muslim state in the shape of Pakistan as subsequent events show did not help either Hindus or Muslims. Instead it created further mistrust and animosity between Hindus and Muslims. Muslim dominated states or parts of the states of united India were severed from the main body which did not mean that those Muslims who opted to continue living in India, born and brought up here whose forefathers are buried here, whose generations have toiled the Indian soil should be accused of having divided loyalty. Their patriotism, their love for the country where they were born is unassailable. They are Indian both by birth and by conviction.

Of late, a small group of politicians intoxicated with their newly acquired power have started demanding certificate of patriotism from Muslims. This coterie got further activated to make Muslims feel as if they are isolated from the main stream and the poor community afraid of the harassment, started issuing statements from Dargahs, Madrasah's, their intellectual forums and associations reaffirming their "loyalty" to the nation. Why Sikhs, Parsis and Christians did not feel the need to publicly announce their love for the country? How ridiculous it is to ask Muslims to declare their allegiance to India from their house-tops.

These self styled patriots did not spare even Maulana Syed Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi, (Ali Mian) Rector of Darul-uloom Nadwatul Ulema, a prestigious seminary in

Lucknow. A fictitious news item with provocative caption was planted on the front page of a national Hindi daily of Delhi in its June 29, 1999 issue by its Lucknow correspondent stating that Maulana Ali Miah during a religious congregation held at Lucknow refused to pray for the Jawans fighting at Kargil. This news item was lifted next day by a number of Hindi dailies published from different parts of the country. Authorities of Nadwa on instruction from Maulana Ali Mian denied the baseless charge. They called the report a blatant lie and a figment of the reporters' imagination. The paper published the contradiction on July 2, 1999 on the back page at an obscure place. But the indecent vilification campaign against Maulana and Nadwa continued unabated.

Maulana Ali Mian has always kept himself away from politics. A doyen of Islamic history and theology and recognised scholar of international repute he guides his community to mould themselves as the most truthful, honest and upright Indians and thus established their identity. Through his organisation of "Payame Insaniyat" (Message of Humanity) he has been emphasising fellow citizens to Promote brotherhood, co-operation and sense of service amongst themselves irrespective of caste, community and region.

Maulana's extensive writings bear testimony to his commitment to our democratic and secular polity. About four decades back he wrote: "The Muslims are not only citizens of an equal status with anybody in India; they are also among its chief builders and architects, and hold position second to none among the people of the world for selfless service to the motherland". Maulana re-emphasised same feelings to the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee and also to the President of the then Congress Mrs. Sonia Gandhi when they called on him.

If such vilification campaigns against respected Ulama and Muslim scholars is not contained it will have far reaching effects and may soon tear apart the syncretic social fabric of the nation. ■

**S.A.**

We solicit articles for publication in The Fragrance of East. Suitable remuneration will be paid to writers. We prefer receipt of articles on:  
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## A Few Singular Characteristics of The Indian Muslims

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

A distinguishing feature of the entire Muslim community, including Indian Muslims, is that the fundamental basis of their existence as a religious community (Millat) is a well-defined, distinct and immutable faith and a divinely ordained canon (shariah). Like other prevalent systems of faith and worship Islam too is a religion, no doubt, but the word hardly expresses the true nature of Islam and, furthermore, causes it to be misunderstood if only owing to its general usage for all the other faiths indiscriminately. It is for this reason that instead of deriving its name from any race, clan, country or founder of the religion, it calls itself man's self-surrender (Islam) to God. This self-surrender expresses itself not only in belief in God but also in dutiful obedience to His commands. It bespeaks, also, of the fundamental difference between the followers of Islam, who are called Muslims, and the adherents of other faiths getting their names from the founder, of their religions the of their origin or a race or a clan. The Jews are also known as Judaists and Bani Israel, Judah was, one of the sons of Prophet Jacob who was himself called Israel. Christians draw their name from Jesus Christ while of their earliest names, Nazarenes or its Arabic form (Nasarah),

as mentioned in the Quran is derived from Nazareth, in Galilee, the home town of Jesus Christ. Zoroastrians known as Parsees in India, get their name from the founder of their religion, Zoroaster or Zarathustra. The same is the case with the Buddhists, named after Gautama Buddha and almost every other religion.

### The Muslims

The believers are called in the Quran, religious treatises, historical books and literary compositions, either as Muslim or Ummat-i-Muslimah, and they are still known throughout the world wherever they by the name of Muslims. As already explained, the name is a derivative of Islam. "the surrender" to Allah, embracing certain defined principles, ideas, values and criteria for the guidance of humanity. Despite their ardent love and attachment with the holy Prophet of Islam, they never agreed to their being called as Mohammedans. It was the British who for the first time nicknamed them as Mohammedans and their religious law (shariah) as Mohammedan Law. But the Muslims protested against the name given to them by their erstwhile rulers and preferred to be known as Muslims. Certain institutions which had been named as Mohammedan College

or Mohammedan Conference during the early phases of British rule in India had to be changed later on under the pressure of Muslim public opinion about the unsuitability of the word 'Mohammedan.'

### **The Content and Form of Faith**

The reason for this strong public opinion which might appear as of trivial importance to certain persons is that the form of the faith is as important from the Muslim viewpoint as the content itself. The faith as well as its manifestation in the form of religious law (shariah) are of basic importance for the uniqueness of the Muslim culture and its way of life. There is, indeed, no basis in Islam for the notion that the Islamic religious law is just another code to be obeyed, as we dutifully obey the laws of a city or a state. It represents the sense of the believers' absolute responsibility to the will of God, and for that reason, it had to be spelled out in detail for the guidance of the faithful. It is, thus, not at all surprising that the Muslims are so sensitive to any talk about the so-called reforms in the Islamic Law. This is a matter of paramount importance for the Muslims which ought to be taken into account in chalking out a course of action in any individual, social or national matter affecting the Muslims. It has also to be borne in mind that excepting for a few local customs, usages and conventions which have somehow found their way into the body

of laws recognised as Mohammedan Law during the British rule in India, the Muslim Personal Law rests upon the Qur'an, as interpreted through and expanded by the rules of Muslim jurisprudence (fiqah) on the basis of sayings and confirmed practice (hadith) of the Prophet of Islam. To be sure, the Qur'an lays down the rules, sometimes in great detail, for the fundamental institutions of Muslim social life, such as, personal behaviour, morals, marriage, inheritance and economic activity. Where only general principles are laid down, these are supplemented by another authoritative source, the hadith, or spelt out by the Muslim doctors of religion on the basis of probable action of the Prophet and his companions in the light of Quranic precepts. Thus, the authority and validity of Muslim Personal Law is derived from the belief that they conform to the Will of an all-controlling God rather than social experience or rational speculation.

### **Inviolability of the Shari'ah**

This brief elucidation of the nature of Muslim personal law would show that those laws which have been laid down in explicit and unambiguous terms in the Qur'an and which have been acted upon by the Muslim community without any interruption so far, are inviolable and immutable. These are unalterable mandatory provisions of the Islamic Law and anybody transgressing these rules would be deemed, according to the



consensus of Muslim doctors of faith, an apostata and outcaste of the Muslim community. There may be differences of opinion among the Muslim doctors in regard to the interpretation and practical application of these mandatory laws, but there has been absolutely no question, nor there is now, of any reform or change in these Quranic Laws. No Muslim State nor any elected legislative body has any right to interfere in these laws, and any effort in that direction would be construed as interference in the practice of religion.

There are, however, other laws, as pointed out earlier, which comprise matters with respect to which there was either no clear guidance, a rule or injunction available in the Qur'an or the hadith or those which fall in the category of non-prohibited matters, and which were spelt out later on by the Muslim legists in conformity with the spirit of the Islamic legal system. In these matters, the doors of difference of opinion and interpretation of the best course of action in the light of the general principles and precepts of the Shari'ah as well as the changing needs of the times, have always been open in past, are open even today, and will continue to remain so in the future too. Muslim doctors of faith and jurists having profound legal knowledge and a developed sense of interpreting matters in the true Islamic spirit can interpret the rules falling in the latter category in the

light of changed circumstances and the needs of the present-day life. This process of assimilation and interpretation has always been operative in the past and will remain so in future also.

### **Taharat**

Another unique feature of the Muslims' personal life arises out of his singular concept of personal and external purity. It demands, apart from the general cleanliness, a state of legal purification too which is very often not understood by the non-Muslims. Cleanliness denotes freedom from dirt or stain both in one's person and clothes. Legal purification (taharat) goes further than that and demands that one should be free from every defilement, great or small, like excretion, urine, wine, blood, saliva of a dog, dung, etc. in the smallest quantity. Thus, however free from dirt a man may be and however stainless his dress, a speck of any defilement would render him legally impure and disqualify him from offering prayers. Similarly, if anyone has not washed his private parts after excretion or urination or requires to take bath (ghusl) owing to any defilement, he cannot attain purification without a proper bathing. The repast, utensils, table-linens, clothes, bedsheets and all other articles of daily use should likewise be free from every defilement in addition to their being clean or free from dirt.

### **Dietary Restrictions**

Another characteristic of the Islamic teachings having a profound impact on the Muslims' way of living is the distinction it makes between the prohibited and permissible articles of food. The Qur'an does not leave its followers free to take whatever they like but lays down a clear line of demarcation between the two types of foodstuffs which should not be over-stepped by any Muslim. In the case of animals and birds whose flesh can be eaten, they must be immolated in the name of God. The flesh of any animal that has been dedicated or offered in sacrifice to an idol or a saint or a person considered to be 'divine' or a martyr is strictly prohibited, and so is the case with the animal that meets a natural death or dies owing to injuries received in hunting before it is sacrificed in the name of God. The swine has been declared desecrate and defiled and its flesh detestable, while there are other animals which are not profane, but their flesh is prohibited. Lions, tigers, panthers, dogs and similar other feline and carnivorous beasts as well as all the hunting birds and those birds which use their claws in eating fall in the prohibited category. The dietary restrictions constitute a distinguishing mark of the Abrahamic way of life: his taste; and taboos, likes and dislikes were, in truth, confirmed by God as divine injunctions to regulate the cuisine practices of the

Muslims of every country and every age till the end of time. Indian Muslims too have abided by these regulations and, to an extent, more meticulously than their co-religionists in many other Muslim countries. Even now they are more cautious, law-abiding and sensitive with regard to Divine commandments than the Muslims of certain other countries whose faith has been enfeebled by an ever-increasing impact of the materialistic civilization of the West and sudden opulence. Almost similar is the case with wine which has ever remained prohibited in the eyes of the Shari'ah. The Muslims have really known it as the "mother of all evils" and never allowed it to gain a foothold in the Muslim society. In the use of alcoholic liquors, too, the behaviour of the Indian Muslims has been more in keeping with the demands of the shari'ah than that of certain westernised Muslim countries.

### **Love of the Prophet**

An intense attachment of the Muslims to the Prophet of Islam is another distinguishing feature of their life. The Prophet is not simply a founder of the faith, or a venerable personage but something more than that: a tender feeling of heart-felt love and respect for the Prophet is what a Musalman treasures more than anything else. A Persian poet expressed the same feeling in these words which cannot perhaps be surpassed:

“To cut short, most respected thou art after God.”

At the same time, the Muslims have been expressly asked to desist from exaggerated adulation and deification of the holy Prophet as was done by the followers of certain earlier prophets. A tradition of the holy Prophet says: “Do not extol me beyond my limits nor entertain exaggerated notions about me like the Christians who unduly magnified their Prophet. Call me, if you have to, by the name of the slave and Apostle of God”.

#### **Unparalleled Love and Affection**

But, in spite of the restraining effect of moderation preached by Islam in praising the Prophet, the heart-felt love and the deep attachment the Muslims have for him is unparalleled and unsurpassed of that felt by the followers of any other religion for their prophet or the founder of their faith. It can rightly be claimed that millions of them revere and love the Prophet more than their own lives, their children and parents and are ever willing to sacrifice their all to guard his honour. The sensitiveness of the Muslims in this regard has been demonstrated on innumerable occasions and can still call forth supreme sacrifice from them. The Muslims cannot simply suffer the slightest disparagement of their beloved Prophet in any shape or form. Even today the Prophet’s name, his honour,

his city, his sayings and his teachings and anything connected with him can arouse the tenderest feelings of love and fervour of devotion for him. These lines by the late Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, a poet and editor of the daily ‘Zamindar’ of Lahore, adequately express the ardent love of Muslims for their Prophet.

The namaz and the zakat and the rozah and haj, virtuous are all ;

But a Musalman I am not despite these all;

Unless for the honour of Madina’s chief, I gladly give up the life I have.

By God, short of that, imperfect shall ever remain my faith!

The never-ending Divine blessings invoked for the Prophet of Islam day in day out, the merit and virtue of these benedictions, the large number of the Prophet’s biographies written by the Muslims of India’ and of other countries and the eulogies composed by the poets to adore and pay their respect to him speak of the deepest love and regard entertained by the Muslims for the apostle of God. It is worth mentioning here that the eulogium has always remained, in every language, a melodious medium to express the sentiments of gratitude to a benefactor, but the ode to praise a particular personage, for whom every poet deems it an honour to sing praises, is essentially a product of Muslim mind. if nothing

similar to it is found in the poetry of other peoples, it is because no other personage has been held in a similar esteem and regard by his people. The eulogies in the praise of the Prophet of Islam in almost every language spoken by the Muslims have a place of their own in those literatures if only on account of their literary merit, rhythmical creation of beauty, exquisite expression and the warmth of feeling contained by them. Excluding Iran which has had some of the best eulogist poets, the contribution of Indian Muslims to this form of poetry is without a parallel in any other language spoken by the Muslims. Some of the well-known poets of Indo-Pakistan sub-continent who have indited eulogies of exceptional poetic beauty, sublime in thought and artistic in construction, in the praise of the Holy Prophet are Mohsin Kakorwi, Amir Minai, Khawaja Altaf Husain Hali, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, Iqbal Ahmad Suhail and Hafeez Jalandhri. An eulogist poet Aasi Ghazipuri has beautifully summed up the feelings of love and respect felt by the Indian Muslims for the Prophet of Islam in these lines:

“Convey my Salam and tell him (the Prophet), O Zephyr,

After the remembrance of God, thee alone we revere.”

### **The Finality of the Prophethood**

It is an article of faith for the Muslims that Muhammad (may the

peace and blessings of God be upon him) was the last Apostle and the seal of all the Prophets. No revelation shall ever descend on a man after Muhammad, and whoever makes such a claim shall be no more than a liar and a deceiver. This faith is grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an and the Traditions and the uninterrupted belief of Muslims in this regard since the earliest times. The conviction in the finality of Muhammad's Prophethood has been a citadel of safety protecting the faith of Muslims from falling a prey to the artifices of cleverest renegades.

### **Companions and the Prophet's Kins**

Companion is the name given to a contemporary follower of the Holy Prophet. Every Muslim acknowledges the yeoman's service rendered by each one of them for the propagation of the faith. They are all regarded as ideal Muslims, benefactors of humanity and pure-hearted souls worthy of the highest marks of reverence. Whenever their name is mentioned by any Muslim, he accompanies it with the phrase 'razi Allah 'anhu' which means 'May God be pleased with him.' Four of the Prophet's companions viz., Hazrat Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali who succeeded the Prophet as his right-guided Caliphs, are held in the highest esteem and their names are mentioned along with the Prophet's in the orations (khutba) of the Friday and the 'Id prayers. In addition to these four companions, there are six

other pious followers of the Prophet who had been given by him the glad tidings of redemption and Paradise. These are known by the Muslims as the 'Promised Ten' ('ashra'-i-mubashsharah.)

The members of the Prophet's household, known as ahl-i-bait, include his wives, daughters and the two grandsons, Imam Hasan and Imam Husain. Reverence and regard for each one of these kins of the Prophet is deemed as a duty incumbent on all Muslims.

### **The Book of God**

The same is the case with the Qura'n too. It is not merely a collection of morals and tales of wisdom, to be acted upon when convenient, but a revelation from God, preserved word by word, for the guidance of humanity. It has suffered no interpolation, not even of a comma or a fullstop since it was revealed to the Holy Prophet. Muslims have been commanded to handle the Book reverently and perform ablution before reciting it.

All over the world one would find a number of Muslims who have committed the entire Qur'an to their memory. In India there are special types of schools which provide instruction in learning the Qur'an by heart and its recitation. Thanks to these schools, India has hundreds of thousands persons who have memorised the whole Qur'an and some of them have attained such a high

level of proficiency that they can recite the entire Quran in a single night. Actually, there are some of them who do so every night during the month of Ramadhan. It is not uncommon to see boys of 10 or 12 years of age who have learnt the voluminous scripture by heart. Nor are women found lacking in this feat of memory.

### **Hadith and Fiqah**

Next to the Book of God, the Traditions (hadith) and the rules of religious law (fiqah) have attracted diligent attention of the Muslims. The Traditions have been preserved with an unbroken chain of narrators from the companions down to their disciples and successors till these were reduced into writing. A separate science for the verification and criticism of the Traditions was evolved which included the biographical account of all the narrators of the Traditions, their moral and spiritual worth, their memorising capacity and veracity. Quite a large number of books, voluminous treatises and bibliographies, enough to fill a library, have been written on the subject. The Indian Muslims too have given special attention to the science and produced some works of outstanding merit. In the last two hundred years, India has indeed been the centre of study and teaching of the Traditions, leaving all the other Muslim countries far behind. Today, no Muslim or even an Arab country can boast of the high-standard

of the hadith studies found in some of the Indian institutions, such as Darul Uloom Deoband, Mazahiril Uloom, Saharanpur, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow and Markazi Darul Uloom, Banaras. These institutions are regularly graduating students in the science of Traditions, carrying out research and bringing out valuable publications on the subject. They also have in their teaching staff certain doctors of exceptional merit and ability who could be the envy of any other Islamic country.

### **Islamic Brotherhood**

Last, but not the least dominant trait of Muslim social life is the international brotherhood, a transcendental religious and spiritual affinity cutting across all the barriers of race, language and nationality, to which a Muslim feels irresistibly drawn on account of his religious teachings. He, undoubtedly, loves the country to which he belongs ; deems it an article of faith to defend its interests and lay down his life for its sake; but this does not stand in his way of taking interest in the welfare of other Muslims whom he considers as members belonging to one and the same family. This concept of human brotherhood is like a celestial light that guides the Muslims in the darkness of racial prejudices and national hatreds: it teaches them to hate none but love all. Their interest in the affairs of the other Muslims consists of a pious wish for their well-being, a feeling of sorrow for

their misfortune, and moral support to them when they need it: this is in no way a stumbling block in their way to patriotism and love for their own country. They consider it a duty enjoined by justice and humanitarian ideals, embedded in their religion and a means of strengthening and furthering the interests of their own country. Nothing bears out this assertion more clearly than the Khilafat Movement launched by the Indian Muslims under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Ali Brothers, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Abdul Bari and other freedom-fighters. The wonderful spectacle of Hindu-Muslim unity and the tremendous popular upsurge for the freedom of the country produced by the Khilafat Movement would be still fresh in the memory of many a person in the country. The object of this movement was to restore justice to the Turks and to preserve Khilafat as much as to liberate their own country from the foreign yoke. The same political consciousness and feeling of sympathy for the Muslims of other countries has been responsible for the keen interest shown by the Indian Muslims in the Palestine problem. There is no denying of this concern of Muslims for the humanity at large, and their co-religionists in particular: it is a characteristic of the message of Islam which must be taken into account for a better understanding of the Muslims' attitude and behaviour. ■

## Hindu Right's Ploy to Win Over Muslims

- Shaikh Mujibur Rehman

In recent months, the Hindu Right has shown great concern for Pasmanda Muslims. In July 2022, at the National Executive Meeting in Hyderabad, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed for Pasmanda outreach. Broadly, Pasmanda is a category of Muslims that has an indelible Hindu heritage, largely belongs to the OBC, Dalit, and Adivasi social groups, and is considered comparatively backward to other Indian Muslims. Convinced about the Hindu Right's anti-Muslim prejudices, its critics are intrigued by its rather new-found compassion for Pasmandas. Some view it as the BJP's divide-and-rule policy to deal with Muslims.

In India's ideological struggle between secularists vis-a-vis Hindu nationalists, it appears as if the BJP is trying to give back to its ideological opponents, the secularists, in their own game. For quite some time, some secularists have been advocating Muslim-Dalit solidarity to deal with the growing influence of Hindu nationalists. This strategy has varied strands. One was represented by Kanshi Ram's Bahujan politics, which was clearly meant to take on India's Brahminical order. There were other political parties, especially of minority groups, which also sought to pursue similar strategies. The underlying goal has been to unravel Hindu consolidation across caste lines, and stitch an enduring political alliance based on shared victimhood.

In the electoral domain, very little is achieved by this strategy against the Hindu Right. Scholars who work the BJP's electoral strategies have argued that the party has been far more successful in co-opting the Hindu Dalits compared to the efforts of its secular rivals. In a way, the Hindu Right is essentially replicating the divide-and-rule policy that secularists sought to deploy to undermine the Hindutva movement particularly since the late 1980s. That is why, one of the ways the Hindu Right's Pasmanda outreach could be seen is as paying back by the same coin to its ideological adversary, the secularists.

At the heart of this debate lies the big puzzle: the place of caste among Indian Muslims. It is a unique gift of Hindu society to Indian Islam and also to other religions such as Christianity and Sikhism. Therefore, its presence among Indian Muslims is robust evidence of inadequate Islamisation. While commenting on the presence of caste among Muslims, Ambedkar in his famous essay, Annihilation of Caste, said that the key point is: in Hinduism, caste has religious consecration but that is not the case with Islam. That is why Ambedkar appealed to Dalits to embrace Islam if they wish to emancipate themselves from the Hindu caste order though he himself embraced Buddhism. Likewise, Periyar, while addressing an anti-untouchability conference in 1943, said: "Converting to

Islam is the solution because it offers social unity and self-respect... Adi-Dravidas ought to leave Hinduism and join Islam..”

In a recent discussion in New Delhi, historian Romila Thapar suggested that Ambedkar should have spoken more forcefully about the caste among Muslims. Not just Ambedkar, but also Gandhi, Nehru or Maulana Azad should have spoken about caste among Indian Muslims in my view, which could have undermined the “separate homeland” movement premised on Muslim homogeneity.

Pasmanda Muslims constitute roughly more than 80% of the Indian Muslim population. Activists have pointed out discrimination faced by some groups of Pasmandas in Mosques, kabaristan (graveyards), and various domains of social relationships, contrary to the teaching of Islam. There are also evidence of people of Pasmanda heritage who have occupied key position in major Muslim institutions. For example, Maulana Abdul Qasim Nomani, served as Rector for years of Deobond, the most prominent Islamic seminary.

While the Hindu Right may have a political motive to attribute the backwardness of Pasmanda Muslims to Ashraf Muslims or upper caste Muslims (for instance Sheikhs, Sayeds, etc.) who trace their origins to outside India such as the Arab world or central Asia, the fact is that the issues of Muslim backwardness are multi-dimensional, and caste could be

only one such factor or even the most prominent factor. Furthermore, Islam is the youngest of the Abrahamic religions compared to Judaism and Christianity, so it is natural that most Muslims even in the Arab world and elsewhere have non-Islamic ancestry, almost the way Indian Muslims are having Hindu heritage. Therefore, Indian Muslims having Hindu heritage represents more of a global pattern of Muslim evolutionary history rather than an exception, and need not be seen pejoratively.

For the Hindu Right, it is convenient to paint Pasmanda backwardness as a consequence of intra-Muslim community prejudices rather than an outcome of any form of discrimination arising out of the majority-minority framework of domination and hostility. But the Hindu Right is yet to formulate any systematic policy of intervention for the upliftment of Pasmandas. For instance, Danish Azad Ansari, a lone Muslim minister in BJP’s Uttar Pradesh government, remains more of an exception a pattern, given that no such faces could be found in BJP governments say in Gujarat or Madhya Pradesh or Haryana, or even at the Centre. At this point, it looks like Hindutva’s response to Pasmanda issues is another stunted form of symbolism- almost the way symbolism was part of India’s secularism. But what the community needs is a substantive intervention to address its long-standing backwardness issues. ■

*(The Hindu -12-01-2023)*



## Prevalence of Oppression-An Unhealthy Sign for the Country and Society

- S. Bilal Abdul Hai Hasani Nadwi\*

Whenever any nation's target is persecution and oppression, it can not last for long. Similarly, governments can't exist with brutality and tyranny.

The main characteristics of India have always been that people belonging to a variety of faiths and religions live together and all flourish and thrive here. But no discrimination showed on the basis of caste and creed. Muslims ruled here more than seven hundred years but all had been accorded full rights and privileges to act on their respective religions. No atrocity was meted out to them in the name of religion. No person was killed, tortured and murdered in the name of religion. Unprecedented tolerance and forbearance was exhibited during Muslim rule.

That is why not a single incident of forcefully conversion of religion was found during the longest period of Muslim rule in India .

Strangely, today some such events are taking place in a democratic country like India which were never seen earlier. It is nothing but a travesty with law and judiciary. Media has totally lost its image and identity.

Today, people are being befooled but reality can not be changed. A section of people is prone to destroy the very existence of the country. What will be the result only Allah knows. Perhaps they have forgotten that when any boat sinks, it sinks with all people aboard. The country is passing through a very critical and tough time. The future of the country seems bleak and hollow.

A deliberate conspiracy is being hatched to make more weak the marginalized section of the country.

It is imperative to ponder over the issue cool mindedly. Moreover, it is time to come forward and combat those who raise their ugly heads to destroy the country's unity and integrity. Anything which is hidden, that can be hidden for some time but not forever. When anything crosses its limits, the situation can not be easily brought under control. If the condition remains unchanged, the anarchy will be rampant in the entire country and it will adversely affect it.

At this juncture, it is the need of the hour that the well - wishers of the country must come forward and steer the sinking boat of it to the shore. ■

(English Rendering: O.R. Nadwi)

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

## A Short History of Chips, The Drivers of Our World

- Alind Chauhan

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic brought the microchip industry to a standstill. Both the supply and demand sides were disrupted as factories shut down and requirements for laptops and computers shot up dramatically

In his latest book, *Chip War*, economic historian Chris Miller writes: "Political leaders in the US, Europe and Japan hadn't thought much about semiconductors in decades. Like the rest of us, they thought "tech" meant search engines or social media, not silicon wafers (microchips)."

These tiny chips are today the bedrock of our modern world. From household appliances to mobile phones, cars to aeroplanes, toys to high-end luxury products, they are part of almost every essential product.

How did this happen? How did the United States perfect its microchip technology? And most importantly, how did semiconductors become a geopolitical prize and a focal point?

Miller answers these questions as he chronicles the history of microchips, with a focus on the key players who invented the new technology, and who ensured it was cheaply and readily available.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union too, tried to set up its own version of Silicon Valley. They failed because they focused only on "vast espionage campaigns" to copy American microprocessors that ultimately produced substandard semiconductors, Miller writes.

The region that did become a leading player in this industry was Asia — where companies in countries such as Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore threatened the dominance of the US. In response, the US chose to innovate around its competitors — "rather than cutting off from trade, Silicon Valley offshored even more production to Taiwan and South Korea to regain its competitive advantage".

This decision to move the manufacture of semiconductors outside the country has now come back to haunt the US. Today, Taiwan makes 37 per cent of the annual global supply of chips, thanks to the giant Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), while the US produces only 12 per cent. The strategic insecurity in this situation is underlined every time China threatens to "reunify" Taiwan with the mainland.

"... Both Washington and Beijing are fixated on controlling the future of computing — and, to a frightening degree, that future is dependent on a small island that Beijing considers a renegade province and America has committed to defend by force," Miller writes.

*Chip War* interweaves the past, present, and possible future of the semiconductor industry, spotlighting its evolution in response to changing geopolitical imperatives. ■

*(The Indian Express, 18-03-2023)*

## Suffah And The People of Suffah

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi\*

Subsequent to diversion of Qibla, when the Prophet's mosque got diverted towards Baitullah, the wall of the mosque on the side of the first Qibla and the space adjacent to it, that was in the shape of a platform, got reserved for accommodating those members of the Muslim community who wanted to come over and reside there for getting acquainted with, and learning from the Prophet (SAW), matters regarding the religion. Hence, the people started staying there. The board for them was arranged by the Prophet (SAW) himself like he did for his family members. And the Prophet (SAW), magnanimous that he was and owing to the wont that he had of going all-out to help the poor, would get himself, off and on, into great distress. Situation would, sometimes, come to such a pass as would leave no recourse but to put up with hunger and starvation. But he (SAW) would endure all that. The number of these theology students would sometimes go up to as high as seventy. But, that was how a team of people well-versed in religion got prepared. This place where these people used to be put up was known by the name of Suffah. It is this Suffah which happened to be the first ever Madrasah in Islam. It proved to be the first ever Madrasah instituted not amongst the

Muslims only but amongst the Arabs also. It was given the name of Suffah, that is: platform or podium. It is from this very place that the incessant trend of acquiring knowledge of religious affairs and Islamic injunctions imparted by the Prophet (SAW) had gotten initiated. Subsequently, the Islamic Madrasahs kept on coming up and getting established all over the world.

### **Patience And Endurance in Serving the Cause of The Islamic Mission:**

The persecution that the Prophet (SAW) and his followers had suffered during the life in Makkah, was in fact inflicted upon them by their own kinsfolk and compatriots. Being, as they did, generally from the same stock of family the former were not inferior to the latter in valour, fervour and sense of honor. Had they wanted, they could have taken, to avenge themselves, such measures as would have robbed them of their rest and repose. Day and night, whenever they found an opportunity, they could have taken revenge from them. But, they were bound under the command that they should keep themselves confined to quietly endure the sufferings, remain patient and be content with only predicator expostulations and exhortations. The Command that they had was:

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\* Rector, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.

(Keep your hands withheld and establish the prayer).

For 13 long years this trend of events had persisted. And ultimately the homeland, too, had to be bidden adieu. Another place was, however, procured where an organism having substantial numerical strength got set up. Permission also got issued to the effect that going on putting up with iniquities on end was no more necessary. Force can be applied in order to defend themselves and resist the onslaughts of the enemy.

Consequent upon this permission, measures as were called for got started to be taken. Nevertheless, there were also instructions to the effect that, in the process of taking these measures, no such measures as were uncalled-for

should be taken. In case of operations being necessary, consideration must be had of the human values. Women and children should be treated with due care and concern. Affability, commonweal and peace-making should be the norms. As a result thereof, the enmity of the enemy kept losing grounds while the message of Islam kept gaining them. The net result was that, in the Prophet's (SAW) life-time itself, the entire Arab Peninsula had become proponent of the Prophet's (SAW) teachings and had itself subjugated to his (SAW) dominion. Even the greatest of the great warriors of Makkah who had left no stones unturned to have him stalled, even to have him murdered, rather, had, ultimately, brought themselves under his subjugation. ■

### Luminous Torch

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

And so does N. S. Mehta, a gifted Indian civil servant, say in course of an article entitled, 'Islam and the Indian Civilization':

"Islam had brought to India a luminous torch which rescued humanity from darkness at a time when old civilizations were on the decline and lofty moral ideals had got reduced to empty intellectual concepts. As in other lands, so in India, too, the conquests of Islam were more widespread in the world of thought than in the world of politics. Today, also, the Islamic World is a spiritual brotherhood which is held together by community of faith in the Oneness of God and human equality. Unfortunately, the history of Islam in this country remained tied up for centuries with that of government with the result that a veil was cast over its true spirit, and its fruits and blessings were hidden from the popular eye."

In sum, as it would be evident from the facts we have stated in the foregoing pages, and the opinions we have examined, what the Muslims gave to India was much greater and far more lasting and valuable than what they took from it. The coming of Islam and Muslims marked the beginning of a new era in its history — an era of enlightenment, progress and prosperity - which it can never possibly forget. ■

## The Fulfilment of The Mission

- S. Athar Husain

“We have truly sent thee as a witness, as a Bringer of Glad Tidings and as a Warner: In order that ye (O Mankind) may believe in God and his Apostle, that ye may assist and honour Him, and celebrate His praises morning and evening”. (Q 48: 8, 9)

The whole of Arabia having proclaimed the Oneness of God, the foundations of Islam having been laid firm and true, the people having been weaned away from ignorance, wickedness and evils, and piety, fear of God and a new life-impulse having been ingrained in their hearts and the final message of God having been delivered to mankind, the mission of the Prophet was now achieved. To quote Amir Ali, “In the midst of a nation steeped in a Prophet had arisen ‘to rehearse unto them the scriptures and knowledge,—them who before had been in utter darkness’. He found them sunk in a degrading superstition; he inspired them with the belief in one God of truth and love. He saw them disunited and engaged in perpetual strife with each other; he united them by the ties of brotherhood and charity. From time immemorial the Peninsula had been wrapped in moral darkness. Spiritual life was utterly unknown. . The idea of a future existence, and of the return for good and evil, were, as motives of

human action, also practically unknown. Only a few years before, such was the condition of Arabia. What a change had these few years witnessed! The angel of heaven had veritably passed over the land, and breathed harmony and love into the hearts of those who had hitherto been engrossed in the revolting practices of semi-barbarism. Long had Christianity and Judaism tried to wean the Arab tribes from their gross superstition, their inhuman practices, and their licentiousness. But it was not till they heard ‘the spirit-stirring strains’ of the ‘Appointed of God’ that they became conscious of the God of Truth, encompassing the universe with His power and love. Henceforth their aims are not of this earth alone; there is something beyond the grave—higher and purer, calling them to the practice of charity, goodness, justice, and universal love. God is not merely the God of today or of tomorrow, carved out of wood or stone, but the mighty, loving, merciful Creator of the world. Mohammed was the source, under Providence, of this new awakening—the fountain from which flowed the stream of their hopes of eternity; and to him they paid a fitting obedience and reverence. They were all animated with one desire, namely, to serve God in truth and purity, to obey His laws reverently in all the

affairs of life. The truths and maxims, the precepts which, from time to time during the past twenty years, Mohammed had delivered to his followers, were imprinted on their hearts, and had become the ruling principles of action. Law and morality were united ... The humble preacher, who had only the other day been hunted out of the city of his birth, and been stoned out of the place where he had betaken himself to preach God's words, had, within the short space of nine years, lifted up his people from the abysmal depths of moral and spiritual degradation to a conception of purity and justice.

“His life is the noblest record of a work worthily performed. He infused vitality into a dormant people; he consolidated a congeries of warring tribes into a community inspired into action with the hope of everlasting life; he concentrated into a focus all the fragmentary and broken lights which had ever fallen on the heart of man. Such was his work, and he performed it with an enthusiasm and fervour which admitted of no compromise, conceived no halting; with indomitable courage which brooked no resistance, and allowed no fear of consequences; with a singleness of purpose which thought of no self. The religion of divine unity preached on the shores of Galilee had given place to the worship of an incarnate God; the old worship of a female deity had revived among those

who professed the creed of the Master of Nazareth. The Recluse of Hira, the unlettered philosopher—born among a nation of unyielding idolaters—impressed ineffaceably the unity of God and the equality of man upon the minds of the nations who once heard his voice. His ‘democratic thunder’ was the signal for the uprising of the human intellect against the tyranny of priests and rulers. In ‘that world of wrangling creeds and oppressive institutions’, when the human soul was crushed under the weight of unintelligible dogmas, and the human body trampled under the tyranny of vested interests, he broke down the barriers of caste and exclusive privileges. He swept away with his breath the cobwebs which self-interest had woven in the path of man to God. He abolished all exclusiveness in man's relations to his Creator. This unlettered Prophet, whose message was for the masses, proclaimed the value of knowledge and learning. By the Pen, man's works are recorded. By the Pen, man is to be judged. The Pen is the ultimate arbiter of human actions in the sight of the Lord. His persistent and unvarying appeal to reason and to the ethical faculty of mankind, his rejection of miracles, ‘his thoroughly democratic conception of divine government, the universality of his religious ideal, his simple humanity’, - all serve to differentiate him from his predecessors, ‘all affiliate him,’ says the author of

Oriental Religions, 'with the modern world.' “

Having a presentiment of his approaching end, the Prophet decided to do the Last Pilgrimage to Kaaba—the Pilgrimage of Farewell. The news spread round to all parts of Arabia and a vast concourse estimated at about one lakh people assembled at Medina to accompany the Prophet to Mecca. With this immense following he left Medina on the 26th Zul-Qada 11, A.H. (24th February A.D. 632) and reached Mecca on the 4th Zul-Hijja. After completing the rites of the pilgrimage he addressed the assemblage from the top of the Jabal-ul-Arafat, on the 8th Zul-Hijja (7th March):

“Ye People! Listen to my words, for I know not whether another year will be vouchsafed to me after this year to find myself amongst you at this place.

“Your lives and property are sacred and inviolable amongst one another until ye appear before the Lord, as this day and this month is sacred for all; and (remember) ye shall have to appear before your Lord, who shall demand from you an account of all your actions. Ye people, ye have rights over your wives, and your wives have rights over you.... Treat your wives with kindness and love. Verily ye have taken them on the security of God, and have made their persons lawful unto you by the words of God. Keep always faithful

to the trust reposed in you, and avoid sins. Usury is forbidden. The debtor shall return only the principal; and the beginning will be made with the loans of my uncle Abbas, son of Abdul Muttalib... Henceforth the vengeance of blood practised in the days of paganism (Jahilyat) is prohibited; and all blood-feud abolished, commencing with the murder of Ibn Rabi a son of Harith son of Abdul Muttalib...

“And your slaves! See that ye feed them with such food as ye eat yourselves, and clothe them with the stuff ye wear; and if they commit a fault which ye are not inclined to forgive; then part from them, for they are the servants of the Lord, and are not to be harshly treated.”

“Ye people! Listen to my words and understand the same. Know that all Moslems are brothers unto one another. Ye are one brotherhood. Nothing which belongs to another is lawful unto his brother, unless freely given out of goodwill. Guard yourselves against committing injustice.

“Let him that is present tell it unto him that is absent. Haply he that shall be told may remember better than he who hath heard it.” (Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Nasai)

Towards the conclusion of the sermon, the Prophet exclaimed, “O Lord! I have delivered my message and

accomplished my work.” The multitude assembled below cried with one voice, “Yea, verily thou hast.” “O Lord, I beseech Thee, bear Thou witness unto it.”

Even as he completed this farewell address to mankind, God revealed the last and final verse of the Holy Quran:

“This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you religion Al-Islam.” (Q 5: 3)

The pilgrimage being over, the pilgrims dispersed for their destinations. Prophet, with the Ansars and Muhajirins, started for Medina: The caravan sojourned at a place called Khum, where the Prophet addressed his companions:

“All praise to God. O people! I am but a human being. It may be that the angel of death may visit me soon and death may overtake me. I leave in your midst, however, two great things—the Revelation of God in which is light and guidance, Ye Hold to it tightly and the other is my family.” (Muslim).

On reaching Medina, he exclaimed:

“God is Great and Magnificent. There is no God but God and He has no partners. His is the sovereignty; and praise and adoration are for Him alone. He is the All-powerful. We return in repentance, in obedience and prostration; engrossed in the remembrance and praise of God. God has fulfilled His promise and helped His servant and defeated all the coalitions.” (Bukhari) ■

### Material and Spiritual Achievements

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Speaking of the material and spiritual achievements of Muslims in India, W. W: Hunter, a noted anti-Muslim writer, has observed that “the Musalmans led several of these great land reclamation colonies to the southward, and have left their names in the Eastern Bengal as the first dividers of the water from the land. The sportsman comes across their dykes, and metal led rodes, and mosques, and tanks, and tombs in the loneliest recesses of the jungle; and wherever they went, they spread their faith, partly by the sword, but chiefly by a bold appeal to the two great instincts of the popular heart. The Hindus had never admitted the amphibious population of the Delta within the pale of their community. The Muhammadens offered the plenary privileges of Islam to Brahman and outcaste alike. ‘Down on your knees, every one of you,’ preached these fierce missionaries, ‘before the Almighty in whose eyes all mane are equal, all created beings as the dust of earth. There is no god but the one God, and His Messenger is Muhammad.’ The battle cry of the warrior became, as soon as the conquest was over, the text of the Divine.” ■



## The Messenger of God

### HIS LIFE AT A GLANCE

- Qutbuddin Aziz

#### Childhood

Prophet Muhammad(S) was born on April 20, 571 AD. In the city of Makkah in Arabia. A distinguished scion of the Hashim clan of the powerful Quraish tribe, his father was Abdullah bin Abdul Muttalib. Alas, he did not live to see the birth of his son who was destined to spread God's message of peace, piety and righteousness on earth. He died a few months before his son was born. Abdullah, a thriving businessman who led trading caravans to Syria from Makkah, was taken ill in the city of Madina where he died and was buried there.

The mother of the infant Prophet-to-be was the pretty and cultured Amina who loved her son. Despite the widowhood inflicted on her at a young age she looked after him with the utmost devotion. His paternal grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, also loved his handsome grandson. In conformity with the prevailing custom in Arabia, his mother appointed the conscientious Halima Saadia to nurse him and she breast-fed him like her own son.

Muhammad (S) was barely six years old when a second tragedy struck him. His mother took him to Madina to visit the grave of his father. On the way back to Makkah, she fell ill and died suddenly. His grandfather, Abdul

Muttalib, then became his full-time guardian and gave him the affection and care which he badly needed. But hardly two years had passed when he lost his loving grandfather, too, who died at the age of 82. He willed that his son, Abu Talib, should make Muhammad(S) his ward, and he looked after his upbringing and education. In the partly pastoral economy of Makkah, sheep had considerable value and Abu Talib, on occasions, deputed his 12-year-old nephew to be the shepherd of his flock. He also took him to Syria with a trading caravan. On way to Syria, a Christian friar saw the young Muhammad(S) and discerned in him the signs of Prophethood. The visit to Syria broadened the horizons of his knowledge of geography and commerce.

#### Social Service

When war broke out between the tribes of Quraish and Qais, the teenage Prophet-to-be sided with his Uncle but he wielded no sword nor did he shed human blood. He gave cheer and hope to the wounded in the battle of Fujair. Subsequently, he joined a band of dedicated young men in founding a social service agency which helped the weak, the destitute and the oppressed. He signed a covenant under which the welfare agency was established and a

leading light in it was his Uncle, Abu Talib.

The shrine of the Ka'aba in Makkah was renovated but a dispute arose amongst the many tribes of Arabia as to who should place in it the much-venerated black stone. It was decided that the person who enters the Ka'aba with the first light of dawn on the morrow should have the privilege of doing this duty. And, lo, the next morning, the teenage Muhammad(S) was the first to enter the precincts of the Ka'aba. Showing statesmanship at such a young age, he persuaded the Makkans to place the black stone on a large thick sheet and the leaders of all the tribes joined in lifting it and placing it in the Ka'ba. A tribal war was thus averted by his wisdom.

### **Trade**

Initiated into trade and commerce by his Uncle, the young Muhammad(S) won fame as a successful, honest and trustworthy trader. His trading missions to Syria and Yemen yielded sizeable profits, and those who entrusted him with their money and goods reaped large dividends. His honesty as a trader was so well-known that many Makkans deposited their wealth with him and called him the most reliable trustee or Amin. A wealthy widow, Khadijah, sent him on a trading mission to Syria where he sold her merchandise from Makkah at a good profit and returned home with riches, all of which he handed over to

her. Deeply impressed by his honesty and business acumen, forty-year-old Khadijah proposed marriage to the 25 year-old Muhammad(S), who was also her distant cousin, and they were married. He continued his trading missions and saw many more neighbouring countries. He loved his wife devotedly and their marital relations were blissful. She bore him six children, two sons and four daughters, including Fatima whom he adored.

### **Prophethood**

Right from his youthful days, Muhammad(S) detested the hundreds of idols which the Makkans worshipped in the Ka'ba. He abstained from the feasts which they held to honour these 360 stones. He urged them to give up the evil practices which they followed as a part of their idolatrous existence such as nude pilgrimage and bacchanal orgies. To escape from the din and bustle of the city, he sometimes sought refuge in solitude in the cave of Hira, 3 miles from Makkah. There he meditated on the mysteries of the universe and the destiny of man on earth. His soul yearned for the divine light. On a fateful day, the Angel Gabriel appeared before him and asked him to recite the name of the Almighty Allah, the Lord of the Heavens, and the Creator of the Earth and of all mankind. Shocked by the suddenness and the glory of the divine revelation, the forty year-old prophet hurried to his loving wife, Khadijah and told her what had happened in the cave

of Hira. She took him to her uncle, Warqā bin Nawfil, who was a scholar of the earlier Scriptures. They narrated to him the whole story and the old sage was at once convinced that it was an angelic visitation and a command from God that he was henceforth to be His Prophet on earth entrusted with a divine mission to spread His word to the farthest corners of the globe. The noble housewife and a righteous woman became the first convert to Islam and a believer in the Prophethood of Muhammad (S).

The Angel Gabriel visited the Prophet many a time and revealed to him the word of God in the shape of the holy Qur'an. He shared knowledge of his Divine Revelation with some of his closest, relatives and friends amongst whom were the rich and magnanimous Abu Bakr, the lion-hearted Ali who respected him like a father, the learned Uthman, the intrepid Sa'ad Bin Abi Waqqas and the Prophet's former slave, Zaid, whom he treated like his own Son. They hailed Prophet Muhammad(S) as God's Messenger and joined the fold of Islam.

Encouraged by Divine support and unflinching loyalty and affection of his faithful wife and his companions, the Prophet taught them the verses of the Qur'an and the Islamic form of prayer. As news of the Islamic religious movement launched by the Prophet reached the idolatrous rulers of

Makkah, they felt alarmed and unleashed persecution on the converts to Islam. They tried to tempt the Prophet with worldly riches to subvert his faith in God but, with rock-like determination, he continued to spread the message of Islam. He showed immense patience by cheerfully bearing the tortures which the idol-worshipping Makkian rulers inflicted on him and his Muslim followers. They even tried to have him murdered but their evil designs failed. The fraternity of Muslims continued to expand rapidly and it gained in strength when the dynamic Umar and the powerful Hamzah joined it by embracing Islam. Many tribes which lived in the neighbourhood of Makkah became Muslim.

### **Muslims go to Abyssinia**

Deeply grieved by the tortures which the Makkian rulers perpetrated on many Muslims, the Prophet persuaded 15 of them, 11 men and 4 women, to immigrate to Abyssinia where the merciful Negus gave them asylum. He spurned the mounds of gold offered by the emissaries of the Makkian rulers to hand over the Muslim refugees to them. A Christian, the Negus was pleased when the Muslims said in his court that while they believed in the Almighty God and His Prophet Muhammad(S), they also respected Jesus as a God-sent Prophet and his mother, the Virgin Mary.

For three long and hardship-laden years, the small Muslim community in

Makkah bore the social and economic boycott ordered by the Makkan rulers. But they never wavered in their allegiance to God and their faith in the divine mission of the Prophet grew stronger. In these testing times, a tragedy befell the Prophet. His Uncle, Abu Talib and his wife, Muzdijah, passed away. It was an irreparable loss because he loved them dearly. But he showed great fortitude in bearing his loss. He continued his divine mission and preached Islam even in the precincts of the Ka'aba, provoking the wrath and conspiracies of the Makkan overlords.

The process of Qur'anic revelation to the Prophet by the Angel Gabriel continued. Out of the 23 years of his Prophethood, thirteen were spent in Makkah and ten in Madina. About two-third Qur'an was revealed to him while he was in Makkah and the divine revelation continued in Madina. Before he emigrated to Madina, the Prophet was taken by the Angel Gabriel on a journey to the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem from where he ascended to the Heavens, met the Prophets who had preceded him and was ushered into God's presence. ■

*(To be continued)*

### Plenty In A Name

Instead of kings, netas and dignitaries of various descriptions, what if we looked at India's extraordinarily diverse flora and fauna, and its grand rivers and imposing mountains to name all our public spaces? The Supreme Court rightly dismissed a PIL that sought a renaming commission focussed on "ancient India". However, India does need a new way of naming – but one not bound by this or that view of a perpetually contested past. The country is expected to add another 416 million people to its cities by 2050, taking the urban population share to 50%. This means major infrastructure expansion. Each new project, street, square will need a new name. So, without a revamped philosophy of naming, this issue will keep wasting social capital and the court's scarce time.

Take a gander at the top airports around the world and most have straightforwardly geographical titles – Amsterdam, Beijing, Dubai, Incheon, Los Angeles, Munich. Similarly, in many countries, streets are named by their simple number and direction. All of this is both user-friendly and conflict-reducing. But when utilitarianism is not the only concern, homage to Nature serves so much better than to man, whether it is Singapore Changi Airport's nod to a legendary tree, or the 300-odd streets named after Oak in California. Why don't we get out of the cross-party obsession with history when naming streets, squares, airports? Think of all the missing Champa, Chinar, Jamun, Jacaranda, Koel, Myna, Mahua. It's easier to find a Peacock Road and an Elephant Road abroad than here.

Words have power, names carry moods. Would you rather live on a street named after a leader or after a flower? And if dead people who were famous have to be considered, why not name public spaces after popular figures from arts, entertainment and sport? Nice names, by the way, are economic multipliers. US data indicates homes on 'Lake' streets average 16% more than the national median home value. Aspirational real estate in India has names like 'Riverview' or 'Camellias'. Shrewd realtors have cottoned on to people's preferences. Surely, governments, elected by people, should too. ■

*(Editorial, The Times of India, 01-03-2023)*

## The Holy Qur'an As A Source of Knowledge And Axis of Intellectual Activity

- Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri

The Holy Quran is the eternal book that Allah (SWT) revealed to His Prophet and Messenger Mohammed Ibn Abdullah (PBUH). A complete guidebook to life in all its dimensions, Allah (SWT) described the Quran as: **“That this is indeed a Quran Most Honorable”** (Al-Waqiaa, 77), and as a beacon that guides mankind to what is most right **“Verily this Qur’an doth guide to that which is most right (or stable)”** (Al-Israa, 9). The Almighty reveals to us the immense blessings contained in the Quran in the divine verse: **“And We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims”** (Annahl, 89). The Quran indeed enlightens Man, presenting him with the guiding principles that steer his life and his relationship with God, the universe, himself, his Muslim family and with non-Muslims, whether those who accept him in peace or those who fight him. It is the Ummahs constitution and Allah’s rope which never breaks.

The Holy Quran is the book of guidance for humanity at all times and in all places. The concept of guidance is an all-encompassing and profound one. Thus, the holy book contains the principles of faith, the Chariah precepts, the general principles governing individual and community life, and all the

rulings and prescriptions that lighten the path before man and steer him towards the best of the two worlds.

Through its divine verses, the Holy Quran provides all the moral values, social interactions and legal ruling that govern the following:

- 1- The rites of worship (about 140 verses)
- 2- Personal status matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and others (about 70 verses)
- 3- Commercial and other transactions such as sales, rental, mortgage, partnerships and trading (about 70 verses)
- 4- Legal matters related to crime and punishment (about 30 verses)
- 5- Juridical matters and testimonies and similar matters (about 20 verses)

The Holy Quran is the entire constitution of Muslim life and the first source of divine guidance in steering this life towards what is right and beneficial. With Quran-inspired guidance, Muslims edified a prestigious civilization of which the benefits spread to all humanity, and on this guidance they go back whenever one of their own or from among their enemies rises against them, wishing to

strengthen weaknesses and redress the deviation in their course. Muslims knew that in the holy book lies their salvation, the witness to their civilization and the backbone of their power. Their enemies knew that too and sought in their battle to attack this source of guidance and denigrate it in the eyes of Muslims by casting doubts on this Book, challenging its origins, its essence and its contents. Their aim is to belittle its worth in the eyes of believers and stamp out any impact it may have on Muslim hearts and minds when these stray far from the path of righteousness, as well as any boosting effect it may have on shaky resolutions.

Attempts to denigrate the Holy Quran were not limited to accidental publicity or spurt of the moment reactions. Instead, they extended to scientific research and penetrated encyclopedias and reference books that are widely used among Muslims. Whether in its old or new edition, Brill's Encyclopedia of Islam, printed in the Dutch city of Leiden and widely used in Islamic and non-Islamic circles, ranks at the top of the encyclopedias and reference books that are replete with distortions of the Quran and attempts to tarnish its image and essence.

Although the Holy Quran is protected by a divine promise from any distortions **“We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it [from corruption].”** (Al-Hijr, 9), and although

some of the attacks on this divine book are the result of either evil plots, ignorance or a dysfunction in the methodology of scientific research, it is our duty to face up to these onslaughts, expose the error of their ways, redress the distortions and mishaps they purport, reveal the truth and ensure that the Quran's effect on hearts is not weakened or lost. This is the mission that the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization -ISESCO- has endeavored to accomplish by publishing a series of books in Arabic, French and English, including The Holy Quran: A study to Rectify Errors in Brill's Encyclopedia of Islam. This book addresses and rectifies the errors contained in the encyclopedias when they tackle Islam or the Holy Quran and was the second book in a series dedicated to redressing the distortions and errors published on Islam and Muslims.

A new European encyclopedia called the Encyclopedia of Quran was later on published in six volumes dedicated to spreading fallacies about the Holy Quran and consecrating distortions. The encyclopedia, published by the Dutch publisher E.J. Brill under the supervision of the Canadian orientalist Jane McAuliffe, contains all the fallacies and prejudices ever purported by former and new orientalists and as a reference book provided relevant but ill-intentioned information.

*(To be continued)*

## The Meaning And Rules of Fasting

- Muzammil Siddiqi

### What is Fasting?

Fasting is called sawm in the Qur'an, The word sawm literally means "to abstain" In Surah Maryam, Allah tells that Mary the mother of Jesus said "I have vowed a fast (sawm) for the sake of the Merciful, so today I shall not speak to anyone." (Maryam 19:26) The meaning is "I have vowed to abstain from speaking to anyone today." According to Shari'ah 'ah, the word sawm means to abstain from all those things that are forbidden during fasting from the break of dawn to the sunset, and to do this with the intention of fasting.

### Purpose of Fasting

The Qur'an says what means, "O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those who were before you, in order that you may learn taqwa (piety) (Al-Baqarah 2:183).

Taqwa is a very important spiritual and ethical term of the Qur'an. It is the sum total of all Islamic spirituality and ethics. It is a quality in a believer's life that keeps him/her aware of Allah all the time. A person who has taqwa loves to do good and to avoid evil for the sake of Allah. Taqwa is piety, righteousness and consciousness of Allah. Taqwa requires patience and perseverance. Fasting teaches patience, and with patience one can rise to the high

position of taqwa.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said that fasting is a shield. It protects a person from sin and lustful desires. When the disciples of Jesus asked him how to cast the evil spirits away, he is reported to have said, "But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 17:21).

According to Imam Al- Ghazali (d. 1111 C.E.), fasting produces a semblance of divine quality of samadiyyah (freedom from want) in a human being. Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim (d. 1350 C.E.), viewed fasting as a means of releasing the human spirit from the clutches of desire, thus allowing moderation to prevail in the carnal self. Imam Shah Waliullah Dahlawi (d. 1762 C.E.) viewed fasting as a means of weakening the bestial and reinforcing the angelic elements in human beings. Maulana Mawdudi (d. 1979 C.E.) emphasized that fasting for a full month every year trains a person individually, and the Muslim community as a whole, in piety and self restraint.

### Fasting Is Obligatory

In the second year of Hijrah, Muslims were commanded to fast in the month of Ramadan every year. The Qur'an says what means "O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as

it was prescribed for those who were before you, in order that you may learn taqwa (piety)” (AlBaqarah 2: 183) and “The month of Ramadhan is that in which was revealed the Qur’an, wherein is guidance for mankind and the clear signs of guidance and distinction. Thus whosoever among you witness the month must fast...” (Al-Baqarah 2: 184).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) explained this further in a number of his statements reported in the books of Hadith. It is reported by Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar that the Messenger of Allah said, “Islam is built upon five pillars: testifying that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, performing Prayer, paying the Zakah, making the pilgrimage to the Sacred House (Hajj), and fasting the month of Ramadan.”

The Muslim Ummah is unanimous that fasting in the month of Ramadan is obligatory upon every person who is capable (mukallaf).

### **Rules of Fasting**

#### **A) Who Must Fast?**

Muslims all over the world wait eagerly for Ramadan, as it is a time of increased inner peace and well-being.

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is obligatory upon every Muslim, male or female, who is adult (i.e., has reached puberty) and sane and who is

not sick or on a journey.

Sickness could be a temporary sickness from which a person expects to be cured soon. Such a person is allowed not to fast during the days of his/her sickness, but he/ she must fast later after Ramadan to complete the missed days. Those who are sick with incurable illness and expect no better health are also allowed not to fast but they must pay the fidyah, which is giving a day’s meals for each fast missed to a needy person. One can also give instead the money for meals to a needy person. Women in their menses and post-natal bleeding are not allowed to fast, but they must make up later after Ramadan. If pregnant women and mothers who are nursing babies find it difficult to fast, they can also postpone their fasting to a later time when they are in a better condition.

A journey according to the Shari’ah is any journey that takes you away from your city of residence, a minimum of 48 miles or 80 kilometres. The journey must be for a good cause. It is a sin to travel in Ramadan in order to avoid fasting. A Muslim should try to change his/her plans during Ramadan to be able to fast and should not travel unless it is necessary. The traveller who misses the fasts of Ramadan must make up those missed days later as soon as possible after Ramadan.

#### **B) Fasting According to the Sunnah**

1) Take sahur (pre-dawn meal). It is



Sunnah and there is a great reward and blessing in taking sahur, The best time for sahur is the last half hour before dawn or the time for Fajr prayer.

- 2) Take iftar (break-fast) immediately after sunset. Shari'ah considers sunset when the disk of the sun goes below the horizon and disappears completely.
- 3) During the fast, abstain from all false talks and deeds. Do not quarrel, have disputes, indulge in arguments, use bad words, or do anything that is forbidden. You should try to discipline yourself morally and ethically, besides gaining physical training and discipline. You should also not make a show of your fasting by talking too much about it, or by showing dry lips and a hungry stomach, or by showing a bad temper. The fasting person must be a pleasant person with good spirits and good cheer.
- 4) During the fast, do acts of charity and goodness to others and increase your worship and reading of the Qur'an. Every Muslim should try to read the whole Qur'an at least once during the month of Ramadan.

### **C) Things That Invalidate the Fast**

You must avoid doing anything that may render your fast invalid. Things that invalidate the fast and require qadaa' (making up for these days) are the

following:

- 1) Eating, drinking or smoking deliberately, including taking any non-nourishing items by mouth, nose or anus.
- 2) Deliberately causing yourself to vomit.
- 3) The beginning of menstrual or post-childbirth bleeding even in the last moment before sunset.
- 4) Sexual intercourse or other sexual contact (or masturbation) that results in ejaculation (in men) or vaginal secretions (orgasm) in women.
- 5) Eating, drinking, smoking or having sexual intercourse after Fajr (dawn) on the mistaken assumption that it is not Fajr time yet. Similarly, engaging in these acts before Maghrib (sunset) on the mistaken assumption that it is already Maghrib time.

Sexual intercourse during fasting is forbidden and is a great sin. Those who engage in it must make both qadaa' (make up the fasts) and kaffarah (expiation by fasting for 60 days after Ramadan or by feeding 60 poor people for each day of fast broken in this way). According to Imam Abu Hanifah, eating and/or drinking deliberately during fast also entail the same qadaa' and kaffarah.

### **D) Things That Do Not Invalidate Fasting**

Using a miswak to clean your

teeth does not invalidate fasting.

During fast, the following things are permissible:

- 1) Taking a bath or shower. If water is swallowed in: voluntarily it will not invalidate the fast. According to most of the jurists, swimming is also allowed in fasting, but one should avoid diving, because that will cause the water to go from the mouth or nose into the stomach.
- 2) Using perfumes, wearing contact lenses or using eye drops.
- 3) Taking injections or having a blood test.
- 4) Using miswak (tooth-stick) or toothbrush (even with tooth paste) and rinsing the mouth or nostrils with water, provided it is not overdone (so as to avoid swallowing water).
- 5) Eating, drinking or smoking unintentionally, i.e., forgetting that one was fasting. But one must stop as soon as one remembers and should continue one's fast.
- 6) Sleeping during the daytime and having a wet-dream does not break one's fast. Also, if one has intercourse during the night and was not able to make ghusl (bathe) before dawn, he/she can begin fast and make ghusl later. Women whose menstruation stops during the night may begin fasting even if they have not made ghusl yet. In all these cases,

bathing (ghusl) is necessary but fast is valid even without bathing.

- 7) Kissing between husband and wife is allowed in fasting, but one should try to avoid it so that one may not do anything further that is forbidden during the fast.

### **E) Requirements for Fasting to Be Valid**

There are basically two main components of fasting:

- 1) The intention (niyyah) for fasting. One should make a sincere intention to fast for the sake of Allah every day before dawn. The intention need not be in words, but must be with the sincerity of the heart and mind. Some jurists are of the opinion that the intention can be made once only for the whole month and does not have to be repeated every day. It is, however, better to make intention every day to take full benefit of fasting.
- 2) Abstaining from dawn to dusk from everything that invalidates fasting. This point has been explained in detail in the preceding sections. ■

*(The author is the imam and director of the Islamic Society of Orange County, California, USA and former president of the Islamic Society of North America. This article originally appeared in the Fatwa Corner of IslamOnline)*

## Renaissance in Europe-A Product of Muslim Educational Influences

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

As an Iqra community (Reading and Research community), Muslims have always been innovators and initiators par excellence. The very first Revelation sent to the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) starts with an imperative verb, "Iqra" i.e. read itself laying tremendous stress on reading and knowing the unknown. The Holy Qur'an says, "Read in the name of your Lord Who has created all that exists. He has created man from a clot of congealed blood. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, who has taught man by the pen. He has taught man that which he did not know." (S.96.A.1-5)

No doubt, Islam is the only religion in the world that made education obligatory for its adherents of the saying, "seeking knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim man and woman." That is why Islam made great strides in different branches of knowledge and learning. It is Islam which showed the path of progress and prosperity to the world. Before the advent of Islam, the entire world had sunk into darkness and corruption.

Briffault, writes in the "Making of Humanity" (P.191) that science owes a great deal more to the Arab culture, it owes its existence to Arab scientists

who made startling discoveries of revolutionary theories. He says that 'the Greeks systematized, generalized, and theorized, but the patient ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of science, detailed and prolonged observations, experimental enquiry, altogether alien to the Greek treatment, that spirit (of inquiry) and those methods were introduced into the European World by the Arabs'. "Medical literature produced by the Arabs served as reference works in Europe for centuries and their researches in medical sciences have proved valid even today. The Arabs systematized different branches of medical knowledge, and undertook intense researches in the field. Their book such as "Firdaus al-Hikma", Kamil as-Sina'a", the Canon and Al -Hawi bear testimony to their researches made for the advancement of medical sciences and the medicine. (Medical Philosophy in Islam and the Contributions of Muslims to the Advancement of Medical Sciences, p,14)

The Arabs, being inspired by the Qur'an and the Sunna to seek ever more knowledge, and to conquer the forces of nature for the benefit of man, did not

hesitate to gather knowledge from any quarter. The Holy Prophet set the minds of the believers towards medical research by saying- 'For every disease there is a medicine' (Li-Kulli Dain Dawaun). The following Ahadith, among many others, urged the believers to strive for knowledge (Uloom).

1. He who desires knowledge adores God.
2. The study of a science has the value of a fast, the teaching of it has the value of a prayer.
3. Science lights the door to paradise.
4. Wisdom is the goal of all believers, acquire it from any one.
5. Take the knowledge even from the lips of an infidel.
6. The ink of a scholar is holier than the blood of a martyr.
7. Whoever is asked about a piece of knowledge and he hides it, shall be bridled with the bridle of fire.
8. Whoever wishes to have the benefit of this immediate world let him acquire knowledge. Whoever wishes to have the benefits of the world hereafter, let him acquire knowledge. And finally:
9. An hour of meditation is better than sixty years of worship.

All these clearly reveal the Islamic attitude towards knowledge. It was due to the Qur'anic and the Prophetic injunctions that Muslims respected the knowledge of other nations and did not destroy or burn the Greek works. (Ibid,p,35).

Noted Islamic scholar S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi says, "When Europe was passing through darkness and ignorance in the Middle Ages, Muslim world was producing scholars, thinkers, educationists, and eminent masters of physical and social sciences. European writers have often acknowledged that for six hundred years Europe learnt and benefited from the researches of Muslims before commencing their march to progress."

S. Habibul Haq Nadwi says, "The rise of Europe came after the capture of Muslim Empire and their intellectual, scientific and cultural treasures as a booty. Even the tenth century Cordova was the most cultured city in Europe, and so were Baghdad and Constantinople".

The Islamic influence on European culture reached its peak in the 10th Century (4th Century Hijri) in Spain when, according to R.W. Southern, in his book, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962 — Page 21) talented young Christians were reading

books in Arabic and were reported to “despise the Christian literature as unworthy of attention. “They also ignored the study of Latin and took to Arabic. Arabic books were also translated in Latin in large numbers between the 11th Century and 13th Century. M. Nakosteen in his book, A History of Islamic Origin of Western Education AD 800-1350 (Published by University Colorado Press, 1964) has said that Universities were founded in Europe during the period to assimilate the flood of Muslim sciences and technologies inundating Europe. Incidentally, the highest point of the Muslim sciences and technologies in the West is also the lowest and the most destructive part of our history during the Mongol invasion. While the Islamic sciences stopped growing by the 14th Century, their influence lasted in Europe till 17th Century.

It was the Muslim influence on Europe which brought about the Renaissance. For four centuries there was not a single advance in the field of science or technology that was not made by the Muslims. Moritz Cantor fails to explain this phenomenon in material terms when he says, “That a people who for centuries together were closed to all the cultural influence from their neighbours, who themselves did not influence others during all this time, who then all of a sudden imposed their faith, their laws and their language, on

other nations to an extent which has no parallel in history — all this is such an extra-ordinary phenomenon that it is worthwhile to investigate its causes. At the same time, we can be sure that this sudden outburst of intellectual maturity could not have originated of itself.”

It will require a long study to pin point the reasons for the decline in Islamic learning. However, the debilitating battles of the Crusades, Taimoor’s invasion from Delhi to Angora, and the Turkish political ascendancy of the Muslim world who could not pay attention to arts and culture on account of their constant warfare, were some of the important reasons for the down-hill journey of Muslim sciences. The defeat and disintegration of the Muslim world at the hands of the nascent industrial powers of Europe completed this task in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (Islamic Education Redefinition of Aims and Methodology, p,8-9)

In short, Renaissance in Europe is indebted to the contributions and achievements made by Islam in various branches of knowledge and learning. As internationally known Islamic scholar Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi says, "There is not a single sector of European revival which is not indebted to Islamic thought. Islam imparted a new glow of life to Europe." ■

## Inside India

### **I Shut Down 600 Madrasas, Want to Close All: Himanta**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said he intends to shut down all madrasas in his state, maintaining that they are not needed in “New India”.

Addressing a large gathering after inaugurating a light-and-sound show in Belagavi, Karnataka, where elections are due soon, he said, “I come from Assam, where everyday people arrive from Bangladesh.”

There is a threat to our culture, traditions. I have shut down 600 madrasas, but my intention is to shut down all madrasas. It was said how can you say such a thing? I replied I can say such a thing because we don't need madrasas, we need doctors and engineers. Schools, colleges and universities are our need,” he said, adding “there is no need for madrasas in New India”.

Sarma accused the Congress and Communists of “distorting” history and “misrepresenting” facts. He also called the Congress the “new Mughals”. The AIUDF and Congress criticised his remarks, saying these were against the “spirit of the Constitution”.

### **Documentary Row: Gujarat House Passes Resolution Against BBC**

Gandhinagar: The Gujarat Assembly passed a resolution seeking “strict” action against BBC for airing a “fabricated” documentary that was used as a “tool-kit” to “defame” Prime Minister Narendra Modi and destabilise India. Congress MLAs, who were earlier suspended for protesting against the change of ‘prasad’ at Ambaji temple, were absent in the Assembly.

The private member’s, moved by Sojitra BJP MLA Vipul Patel, was passed after almost 90 minutes of discussion. “The passage of a private members resolution unanimously by all the members present is a big thing. This reflects how much anger is there among the masses regarding the BBC documentary,” Speaker Chaudhary said after the resolution was passed.

“Any media house publishing any news about India should bear in mind that India is the largest democracy that follows the principles of Panchsheel,” he said.

### **Need to Plan For Community’s Uplift, Tap Govt. Schemes:**

Lucknow: Muslim scholars and intellectuals gathered in the state capital and called for need to evolve a plan to help the community come out of poverty.

“It is time to plan for future so that our community

could come out of poverty and deprivation,” said chairman, Islamic Centre of India, Khalid Rashid Farangi Mahali while presiding over a two-day conference of Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) that began in Lucknow. Government representatives, scholars, policy makers, academicians, intellectuals and civil society activists are attending the two-day event where the need to tap benefits of government schemes for the community was also made.

### **NCM Panel to Check Minority School Dropouts**

NEW DELHI: The National Commission of Minorities (NCM) has formed a panel to examine ways to promote minority education and also ensure that there are no dropouts of school children after the ministry of minority affairs withdrew the pre-metric scholarship scheme for Classes 1-8 saying they are already covered under the Right to Education Act which provides for free and compulsory education up to Class 8, Ambika Pandit.

The six-member committee, to be led by NCM Vice Chairman Kersi K Deboo and with one representative from each community, will study the implementation of the RTE Act by states and recommend measures to ensure that no child drops out of the school system.

NCM officials said the panel, over a period of three months, will review the implementation of RTE in not only government schools but also the norms followed by government-aided private schools and make recommendations to the government.

The ministry of minority affairs has justified changes in the pre-matric scholarship scheme saying the RTE provides for free and compulsory education for every child up to Class 8. Now this scheme is applicable to only Classes 9 and 10. The ministry had also informed Parliament in response to a written question in Lok Sabha in February that “as the Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) Scheme overlaps with various fellowship schemes for higher education, the government has decided to discontinue the MANF Scheme from 2022-23”.

“The NCM had received representations from minority communities against the withdrawal of pre-metric scholarship (Class I to VIII) and Maulana Azad National Fellowship Scholarship for PhD students. In order to discuss the effect of the same, the Commission held a meeting with educationists and community leaders from all over the country, NCM said in a statement. It is learnt that at the meeting, some representatives raised concern that some states are not implementing the RTE effectively. ■

## Around the World

### **Erdogan in For Biggest Test as Turkey Votes on May 14**

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan officially set parliamentary and presidential elections for May 14, a month early and just three months after earthquakes that left millions homeless across southern Turkey.

“Our nation will go to the polls to elect its president and parliamentarians on May 14,” Erdogan said in a televised speech after signing off the decision, little more than a month after the quakes killed almost 50,000 people in Turkey.

Erdogan said the elections had been brought forward because the planned date of June 18 date with university exams, summer holidays and travel to the Hajj pilgrimage.

The vote will be Erdogan’s biggest test in his 20 years in power, and decided not only who leads Turkey but how it is governed, where its economy is headed and what role it may play in easing conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East.

### **Govts Vet Crucial UN Climate Science Report**

PARIS: Diplomats from nearly 200 nations and top climate scientists began a week-long huddle in Switzerland to distil nearly a decade of published science into a 20-odd-page warning about the existential danger of global warming and what to do about it.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s synthesis report — to be released on March 20 — will detail observed and projected changes in Earth’s climate system; past and future impacts such as devastating heat-waves, flooding and rising seas; and ways to halt the carbon pollution pushing Earth towards an unliveable state. “It’s a massive moment, seven years since the Paris Agreement and nine years since the last IPCC assessment report,” Greenpeace Nordic senior policy advisor Kaisa Kosonen, an official observer at IPCC meetings, told.

Since its creation in 1988, the IPCC — an intergovernmental body staffed by hundreds of scientists who work for it on a volunteer basis — has released six three-part assessments, the most recent in 2021-2022. “It is scientists telling

governments how they are doing during these crucial defining years,” Kosonen said.

### **Iran And Saudi Arabia Agree to Revive Diplomatic Ties, With Help From China**

Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations and reopen embassies after seven years of tensions.

The deal struck in Beijing this week represents a major diplomatic victory for the Chinese as Gulf Arab states perceive the US slowly withdrawing from the wider West Asian Region.

In images and video it described as being taken in China, Iranian state media showed Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, with Saudi national security adviser Musaad bin Mohammed al-Aiban and Wang Yi, China’s most senior diplomat.

“After implementing of the decision, the foreign ministers of the both nations will meet to prepare for exchange of ambassadors,” Iranian state television said. It added that the talks had been held over four days.

The joint statement calls for the reestablishing of ties and the reopening of embassies to happen a maximum period of two months.” In the video broadcast by Iranian media, Wang could be heard offering “wholehearted congratulation on the two countries’ “wisdom.”

Shortly afterwards, Saudi state media began publishing the same statement.

### **Hundreds of Troops Killed as Battle for Bakhmut Goes on**

**Ukraine and Russia claimed that hundreds of enemy** troops were killed in one day in the fight for Bakhmut, with Kyiv fending off unabating attacks and a small river that bisects the town now marking the new front line. A Ukrainian military spokesperson, said that 221 pro-Moscow troops were killed and more than 300 wounded in Bakhmut. While Moscow did not specify Bakhmut casualties, the eastern Donetsk town, now nearly deserted, has been the site of one of the bloodiest and longest battles of the year-long war. ■

**OUR REPRESENTATIVES ABROAD**

<b>Britain</b>	:	<b>Mr. Akram Nadwi</b> O.C.I.S.St. Cross College Oxford Ox 1 3 TU (UK)
<b>Dubai</b>	:	<b>Mohammad Khalid Kanpuri</b> P.O. Box No. 12772 Dubai U.A.E.
<b>Pakistan</b>	:	<b>Mr. Ataullah</b> Sector A-50, Near SAU Qrs. Karachi 31 (Pakistan)
<b>Qatar</b>	:	<b>Dr. Aftab Alam Nadwi</b> P.O. Box No. 1513 Doha, Qatar
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	:	<b>Mr. Zia Abdullah Nadwi</b> Director Al Waha International School P.B.No. 12491 Jeddah, Pin-21473 (K.S.A.)
<b>South Africa</b>	:	<b>Mr. M. Yahaya Sallo Nadwi</b> P.O. Box No. 388 Vereninging, (South Africa)
<b>U.S.A.</b>	:	<b>Dr. A. M. Siddiqui</b> 98-Conklin Ave. Woodmere, New York 11598