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Man's Ultimate Responsibility

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

If human beings subjugate themselves to the supremacy of material things and become slaves to their selfish desires, life on earth will become hellish and unbearable. Man has to remember that his place in the scheme of creation is that of God's vicegerent. As the Quran bears testimony, Allah ordered the angels to bow down in front of man as a mark of respect. This clearly establishes that it is highly humiliating for man, God's deputy on earth, to bow down in front of anybody except his Creator. Had there been any such scope, Allah should have allowed man to bow down in front of the angels as they carry on Allah's orders on the earth: they, for instance, bring rain and make the wind blow. By making the angels bow down in front of man Allah clearly revealed His will that the world has been given to the care of man as His vicegerent and that he himself is created for the worship of Allah the Almighty. Man must look at his present miserable lot and tell himself that he is supposed to do better. He must rise to his appointed position as Allah's vicegerent, take none else except Allah as his Lord, and save himself and the world from eternal suffering. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

Those who love to see obscenity spread among the believers, will have a grievous penalty in this life and in the Hereafter. Allah knows while you do not know. (al-Nur 24: 19)

This verse carries a miraculous note, for it was revealed in Madinah in particular context. A certain event had happened which was rapidly gaining currency. The Quran disregards such insignificant points as the number of people involved in such events' and their interrelationships. Its critique is universal, far beyond the narrow and geographical limits of any particular event. It's message is as valid now as it was at the time of its initial revelation.

As for those who love to spread obscenity among the unbelievers, it may suffice for us to cast a quick glance over today's journalism, television, radio, popular fiction, cinema and outlook on life. Such an abysmal depth of moral depravity was once unimaginable. The Madinan Muslims took the verse quoted above at its face value and believed in it. They could not foresee the present level of obscenity that pervades society.

It goes without saying that the forces moral disorder and anarchy are equipped with an amazingly rich range of resources. They are capable of accomplishing anything and may project falsehood and evils truth.

The same is true of the evil influence exercised by political, social and financial bodies working amid us. Europeans, Americans and Communists who nurture a false and tendentious view of life, who cause and spread corruption, whose morals are depraved and who cling to a false set of notions represent a powerful, highly organized entity. They impose their evil views on other nations. Presently they enjoy ascendancy and hegemony. They are further reinforced by a media which loves to spread obscenity among believers. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Uthman narrates that the Prophet of Allah blessings and peace be upon him—said, "The best among you is he who learns the Quran and teaches it to others". — Bukhari

Commentary: Since the superiority of the Quran to other words (kalam) is as prominent as the superiority of Allah Himself to His creatures, the rank of learning and teaching of the Quran being higher than the rank of other virtuous deeds is but natural. In addition, as it is one of the prophetic duties of the Messenger of Allah— blessings and peace be upon him — to receive the Quran from Allah through revelation, understand its wisdom and teach it to mankind, the person engaged in learning and teaching it serves the mission of the Prophet and thus develops a special association with him). On this ground a learner and teacher of the Quran naturally stands superior to all others. However, only that person deserves this honor who learns and teaches the Quran with due sincerity. If unfortunately a person adopts learning and teaching of the Quran as a means for worldly gains, he, as mentioned in a Tradition, will be among the unfortunate destined to be thrown first into the Hell fire and used as initial fuel to it. May Allah protect us from such ill-fate.

'Abdullah bin' Umar narrates that the Prophet of Allah -blessings and peace be upon him—said, "Only two persons are enviable [i. e., it is justified to envy them]: One who is granted the bounty of the Quran and remains engaged in it day and night, and the other who is blessed with wealth and spends it for Allah day and night. "

—Bukhari and Muslim.

Commentary: There are different ways in which a person can remain engaged in the Quran day and night, as referred to in this Tradition. First, he may commit himself fully to learn and teach it. Secondly, he may remain busy in reciting it in Prayers (Salat) as well as outside Prayers (Salat). Thirdly, he may carefully observe the Quranic injunctions. The words of the present Tradition ("who remains engaged in it day and night") cover all these meanings.

The Quran is indeed a great bounty of the Almighty, and the best way to thank Him for it is to observe a regular practice of reciting it and take it as a guide for life. ■

Editor's Note 

Prophet's Mission

God almighty has sent messengers to ailing societies for their treatment and cure. Their presence had their effect but lost with the passage of time and their teachings faded. However, the last messenger arrived with a Holy Book, the Qur'an and his teachings are still as fresh as ever.

"All Prophets and Messengers were unanimous in their call to general fundamentals like belief in Allah, His angles, His Books, His Messengers; belief in the Last Day and in pre-decree, its good and bad; and like command to worship Allah alone without ascribing any partner to Him, to follow His path and not to follow dissenting paths; like prohibiting the four kinds of sins: all evil deeds, the apparent and the hidden; sins; unjust oppression; associating partners with Allah in worship and worshipping idols. They also agreed on deeming Allah far from having a wife, children, associate or equal as they agreed on prohibition of saying about Him what is not true; on prohibition of infanticide, killing unjustly; eating usury; usurping of orphan's wealth. They were unanimous on enjoining the fulfilment of covenants and giving full scale and weight, being dutiful to parents; doing justice between people; being truthful in sayings and deeds; prohibition of squandering and arrogance as well as eating up people's wealth unjustly.

Ibn Al-Qayyim said, "All Divine Laws are unanimous in their fundamentals – even if they differ in any other things. The goodness of these laws are firmly rooted in the human intellect and had the laws not come in this form, they would have been unwise, unbeneficial and merciless though it is impossible that they should come in any other form. Allah says,

"And if the truth would have been in accordance with their desires, verily, the heavens and the earth, and whosoever is therein would have been corrupted."

How can a wise man deem it permissible that the Law of Allah Who is the Best of judges should come in a form different from its present form?

This is why that all Prophets practiced one religion as confirmed by Allah when He says,

"O (you) Messengers! Eat of the food that Allah has made lawful and do righteous deeds. Verily, I am Well-Acquainted with what you do. And verily, this your religion (of Islamic Monotheism) is one religion and I am your Lord, so keep your duty to Me."

He also says,

"He (Allah) has ordained for you the same religion (Islamic Monotheism) which He ordained for Nooh (Noah) and that which We have revealed to you (O Muhammad) and that which We ordained for Ibraaheem (Abraham), Moosaa (Moses) and 'Eesaa (Jesus), saying: you should establish religion (i.e., to do what it orders you to do practically). And make no divisions in it."

The purpose of religion is to make mankind attain what they are created for: to worship their Lord alone without associating any partner with Him. He ordained for them rites which they must fulfil and guaranteed for them obligations. He also gave them means that can make them attain that good, so that they can achieve the pleasure of their Lord and happiness in this world and the Hereafter according to a Divine Way that does not tear up man or afflict his person with deadly diseases that can cause a clash between his nature and soul and the world around him.

All Messengers called to the Divine Religion that presents man with creedal foundation in which he should believe, and the law which he should follow in his life. That is why Torah was a creed as well as a law and its followers were required to make it judge between them. Allah says,

“Verily, We did send down the Tauraat (Torah), therein was guidance and light, by which the Prophets who submitted themselves to Allah’s Will judged for the Jews and the rabbis and the priests.”

Then came the Christ who brought with him the Gospel in which there was guidance and light and in confirmation of the Torah that preceded it. Allah says,

“And in their footsteps We sent ‘Eesaa (Jesus) son of Mary, confirming the Torah that had come before him, and We gave him the Injeel (Gospel) in which there was guidance and light.”

Then Muhammad came with the final Divine Law and the complete religion as a witness over the laws that had come before it and to abrogate them. Allah gave him the Qur’an as a confirmation of the Divine Books that had come before it. Allah says,

“And We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Book (this Qur’an) in truth confirming the Scripture that came before it and a watcher over it (old Scriptures). So judge among them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you.”

Allah also explains that Muhammad and the believers who were with him believe in Him as all Prophets who were before them had done. He says,

“The Messenger (Muhammad) believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allah, His angels, His Books and His Messengers. They say: We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers. And they say: We hear and obey. (We seek) Your Forgiveness, our Lord and to you is the return.” ■

S.A.

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The Place of Women in Islamic Society

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Verily Muslims, men and women, the believing men and women, men and women who are obedient, men and women who are truthful, men and women who are patient, men and women who are humble, men and women who give charity, men and women who fast, men and women who guard their chastity, and men and women who remember Allah much, Allah has promised forgiveness for them and a great reward.

(al-Ahzab 33:35)

Almighty Allah takes delight in speaking highly of such devout women. Human attributes cannot be ascribed to Him. On analysing this passage one is apt to say that women are relatively less truthful, less patient and less devoted to Allah. In an emotional crisis they lose poise and self-control and utter such statements which may put their faith in jeopardy. Women also grieve more.

However, Allah is fully conversant with human nature. He foresaw that such weaknesses would be imputed to women. He therefore mentions women at length and invests them with all the virtues which can be attained by men. He loves men and women alike. His mercy encompasses both sexes.

The passage clarifies that devout

believing women do not lag behind men. They may equal men in excellent conduct and virtue. They are entitled to equal reward. Their gender is not a disadvantage. Nor is it an obstacle to their attaining a higher status and to fulfilling the purpose of their creation. These virtues are not alien to their gender.

It would have sufficed to say that men and women may achieve the same rank. However, the Qur'an mentions both men and women separately and independently. The message is loud and clear. Worship is not only men's domain. Women may excel in this field. So is also the case with fasting. For here too women may remember Allah as much as men can. It emerges from the history of other religions that certain qualities are earmarked for men alone. The assumption was that only men could reach such heights. Women were not granted such equal status. They were not expected to annex exalted rank. The Qur'an, however, does away with such a distinction, declaring that both men and women can excel in their worship of Allah.

Al-Nisa' (Women) is one of the longer Qur'anic surahs. Hindu scriptures by comparison do not give such prominence to women. In Islam women

have equal opportunity with men, as also the same ability and capacity for attaining the highest rank in worshipping, and obeying Allah, winning His pleasure and earning a coveted position in His sight. In short, women have the potential to do the same as men.

The Qur'an speaks of equality among men and women in worship and religious obligations. Women are equally fit to enjoin good and forbid evil. They may enforce the Islamic moral

code perfectly in the same manner as male 'Ulama' may accomplish it. Allah looks upon women as equal partners with believing men in promoting virtue and good. This truth is stated more forcefully in the following Qur'anic passage: The believers, men and women, are supporters of one another. They enjoin good and forbid evil. They perform prayers, give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah will have His mercy on them. Surely Allah is Almighty, All-Wise. (al-Tawbah 9:71) ■

Muslim Outfits Question Hurry in Initiating Puja, to Approach President

Leaders of Muslim bodies, including All India Muslim Personal Law Board and Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, expressed regret and concern over the "abrupt initiation" of puja in the cellar of Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi. The leaders have sought time from the President to convey their concerns on the Gyanvapi situation and other such matters prevailing in different parts of the country.

Speaking to reporters, the leaders said that the swift initiation of puja despite the court granting a seven-day window to the administration for making necessary arrangements point to the "apparent collusion" between the administration and the plaintiff, aimed at foreclosing any effort by the Mosque Managing Committee to pursue remedies against the district court order.

"The District Judge's decision... is highly questionable, especially when it was the judge's last day in office. Equally concerning is the unilateral disclosure of the ASI report, causing turmoil in society. Importantly, this report is merely a claim," the leaders said in a joint statement.

They also said that the issue extends beyond the Gyanvapi mosque, as claims are persistently being made on places of worship like the Shahi Eidgah of Mathura, the Sunehri Masjid Delhi, along with numerous other mosques and Waqf properties across the country. "This trend of unwarranted claims on various places of worship raises serious concerns. The continued silence on the Place of Worship Act 1991 by the Supreme Court has become a source of deep worry for the Muslim community in the country," the statement reads.

"In this critical hour, as representatives of Indian Muslims, we have requested the President of India for time to communicate these concerns. We hope that, at her level, she can take steps to address these issues. Additionally, we intend to convey the sentiments of the Muslim community to the Chief Justice of India in a respectful and appropriate manner," they said in the statement.

Speaking to reporters, Maulana Syed Arshad Madni, President of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, said that mosques were embroiled in such issues right from Delhi's Jama Masjid to other places of worship in Ahmedabad, Sambhal, Mathura, etc.

Malik Mohtasim Khan of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind said that the order to allow puja in the southern cellar of Gyanvapi was against the principles of the judiciary. ■

The Islamic Approach To Life

- Khurshid Ahmad

We are living in a period of cultural crisis. It seems as if the very foundations of contemporary society are being threatened from within and without. The family, as a basic and most sensitive institution of culture, is being undermined by powerful and destructive forces.

All the symptoms suggest that the crisis in general is deepening and the institution of the family is, in particular, weakening, even disintegrating in Europe and America. It is time to pause for a while and re—examine the foundations on which family life is built in the contemporary west and also to study alternative foundations and structures in other cultural traditions. This will include the contemporary man to identify the nature of the crisis that confronts him today and will also point to some of the possibilities that are still open to him. I would like to discuss in the following pages the concept of family life in Islam, its foundations, structure and principles.

We shall be in a better position to understand the institution of family in Islam if we start by a brief statement about the Islamic approach to life, religion and culture.

Tawhid: The Unity of God

Islam affirms the Unity of God and

His indivisible sovereignty over the Universe. God is the Creator, the Master, the Sustainer of all that exists. Everything is operating according to His plan. He has revealed, through His prophets, the Right Path for the guidance of Mankind. All prophets (peace be upon them) have preached the same message— that of acceptance of God's sovereignty. They invited men and women to a life committed to virtue, purity, justice and peace, and to act according to the guidance He has revealed. All prophets, from Adam, Noah and Ibrahim (Abraham) to Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on them) taught the same religion of acceptance of and submission to God and commitment to peace i.e. Islam. Man's failure lies in not protecting and preserving the teachings of the earlier prophets. As such, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was raised to restate the original message, to present it in its perfect form and to preserve it in such a way that the word of God would no longer be confused with the word of man.

2. Man's Vicegerency

If Tawhid (Unity of God) constitutes the ideological foundation of Islam, the concept of man's Khilafah (vicegerency/ caliphate) provides the operational

framework for the Islamic scheme of life.

The story of Adam and Eve is found in almost all religious and major cultural traditions. But in these narrations, fact and fancy are found intermingled. The way the Qur'an narrates this event is crucial to the understanding of the Islamic world—view.

The main outline of the Qur'anic narration is as follows: God declared His intention to send a vicegerent (Khalifah) to the earth. He created Adam and Eve from the same substance. They were destined to play this role of vicegerency and were endowed with the 'knowledge of things' to do the job well. Then they were put to test and were asked not to approach a certain tree. They fell victim to the evil persuasions of Satan and committed sin. But immediately after sinning they repented their mistake, sought God's forgiveness and were forgiven. It was after they were forgiven and redeemed that they were sent down to the earth to play their role as vicegerents of God. They were promised Divine Guidance and were assured that those who followed that Guidance would be successful. Adam was the first man to receive this guidance and convey it to his progeny.

Some very important inferences follow from this:

(a) Islam does not contribute

to any theory of the "fall of Adam" symbolising the fall of man. There was no "fall" at all in that sense. Man was created for the purpose of acting a vicegerent on the earth and he came to the world to fulfil this mission. It represents the rise of man to a new assignment, his tryst with destiny, and not a fall.

(b) The role and status of vicegerency is conferred upon the human being as such, and it is shared by man and woman alike. This lays the foundations of their essential quality as human beings, as vicegerents of God on the earth, whatever their different roles in society.

(c) Islam does not subscribe to the view that woman led man (Eve leading Adam) to sin and disobedience. According to the Qur'an "Satan caused them both to deflect therefrom". Both were held responsible for the act, both repented their transgression and both were forgiven. They entered the world without any stigma of original sin on their soul.

(d) Human nature is pure and good. Man has been created in the best of the forms. Man and woman are made from the same substance. Everyone is born in a state of purity and innocence. Success or failure depends entirely on one's own beliefs and behaviours. No one is to be responsible

for the shortcoming of others.

(e) Man has been given freedom of choice. He is free to accept or deny the Reality. He is responsible for his actions, but is not to be deprived of this freedom, even if he makes mistakes and abuses it. The uniqueness of the human situation lies in his psycho—social volition. This is the main—spring of human potential—this is what enables him to rise to the highest pinnacle or to fall into the deepest abyss.

(f) The dangers of misuse of freedom continue to confront man throughout his career on the earth. The challenge from Satan is unceasing. To safeguard man against this, Divine Guidance is to be provided. The trial of Adam and Eve reveals, on the one hand, the essential goodness of their nature and on the other, their susceptibility to error. This demonstrates man's need for Divine Guidance.

(g) Man has not been totally protected against error. This would involve negation of the freedom of choice. He may commit errors; his redemption lies in his realisation of that error, in seeking repentance and in turning back to the right path.

The theory of vicegerency affirms that God's creation is deliberate and not fortuitous. Man has been created with a purpose. Everything else in the creation

has been harnessed to his service. His career on the earth begins with the consciousness of a mission, not through groping in darkness. The ideal was set before Him through Divine revelation. The criterion for success has been laid down in clear terms. The signposts of the Right Path have been made manifest. Man's life on earth is in the nature of a trial. It is time—bound. This life will be followed by an eternal life wherein man shall reap rewards of his performance in this life. And in this lifelong trial, men and women are equal participants and will be judged as such. No one is mere shadow of other, but both are active co—partners. The Qur'an explicitly states that man and woman will get what they strive for and that the same standard is set for them both as the ultimate criterion for their success. "And the believers, the men and the women, are friends protecting each other; they seek and enjoin good and forbid evil and offer the prayer and pay the Zakat (poor—due): and they obey God and His Messenger. It is on these whom Allah will have mercy. Surely Allah is All—Mighty, All—Wise. Allah has promised to the believers, men and women, gardens underneath which rivers flow, forever therein to dwell, and goodly dwelling—places in the gardens of Eden, and greater than anything else, God's good pleasure (and acceptance from Him). That is the supreme triumph" "And whosoever

does righteous deed, be they male or female, and is a believer, we shall assuredly give them a goodly life to live; and We shall certainly reward them according to the best of what they did”.

“Men who surrender to Allah and women who surrender to Allah, and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who persevere (in righteousness) and women who persevere, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their modesty and women who guard their modesty, and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and mighty reward.” This is how the Qur’an describes the ideal and the model for men and women and the criterion for the Day of Judgement. This defines what is expected of them as God’s vicegerents. This lays the foundation of their equality as human role in the world.

3. A Complete Way of Life

Islam affirms God’s Sovereignty over the entire gamut of man’s life. It is opposed to asceticism, monasticism and creeds of life—denial and annihilation. It stands for life—affirmation and life—fulfilment. It refuses to divide life into water—tight compartments of

the sacred and the secular, of the holy and the profane. It invites man to ‘enter wholly the fold of Islam’ and regards the division of life into religious and secular as deviations from the Right Path. It gives an integrated view of life and reality. The teachings of Islam cover all fields of human activity, spiritual and material, individual and social, educational and cultural, economic and political, national and international. They cater for the aspirations of the soul as well as for the demands of the law and social institutions. Islam’s uniqueness lies in spiritualising the whole matrix of life. Every activity, whether related to things like prayer and fasting, or to economic transactions, sexual relationships, diplomatic dealings or scientific experimentations, is religious if it is undertaken with God-consciousness and accords with the values and principles revealed by Him; and it is irreligious if it is in violation of them. Activities related to matters of economy, politics and law, or of sex and social manners, are a part of man’s religious behaviour and do not fall outside its scope. Life is an organic whole and the same principles would guide and govern it in all its ramifications. The Shari’ah is the Islamic code which guides life in its entirety. The example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the model which a Muslim tries to follow and in his life—example one can seek

guidance in all aspects of human life, from the highly personal to the purely social—as a man, a son, a husband, a father, a preacher, a teacher, a trader, a statesman, a commander, a peace—negotiator, a judge or a head of the state. The Islamic outlook on life is revolutionary as it gives a new dynamism to what has been traditionally regarded as religious. What makes an activity religious is the attitude with which it is undertaken and its conformity or otherwise with the values enunciated by God and His Prophet. With this revolutionary outlook, the entire realm of life is won over for God and Godliness. Nothing is left for Caesar.

4. Faith as the Basis of Society

Islam makes faith and religion the basis of the entire human society and the mainspring for the network of its relationships. Social groups and communities have been founded on race, blood, tribe, geography etc., but in Islam all these differences have subordinated to a new form of organisation emanating from the faith. 'Commitment to Islam integrates man not only with God but also with the community of believers. These two relationships branch out from the single act of faith. The Islamic concept of nationhood is not based on race, language, colour, territory or politico—economic affinity. Islamic community is a fraternity of faith — anyone who

believes in the Islamic religion and ideology is an inalienable part of this nation—whatever his race, colour, language or place of birth.

This is a new principle of human organisation; it is rational and ideological in nature and is capable of embracing the entire human race.

This concept of an ideological community is not a mere moral precept; it has its social, political and legal dimensions. It produces a new infrastructure for human relations. Faith is the decisive force in this system. It gives birth to social institutions, from the family to the state. Islamic culture grows from this faith in the same way as a tree grows from a seed. To some extent it is affected by external forces, but ultimately it is the potential of the seed which is fulfilled. This is a unique principle of organisation. The Islamic society and culture are ideological and universal in their origin and orientation.

These submissions, I believe, help us in understanding the nature of the Islamic system of life. The Islamic culture cannot be understood if some of its parts are studied in isolation, or in perspective of cultures based on foundations diametrically different from its own. The Islamic institution of the family should also be studied and examined in the perspective of Islamic outlook on life and the ethos of the Islamic culture. ■

Strike A Fine Balance, Have A Just Civil Code

- Faizan Mustafa & Anant Sangal*

On February 7, Uttarakhand passed the Uniform Civil Code. In this article, dated June 24, 2023, Faizan Mustafa and Anant Sangal argue that the proposed UCC must be emblematic of India's 'mosaic model' of multiculturalism.

On June 14, the Law Commission of India decided to solicit views and proposals from the public about the Uniform Civil Code (UCC). After a hiatus of just five years, when the Commission had concluded that the 'UCC is neither necessary nor desirable', the move now is one that keeps the pot boiling on one of India's most ideologically as well as politically rivalled issue. Though we believe that the enactment of the UCC in piecemeal manner would be in tune with the spirit of Article 44, the attempt here is to invite attention to one particular consideration that must weigh with the Commission as it undertakes this exercise de novo.

Autonomy Versus authority

The question of personal laws is basically the question of personal and religious autonomy versus the state's authority to reform familial relations. Since each religious group has cultural autonomy, it is thus being argued that the community should itself come forward to seek reforms. This is the justification for

the adoption of internal law reform or voluntary UCC. In fact, the Special Marriage Act, 1954 and the Indian Succession Act, 1925 are nothing but examples of voluntary adoption of the UCC though the recently enacted love jihad laws by prohibiting inter-faith marriages basically violate the spirit of Special Marriage Act.

There are also regional differences, i.e. Kerala had abolished the Hindu Joint Family in 1975; Muslim marriage and divorces are to be registered in Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand under the 1876 law, and in Assam under 1935 law, and adoption was permissible to Kashmiri Muslims.

At present, not just Muslims but even Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Parsis, and Jews are governed by their own personal laws. Accordingly, believe it or not, it is the religious identity that determines which personal law would apply to a group of individuals. Even reformed Hindu Personal Law under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 does insist on solemnisation of marriage, through saptapadi (seven steps around fire) and datta (invocation before fire). Section 7(2) of the Act, just like Manusmriti (8.227), provides that marriage is completed on the seventh step. Sapinda relationship, adoption and Hindu Joint Family rules too are based on the Hindu Personal Law.

Surprisingly when two Hindus marry under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 (

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section 21A inserted in 1976), they continue to be governed by Hindu Personal law, but if two Muslims marry under this legislations, the Muslim Personal Law (MPL) would no longer govern them. Interestingly, a person who renounces Hinduism too continues to be governed by the Hindu personal Law.

The Constitution was not the starting point but a mere culmination of India's long-standing integrative traditions. In addition to the provisions that outlaw discrimination in all its forms, the Indian Constitution's commitment to cultural accommodation is visible through a near-absolute fundamental right in Article 29(1) dedicated exclusively to conserving the distinctive culture of all citizens. However, do Muslims of India have the courage to argue that polygamy or arbitrary unilateral divorce even in anger or while in an intoxicated state could be considered a part of their culture?

Unity More Than Uniformity

That said, the Commission must bear in its recommendation that for a diverse and multicultural polity such as India, the proposed UCC must be emblematic of India's 'mosaic model' of multiculturalism. The logic is invariably obvious — a homogenising lithification of identities must not become a mirage for flourishing diversity (something that has consistently remained peculiar to the American model of multiculturalism). After all, unity is far more important than uniformity. The British brought homogeneity amongst Hindus and Muslims by grossly undermining

heterogeneity within the two religious communities.

Under the Indian Constitution, the right to cultural autonomy defends the Indian model of multiculturalism. Prominent scholars on multiculturalism such as Rochana Bajpai suggest that the Indian Constitution offers two major approaches with respect to accommodation of difference — integrationist and restricted multicultural. While the affirmative action policies largely land in the first approach's camp, for Ms. Bajpai, "state assistance to minority cultures has been seen as an illegitimate concession [...]" and is often termed as 'appeasement of minorities'.

This, as Ms. Bajpai furthers, leaves cultural difference without any robust constitutional normative underpinnings. In short, it is through these two approaches that the Constitution makes way for cultural accommodation and a celebration of group differences. Accordingly, the 21st Law Commission (2015-18) had boldly favoured equality between men and women in communities rather than aiming for equality between communities. A just code should be the primary goal as just laws are more important than a mere one uniform law.

Having this discussion as the backdrop, India's tryst with preserving its multicultural diversity is often found at the crossroads with values such as secularism. Despite secularism being a fundamental tenet governing the Indian polity, India decided not to adopt the French model of *laïcité*, which strictly prohibits

bearing any religious outfit or marker in public; that considers religion in public as a threat (and not a prominent promoter) to the nation's secular fabric — thus pushing it within only the four walls of the domestic household. Indian society, therefore, 'accommodates' and not just 'tolerates' the wide array of group and ethnic differences.

When groups claim and effectuate their multi-ethnic traditions without impinging on the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens, their traditions and values acquire the status of social mores for they fulfil a much broader purpose of social and national integration.

However, a claim of such broad nature invites limitations inherent — in the name of personal laws and practices, what deserves legal protection and promotion and what does not. Right to cultural-relativism cannot justify continuation of unjust and discriminatory personal laws. Such provisions of the personal laws must be made consistent with substantive equality and gender justice goals espoused in the Constitution.

Hurdles on The Path Ahead

Simultaneously, we must understand that when a community feels threatened in any way, whether rightly or wrongly so, the collective esteem of its members becomes woven to the community, and community allegiance becomes much stronger. Therefore, one hopes that the Law Commission of India would not contribute to the rise of reactive culturalism amongst different

communities in India, including Muslims. The Muslim community too must understand that the MPL and Islam are not one and the same. The MPL is a jurist given law and is not entirely divine. In fact, it is more appropriate to call it Anglo-Muhammadian law that was derived in certain matters from the erroneously translated secondary sources rather than the Koran and Sunna of the Prophet. British courts treated juristic opinions in the MPL on a par with statutory laws enacted by the legislature and by insisting on the British doctrine of precedent, they further brought in a lot of rigidity in the MPL. If MPL reforms that rely on inter-school borrowing could be accepted by the Ulema way back in 1939, why cannot this be done today? Let the Muslim clergy come forward and lead the MPL reform process by identifying the discriminatory and oppressive issues and adopt the views of progressive jurists.

As the Commission proposes an overhauling secularisation of various socio-religious-cultural practices that have been the mainstay of thousands of religious and ethnic communities since times immemorial, the path ahead is not going to be free from hurdles. In the words of political philosopher Iris Young, as the value of social difference is more relational and is itself a product of social processes, we believe that it will be incumbent upon the Commission to strike a fine balance as it should aim to eliminate only those practices that do not meet the benchmarks set by the Constitution. ■

(The Hindu, 08-02-2024)

Mi'raj

- S. Sulaiman Nadwi

At last that blessed night came when the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was to ascend to heaven in order that the extraordinarily signs of Allah be shown to him and some special commands and instructions be given to him. The guardians of the heavens were ordered to make preparations to accord a befitting welcome to the special guest who was to arrive. The message was given to Ruh-ul-Amin (Jibril) that Buraq, the heavenly steed be brought. Bukhari and Muslim and other reliable collections of Ahadith, contain the detail of the night journey. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) described that extraordinary experience in the following words: When I was in Makkah Jibril descended and took me to the Zamzam (the sacred well in Haram Sharif of the Ka'bah) and opened my heart and then washed it with water of Zamzam. He then brought a gold basin full of wisdom and faith and after emptying it into my breast he closed it up. Then he (Gabriel) brought an animal (Buraq) to me, which resembled lightening in swiftness and lustre, was of clear white colour, medium in size, smaller than a mule and better than an ass, quick in movement, who could place his hoof at a distance equal to the range of vision. I mounted it and

came to Bait-ul-Maqdis and prayed two Rakahs in it, then tethered it to the ring used by the Prophets. After that Gabriel took me to the first heaven. Gabriel then asked the (gate of the heaven) to be opened and he was asked who he was. He replied: Gabriel. He was again asked: Who is with you? He (Gabriel) said: Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It was said: Has he been sent for? Gabriel replied: He has indeed been sent for. And (the door of the heaven) was opened for us and lo! we saw Adam. He welcomed me and prayed for my good. Then we ascended to the second heaven. Gabriel (peace be upon him) (asked the door of the heaven to be opened) and he was asked who he was. He answered: Gabriel; and he was again asked who is with you? He (Gabriel) replied: Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It was said: Has he been sent for? He replied: He has indeed been sent for. The gate was opened. When I entered 'Isa b. Maryam and Yahya b. Zakariyya (peace be upon them), welcomed me and prayed for my good. Then I was taken to the third heaven and Gabriel asked for the opening (of the door). He was asked: Who are you? He replied: Gabriel. He was again asked: Who is with you? He said: Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It was said: Has

he been sent for? He replied: He has indeed been sent for. (The gate) was opened for us and I saw Yusuf (peace be upon him) who had been given half of (world) beauty. Then he ascended with us to the fourth heaven. Gabriel asked for the gate to be opened and it was said: Who is he? He replied: Gabriel. It was again said: Who is with you? He said: Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It was said: Has he been sent for? He replied: He has indeed been sent for. The gate was opened for us, and lo! Idris (peace be upon him) was there. He welcomed me and prayed for my well-being (about him) Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, has said: We elevated him (Idris) to the exalted position. Then he ascended with us to the fifth heaven and Gabriel asked for the gate to be opened. It was said: Who is he? He replied: Gabriel. It was again said: Who is with thee? He replied: Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It was said: Has he been sent for? He replied: He has indeed been sent for. (The gate) was opened for us and then I was with Harun (Aaron) (peace be upon him). He welcomed me and prayed for my well-being. Then I was taken to the sixth heaven. Gabriel asked for the door to be opened. It was said: Who is he? He replied: Gabriel. It was said: Who is with thee? He replied: Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It was said: Has he been sent for? He replied: He has indeed been sent for. (The gate)

was opened for us and there I was with Musa (Moses) (peace be upon him). He welcomed me and prayed for my well-being. Then I was taken up to the seventh heaven. Gabriel asked the (gate) to be opened. It was said: Who is he? He said: Gabriel. It was said: Who is with thee? He replied: Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It was said: Has he been sent for? He replied: He has indeed been sent for. (The gate) was opened for us and there I met Ibrahim (Abraham) (peace be upon him). Then I was taken to Sidrat-ul-Muntaha (lote-tree of the farthest limit). I saw Paradise and Hell. Then I was shown Bait-ul-Ma'mur and there enter into it seventy thousand angels every day never to (have their turn) to visit this place again. Then Gabriel stopped there and I was presented to the Divine presence. Then Allah revealed to me a revelation and he made obligatory for me fifty prayers every day and night. On my return, I spoke to Moses (peace be upon him) that my followers had been enjoined to pray fifty times. Moses (peace be upon him) said: Your followers cannot perform so many prayers. I have already tried the children of Isra'il. Go back to God and ask for a remission in number. I went back to the presence of God and said that my followers cannot bear (the burden of) so many prayers. The Lord reduced five prayers for me. I reported this to Moses (peace be upon him); he urged me for a further reduction. I again urged my

Lord to reduce the number still further. I went again and again in the presence of Allah at the suggestion of Moses (peace be upon him) for reduction in the number of prayers till these were reduced to five only. Moses (peace be upon him) again asked me to implore for further reduction, but I said: I feel ashamed now of repeatedly asking Allah, the Exalted, for the reduction. I accept five daily prayers. Allah commanded that these five prayers shall be rewarded as fifty prayers.

It is also recorded in the Hadith that the Prophet (peace and blessings

of Allah be upon him) led a congregational prayer of the Prophets in Bait-ul-Maqdis. He described the appearance and shape of some of the Prophets. He observed: Musa (peace be upon him) was a man of high stature as if he was of the people of Shanu'a (tribe) and Jesus was a medium-statured man with white and red complexion as if he had just come out of the bath. I saw Ibrahim, and amongst his children, I have the greatest resemblance with him. He (the Holy Prophet) also made a mention of Malik, guardian of Hell and Dajjal. ■

Language & Learning

According to a report in this newspaper, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has proposed a major overhaul in the academic framework for secondary and higher secondary education. Students will be required to study three languages — instead of two — till Class X, at least two of which must be native Indian languages. At the higher secondary level, students will have to study two languages instead of one, at least one of which must be a native Indian language. Secondary-level students will now have to clear 10 subjects, as opposed to the current requirement of five. Graduating from high school will require clearing six subjects, instead of five. The shift is in accordance with NEP 2020's objective of doing away with the rigid separation between academic and extracurricular streams. A credit bank system will ensure that the student is rewarded for skills obtained outside the classroom. The CBSE's plan gives the learner the space to combine academic training with vocational education. It is, therefore, a welcome departure from pedagogic strategies that have contributed to the country's skill deficit by devaluing hands-on training. The examination authority must, however, make sure that the new system does not impose an extra burden on already stretched students.

A wealth of scholarship has underlined that knowledge of multiple languages improves learning outcomes and helps skill acquisition. At the same time, the three-language formula remains a politically fraught issue, especially in South India, which has a long history of language-based sub-nationalism. The Tamil Nadu government, for instance, has opposed the NEP even though the policy does not require non-Hindi-speaking states to include the language in school curricula. Linguistic activists in the state fear the implementation of the three-language formula could push schools to teach Hindi because of the scarcity of teachers in other languages. When it was first framed in 1968, the formula envisaged teaching a modern Indian language, apart from Hindi and English till Class VIII in schools in North India. But Hindi-speaking states have never had more than a handful of schools with teachers who can teach Malayalam, Kannada or Tamil — or, for that matter, Bengali, Marathi or Gujarati. The CBSE's proposal should occasion conversations on finding a greater play for the country's linguistic diversity in school curricula.

The CBSE has not specified a time-frame for rolling out the new system. The agency must hold wide consultations before finalising its plan. It must ensure that all sensitivities are respected and old fault lines are not reopened. ■

(Editorial, *The Indian Express*, 03-02-2024)

The First Military Confrontation Between Infidels And Muslims

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

It was the sixteenth month since the Hlirat when the Prophet (SAW) got the information that a party of the Quoraish was advancing on the route to Syria; and, that it was headed by the military commander of the infidels, Abu sufyan; and, that its intent was to make provisions for getting the forces of the Quoraish further buttressed. He (SAW), accompanied by a team, went in its pursuit and got up to a place in the vicinity of Yanboo'. But that party had already gone ahead before the Prophet (SAW)'s arrival there. On getting the reports of the return of the self-same party from Syria. He (SAW) set out, taking a number of Muslims along with him in its pursuit. On getting the information of his (SAW) departure, this party of the Quoraish had the word sent immediately to Makkah and sought special help from there. The Muslims had gotten up to the vicinity of 'Badr' in their pursuit. But, by the time they had reached there, that party had already crossed over the place. As the Muslims were planning to get back to Madinah, the Prophet (SAW) received the information that the people in Makkah had already dispatched an army, equipped to the hilt, with the intent to wage a full-fledged war with the Muslims. The Prophet (SAW) held consultations with his companions.

There were with him just 313 souls at the moment. They had, in fact, been taken along, considering them sufficient enough for the party of the Quoraish that had gone to Syria. They had not been taken along with the intention to get engaged in any regular warfare. Now that the issue of the arrival of the regular army of the enemy had come up, it was necessary to hold consultations as to whether the army of the Quoraish that was imminent to arrive should be confronted so that the impression was not carried that the Muslims had given the proof of chicken-heartedness and fled away from the battle-field; or, before its arrival there, the retreat to Madinah should be expedited so (hat getting into a regular warfare does not get necessitated. The outcome of the consultations was, however, that beating retreat from here now that the enemy was due to arrive for getting into a regular warfare would be deemed flight on the part of Muslims and have them disgraced. Hence, come what may, they have to face it and have it dealt with. It is this very incident which came to be known as 'the incident of Badr'. It had occurred in the form of a regular, full-fledged war.

The forces of the Quoraish were armed up to the hilt. They had one

thousand or so strong troops. The Muslims were, as against them, one-third in strength, numerically speaking, that is. Nevertheless, The Muslims were sure and confident of the Succour and Support from Allah Almighty. Anyhow, the enemy, along with his huge army did arrive and the combat took place. And, the Muslims, one-third as they were against them, emerged miraculously victorious. The Quoraish were routed. This battle gave a great boost to the Muslims' reputation. The impression that the people had about the Muslims that they were a helpless and feeble bunch of people got changed. The Quoraish as well as the people of neighbourhood had now fully realized -thanks to this battle-how strong a force the Muslims actually were.

In the context of this battle of Badr, the following incident is, also, worth being mentioned. Quite some time prior to this battle of Badr, the Prophet (SAW) had received information of some people from the Quoraish getting mobilized at a place called Nakhla. The Prophet (SAW) had, then, sent Abdullah bin Jahsh with a team of twelve persons there. They had instructions to just collect the information and get back, On arrival there, however, they had come across a caravan of the Quoraish and the situation had reached to the point where the skirmish was unavoidable. In it, a member of the Quoraish, Amr bin had got killed. This incident had taken place towards the end of the month of

Rajab which is the month during which waging a war was deemed prohibited. Hence, the Quoraish made it an issue of desecration of this month. It gave them the handle to launch a campaign of hostile propaganda against Muslims and to provoke and instigate the people on taking the revenge. On that pretext, they had started making plans of waging a war. It was in the name of this incident that they got the people provoked on launching a full-fledged war operation. Having the entire tribe of the Quoraish, to a man, provoked and instigated on war, they had a strong army built and had a march made towards Madinah. Having arrived in Badr, they had a fight with the Muslims. But this mischief-mongering on their part boomeranged on themselves and it were but the Muslims who, with the Help from Allah Almighty, did achieve the victory.

This great battle had taken place two months after the above-mentioned incident at Nakhla, Friday, the 17th Ramadhan in the second year of Hijrah.

Brief Account of the Battle:

As to how the battle did take place, here is a picture portrayed. Badr is a place at a distance of about 150 kms., south of Madinah. It was then a vast open ground in the midst of mountains. There was a well in it. Actually, it is this well which was called Badr. On the western side of it and close by it, the route from Makkah to Syria passed by. All the caravans used to take

this very route on their journeys to and fro. The Prophet (SAW) had arrived, in order to intercept the caravan of the Quoraish, at this very point in the vicinity of Badr when the report reached that caravan of the enemy had already crossed over past the place. And, simultaneously, it was also reported that the infidels of Makkah had already, having raised an army, set out for waging the war. Thereupon, he (SAW) sought from his companions, Muhajirs and Ansar both, their opinions. In response, the opinion of all of them was unanimously in favour of facing the challenge. Hence, the Prophet (SAW) stayed put.

On its arrival, the army of the Quoraish camped in the better part of the open ground. Moreover, the Muslims were one-third, strength-wise, as against them. They were very short of war equipment also. None the less, it was the matter of life and death for the religious identity of the Muslims. In case the infidels—God forbid—had the victory achieved, the Muslims would get wiped off the face of the Earth. For, all the core strength that the Muslims had, their corps d'élite, was entirely this much that was here.

The Muslims had gotten a tent pitched at an elevated place of Badr for the Prophet (SAW). The place commanded the view of the entire battlefield of Badr. The Prophet (SAW) and Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (RAA) stayed within the tent while Hazrat Sad

bin Waqqas, accoutered with arms, stood guard in front of it. He had taken the charge of protecting the Prophet (SAW). As for the Prophet (SAW), he had his head laid on the ground and kept weeping and saying on end: "Oh Sustainer of the world! In case this small group gets eliminated, there would be no one left to have Thee worshipped."

As per Ibn-e-Ishaque's version of the account, it was Aswad bin Abdullah el-Asad from the infidels' side who, first of all, made a raid on the water reservoir of the Muslims, but got killed. Then, Waleed bin Utbah, Utbah bin Rabeeyah and Shaiba bin Rabeeyah emerged out of the ranks and challenged the Muslims to combat. From this side, therefore, Hazrat Ali, Hazrat Hamzah and Hazrat Ubaidah bin Harith came forward. One-to-one duels took place and all the above-mentioned three infidels got killed. From amongst the Mujahideen, however, Hazrat Ubaidah got wounded. He had got his leg severed. Owing to it, while returning after having achieved the victory, he met his martyrdom at a place called 'Safraa.

After the above-mentioned infidels had been killed, there was a free-for-all encounter. The two sides got into scuffle with each other with no holds barred. On the Muslims' side, it was Mohja, the liege of Hazrat U'mar bin Khattab, who met, first of all, his martyrdom, getting hit by an arrow. Then it was Harith bin Suraqah Ansari who, while he was drinking water from the

pond, got hit by an arrow and met his martyrdom. Meanwhile, Hazrat U'mair bin Hammam made a vigorous assault and achieved martyrdom in the process.

The battle was, at its fiercest, on. The Prophet (SAW) was engrossed in making supplications. Such was the state of his engrossment that the chadar (shawl) that he had on had slid off his shoulders and yet he remained engaged in making entreaties to Allah Almighty with tears welling up from his eyes and rolling down his cheeks. Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (RAA) had the chadar readjusted on his (SAW) shoulders. Still in the self-same ecstatic mood, he (SAW) picked up a handful of pebbles from the ground and, having the words (The faces got distorted) recited, had them exhaled on to the pebbles. Then he had them thrown towards the infidels. They started rubbing their eyes. Owing to this, their onslaught got affected. The Muslims started being felt by the infidels as too strong to be dealt with and started getting the upper hand. It is this very incident about which Allah Almighty has said:

(and thou throwest not, When thou throwest, but Allah threw)

Simultaneously, the Help from Allah Almighty through the angels, too, was rendered. The angels, having descended in the guise of Muslims, systemically participated in the battle and gave the infidels a severe blow. In

short, the complexion of the battle got changed within a short while. The Muslims emerged victorious with flying colours. Many a top-ranking chiefs of the infidels had bitten the dust. As to the rest, the Muslims started making them captives. They had a large number of them bound and bundled. The Muslims had the victory finally achieved.

It was the first ever battle the Muslims fought with the infidels. The Muslims were short in number and had, without having had any previous experience of any such battle, taken on an army that was many more times experienced than they. Yet, they had achieved a magnificent victory. The infidels were reduced to such a state that they wanted to make good their escape but had no recourse to.

The Fate of the Foes:

During the battle, two youngsters from among the Ansar who were yet in their adolescence asked one of their seniors: 'Uncle! This Abu Jahl who is the extremely virulent enemy of our Prophet! Where is he? Just have him pointed out to us'. 'There he stands' the senior said (pointing towards him): No sooner had they heard him say that than rushed headlong towards him and swooped down on him. Thus, that mighty and haughty arch-enemy had to bite the dust at the hands of young children. He was lying there after having been fatally hit when that gentleman noticed that he was still breathing. He came over and

put his foot on his neck. Thereupon he said: 'Do you know who you are putting your foot on? It is the neck of a great head.' Blurting out, as he did, this boastful, bloated blabble, he gave up the ghost.

The Prophet (SAW) wanted to know what did happen to his arch-enemy, the one who, along with his infidelity, had harboured rancor also against him (SAW). So, he (SAW) said: 'Would someone get me what happened to Abu Jahl?' Abu Jahl was the person who was the first and foremost among those who nursed animus against the Prophet (SAW). He had left no stone unturned in his attempt at having him (SAW) eliminated. And, it was he himself who was holding the command of the infidels, too, in this battle. In a short while his severed head was brought to him (SAW) with the report that he had been killed. He (SAW) then said:

(Allah is the One Who Alone and none else than He is the God.)

Thrice he said it. Then he (SAW) said:

(Allah is the Greatest. All the praises are his due. He has fulfilled His Promise. He rendered support to His slave. And, He alone got the groups (of enemies) vanquished.)

Thereafter he (SAW) said: Show me his head. Having seen it, he said: Here it is! The Pharaoh of this ummah!

When the battle was over, it was

found that the number of infidels killed in the battle was as large as seventy. Many of their great chiefs were done to death. Their corpses were thrown into the well of Badr. Standing in front of the infidels' corpses, the Prophet (SAW) said: How vicious kin of your Prophet you proved to be. You disbelieved me while others believed in me. You derogated me while others supported me. You expelled us (me and my companions) out of our home and hearth while others gave us shelter and refuge.

As against the number of infidels killed, the number of Muslim martyrs was much less. The number of their martyrs was just fourteen. Out of them six were Mohajirs and the rest were Ansar. All the rest returned crowned with victory. As a token of Appeasement with the over-all, selfless zeal of rendering support to the Truth and solicitation of the Divine ingratiating which the Muslims had taken part in the battle with, Allah Almighty had all the previous and future sins of the participants in the battle of Badr granted the Forgiveness, too. And, thus, their grade in merit was raised much more higher.

Treatment Meted out to the Captives:

In respect of individuals from among the enemy who were taken captives, the Prophet (SAW) decided, in consultation with his companions, to have them redeemed on payment of ransom money. Thereupon, it was

Revealed by Allah Almighty that these enemies had deserved but to be beheaded and that setting them free was not appropriate. But, since it has already been done it is no more blameworthy. Allah Almighty might have it itself turned out to your advantage.

Post war, the treatment meted out by the Prophet (SAW) to prisoners-of-war of the infidels varied from case to case. Whatever was expedient to do with who was carried out. Anyone of them whose enmity against Islam was perceived as ruthlessly violent and menacing was put to death. Others were redeemed against payment of ransom amount. That amount was later spent on fulfillment of general Islamic requirements and was thus made to serve the Muslims. Thus, there happened to be someone who was set free by him (SAW) in exchange of some Muslim captive. There was someone whom he (SAW) set free just for nothing in exchange. That he did just out of pity for him. Uqbah and Nadhr bin Harith were put to death. The captive soldiers were brought to Madinah. Included among them were Hazrat Abbas, Aqueel (Hazrat Ali's brother) and Abul Aas (the Prophet's son-in-law) also. They, too, were released from captivity against the payment of the ransom money.

One of them, Abul Aas bin Ar-Rabee', husband of the Prophet's daughter, Hazrat Zainub (RAA), who had till then not professed Islam and had

taken part in the battle under pressure from the people, was brought, made captive, before the Prophet (SAW). He, too, was allowed by Him (SAW) to be redeemed only against payment of the ransom that was the penalty. But, he had nothing with him to pay the penalty. It were, therefore, the bracelets of his wife that he had offered to be accepted for the penalty levied on him. Those were the bracelets which her mother, Hazrat Khadeejah (RAA), had gifted her daughter at the time of the wedding. They were her beloved mother's keepsake with her and so cherished by her. When those bracelets were put before him (SAW), he had his beloved and most compassionate wife recalled to his memory. He (SAW) was touched at heart. He (SAW) said to Muslims: Should you people be not averse, these bracelets may be returned to the daughter (to keep them as her late mother's gift). All of them willingly allowed that. This son-in-law of the Prophet (SAW) was so impressed that he had the Faith instilled in his heart. But, he had some obligations towards people in Makkah to be fulfilled. So, he went back to Makkah and having returned from there, embraced Islam.

Apart from him, there were several others who had nothing with them to pay in exchange. He (SAW) ruled that those of them who were literate may teach the Muslims reading and writing. That would be the compensation on their part. ■

Learning And Scholarship In Islam

- Shaukat Ali

Islam has insisted that life is to be lived in a positive, gainful and effective manner and that an individual has deep obligations towards the collective welfare of the community. To achieve this objective it is essential to maintain a constant flow of fresh knowledge into the society so that its members can be saved from ignorance and stagnation.

The pre-Islamic Arabia was not entirely denuded of learning, but whatever evidence has been preserved shows that knowledge as something higher, nobler and truer did not exist at that time. The Prophet of Islam for the first time in the history of Arabian Peninsula made knowledge an essential tool for understanding realities of life. Under his inspiring guidance, learning acquire respect and reverence which remained the hallmark of Islamic civilization for centuries afterwards.

The Quran itself in lucid and self-explanatory terms has laid great emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge. In the chapter entitled Al-Adaq (The Clot) which is considered by commentators to be among the earlier, if not the earliest revelations, the Quran in unmistakable terms points out God's desire to educate men in arts and sciences which are difficult for them to comprehend.

1. Read: In the name of thy Lord who createth,
2. Createth man from a clot.
3. Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous,
4. Who teacheth by the pen.
5. Teacheth man that which he knew not.

There is ample evidence in Quran, that knowledge was essential even for the prophets.

And unto Solomon (we subdued) the wind in its raging. It set by his command toward the land which We had blessed. And of everything We are aware.

And about the Prophet Lot the Quran says:

And unto Lot we gave judgement and knowledge, and We delivered him from the community that did abominations. Lo! they were folk of evil, lewd.

The importance which the Quran attaches to knowledge can further be explained by the frequency with which it has used the word ilm (knowledge). According to one estimate it has been used 750 times in the Holy Book.

The Traditions of the Prophet have also emphasized in unequivocal terms

that life without knowledge is hollow and barren. Knowledge is great fertilizer of the human mind, and to have the maximum harvest out of human existence it is essential to enrich one's life with continuous learning. Al-Bukhari in his monumental work attributes a tradition to the Prophet which says that disappearance of knowledge and absence of scholars from society would spell the demise of human civilization. Abu Dawud (202-275/817-889) also makes several statements to illustrate the basic fact that knowledge alone could make life radiant with spiritual, material and moral richness. The position of the scholar among people, in his opinion, is the same as that of the moon among stars. He copies numerous traditions of the Prophet which accord a very prestigious and reverent position to scholars in a Muslim community. He also emphasizes that knowledge, particularly religious knowledge, should not be sold for worldly gains.

The entire Hadith literature is replete with references from Quran and the sayings of the Prophet which abundantly prove that religion and knowledge are the two main pillars of human life.

Some historians have attributed the following two traditions to the Prophet:

Acquire knowledge, because he who acquires it in the way of the Lord performs an act of piety; who speaks of it, praises the Lord, who seeks it adores God, who dispenses instruction in it, bestows alms, and who imparts it to its fitting objects, performs an act of devotion to God. Knowledge enables its possessor to distinguish what is forbidden from what is not; it lights the way to Heaven; it is our friend in the desert, our society in solitude, our companion when bereft of friends; it guides to happiness; it sustains us in misery; it is our ornament in the enemies. With knowledge the servant of God rises to the height of goodness and to a noble position, associates with sovereigns in this world and attains to the perfection of happiness in the next.

There has never been any doubt in Islamic history that knowledge is a benediction of God and it is fully integrated into Iman (Belief). A verse in the Quran reads as follows:

“God will lift up by degrees those among you who have come to believe and those who have been given knowledge.

And those who come to believe know.

And we have set out signs for people who know—for people who understand—for people who have

come to believe.”

Seyyed Hossein Nasr has summed up the significance of knowledge in Islam in the following words:

Many of the verses of the Quran that were to follow affirmed the sacred nature of knowledge and scientia (ilm) one of the God's name being 'He who knows (al-alim).' The Prophet himself though unlettered from the stand-point of human knowledge was at the same time the channel of the revelation of the Book which is considered by all Muslims to be the quintessential sum of all knowledge both human and divine. Moreover, he reaffirmed the teachings of the Quran by stressing that the acquisition of knowledge to the limits of one's abilities is incumbent upon every believer, as part of his religious duties. His sayings such as 'Seek knowledge from cradle to the grave,' 'Seek knowledge even in China' were echoed through the later centuries as the most authoritative arguments for teaching and propagating knowledge (ilm) even though debates also arose as to exactly what the knowledge to which the Prophet alluded, and whose attainment he considered so essential, encompassed.

Islam has insisted that reason and

revelations are the two wheels of the vehicle of life, and in order to reach one's destination, both wheels have to be equal in size, strength and lubrication. In other words, search for knowledge is an act of piety; it is equivalent to prayer. To make search for fresh knowledge easier, Islam has kept its principles and precepts flexible, and left an ample room for individual interpretation, so that growing complexities of human problems could be resolved in the light of increasing knowledge. Grunebaum says, "There is an element of sober reasonableness in Islam which works toward a humane application of its precepts. The Prophet was sent not to make life more difficult but to facilitate it.' The emphasis, however, was on the usefulness of knowledge, so that the believer could shape the affairs of his life strictly according to the ethical ideals of Islam.

In short, the role of knowledge in the religio-political life of the Muslim community is decisive and all-pervading. It is considered to be a source of strength for human character. It enlightens the soul, dispels ignorance, enriches the mind, produces excellences in intellect, saves men from omissions and excesses, cures passions and impulses of their waywardness and solidifies faith and belief in the revealed word of God.■

(To be Continued)

Spoken English And Broken English

- G.B. Shaw

1. I am now going to suppose that you are a foreign student of the English language; and that you desire to speak it well enough to be understood when you travel in the British Commonwealth or in America, or when you meet a native of those countries. Or it may be that you are yourself a native but that you speak in a provincial or cockney dialect of which you are a little ashamed, or which perhaps prevents you from obtaining some employment which is open to those only who speak what is called 'correct English'. Now, whether you are a foreigner or a native, the first thing I must impress on you is that there is no such thing as ideally correct English. No two British subjects speak exactly alike. I am a member of a committee established by the British Broadcasting Corporation for the purpose of deciding how the utterances of speakers employed by the Corporation should be pronounced in order that they should be a model of correct speech for the British Islands. All the members of that Committee are educated persons whose speech would pass as correct and refined in any society or any employment in London. Our chairman is the Poet Laureate, who is not only an artist whose materials are the sounds of spoken English, but a specialist in their pronunciation. One of our members is Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, famous not only as an actor

but for the beauty of his speech. I was selected for service on the Committee because, as a writer of plays, I am accustomed to superintend their rehearsals and to listen critically to the way in which they are spoken by actors who are by profession trained speakers (being myself a public speaker of long experience). That committee knows as much as anyone knows about English speech; and yet its members do not agree as to the pronunciation of some of the simplest and commonest words in the English language. The two simplest and commonest words in any language are 'yes' and 'no'. But no two members of the committee pronounce them exactly alike. All that can be said is that every member pronounces them in such a way that they would not only be intelligible in every English-speaking country, but would stamp the speaker as a cultivated person as distinguished from an ignorant and illiterate one. You will say, 'Well: that is good enough for me: that is how I desire to speak'. But which member of the committee will you take for your model? There are Irish members, Scottish members, Welsh members, Oxford University members, American members; all recognizable as such by their differences of speech. They differ also according to the country in which they were born. Now, as they all speak differently, it is nonsense to say that they all speak correctly. All we can

claim is that they all speak presentably, and that if you speak as they do, you will be understood in any English-speaking country and accepted as a person of good social standing. I wish I could offer you your choice among them as a model; but for the moment I am afraid you must put up with me—an Irishman.

2. I have said enough to you about the fact that no two native speakers of English speak it alike; but perhaps you are clever enough to ask me whether I myself speak it in the same way.

3. I must confess at once that I do not. Nobody does. I am at present speaking to an audience of many thousands of gramophonists, many of whom are trying hard to follow words, syllable by syllable. If I were to speak to you as carelessly as I speak to my wife at home, this record would be useless; and if I were to speak to my wife at home as carefully as I am speaking to you, she would think that I was going mad.

4. As a public speaker I have to take care that every word I say is heard distinctly at the far end of large halls containing thousands of people. But at home, when I have to consider only my wife sitting within six feet of me at breakfast, I take so little pains with my speech that very often instead of giving me the expected answer, she says 'Don't mumble; and don't turn your head away when you speak. I can't hear a word you are saying'. And she also is

little careless. Sometimes I have to say 'What?' two or three times during our meal; and she suspects me of growing deafer and deafer, though she does not say so, because, as I am now over seventy, it might be true.

5. No doubt I ought to speak to my wife as carefully as I should speak to a queen, and she to me as carefully as she would speak to a king. We ought to; but we don't ('Don't', by the way, is short for 'do not'.)

6. We all have company manners and home manners. If you were to call on a strange family and to listen through the keyhole—not that I would suggest for a moment that you are capable of doing such a very unladylike or ungentle manlike thing; but still—if, in your enthusiasm for studying languages you could bring yourself to do it just for a few seconds to hear how a family speak to one another when there is nobody else listening to them, and then walk into the room and hear how very differently they speak in your presence, the change would surprise you. Even when our home manners are as good as our company manners—and of course they ought to be much better—they are always different; and the difference is greater in speech than in anything else.

7. Suppose I forget to wind my watch, and it stops, I have to ask somebody to tell me the time. If I ask a stranger, I say 'What o'clock is it?' The stranger hears every syllable distinctly.

But if I ask my wife, all she hears is 'cloxst'. That is good enough for her; but it would not be good enough for you. So I am speaking to you now much more carefully than I speak to her ; but please don't tell her!

8. I am now going to address myself especially to my foreign hearers. I have to give them another warning of quite a different kind. If you are learning English because you intend to travel in England and wish to be understood there, do not try to speak English perfectly, because, if you do, no one will understand you. I have already explained that though there is no such thing as perfectly correct English, there is presentable English which we call 'Good English' ; but in London nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand people not only speak bad English but speak even that very badly. You may say that even if they do not speak English well themselves they can at least understand it when it is well spoken. They can when the speaker is English ; but when the speaker is a foreigner, the better he speaks, the harder it is to understand him. No foreigner can ever stress the syllables and make the voice rise and fall in question and answer, assertion and denial, in refusal and consent, in enquiry or information, exactly as a native does. Therefore the first thing you have to do is to speak with a strong foreign accent, and speak broken English ; that is, English without any grammar, Then

every English person to whom you speak will at once know that you are a foreigner. and to understand you and be ready to help you. He will not expect you to be polite and to use elaborate grammatical phrases. He will be interested in you because you are a foreigner, and pleased by his cleverness in making out your meaning and being able to tell you what you want to know. If you say 'Will you have the goodness, Sir, to direct me to the railway terminus at Charing Cross', pronouncing all the vowels and consonants beautifully, he will not understand you, and will suspect you of being a beggar or a confidence trickster. But if you shout, 'Please! Charing Cross! Which way!' you will have no difficulty. Half a dozen people will immediately overwhelm you with directions.

9. Even in private intercourse with cultivated people you must not speak too well : Apply this to your attempts to learn foreign languages, and never try to speak them too well. And do not be afraid to travel. You will be surprised to find how little you need to know or how badly you may pronounce. Even among English people, to speak too well is a pedantic affectation. In a foreigner it is something worse than an affectation ; it is an insult to the native who cannot understand his own language when it is too well spoken. That is all I can tell you: the record will hold no more. Good-bye!■

The Pillars of Islam

- K.K. Usman

The faithful are required to fulfill five obligations, called 'the Pillars of Islam'.

1. Shahada (Declaration of Faith)

And your God is but One God, there is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. (2:163)

Muhammad is the Messenger of God. (48:29)

The declaration of faith (shahada) consists of: 'I bear witness there is no god but God; and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.'

Those are the first words the Muslim newborn hears as the parents or attendants recite them upon birth; and they are the last words the Muslim hears at his hour of death. If they are capable, the dying recite the words to themselves; if incapable, they are recited by others to them. Thus the life of the Muslim begins and ends with Shahada: La ilaha illa Allah Muhammadu Rasool Allah.

The meaning of Shahada is affirmation of divine existence and unity, transcendence and absoluteness, presence and proximity of God. Its value is identical with that of tawhid, of which it is the expression. Its meaning also comprehends the affirmation of the prophet-hood of Muhammad and consequently, acceptance of all that he

conveyed as revelation from God. The Shahada therefore is the confession of faith. As we saw in an earlier chapter (the concept of Faith), the Islamic confession of faith is not simply "an act of faith." Rather, it is a declaration of an intellectual — cognitive and intuitive — emotional fait accompli, namely, the conviction of the truth that there is but One God and that Muhammad is indeed His Messenger. This conviction may be arrived at in different ways-sensory, empirical, rational, a priori, emotional and intuitive-until one reaches a state of perfect certainty called yaqeen.

2. The Prayer (Salat)

Recite from the Book of Revelation and establish regular prayers: for, prayers keep people away from shameful and evil deeds. God's remembrance is indeed, best for them. (29:45)

It may be pointed out here that the Islamic prayer (Salat) is somewhat different from 'prayer' as used generally and in traditional sense of the word and therefore it is better to use the term Salat to refer this form of worshiping God. Basically Salat consists of recitation from the Quran (The opening chapter, Fathiha, being obligatory) and glorification of God, accompanied by

various body postures. Every Muslim, male or female, must offer five daily prayers on time, if there is no lawful reason for exemption. These daily prayers are:

- I. Early Morning Prayer (Fajr or Subah)
- II. The Noon Prayer (Zuhr)
- III. Mid-Afternoon Prayer (Asr)
- IV. After Sunset Prayer (Maghrib)
- V. The Night Prayer (Isha)

The nature, body postures and the formulas uttered during the above referred obligatory Salats are basically the same, but differ in their length, depending upon the number of repetitions of the process, technically called, Rakah (Unit). When a faithful performs the Salat, he is in intimate and confidential converse with his Lord; and at that occasion he ought to know exactly what he says with his Lord.

When we analyze the Islamic Salat and study its unique nature, it will reveal to us that it is not merely a physical motion or a void recital of the Quran. It is a matchless and unprecedented formula of intellectual meditation and spiritual devotion of moral elevation and physical exercise, all combined. It is an exclusively Islamic experience where every muscle of the body joins the soul and the mind in the worship and glory of God.

Formal as it is, salat in Islam is a discipline imposed upon all Muslims. By subjecting the worshipper to it, Islam sought to discipline its adherents and keep them ever conscious of the presence of God. Salat punctuates the time and habituates the Muslim to a healthy rhythm of life. Through ablution in fresh water, salat acts as a refresher and cleanser; and through the alternation of standing up, genuflection, prostration, and sitting down, it serves as an exercise for the body. Salat brings psychic satisfaction and emotional fulfillment. To empty the consciousness of its daily cares, to concentrate upon God and His presence and Will, is an uplift of the self to the realm of the absolute and universal. From such an exercise, the worshipper emerges more ready to face life and its problems than before. The content of the salat, the ideas presented to the mind through the liturgical recitation, strengthen the self in its determination to will and do the good, to avoid evil, to fill the world with value. Finally, when performed in congregation, the packed straight lines readily suggest and exhort the Muslim to uphold egalitarianism, universalism, brotherhood, and concern for the others.

The Quran also enjoins that a Muslim should do ablutions and purify himself /herself before the prayer. This consists of: washing the face, arms including the elbows, wiping the head

or part of it with a wet hand and washing the feet to the ankles. These are the parts of the body which are generally exposed to dirt, dust or smog.

Because of its unique significance as the first house of worship of God, Islam prescribes that the Muslims face the direction of 'Kaaba', in Mecca, whenever they perform Salat (Prayer): this direction of the Kaaba from any place in the earth is known as Qiblah.

In addition to these five obligatory Salats (Prayers), the Quran also enjoins Muslims to participate in the congregational Prayer on Fridays.

Salat can be performed either individually or in group or congregation; the latter is considered more meritorious. Mosques are built for the purpose of congregational Prayers. At the time of each Salat, in order to remind the people, it is announced from the mosques and it is termed Adhan or the Prayer Call. It consists of seven formulas of which the sixth is a repetition of the first, as follows:

1. Allah akbar: "God is Most great.
2. Ash-hadu an la ilaha illa Allah: "I bear witness that there is no god but God."
3. Ash-hadu anna Muhammada rasool Allah: "I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God."
4. Haiya 'ala' l-salat: "Come to prayer."
5. Haiya 'ala' l-falah: "Come to

Salvation."

6. Allah akbar: "God is Most great."

7. La ilaha illa Allah: "There is no god but God."

The first formula is repeated four times one after the other, the other formulas are repeated twice each, except the last, La ilaha illa Allah, which is pronounced only once. At the morning prayer (Fajr), the words: al salat Khair min al- naum: "prayer is better than sleep" — is added.

The first Muslim who was honoured by Prophet Muhammad to do the Prayer Call was Bilal, an emancipated black slave of Abyssinian (Now Ethiopia) origin.

3. Fasting (Sawm)

O, you who believe in God! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before, so that you may learn self-restraint. (2:183)

Fasting must be observed from dawn to dusk every day in the month of Ramadan (the ninth month of Islamic Calender), when a Muslim is not to eat or drink-even a drop of water. Smoking and indulgence in sexual intercourse also are not permitted during the hours of fasting. Ramadan was the month in which the Quran was first revealed. At the end of the month of fasting, Muslims celebrate the completion of their process of purification by the festival of

‘Eid’ or more correctly Eid at-Fitr.

Fasting is one form of worshipping God prescribed by Islam and it has number of spiritual, personal and physiological benefits. It indoctrinates man in patience and unselfishness; because when he fasts he feels the pains and pangs of deprivation but endures it patiently. It is true that these deprivation is only temporary and yet there is no doubt that the experience makes him realize the severe effects of such sufferings on others, who might be deprived of essential commodities for days or weeks or even for months together. The significance of the experience of fasting in social and humanitarian sense is that such a person will be swifter than anybody else in sympathizing with his fellowmen and in responding to their needs. And that is an eloquent expression of unselfishness and genuine sympathy.

It is also an effective lesson in applied moderation and willpower. The person who observes his Fasting properly is certainly a man who can discipline his passions and desires and elevate his self above temptations of a physical nature. Such is the man of character and personality, the man of willpower and determination.

4. Sharing of Wealth (Zakat)

Zakat is meant for the poor and the

needy... This is ordained by God.

(9:60)

Payment of Zakat, or sharing of one's wealth, must be made for the welfare of the poor, out of one's assets. It is not just a form of charity or alms-giving or tax or tithe; nor is it simply an expression of kindness. It is all of these combined, but much more. It is not merely a deduction of a certain percentage from one's income or assets, but an abundant enrichment and spiritual investment. It is not simply a voluntary contribution to someone or some cause; rather, it is a duty enjoined by God and undertaken by Muslims in the interest of society as a whole. It is the right of the under - privileged on the wealth of the rich. The literal meaning of Zakat is 'to purify.' The technical meaning of the word designates the annual amount in kind or money which a Muslim with means must distribute among the rightful beneficiaries. But the religious and spiritual significance of Zakat is much deeper and more lively; so is its humanitarian and political value and significance.

5. The Pilgrimage (Hajj)

And remember when We prepared for Abraham the site of the Sacred House, saying: Do not ascribe anything as associate with Me and sanctify My House for those who circumambulate it and those who stand

and those who bow and those who prostrate themselves there. And proclaim Hajj (Pilgrimage) to mankind; they will come to thee on foot and on every kind of lean camel; they will come from every deep ravine. (22:26,27)

Finally, a pilgrimage to Mecca to perform Hajj— religious rites around Kaaba and its vicinity — must be undertaken at least once in a life time, unless one is unable due to financial reasons or physical or mental disability; otherwise it is obligatory to every Muslim, male or female.

Many of the religious rites performed during Hajj are symbolic and centre on complete submission and devotion to God. At the same time they commemorate as an example of such total submission and obedience Prophet Abraham did, especially in his willingness to sacrifice what he loved most in the world — his son Ishmael — at God's command.

It is the largest annual convention of the faithful where the Muslims meet to know one another, study their common affairs and promote their general welfare. It is also the greatest regular conference of peace known in the history of mankind. In the course of Hajj, peace is the dominant theme; peace with God and one's soul, peace with one another and with animal kingdom, with birds, insects and nature

and the whole physical environment. No animal and other creature to be hunted or harmed, nor trees or grass to be cut. To disturb the peace and tranquility of anyone or any creature in any shape or form is strictly prohibited. Hajj takes place during the first days of the lunar month of 'Dhul Hijj', with its climax on the ninth of the month (Arafa gathering). On the following day, Muslims throughout the world observe one of Islam's two major festivals, Eid al-Adha, the other celebration being Eid al-Fitr— after the conclusion of Fasting of Ramadan.

Hajj is a wholesome demonstration of the universality of Islam and the brotherhood and equality. From all walks of life, from all trades and classes, and from every corner of the globe, the faithful-men and women (millions of them), of diverse colours and races, assemble at Mecca in response to the Call of God. They dress in the same simple way, observe the same regulations, utter the same supplications at the same time in the same language, for the same end. There is no royalty but only loyalty to God. There is no aristocracy, but only humility and devotion.

The pilgrims, a large segment of humanity, intone in unison: 'Labbaika Allahumma Labbaika... O Lord! we heard your Call.. we came...■

Epicurean Philosophy of Life Versus Islamic Philosophy of Life

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Islam is a complete code of life. It encompasses every aspect of life. Its main plank is to attain the pleasure of Allah. So, every Muslim must try to achieve Allah's pleasure and he should also lead a pious life for His sake. And it should be his main purpose of life. The Holy Qur'an says, "Who has created death and life that He might test you as to which of you is excellent in work. And He is the Mighty, the Forgiver. (Surat- ul- Mulk, V.2) It further says, "Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods, lives and fruits of your toil, but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere." (S.2.A.155) According to Islam, real life begins after death. Hence, every Muslim should try his level best to prepare for life Hereafter.

This world is transitory. It has no worth in real sense. It is unfortunate that the concept of Hereafter is disappearing from the hearts of Muslims day by day. A lot of Muslim youths are apostatizing daily. The wave of apostasy is on the rise. Allama Ibn Taimia said, "Al - Gannatu fi sadri" (Heaven is in my heart). The need of the hour is to revive his thought and principle. If one leads one's life believing that Heaven is in one's heart. No harmful

and anti- Islamic act can be done.

Needless to add that every act is considered as worship and adoration in Islam. Accordingly, every Muslim should lead his life according to Qur'an and Sunnah. Islam came to foster peace and amity throughout the world. But now Islam is being projected as a threat to the entire globe. Besides, an international conspiracy is being hatched to malign Islam and its adherents. No stone is being left unturned to obliterate Islam from the map of the universe. These trends have come up after the 9/11 events in USA. The present genocide of Palestinians by Israel is also a part of the international conspiracy against Islam. In contrast the Epicurean philosophy of life is eat, drink and be merry. This philosophy of life was propounded by the Greek philosopher Epicurus. According to him, the main aim of life is to eat, drink and make merry for we may die tomorrow. Today, almost the entire world is following the Epicurean philosophy of life. Unfortunately, even a plethora of Muslims also follow this philosophy of life today.

Muslims should be aware of the Islamic philosophy of life. The Islamic

mphilosophy of life is to lead a prosperous and pious life by attaining the pleasure of Allah. They should also be instructed not to cross the limits set by Islamic Shariah. The Holy Qur'an says,

"Whoever does good, whether male or female, while he or she is a believer, We will give him a good life and We shall certainly pay them a reward in proportion to the best of what they did." (al-Nahl 16:97)

Commenting the above mentioned verse of the Holy Qur'an, Maulana S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi says, "Allah announces such glad tidings in this verse, proclaiming that whoever does good will be rewarded with successful life. Allah's promise is above and beyond doubt. Yet Allah has assured us that He will certainly reward such men and women who do good with a successful life. As we noted earlier, all human beings exert themselves day and night to secure a happy life. If one leads one's life along these lines, Allah promises one happiness and success. Numerous examples bear out this truth."

In short, we should have full trust in Allah and should always inculcate fear of Allah and also should do every act for His sake. And having the concept of the Hereafter, we should lead a good life in this earth. Besides

being social animal, we must motivate others to follow the Islamic philosophy of life doing away with the Epicurean philosophy of life in letter and spirit so that we may easily prevent the present spate of apostasy. As the Holy Qur'an says, "O Believers! Fear Allah as He should be feared. And do not die except in the state of Islam." (Al-Imran 3:102) "O Believers! Fear Allah and speak the truth. He will direct you to good deeds and will forgive your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger he has indeed attained a good achievement." (al-Ahzab 33:70-71)

O Believers! Guard yourselves and your family members against the Fire, of which the fuel is mankind and stones. Over it are angels, stern and strong. They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, and they do what they are commanded". (al-Tahrim 66:6)

In the words of noted Islamic scholar Maulana S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, "The important point, therefore, is that we should arrange for the Islamic education and moral training of our children. They should be instructed in matters of faith so that they can be saved from Hellfire. Such arrangements will keep them away from Allah's wrath and will help them lead a life in accordance with divine guidance. They will thus enjoy an enviable life and earn deliverance and success in the Next." ■

Around the World

44 Killed in Israeli Strikes in Rafah After Bibi says Invasion Inevitable

RAFAH: Israeli airstrikes killed at least 44 Palestinians - including more than a dozen children - in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, hours after Israel's prime minister said he had asked the military to plan for the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people there ahead of a ground invasion.

Benjamin Netanyahu did not provide details or a timeline, but the announcement set off panic and warnings from diplomats. More than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people are packed into Rafah, many after following Israeli evacuation orders that now cover two-thirds of the territory. It's not clear where they could run next.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry warned that any Israeli ground offensive on Rafah would have "disastrous consequences," and asserted that Israel aims to eventually force the Palestinians out of their land.

Shoukry also said Egypt was working to bridge the gap between the warring sides to achieve a permanent cease-fire and free the remaining hostages taken on Oct. 7 in return for Palestinian prisoners in Israel. "The negotiations are complex," he said.

There is increasing friction between Netanyahu and the United States, whose officials have said an invasion of Rafah without a plan for the civilian population would lead to disaster.

Israel has carried out airstrikes in Rafah almost daily, even after telling civilians in recent weeks to seek shelter there from the current ground combat in Khan Younis just to the north.

An Israeli airstrike on a home in Rafah killed at least 11 people, including three children, according to Ahmed al-Sawaf, head of Rafah municipality. The dead were taken to Abu Youssef al-Najjar hospital, according to an AP journalist there. Two other strikes killed two policemen and three senior officers in the civil police, according to city officials.

In Khan Younis, Israeli forces opened fire at

Nasser Hospital, the area's largest, killing at least two people and wounding five, according to the medical charity Doctors Without Borders.

Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said hospital staff are no longer able to move between buildings because of the intense fire. He said 300 medical personnel, 450 patients and 10,000 displaced people are sheltering there.

Vowing to eliminate Hamas, Israel launched a massive military offensive in Gaza that the territory's health ministry says has killed at least 28,064 people. ■

Countries Halt Funding To UN Agency In GAZA

Paris: Several key donor countries have said they will halt funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees following Israel's allegations that staff members took part in Hamas's October 7 attack. UNRWA responded saying it had fired several staff over Israel's accusations, promising a thorough investigation into the claims, which were not specified, while Israel vowed to stop the agency's work in Gaza after the war.

Britain, Italy and Finland on Saturday became the latest countries to pause funding for the UNRWA. The United States, Australia and Canada had already paused funding to the aid agency after Israel said 12 UNRWA employees were involved in the cross-border attack.

Set up to help refugees of the 1948 war at Israel's founding, UNRWA provides education, health and aid services to Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. It helps about two thirds of Gaza's 2.3 million population and has played a pivotal aid role during the current war.

The Palestinian foreign ministry criticised what it described as an Israeli campaign against UNRWA, and the Hamas militant group condemned the termination of employee contracts "based on derived from the Zionist enemy."

Israel said it will seek US and European Union support to halt UNRWA operations in Gaza. ■

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