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The Fragrance of East

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Ramadan: A Global Season of Worship and Good Deeds

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

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

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Wisdom of Qur'an

Indeed, We have now sent a Book to you wherein is your mention. Will you not think?

Commentary:

Mujahid believed in the meaning expressed in the translation. But Sufyan (Ibn 'Uyaynah) thought—to which meaning Ibn Jarir is inclined – that the term “*dhikr*” here alludes to “honor”. That is, it is a revelation that promises to ennoble those who follow and live by it (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi), as Allah said, adds Zamakhshari (43:44), Surely, it (the Qur'an) is a (thing of) honor: for you and your people.”

Sufyan ibn 'Uyayna also explained, as in his biography, “The Qur'an was revealed to a people who regarded qualities such as good neighborliness, fulfilling oaths, truthfulness, trustworthiness, etc., as noble qualities and which they themselves tried to live by. The Qur'an reminded them that by promoting the same values it was mentioning them” (Au). Hasan however understood the term “*dhikr*” of this occurrence as “religion (Ibn Kathir).

Asad's commentary is on the same lines, “...the above phrase contains, apart from the concept of 'reminder', an indirect allusion to the dignity and happiness to which man may attain by following spiritual and social precepts laid down in the Qur'an.”

If we take the standard meaning, then Mawdudi's comment explains what the verse means, “What was so exotic about the Qur'an which drove its opponents to hold such a collection of mutually conflicting opinions about it (as expressed in verse 5 above: au)? The Qur'an should have been familiar material to them for its discourses centered on the human psyche and on human affairs; on man's nature, man's beginning and end.” ■

How many towns We destroyed that were transgressors, and brought forth after them another people? When they felt Our chastisement (coming) they began to run from it.

Commentary:

The textual word “*yarkudun*” is richer in meaning than simply running away. Zamakhshari points out that the word “*rakada*” is used for spurring a riding beast with the heels, in an effort to make it gallop. At another place Allah used the word in the sense of “rubbing.” He said (38:42), ‘Rub (the ground) with your foot.” ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

(1) *Abu Hurairah relates that the Apostle of God said: No believing man hates his believing wife. If there is a bad quality in her, there will, also, be a good quality.* “

- Muslim

Commentary: It tells that if a man disliked his wife for some reason, he should not adopt an attitude of hatred or indifference towards her and start thinking in terms of divorce, but look for the good qualities in her and learn to admire her because of them. This is the claim of Faith on a believing husband and the privilege of a believing wife, As the Quran says: *But consort with them in kindness, for if ye hate them it may happen that ye hate a thing wherein Allah hath placed much good.*’ - (IV:19).

(2) *It is related by Ayesha that the Apostle of God said: “Among Muslims his Faith is more perfect whose behaviour towards (everyone) is good, and, (particularly) towards his wife is of love and kindness.”*

- Tirmizi

(3) *It is related by Ayesha that the Apostle of God said: “Good among you are those who are good to their wives; and I, (on my part), am very good to my wives.”*

- Tirmizi

Commentary: It shows that a special mark of goodness is that a man treated his wife lovingly and well. To make the advice more effective for the Muslims, the Prophet added that, by the grace of God, he was most kind and considerate to his wives himself. The attitude of the sacred Prophet towards his wives was perfect, indeed, a few examples of which are contained in the narratives given below. ■

Editor's Note 

Advent of Ramadan

It is said that underlying significance and aims and virtues of the four fundamental duties of Islam, Namaz, Zakat, Saum (fasting) and Haj should be clearly understood by believers. Each one of these has its own significance and their cumulative observance and practice make a person perfect Muslim.

Salat or Namaz is ordained to be observed as a regular worship and should be offered five times a day as prescribed in Tradition. Zakat that is poor's due is obligatory on those who possess wealth more than their own requirements. Similarly Haj that is pilgrimage to Mecca is must for those who are financially and physically sound. The Saum that is fasting is obligatory for a month in a year.

Imam Ghazali shedding light on the objects of fasting , writes :

“The object of fasting is that man should produce within him a semblance of the Divine Attribute of Samadiyat (i. e., Freedom from want), that he should, as far as possible, take after the angels and cast off the beastly propensities because the angels are free from desire and the place of man, too, is above the animals and he has, further, been given the power of discrimination to resist the pressure of inordinate appetites. He is, of course, inferior to angels in the sense that desire often overpowers him and he has to strive hard to subdue it. When he conquers them attains the dizzy heights of the heavenly host and begins to dwell on the plane of the angels”.

Similarly, Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim says:

“The purpose of fasting is that the spirit of man was released from the clutches of desire and moderation prevailed in his carnal self and through it, he realised the goal of purification and everlasting felicity. It is aimed at curtailing the intensity of desire and lust by means of hunger and thirst, at inducing man to realise how many were there in the world

like him who had to go even without a small quantity of food, at making it difficult for the Devil to deceive him, and at restraining his organs from turning towards things in which there was the loss of both the worlds. Fasting thus is the bridle of the God-fearing, the shield of the crusaders and the discipline of the virtuous.”

Proceeding further the Allama remarks:

“Fasting is most efficacious in the protection of the external limbs and internal organs. It guards against disorders resulting from the accumulation of the effete matter. It expels the toxins that are injurious to health and cures the ailments which develop in the body due to over-indulgence. It is beneficial for health and most helpful in leading a life of piety and good-doing.

“Says the Quran :

O ye who believe: Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before ye, that ye may ward off evil. (– ii : 183)

“And the holy Prophet has said: Fasting is a shield.”

“Hence, a person who wishes to marry but does not have the means to support a family is advised to observe fasting. It has been prescribed as a sovereign remedy for him, the object being to demonstrate that since the advantages of fasting were evident from the point of view of commonsense God had enjoined it as an act of mercy for the protection of His slaves”.

Considering the importance and virtues of the Ramadan fasting we expect that every Muslim, as in the past, this year too will observe this obligation. ■

S.A.

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The Message of Ramazan

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

O Believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you. That you may become pious. (Al-Baqarah 2: 183)

The above Qur'anic verse lays down that fasting is a religious duty incumbent on all Muslims. Until the last Day the command embodied in this verse remains valid. Embedded in the verse is thus much food for thought.

First, the command is addressed to believers. For the command involves doing something which is difficult. It calls for courage and patience to fast. Accordingly, mention is made first of faith. The believers are asked to discharge this duty. For they have pledged their servitude to Him, affirming that He is the Master and Ruler-interest. For they are obliged to perform whatever He commands of them. This is because of their servitude to Him. Being His servants they are expected to behave thus. They are at His beck and call. Allah being All-Wise begins the command in the above fashion. Otherwise, secular laws are promulgated without any reference to one's gain or safety against some loss. Although Allah is the absolute Ruler, Creator of the heavens and earth who exercises total control over everyone's life, honour and property, He invokes the conviction of believers. Muslim are exhorted to act on the dictates of their

faith. They are expected to respond vigorously and positively to His call. Against this backdrop they are told that a month-long fasting is prescribed for them as a religious duty.

Allah is thoroughly conversant with human nature. For He is man's Creator. At the same time, He makes certain allowances for man out of His wisdom and mercy. Whenever He enacts a command, He prepares man mentally for it, enabling him to obey His command willingly. Man is instinctively repulsed by something new and odd. However, on realising that something is a standard practice, followed down the ages by many generations, man is drawn towards it and feels no hesitation in obeying such a command.

Believers are informed that fasting was a duty obligatory upon earlier generations as well. One learns from the history of world religions and nations that fasting has been a religious obligation in some form during all periods of time. Its details may be found in religious and historical works. One learns the exact form and duration of fasting among different religious communities. Finer points about the restrictions and the starting and concluding times of fasting may also be gleaned. Constraints of space prevent us from exploring this point any further.

The important truth home though

is that fasting helps man attain piety. The Qur'an employs the term taqwa in this context. Generally speaking, words are invested with different meanings with the passage of time. A pious person is taken to be one who is constantly engaged in worship, and who sleeps little. One who does not fall asleep at all is recognised as a perfectly pious person. He is expected to offer prayers all the time and is very cautious about each and every issue, be it religious or mundane. In the original Arabic, however, taqwa does not carry these shades of meaning. It does not imply that one blessed with taqwa is given wholly to worship, stays awake throughout the night and fasts round the year. Instead taqwa signifies in the original Arabic a state of mind and consciousness. It encompasses one's temperament and way of thinking, Ramadan helps man attain piety. Yet it does not mean that with the passage of Ramadan, piety comes to an end. Piety is not some temporary condition.

Piety represents a constant state of self-control and restraint. If a child is brought up well, he imbibes the value of respecting his elders. He does not indulge in any act in the presence of his elders which may be offensive to them. By the same token, he refrains from mocking or insulting them. Piety signifies such a training of the mind which guides one to practice moral values all the time. A pious person thinks carefully before taking any action whether his act is permitted by the

Shari'ah or not. This reference to the Shari'ah at every step is a pointer to one's piety. Take the illustrious examples of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, holding exalted rank among the Prophet's Companions. They were witness to the revelation of the Qur'an. Furthermore, they possessed mastery over the Arabic language and idiom. They were born and brought up in Makkah and used the local language fluently. As true Companions they never felt shy of seeking clarification from the Prophet (PBUH). Once they asked 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud to define taqwa. To this he replied: "O Commander of the Faithful! Have you ever walked on a path with thorns on either side?" When 'Umar replied in the affirmative, he asked as to how he walked on that path. 'Umar replied: "I walk cautiously, ensuring that body and clothes are safe against thorns." 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud exclaimed: "This is the definition of taqwa - to lead life in a way with our doing anything which may displease Allah. One's deeds should not be discordant with the Shari'ah."

Those not familiar with Arabic idiom think that fasting is prescribed for making believers pious. It is not however the point that one who fasts for twenty-nine or thirty days in Ramadan will turn into a pious person at the end of the month. One who fasts, recites the Qur'an often and prays to Allah at night, including offering Tarawih Prayers, does not turn automatically into a pious person. This is not the end of his

test. It signifies, at most, that he did not eat or drink during the daytime in Ramadan even what is lawful and wholesome, and he did so at Allah's command. Even a drop of water was not consumed by him. Needless to add, water is one of the greatest divine bounties. Allah has created every living being out of water. A true believer does not eat food during the daytime of Ramadan, though he was provided with food by Allah. He had food items at home bought out of his lawful earnings. Yet he did not take food or water, though he needed these as a human being. Only in deference to Allah's command did he not touch these otherwise lawful and wholesome things from dawn to dusk. Not a drop of water should pass his lips. Since one does all this in accordance with Allah's command, one should make a point of living by His directives after Ramadan as well. One should discern between the lawful and the unlawful. We are very sensitive to any impurity. Let us bear in mind that disobedience to Allah is the most damaging impurity.

As we forego lawful and wholesome things during Ramadan in deference to Allah's command, we should not draw near any sin after the month of Ramadan is over. We should not do anything which may displease him. Nor should we ever tell a lie. By the same token, we should not give false testimony or hurt any fellow Muslim's feelings. We should

not deny anyone his due or indulge in slandering. We should refrain from stealing, injustice, violence, and hurting others. Piety consists in shunning all that is sinful, impure and immoral. A constant effort to keep away from evil constitutes piety.

There is some difference an act of worship and piety. The latter represents an outlook and temperament. One may perform acts of worship. However, in a state of anger and in mundane transactions one may disregard the spirit of one's worship. This underscores a lack of piety. One's mind should be permeated with piety. Fasting is prescribed for Muslims for instilling piety into their minds and hearts. One should think all along of one's ultimate return and accountability to Allah.

Piety signifies God-consciousness. One should weigh up before doing anything whether this act will please or enrage Allah. One should ascertain first whether such action is in accord with the Shari'ah or not, and whether it is lawful or not. One's action should follow the command of Allah and His Messenger. Becoming habitual about this constant checking infuses piety into one. This is the rationale behind declaring fasting in Ramadan as an obligatory duty. For it may bless one with piety. ■

(Guidance from the Holy Quran by S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Page 80-84)

Unbonded

Anonymous donations of high value tend to undermine electoral democracy and governance as they facilitate a quid pro quo culture involving donors and beneficiaries. In striking down the Electoral Bond Scheme (EBS) under which anyone could buy electoral bonds and donate them to political parties for encashment, the Supreme Court of India has recognised this malaise and struck a blow for democracy and transparency in political funding. The Court found that the entire scheme violates the Constitution, especially the voters' right to information. It further found manifestly arbitrary, the amendment to the Companies Act that removed the cap of 7.5% of a company's profit that can be donated to political parties without any requirement to disclose details of the recipient parties in its profit and loss accounts. It has also mandated disclosure of donation details since 2019. The judgment is one more in a long line of verdicts the Court has handed down to promote voter rights and preserve the purity of elections. Its earlier interventions led to the featuring of the 'None of the Above' option on the ballot, the removal of the protection given to legislators from immediate disqualification on conviction for a criminal offence, the mandatory disclosure of the assets and criminal antecedents of candidates in their election affidavits and expedited trials for MPs and MLAs involved in criminal offences.

The Court's reasoning is unexceptionable. It found that the primary justification for the EBS — curbing the use of 'black money' for political or electoral funding by allowing donations through banking channels — failed the test of proportionality, as it was not the least restrictive measure to abridge the voters' right to know. It has made the logical connection between unidentified corporate donations and the likelihood of policy decisions being tailored to suit the donors. The judgment is a natural follow-up to a principle it had laid down years ago that the voters' freedom of expression under Article 19(1)(a) will be incomplete without access to information on a candidate's background. The principle has now been extended to removing the veil on corporate donors who may have been funding ruling parties in exchange for favours. While the verdict may help ease the hold that donors may have on governance through money power, a question that arises is whether the validity of the scheme could have been decided earlier or the issuance of bonds on a regular basis stayed. How much of the thousands of crores of rupees given to parties under this scheme resulted in policy measures favourable to the donors or helped fund the deployment of additional campaign resources will never be known. This was a fit case for the grant of an interim stay. ■

(Editorial, The Hindu 16-02-2024)

Places of Worship And An Unsettling Judicial Silence

- Ziya Us Salam

When the Supreme Court of India passed its verdict in November 2019, in what is popularly known as the Babri Masjid case, it was a slight beacon of hope for all backers of the idea of India. Though the Court ended up giving the plot of land to the party that was responsible for the desecration and demolition of the mosque, the Court's glowing reference to the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 was like applying a little balm to an embattled soul. It promised to shut the door with a finality on further contentions of other places of worship, notably the Gyanvapi Masjid in Varanasi and the Shahi Idgah in Mathura.

The unanimous view of the five-judge Bench was, "In providing a guarantee for the preservation of the religious character of places of public worship as they existed on 15 August 1947 and against the conversion of places of public worship, Parliament determined that independence from colonial rule furnishes a constitutional basis for healing the injustices of the past by providing the confidence to every religious community that their places of worship will be preserved and that their character will not be altered.

The law addresses itself to the State as much as to every citizen of the nation...The Places of Worship Act imposes a non-derogable obligation towards enforcing our commitment to secularism under the Indian Constitution....Non-retrogression is a foundational feature of the fundamental constitutional principles of which secularism is a core component. The Places of Worship Act is thus a legislative intervention which preserves non-retrogression as an essential feature of our secular values."

A Peace That Prevailed For Only a While

The light for peace and harmony burned bright. Not for long though. Over the next year or so, petitions began to be filed for the so-called liberation of Hindu temples where the mosques in Mathura and Kashi stand. These mosques have been on the radar of Hindutva forces ever since the Babri Masjid-Ramjanambhoomi agitation began, when the oft-heard slogan was, "Ayodhya to jhanki hai, Kashi, Mathura baqi hai (Ayodhya is a mere trailer, Kashi and Mathura are still left)". The Kashi mosque now faces almost 15 identical petitions; the Mathura mosque

has 12 petitions.

More petitions have been filed in the lower judiciary against mosques such as the Shamsi Jama Masjid in Badaun, Teele Wali Masjid in Lucknow, Kamal Maula mosque in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, Adhai Din ka Jhonpra in Ajmer, the Jama Masjid in Srirangapatnam, and even the Quwwat-ul-Islam Masjid at the Qutub Minar in New Delhi. The claims of the mosques having been built after restructuring or demolishing ancient temples have been questionable. If in the case of Badaun, the protesters were not sure whether the mosque was built after demolishing a temple or merely restructuring one, in the case of Kamal Maula Masjid, an idol was sought to be placed in September last year to buttress the contention that the mosque was an 11th century temple dedicated to the Hindu goddess Saraswati. There was no proof to back any of the contentions by little-known right-wing activists but the petitions were still admitted in various district courts.

Surveys And Hearings

These were new territories being tested by revanchist forces. Barring a rap on the knuckles, as in the case of Quwwat-ul-Islam Masjid, the district and High Courts were silent in what amounted to a deliberate challenge to

the Places of Worship Act which the Supreme Court spoke so glowingly of in the Babri judgment. They probably got their encouragement from an oral remark made by the Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud who is reported to have stated “the ascertainment of the religious character of a place as a procedural instrument may not necessarily fall foul of the provisions of sections 3 and 4 of the Act of 1991”. The remark probably opened a Pandora’s box.

Almost on cue, when the Allahabad High Court ordered a survey of the Gyanvapi mosque, a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court upheld the decision. The religious character of Gyanvapi could indeed be ascertained. It did, however, earlier this year, stay the Allahabad High Court’s order for a court-monitored survey of Shahi Idgah Masjid in Mathura.

Further, the Supreme Court agreed to hear a clutch of petitions against the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act itself. Even as it maintained that the pendency of petitions did not affect the maintainability of the Act, its action of admitting the petitions itself was a signal that nothing was above debate. One of the petitioners even objected to the cut-off date of August 15, 1947, something

the top court had spoken glowingly of in the Babri verdict. The petitioner, a former spokesman of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Delhi, insisted that the cut-off date should be 1206, the time when Qutbuddin Aibak laid the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate. That his objection was not dismissed at the first stage was of significance.

The petitions seeking the restoration of places of worship to their alleged status three to eight centuries ago should not have come as a surprise, but the speed and the frequency of petitions at various levels were a little alarming. The courts were probably prepared. In 1994, barely three years after the Places of Worship Act came into force, the top court expressed its apprehensions over the provisions of the Act being flouted.

Drawing a parallel with the razing of the Babri Masjid by those unconcerned with the provisions of the Indian Penal Code for violating a place of worship, the Court said, "Similarly minded people are as little likely to be deterred by the provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1991". Incidentally, the Places of Worship Act, which made an exception for the Babri Masjid, virtually envisaged the conversion of the Ayodhya mosque, but, in the same breath, wanted to put

an end to demands on other monuments. With the Babri mosque having lapsed into history, challenges to the Act of 1991 itself amount to a breach of public trust. These petitions are being used as a political weapon today. They help further a certain political narrative in the run-up to the general election 2024. The public gets excited, and fringe leaders become vocal and aggressive.

A Moment to Ponder

Even as petitions pile up in courts across the country, let us not forget what happened in Ayodhya in 1986. It was the order of a district court in Uttar Pradesh which kick-started the flow of events that ultimately led to the destruction of the mosque and the final possession of its land by the assailants. The district court's permission changed the way India looked at places of worship. The question today is this: will the Supreme Court step in to uphold the integrity of the Places of Worship Act? Or, will the continued extensions granted to the Union government to specify its stance pave the way for the repeal of the Act by Parliament? Noises against the Act are already being heard in the Lok Sabha. It is the silence of the top court which is unsettling.■

(The Hindu 16-02-2024)

Unicef Says One in Six Gaza Children Malnourished

Israel ordered new evacuations from parts of Gaza City, as a study led by the UN children's agency found that one in six children are acutely malnourished in the isolated and largely devastated north of the territory, where the city is located.

The report by the Global Nutrition Cluster, an aid partnership led by UNICEF, says more than 90% of children under 5 in Gaza eat two or fewer food groups a day, known as severe food poverty. A similar percentage are affected by infectious diseases.

The Israeli military ordered the evacuation of the Zaytoun and Turkoman neighbourhoods on the southern edge of Gaza City, an indication that Palestinian militants are still putting up stiff resistance in areas of northern Gaza that the Israeli military said had been largely cleared. ■

Distinction Of A Muslim In The World

- S. Bilal Abdul Hai Hasani Nadwi

Religion, in fact, is meant for leading an advantageous and purposeful life. Today, a variety of religions and faiths are found in the world. A section of people claims to be secular. Communism is based on secularism. Their concept of life is only eating, drinking and being merry. Communism propounded a theory against capitalism. As it couldn't perpetuate on moderation and temperance and revolted against the nature of human beings and so it did not succeed in its desired goals. Adherents of any religion which exists in the globe in any shape have their own peculiar thoughts and beliefs. They regard religion just as a concept and an abstract notion. That is why they practice it on certain occasions. No imprint of their religions appears in their lives. Only a few outward images which they regard enough. The followers of Divine faiths totally ignored the real facts. No major difference is visible between them and their religions. To them the matter of the Hereafter, reward and punishment is only a fantasy. With the result that their sole aim of life is merely achieving worldly gains. The main plank of their discussion about Allah, messenger and Hereafter is only to strengthen unity.

It is only Islam which appreciates each moment of human life and exhorts its adherents to keep engaged their every breath in remembrance of Allah.

According to Islamic view point no moment of human life is purposeless.

Now, it is the onus of mankind as how far they make their life and every moment useful and valuable. Islam makes no difference between religious issues and worldly ones. According to Islam this world and its all things are integral part of the religion. It shows right directions to everyone and apprises of real values of life so that one may lead a peaceful life here. Islam abhors negligence, carelessness and lethargy. It demands its followers to carry out the teachings of Islam in letter and spirit.

It should be noted that Muslims can not be free merely by observing outward Islamic phenomena, worship and adoration. On the contrary Islam urges them to fulfill their obligations and accord due attention to others rights' and spend their valuable time in proper way and not to become frustrated. Islam teaches that if someone came to know that he was about to die after a while nevertheless he might not be inactive. Islamic teaching is that if anyone plants a sapling and his days are numbered in this world, he shouldn't stop his work in its waiting. He should always be engaged in his business and make his every moment useful. He should also keep himself busy in pleasing Allah and shaping his Hereafter. A host of people may derive benefits from this act of him. And this act will be a perennial and enduring charity for him. The Holy Prophet says, "The best of you is who proves himself more profitable to others." The

most striking aspect of a Muslim is that he always strives to spend every second with sagacity and wisdom and doesn't indulge in silly talks, frivolity and anti-social activities. The Holy Prophet says, "These are the virtues of Islam that its followers don't go near obscenity and mischievousness".

Despite these real teachings of Islam unemployment and joblessness appear in bulk in Muslim community. The religion which always exhorts its adherents to become aim oriented, they seem oblivious in achieving purposeful and fruitful life. Today, Muslims are far lagged behind on every front. Especially, the youth upon whom Almighty Allah bestowed extraordinary powers and calibers, they

also show criminal negligence in every spheres of life. In a Hadith it is warned that every Muslim should be covetous of profit. And he should always think of the profits. Obviously, the genuine profits are the profits of the Hereafter. This world was definitely created for the cause of the Hereafter.

Ironically, the nations which have no such Divine messages and have no sweetness of faith and belief, they are rapidly progressing in every domains of life by targeting this mundane world as their main aim. But we despite having everything, have nothing. Had we felt our power and strength, we presented the world which it needed the most. ■

(English Rendering: O.R. Nadwi)

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Characteristics, Virtues and Traits of Prophet (SAW)

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

Whenever Allah Almighty sends down someone as a Prophet for the reform and edification of any people, He chooses for the purpose some such person from amongst the people as is distinguished within the entire community in perception and prudence, character and conduct, and valour and aspiration. This distinction is, in fact, conferred on him by Allah Almighty Himself in order to enable him to perform the assigned job of reform and guidance. To that end, celestial dictates are issued to him according to whom he invites them towards the righteousness and Guidance. During the period passed before getting assigned the office of Prophecy by Allah Almighty, the human traits in him are vested by his Providence that are confined within the sphere of innate human nature and those are the loftiest traits. These traits are watched and liked by his people. Living among them, as he does, he has the people made already conversant with his sublime and virtuous human traits.

Hence, when he gives them a call, on getting assigned the Prophecy, towards righteousness and Guidance, the obstinate and egoistic people of his community repudiate it saying only that 'this person is now starting saying such things as were not said by our elders. He has gone astray from the ways of

our elders.' But, along with that, they do not find it possible for themselves to deny his virtuous and humanistic traits. They are unable to bring themselves round, just out of prejudice and stubbornness, to listen to anything against their religious rituals and customs which are practiced by them since their birth. But, they do not deny, at the same time, the moral and humanistic qualities of the Prophet. The Prophet would say to them that: 'Dear brethren! You know me very well. You know how long it is since you are watching and observing me. You have tested and tried me. Yet, you do not pay attention to what I say.' It is what the holy Quran has referred to in this verse:

(Of a surety I have tarried among you a lifetime before it).

Sincerity, nobility, resoluteness and courage, fortitude and steadiness, affability and amiability, compassion and politeness are those virtues of prophets which make whoever listens to their message even with a least bit of impartiality feel compelled to comply with him.

The case with the Prophet Mohammad (SAW) was exactly the same. He had been loved and liked for forty years by the people among whom he had lived. But, when he took to preventing them from their wrong practices and distorted religion and

started calling them towards good morals and correct religion, they got disaffected with him. But, despite getting extremely belligerent on his making the call, some of them would keep mulling over his message and finally have it accepted. For, they were well aware of his humanitarianism, honesty, chastity and good character. Hence, whoever listened to him with an open mind would get enamoured of him. So much so that one coming to him with the intention of causing harm to him would suddenly get transmogrified after having witnessed his (SAW) amiability. Nevertheless, a large number of the people would not be willing to listen to his message. They would have their ears as it were stuffed with cotton, making sure that it does not get into their ears. And, then, in order to prevent him from giving this message they would adopt violent ways and be cruel to him.

When he (SAW) got entrusted with the responsibility of the Prophecy, he expressed his anxiety, owing to the load of its weight that he was feeling, to his revered wife Hazrat Khadeejat-el-Kubra (RAA). Thereupon she consoled and comforted him with these words: 'You need not be upset. I swear by Allah, He would never let you be disgraced and humbled. For, you are the one who has regard for the uterine relations and kinship, take the load off the others, render assistance to the needy, extend hospitality to the guest and bring relief to those who sustain

infections and distresses in the cause of the Truth.'

Umm-ul-Momineen, Hazrat Khadeejat-ul-Kubra (RAA) had said what is quoted above on the basis of her common-sense, her unsophisticated nature as well as the experiences of her own personal life and the knowledge she had of the people. The Prophet (SAW) had earned from the people the honorifics of 'As-Sadique' and 'Al-Ameen' because of his good traits, honesty and probity. That was the testimony from them to the fact that he was really very honest and extremely trustworthy. Hence, despite being hostile to him, they relied on him in all other matters. They even deposited their valuables with him for safe custody. He (SAW), too, used to be considerate to everyone on occasions where his cooperation and compassion was required. Even on occasion of renovation of Ka'ba he joined all others in carrying stones. Whenever there would be consultations for any good cause he would take part in it. Anyone in distress and inflicted upon by any calamity would be helped by him. One instance of the same is as follows: There was a man whom Abu Jahl had bought camels from. But, in making payment of the price, Abu Jahl had adopted the course of inordinate dilly-dallying. Whenever he would come to him to collect the price, he would put him off. In a gathering of youths from the Quoraish, that man brought up this

issue. Some of the people in the gathering saw there a prospect of having some fun. As the case involved Abu Jahl who was extremely hostile to the Prophet (SAW), they thought it would be great fun to watch when the two come to combat each other. They said to him (pointing towards the Prophet - SAW): 'Go to that gentleman sitting there and seek assistance from him.' He came up to him (SAW) and, making a complaint of Abu Jahl's dishonesty, sought assistance from him. Even though it was something preposterous for him (SAW) to go to Abu Jahl and make an appeal to, or request, him to make the payment of the price to that man. But, prompted by his urge to help him out, he (SAW) paid no heed to the risk involved and said to him: Come on, I would try to help you out'. Reaching the Abu Jahl's house, he (SAW) knocked at the door. When he came out the Prophet (SAW) asked him to have the payment made. Abu Jahl was so awed by the Prophet's boldness that he agreed to make the payment and having fetched the price-money from inside he had it paid to that man. When Abu Jahl joined his mates later, they scoffed at him saying: 'Generally, you make a great show of your strength against Mohammad (SAW); but, you got cowed down by him on this occasion.' He confessed that he had gotten really awed by him and found himself compelled on doing what he did. Such behavior of the Prophet (SAW) was

never for the sake of his own benefit. In his own case, he (SAW) would endure distress and would never think of taking any revenge from the aggressor. But, in case someone else needed his help, he would go all out to help him. He had a soft corner for each and everyone. It is what Allah Almighty Himself has defined him with:

(It was then of the mercy -of Allah that thou hast been gentle with them; and wert thou rough, hardhearted, they had surely dispersed from around thee. So pardon them thou, and ask thou forgiveness for them and take thou counsel with them in the affair, and when thou hast resolved, put thy trust in Allah. Verily Allah loveth the trustful.)

In case of someone having personal enmity with him (SAW), he would not be revengeful to him at all. But, where the interest involved used to be religious or were a matter of principle, he would take a tough stand. The definition of his character in traditional annals is worded thus:

Describing the lofty morals of the Prophet (SAW), Hazrat Ali (RAA) says:

"I did not see him ever taking revenge from anyone for his cruelty and aggression, unless it were the matter pertaining to violation of restraints imposed by Allah Almighty and disregard for His dictates. In case any dictate of Allah Almighty was trampled and His Honour was smeared, he (SAW) would, of course, be angry with the culprit more than anybody else."

Hazrat Anas bin Malik states that the Prophet of Allah (SAW) was very kind-hearted. Whenever any indigent came to him, he (SAW) would positively assure him of his assistance. In case he had something, he would immediately fulfill his need. Once, there came a Bedouin when the congregational prayer was already in progress and, getting hold of his (SAW) mantle, got to saying: 'A small requirement of mine is still remains unfulfilled. I am afraid I might forget it'. He (SAW) went with him. When he had his need fulfilled, the Prophet (SAW) came back and had the prayer performed.

The incidents of his (SAW) tolerance, fortitude, magnanimity, endurance and resoluteness are corroborated by the testimony given by his (SAW) attendant, Hazrat Anas (RAA). It is about the time when he was very young. He says: I served the Prophet (SAW) for ten years. He (SAW) never objected to anything I did and never said why I did, or not did, this or that.

Hazrat U'mar narrates that the Prophet (SAW) said: "Do not exaggerate in commending and defining me like the Christians did with Hazrat Isa bin Maryam (AS). I am Just a bond-man of Allah. Do call me just 'Bond-man of Allah and His Apostle'".

Hazrat Abdullah bin Abi Aufa narrates that the Prophet (SAW) had no inhibition and did not feel ashamed at

going in company of any slave or any widow till his or her need was fulfilled.

Hazrat Anas (RAA) says: 'Anyone of the bond-maids and slave-girls of Madinah would hold him (SAW) by hand and have whatever she wanted to say said to him and would take him along with her as far as she wanted to'.

When Adi bin Hatim et- Tai (RAA) called on him (RAA), he took him inside his house. The bond-maid offered the cushion to rest upon. He (SAW) had it placed in between him and Hazrat Adi and made himself seated on the floor. Hazrat Adi says: "That made me realize that he (SAW) was not a man of pomp and Show.

Hazrat Anas (RAA) states that: "The Prophet (SAW) would call on the sick, accompany the funeral procession and accept the invitation of the poor".

Hazrat Jabir (RAA) says: "Being considerate to the infirm, he (SAW) would slow down his speed and pray to Allah for him."

Hazrat Anas (RAA) has been quoted to have said that the Prophet (SAW) said: "I am bond-man of Allah, eat like a bond- man and sit like a bond-man."

The Prophet (SAW) would have his house himself cleaned, his camels tethered, his cattle served with fodder, partake with his servant in having meal, assist him in kneading the flour and have the victuals brought from the market. ■

Learning And Scholarship In Islam

- Shaukat Ali

Definition of Knowledge

It is very difficult to formulate a concrete and operational definition for an elusive and eternally ambiguous term like knowledge. Difficulties multiply manifold in the case of Islam, because in it secular and religious knowledge are completely intermingled. In the mind of a Muslim, knowledge includes everything which reason and revelation can unearth for the spiritual and material betterment of mankind. Since the Quran and the Prophet had emphasized the importance of knowledge in unmistakable terms, Muslim scholars in every period of Islamic history took special pains to explain the scope and subject matter of knowledge. The result of all these endeavours, however, has been that Islamic literature is crowded with bewildering variety of definitions. Franz Rosenthal in his valuable work listed 107 definitions from various source books.

Philip K. Hitti defines ilm (Islamic knowledge) in the following words:

The Arabic word for science (ilm) like its English correspondent etymologically means "knowledge" or "learning." It may be used in the broad sense to mean knowledge systematized with reference to general truths and laws, or more specifically, to refer to knowledge as

it relates to physical world in which case it is known as physical or natural science.

The term ilm (knowledge) as originally used was a universal blanket for all kinds of intellectual, philosophical and scientific pursuits, which enabled human beings to explore the mysteries of nature, and highlighted the true meanings of the revelation. But at a very early stage of the growth of Muslim scholarship, knowledge was categorized into different areas and instead of ilm (knowledge) singular, ulum (plural) became a common term for scholarship. The general opinion among the historians of Islam is that as territories which had advanced civilization were conquered outside Arabia, realization dawned upon Muslims that knowledge was extremely diverse in nature, and that each branch constituted a distinct area of specialization, requiring specific kind of intellect and a particular kind of education and training.

According to Franz Rosenthal there reached a stage when the number of various branches of knowledge had risen to 150 and according to one account in the sixteenth century, the number possibly could be as high as 316. In spite of this bewildering diversity, however, a belief that knowledge in

essence is one, continued to persists in the world of Muslim scholarship. All branches of knowledge were interconnected and in order to understand the realities of life, and resolve baffling complexities which hampered the solutions of problems it was essential to use maximum amount of information from all branches of knowledge.

The Muslim scholars, however, never gave any definitive view on how to relate the original Quranic concept of Ilm to the later developments which produced countless fields of intellectual specialization. The study of the landmark figures in the history of Muslim scholarship clearly demonstrates that compartmentalization of knowledge did not deter them from mastering several branches of knowledge at the same time, pleading that division of human learning into different subjects was only an effort to systematize knowledge and facilitate its assimilation, otherwise knowledge was one compact whole.

In Arabic and Persian the term Hakeem which meant wise was used for physician as well as for philosopher. Very rarely a distinction was made between natural sciences, humanities, and other related subjects. As a general rule the reputation of a scholar depended on the number of subjects on which he could claim mastery, and the amount of light that he could shed on an issue through various interdisciplinary

approaches.

Uses of Knowledge

Knowledge is the guardian of soul, architect of morality, and custodian of values and ideals which are the major determinants of human destiny both here and hereafter. Intellect, which is the unique characteristic of human beings, is meant to be utilized for the cultivation of divine attributes. It is the only instrument, which is properly cultivated and effectively used, could narrow the gap between God and man. Ignorant and untutored mind can never hope to develop the ability which uncovers the inscrutable secrets of the universe. Scholars of all shades of opinion in Islam agree that pure reason alone is an insufficient guide. Reason in their opinion needs always to be supplemented with the revealed word of God. Ideal conditions for human thought and action are possible only when a believer uses both the secular and spiritual knowledge in resolving the problems of life. Revelation does not put any serious constraint on the freedom of thought. Except for some fundamental principles relating to the sovereignty of God, the mission of the Prophet, and sanctity of the word of the Quran, all the rest of the fields of human activity are subject to independent judgement, and rational interpretation. Outside the boundaries laid down by Sharia, the entire world of knowledge is a fit subject for research. As a matter of fact such an investigation through

reason and logic, it is said, would strengthen the faith of the believer.

In Islam knowledge is not the monopoly of the learned few. Every Muslim according to his needs and means is under religious obligation to accept learning as a continuous process in his life. Reason and debate are considered to be competent instruments for the spread of enlightenment, and independent judgement based on righteous niyya (intention) is a very powerful instrument to overcome difficulties of life. It is due to this insistence on research and inquiry as a religious duty, that the early Muslims produced some of the greatest early heralds of scientific knowledge. Between the ninth and twelfth centuries when the rest of the world intellectually stagnant, Muslim scholars wrote some immortal works in every branch of scientific knowledge. Schools and academies in the Muslim empire were throbbing with creativity and innovation. A careful examination of some of the fundamental duties of the Islamic faith showed that without scientific knowledge their performance was impossible. Fasting, pilgrimage and numerous other religious ceremonies required careful and scientific understanding of the lunar calendar. Five daily prayers needed precision regarding the movement of the sun. It was essential to devise instruments by which the increasing and decreasing shadows between dawn and dusk could

be measured with exactness. Prayers in Islam were congregational, and thus there was all the more reason for finding a universally accepted standard by which everyone could be in time in the mosque. Similarly, the numerous details regarding many other aspects of the sacred law could only be assured by specialized knowledge. For instance, the laws of inheritance, Zakat (Poor Relief) and Wakf (religious endowments) required considerable knowledge of various sciences.

Some Western scholars have tried to minimize the role of Islam in the sudden upsurge of scientific inquiry in the Muslim lands which followed its advent. Grunebaum says:

No matter how important the contribution of Muslim scholars were able to make to the natural sciences, and no matter how great the interest with which, at certain periods, the leading classes and the government itself followed and supported their researches, those sciences (and their technological application) had no root in the fundamental needs and aspirations of their civilization.

This statement by a learned orientalist, however, smacks of prejudice. Islam's broad but firm injunctions in favour of knowledge and reason played a decisive role in unleashing upsurge of scientific learning in lands which for centuries had been intellectually barren.

Western scholars have been critical of Islamic civilization, pointing out that except for one powerful thrust during the 4th and 5th centuries of Hijra it has been intellectually sterile and stagnant. Muslim writers in their opinion were trapped in dogma, and their mind and thought revolved with few exceptions around unalterable stereotypes. Their capacity to widen the horizons was limited by the inflexible and insurmountable theological barriers. These impressions could be the result of prejudice or misunderstanding or may be both. It is not our intention to make another apologetic plea in defence of Muslim scholarship. The approaches of the Muslim scholars were far from being perfect. They had numerous faults of methodology, and many of them were patently careless in the collection of data. It is, however, unfair to think that Islam in any way was hostile to independent intellectual inquiry and that it was a religion which ultimately led to permanent stagnation in Islamic thought.

In order to make an objective estimate, it would be essential to list certain cardinal features of Muslim scholarship which distinguish it from the rest of the world of scholarship.

It was inherent in the thinking of Muslim scholars to believe that the revealed word of God was the main source of knowledge. All other knowledge derived through scientific

experimentation, observation or reflection was meant to support or substantiate the instructions given in the Quran. The only purpose the knowledge has is to strengthen the faith of the believer. Such an approach is diametrically different from the Western views on knowledge, which insist that all scientific learning is meant to refute religious dogma, and find ways of interpreting and understanding the realities of life, which have no spiritual connotations. Judging strictly from Western standards knowledge is an end in itself and not a means to an end. In Islam on the other hand, knowledge is only a means to an end. D. B. MacDonald in his estimate of the contributions of Al-Ghazzali has made the following remarks regarding this fundamental aspect of the Muslim scholarship.

Unfortunately, he was beset by the utilitarianism of Islam, and so could not be content to let his book stand for itself as a human document, nor even as an apologia pro vita sua. He must needs make out of it a manual of apologetics suited to his time, and thus, undoubtedly, has dulled the personal touch. In so doing he has furnished perhaps the most striking example of the fatal Muslim didacticism which does not permit an artist, conscious or unconscious, to set a living figure before the reader and leave it to do its work, but must

systematize and explain everything. In this, the Muslim writers differ markedly from the poets of heathen Arabia who had a frank delight in the simple expression of themselves without thought of their audience.

Al-Ghazzali in his *Ayyuha L- Walad* has in unequivocal terms emphasized the knowledge which cannot be operationalized is only a monumental wastage. Unless research findings are helpful in resolving problems of life, in his opinion, they are a futile intellectual exercise. *Tehsil-i-Ilm* (search for knowledge) he points out, must have some meaning, a purpose and a defined goal. The above treatise was written in response to a young scholar who was encountering certain difficulties in streamlining his thoughts regarding the wisdom of striving and struggling for the accumulation of knowledge and incessant reading of various sciences. Al-Ghazzali says:

O youth, do not be bankrupt of works, nor empty of states, be assured that knowledge alone does not strengthen the hand—just so though a man read a hundred thousand scientific questions and understood them or learned them, they do not benefit him except by working.

Without implementation the tree of knowledge will not bear any fruit, and one would never be able to attain the nearness to God which is the ultimate objective of all learning. He says:

“Knowledge is the tree and the working is its fruit, and though you studied a hundred years and collected a thousand books, you would not be prepared for the mercy of Allah the Exalted except by working.”

In advocating such a course Al-Ghazzali was only trying to portray the true and essential character of knowledge in Quranic terms. In Islam, religion is not merely a spiritual embellishment of human soul; it provides full guidance to the believers in resolving multifarious problems which they encounter in their search for the Straight Path. According to the Islamic view, religious and secular knowledge are two facets of the same reality. Both complement each other.

In ‘*Mizan al Amal*’ Al-Ghazzali says, “whoever thinks faith alone will suffice him is ignorant of the meaning of faith.” In other words is to make life more gainful faith based on revealed knowledge, and understanding derived from secular learning must go hand in hand. He sums up his thesis with a warning to his correspondent that “O youth, knowledge without work is insanity and work without knowledge is vanity.”

The essence of devotion in Islam is to work ceaselessly for the glory of Almighty God and to abide with- His commands in shaping human destiny on this earth. *Ibada* (prayer) is the only instrument by which this obligation can

be fulfilled. But prayer without knowledge remains hollow, and knowledge by itself would be meaningless unless it is translated into action. Both ilm (knowledge) and amal (action) are needed to give enrichment and meaning to life.

In Islam-knowledge is its own reward. It cannot be- sold or bought as a marketable commodity in pursuit of worldly gains or reputation. Search for material rewards and ambition to win widespread fame are the common fragilities of human nature, but to acquire knowledge simply for their sake is intellectually sacrilegious.

From the strictly Islamic point of view knowledge is only meant to uncover the truth and strengthen the faith of a believer. Knowledge used for any other purpose is against Quranic principles whose supreme ideal is to make scientific research an additional support for the dissemination of God's message on earth. It is meant to illustrate and substantiate the wisdom of the Holy Prophet as depicted in his words and deeds. In the books of Hadith the following tradition of the Prophet is narrated through Abu Hurairah :

The second (person to receive sentence on the day of resurrection) a man who shall have obtained knowledge and instructed others, and read the Quran, he will be brought into the presence of God, and will be given to understand the benefits he had

received which he will be sensible of and confess and God will say 'What didst thou do in gratitude thereof? He will reply, 'I learned knowledge and taught others and I read the Quran to please thee.' Then God will say 'Thou liest, but thou studieth that people might call thee learned.' Then God will order him to be dragged upon his face and precipitated into hell. The prophet said, 'He who desires knowledge in order to be honoured in the world or dispute with the ignorant and attract the notice of mankind, God will throw him into hell fire. '

Al-Ghazzali has administered the following warning to scholars who use scholarship for material acquisition, official position and popular recognition.

O youth, how many nights you have remained awake repeating science and poring over books and have denied yourself sleep. I do not know what the purpose of it was. If it was attaining worldly ends and securing its vanities and acquiring its dignities and surpassing your contemporaries and such like, woe to you and again woe.

Ignorance is the malady of the human heart and soul, which can only be cured with knowledge. Learned doctors in Islam are the physicians who through in-sight and knowledge diagnose the ailments of mind and then write prescriptions for their ultimate elimination. It would be extremely unbecoming of a physician to have any

other objective except to cure the disease.

The idea that knowledge is divine, and that scholars are accountable to God for it, inculcated among Muslim scholars a deep sense of responsibility and objectivity both in the collection of facts and their interpretation. They did not like scorch for truth to be contaminated with prejudices or selfish interests. In order to arrive at the right conclusions they very often used comparative method of study. Abu Nasr al-Farabi (258/870-339/950) who ranks among the greatest philosophers of Islam has listed his views on research in natural and social sciences as follows:

There he should set out next upon the science of man and investigate the what and the how of the purpose for which man is made what is the perfection that man must achieve. Then he should investigate all things by which man achieves this perfection or that are useful to him in achieving it. These are the good, virtuous, and noble things. He should distinguish them for things that obstruct his achieving this perfection. These are the evils, the vices and the base things. He should make known what and how every one of them is, and from what and for what it is, until all of them become known, intelligible and distinguished from each other.

Abu Raihan al-Beruni (362/973-442/1051) whose examination of Indian history, geography and society is considered a spectacular piece of scientific inquiry, also laid down certain rigorous rules for genuine scholarship. E. C. Sachau who translated al-Beruni's monumental work, *Kitab-al-Hind*, made the following observations on his method and approach to social studies:

He is a stern judge both of himself and of others. Himself perfectly sincere, it is sincerity which he demands from others. Whenever he does not fully understand a subject or only knows part of it, he will at once tell the readers so, either asking the reader's pardon—He is not a friend of those who hate to avow their ignorance by a frank 'I do not know' and he is roused to strong indignation whenever he meets with want of sincerity.

In his preface to *Kitab-al-Hind*, Al-Beruni himself made the following remarks on scientific reporting and observation in research.

No one will deny that in questions of historic authenticity hearsay does not equal eye-witness, for in the latter the eye of the observer apprehends the substance of that which is observed, both in the time when and in the place where it exists, whilst hearsay has its peculiar drawbacks. But for these, it would even be preferable to eye-witness; for the

object of eyewitness can only be actual momentary existence, whilst hearsay comprehends alike the present, the past, and the future, so as to apply in a certain sense both to that which is and to that which is not (i.e., which wither has ceased to exist or has not yet come into existence). Written tradition is one of the species of hearsay we might almost say, the most preferable. How could we know the history of nations but for the everlasting monuments of the pen? The tradition regarding an event which in itself does not contradict either logical or physical laws will invariably depend for its character as true or false upon the character of the reporters, who are moved by the divergency of interests and the all kinds of animosities and antipathies between them. Such a reporter is near akin to the first-mentioned one, as he too acts from motives of personal predilection and enmity.

Another tells a lie because he is of such a base nature as to aim thereby at some profit, or because he is such a coward as to be afraid of telling the truth.

Another tells a lie because it is his nature to lie, and he cannot do otherwise, which proceeds from the essential meanness of his character and the depravity of his innermost being.

Lastly, a man may tell a lie from

ignorance, blindly following others who told him.

If, now, reporters of this kind become so numerous as to represent a certain body of tradition, or if in the course of time they even come to form a consecutive series of communities or nations, both the first reporter and his followers form the connecting links between the hearer and the inventor of the lie ; and if the connecting links are eliminated, there remains the originator of the story, one of the various kinds of liars we have enumerated, as the only person with whom we have to deal.

That man only is praiseworthy who shrinks from a lie and always adheres to the truth, enjoying credit even among liars, not to mention others.

It has been said in the Quran, 'Speak the truth, even if it were against yourselves' and the Messiah expresses himself in the Gospel to this effect: 'Do not mind the fury of kings in speaking the truth before them. They only possess your body, but they have no power over your soul.' (cf. st. Matt. X, 18, 19, 28; St. Luke, xii, 4). In these words the Messiah orders us to exercise moral courage. For what the crowd calls courage—bravely dashing into the fight or plunging into an abyss of destruction—is only a species of courage, whilst the genus, far above all species, is to scorn death,

whether by word or deed. Now as justice (i.e., being just) is a quality liked and coveted for its own self, for its intrinsic beauty, the same applies to truthfulness, except perhaps in the case of such people as never tasted how sweet it is, or know the truth, but deliberately shun it, like a notorious liar who once was asked if he had ever spoken the truth, and gave the answer, 'If I were not afraid to speak the truth, I should say, no.' A liar will avoid the path of justice ; he will, as matter of preference side with oppression and false witness, breach of confidence, fraudulent appropriation of the wealth of others, theft, and all the vices which serve to ruin the world and mankind.

In his other famous work called *Chronology of Ancient Nations*, al-Beruni also emphasizes that historical research should be free from emotions and prejudices which so often blur human vision and disable men from comprehending the truth with clarity. He points out that rigorous comparative method alone can insure objectivity and impartiality in research. In the preface to the above book he says that his purpose 'cannot be obtained by way or ratiocination with philosophical notions, but solely by adopting the information of those who have a written tradition— and by making their opinions a basis on which to build up a system; besides we must compare their traditions and opinions among themselves, when we try to establish our

system. But even that we must clear our mind from all those accidental circumstances which deprave most men, from all causes which are liable to make people blind against the truth, e.g., inveterate custom, party spirit, rivalry, being addicted to one's passion, the desire to gain influence.' '

From the Greeks the Muslim borrowed their tremendous love for logic. Although theologians like Ibn Taimiyya condemned Greek logic vehemently as something against the canons of Islam, the history of Muslim scholarship shows that logic as an instrument of intellectual synthesis and philosophical articulation continued to exercise considerable influence in research and studies in Islam. Josef Van Ess has explained its uses for the Muslims as follows:

This assertion seems somewhat in question; no Islamic jurist, or any other jurist, could do without logic; he had to use most subtle hermeneutic methods to interpret the Quran, and he had to apply all kinds of logical processes to adjust the commands found by this interpretation to the individual cases of daily life. The same is true of kalam, Islamic theology: theology is by definition nothing more than logical demonstration of believed truth.

Abu said al-Sirafi (280-368/893-979), a reputed theologian of his time in Baghdad, made distinction between

two types of logic. One which was used by Muslim theologians (Ulema) and Fukaha (Jurists) and the other which was strictly of Greek origin. In his opinion scholars in Islam were keen and anxious seekers after truth. They looked into each issue diligently and spread no effort in uncovering right and wrong through intelligent interpretation. Their achievements he believed were impressive and intellectually satisfying. The strict logicians on the other hand wasted most of their time in wallowing around in barren argumentation. In other words, logical argumentation should not be an end in itself; it must further the cause of knowledge. Logic which does not help either in resolving problems of life, or in strengthening our beliefs is a wastage. Some scholars knowing that Islam does not allow meaningless hair-splitting, have castigated it as a religion based on intolerance and fanaticism. Such a view, however, is patently contrary to the spirit of Islam. There is nothing in the Quran or the Traditions of the Holy Prophet from which it could be constricted that independence of judgement or difference of opinion are disallowed. In fact all the available evidence goes to prove that Islam perhaps among the great religions of the world, is the only religion which maintains that difference of opinion, provided. It is not based on malice is the surest way to wisdom and rectitude.

Intellectual and religious tolerance

is a sign of social and emotional maturity. In all areas of Islamic scholarship, i.e., philosophical, theological and mystical, there were always deep and unbridgable divergencies. Ikhtilaf (difference) was considered to be a legitimate right of the individual. The result was that intellectual saber-rattling became a very prominent feature of scholarly circles in Islam. Most of the Asul-ul-Fiqh (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence) were products of continuous debate and discussion, and endless controversies which were generated by serious differences among various schools of thought. The only time when Ikhtilaf would not be tolerated was when it was apprehended that scholars were indulging in dangerously innovative interpretation of the Quranic faith. Jean-Paul Charnay has summed up the role of Ikhtilafat (Divergences) in the intellectual life of Islam as follows:

Ikhtilafat played a primary role in the development of Muslim thinking: intellectual technique, practical utilization, and function in the Muslim community's evolution through diverse historical phases. Ikhtilaf is first an expression and consequence of the creative intellectual flowering of demographic conquests, of local and social disparities. It multiplies as it is influenced by political and religious passions and regional deviationism. ■

(Concluded)

Arabic Journalism in India Upto 1960

- Durdana Shaheen*

In the marvelous history of Arabic language and literature in India, Arabic Journalism was introduced in 19th century. This was the period when Arabic journalism developed in the Arab world. It was the awareness of Arab scholars in India who introduced this new genre of Arabic Language and literature when it was in its early stage in the Arab world. I would like to give a brief introduction of the development of Arabic Journalism in India up to 1960.

India is a multi-cultural and multi-faceted country. It is also a multi lingual country. Indo-European and Dravidian languages were being used as native languages in different parts of the country. Foreign languages like Persian and English were the languages of rulers. Generally, the classical languages have religious fervor.

Arabic language has a religious tradition. After the advent of Islam, Muslim scholars and other people whose language was Arabic migrated to India. Muslims tried to learn Arabic language for academic, literary, scholastic purposes and for knowledge. This language did not remain as a religious language but flourished in India as a language of knowledge and sciences. Arabic is not a spoken

language in India. Arabic scholars took interest in writing books in Arabic on philosophy logic and language related sciences, grammar and linguistics. It remained as a living language in India.

Journalism spread all over the world in 19th and 20th century. Arabic scholars also tried to quench their thirst and satisfy their emotions. They started writing articles and publishing in the journals. Arabic journalism did not highly flourish in India as Arabic language was not the language of common man but of scholars and educated people. Among the Arabic knowing scholars only few could read, understand, write and speak. It is very interesting that though Arabic is not a spoken language in India, it got its place in Journalism also. The Arabic journalism covered all branches of the Islamic sciences, and social, cultural aspects of India and Arab countries. Generally, Arabic journalism girdled with monthly and fortnightly magazines. Daily newspapers were not published as there was no scope due to lack of readers and facilities of publication as well as economic problems.

History of Arabic journalism goes back to the publication of "*An-Nafful Azeem Le-Ahle Haza Al- iqlim*" from Lahore in 1871A.D. Mr. Shamsuddin was the founder of this magazine it was published in the printing press of his

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father Mohammad Azeem and Mr. Muqarrab Ali was his first chief editor as well as the registrar of Punjab University. G. W. Laithir was among the patronages. Initially it was published in 8 pages, when its readers increased, it contained 10 pages. Its basic aim was to spread Arabic language among the people to understand Islamic laws which were written in Arabic. The second aim was to give information to the people regarding the contemporary problems and matters and for awareness of their responsibilities as well as to broaden their thinking. It tried to introduce Arabic sciences in Arabic language to the academic field. It also tried to make Arabic language easy for understanding. After the death of Mohammad Azeem in 1885 it was not published regularly. After some time, it was stopped. This magazine was important in this sense that it started Arabic journalism for the first time. Syed Suleiman Nadwi wrote that *Al-Riyaz* was published as a monthly magazine after that. It was shortly stopped due to financial crunches.

After a long time, the magazine "*Al-Bayan*" came into existence in 1902. Its first editor was Abdullah Imaadi. He was a great scholar of Arabic language and literature. He was also at home in translation from Arabic to Urdu language. He got great recognition in Academic field. The magazine "*Al-Bayan*" as published every month at Lucknow. After five years, it became

fortnightly. But at the end it again became monthly. When Abdullah Imaadi migrated to Hyderabad for academic and translational works, Syed Suleiman Afandi and Syed Ali Zaynabi became chief editors of the magazine. Its first patronage was Abdul Ali Madrasa who was the owner of the printing press where the magazine was published. After that the German Orientalist Dr. Yusuf Horvitz the professor of Oriental languages at Aligarh College became the patronage. It was a literary and academic magazine. Historical information was given elaborately in it. Great Indian Scholars as well as Great Arab writers wrote articles for this magazine. This magazine played an important role in spreading Arabic language in India. Magazines of the Arab world appreciated the language and contents of this magazine. This magazine was giving critical analysis on the contemporary issues of the Arab world and other countries. It was considered as a moderate magazine regarding thoughts and ideas.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the former education minister of India, the great writer, orator, journalist published an Arabic magazine "*Al-Jamia*" on 1st April 1923 from Calcutta, before that magazine, he had become a revolutionary writer for his journal "*Al-Hilal*" Urdu language. His Arabic magazine "*Al-Jamia*" was a fortnightly. He was the patronage of the magazine. Abdur Razzaq Maliabadi looked into

the editorial matters.

Abul Kalam Azad aimed to publish it for the unity of the Arab world. He invited the people in his Arabic articles to unite the Arabs. He wrote against those Arabs who were playing against the unity of Muslims. The articles published in this magazine were very much revolutionary against British and European conspiracy, its thoughts and ideas were quoted in the journals of Arab countries. Due to financial constraints, it was stopped in 1924.

When Abul Kalam Azad became Education Minister of India after independence, he suggested to publish an Arabic magazine to strengthen the cultural relations between India and Arab countries. On his advice "*Al-Hind Saqafatun*" magazine was published in March 1950, and it continued. Its first editor was Abdur Razzaq Maliabadi. After that in 1959 Shamooun Tayib became its editor. There is a long list of its editors who became consequently one after the other. This magazine gave importance to publish the articles on Indian culture, civilization, literature, politics, history and social values. Many articles were translated from English, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali and other Indian languages. The articles written by non-Muslim writers were published frequently. This magazine played an important role to develop cultural relations between India and Arab countries.

In the history of Arabic in India the

role of Darul uloom Nadwatul Ulama is highly appreciable as its role in Arabic journalism is highly contributive. Its first Arabic magazine "*Al-Zia*" was introduced in 1932. It was an academic, literary, educational and social magazine as it was mentioned on the title of the magazine. It was published monthly and it was decided to publish 10 issues in a year and to present books in the remaining two months to its readers and contributors. Its editor was Masood Alam Al Nadwi and it was published under the two greater scholars and patronages of Syed Suleiman Nadwi and Taqiuddin Hilali. Masood Alam Nadwi was considered as a great Indian scholar in Arabic and appreciated by Great Arab writers.

The style of his writings was sublime, lucid and beautiful. From the contents of the first issue, we can acknowledge the style and the subject matters of the magazine. The articles were on Islamic institutions, philosophy of proverbs, prophetic literature and the great poets of the east, under the heading "Garden of Literature"

There was a poem of an Indian poet. It contained the critical studies on books. At the end, information was given regarding contemporary events. Magazines in the Arab world reviewed this magazine and highly applauded.

The most important journal, in the history of Arabic journalism in India is "*Al-Baas Al-Islami*" it started its

publication in October 1955. Its chief editor was Mohammad Al Hasani and its editorial board comprised Saeed Al Azami and Ijteba al Hussaini. Saeed Al Azami was a person who made a history in the field of journalism in India and Arab world also. We will discuss regarding this magazine later.

After independence of our country, Arabic journalism flourished. When petroleum and natural gas, were found in the Arab countries, economic exploration became the important motif for the development of the Arabic language among Indians. It motivated the Indians to learn Arabic language. Government of India paid attention towards it and sent students and scholars to improve Arabic and to strengthen cultural relations. Government of India established cultural centers in the Arab countries. Indian embassy at Cairo tried to give importance to Arabic language and culture as well as to present Indian culture and philosophy to the Arab world. It started publishing a magazine "Saut-Al Sarq in October 1952. Its first editor was Jarjees Khaleel. Its publication is being continued. It was publishing with colorful pictures. In the first volume the articles published were as follows:

1. What importance does India give to me?
2. As I know the Indian women.
3. Development in India.

4. Economy and commerce
5. Art of dance in different periods.
6. International cinema celebration at Cairo
7. Nainital the magic pond
8. Science and technology
9. From the Indian kitchen.
10. Hindi language in front of you
11. Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib
12. Boquete of poetry
13. Corner of children

The magazine became a source of development of Arabic language and culture. It is the prominent history of Arabic Journalism in India that these two magazines Al Bass Al Islami and Saut Al Sharq played an important role in the development of Arabic language, literature and culture in India. These two magazines were recognized for its contribution to Arabic language and science by Arab scholars in Arab world. This is a great achievement of Indians scholars as highly recognized and appreciated by men of letters and scholars in Arab countries. ■

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The Blessed Month of Ramazan

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Ramadhan is the month of peace, tranquility, piety, righteousness, generosity and bestowal. Of the five tenets of Islam, fasting in the month of Ramadhan is a must every year. During fast one must abstain from eating, drinking and smoking including inoculation and injections from dawn to dusk. In this context the verses of the Holy Quran which ordain for fasting, as an obligatory duty for Muslims are as follows:

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that ye may (learn) self restraint.” (Fasting) for a fixed number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number should be made up from later days. For those who can do it (with hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that indigent, but he that will give more, of his own free will, it is better for him, and it is better for ye that ye face, if ye only knew”. (S.2,A.183-184)

Ramadhan's significance can be gauged from the fact that “the Quran was revealed to prophet Muhammad(PBUH) in this month as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present at his house during that month should spend it in fasting, but if anyone is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. God intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to

difficulties. He wants you to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful. (S.2,A.185)

Needless to add that like Salat (Prayers), fasting has been an essential duty for the followers of earlier Prophets. The Bible says that Jesus Christ fasted for forty days (Matthew 4: 1-4, Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-4). In Peter 2:21 the followers of Christ are enjoined to fast as the Prophet did. Even the Vedas and the Puranas prescribe fasting. Thus earlier peoples fasted though with a difference in the number of days and the prescribed time of fasting.

It should be kept in mind that this particular month has been considered sacred even from pre-Islamic days too. Ibn-Hisham states that the Qurayesh in the days of ignorance spent one month a year on Mt. Hira, practicing penance (Tahannuth). Before instituting fasting of Ramadhan Muhammad (PBUH) evidently observed fast on the tenth of Moharram”. (History of the Arabs, p. 133)

During Ramadhan evil conceals itself while good comes to the fore and the whole atmosphere is filled with piety and purity. The holy prophet says: “The deed of son of Adam is' increased several times (in Ramadhan) and the reward is increased by ten times. But Allah says that fasting is exclusively for Him and He himself will deliver its reward (to His

bondsmen) as he abstains from eating and controls his desires only for Him. There are (two instances) of happiness for the fasting Muslim, one is at the time of breaking his fast and the other at the time meeting his Lord. And verily to Allah, the smell of fasting person's breath is the best and cleanliest. "The prophet of Islam also says: There is a door of paradise called Rayyan towards which only the fastings will be called. Only the fastings will enter it and those who enter it will never feel thirsty.

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of Allah said: "when the month of Ramazan' comes, the Gates of Heaven are thrown open, and the Gates of Hell are shut, and the devils are put behind the bar." (In another report, the "Gates of Mercy" are mentioned in place of the "Gates of Heaven." (Bukhari and Muslim)

"Salman Farsi narrates that the Apostle of Allah delivered a sermon on the last day of Sha'ban in which he said:'

"O my people! You are on the threshold of a month of great solemnity and blessings. It is a month whose one night is better than a thousand months. God has prescribed fasting in this month and make Taraweeh prayers optional Whosoever willingly and with good intentions does one good act in this month will have the merit of having done an obligatory act in other months and one who does a prescribed act in this month it will be equal to seventy prescribed act of other months. This is the month of endurance and the reward of endurance is paradise and this the month of sympathy with and

care of the needy men of the community". (Mishkat)

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of Allah said: "Whoever omits even a single fast of Ramazan without the legal concession of a journey etc. or (a valid excuse like that of illness), amends cannot be made for the thing that is omitted even though he observes fasting throughout the life." (Tirmizi)

It is needless to add that fasting is a shield against sins, crimes, vices and other un-Islamic acts. The prophet says: "Fast is like a shield for protection from satan's attack. Therefore, when one observes fast he should use this shield and abstain from quarreling. If anybody abuses him or quarrels with him, he should simply say: Brother, I am fasting do not expect me to indulge in similar conduct (Bukhari & Muslim)

To restore real spirit of fast, it is incumbent to observe it with prescribed rules and regulations. The noble prophet said: "If one does not give up speaking a lie during fast, God does not require him to give up eating and drinking (Bukhari).

On another occasion, he said: "Many are the people who fast but who gain nothing from their fasts except hunger and thirst: and many are those who stand praying all night but gain nothing except sleeplessness (Darimi)"

To sum up the fasting according to Islam, is a spiritual discipline and as a consequence it inculcates moral discipline. It imparts moral strength and leads to the promotion of virtues of piety.■

Around the World

Israel Discussing New Limits on Access to Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem

Jerusalem: The Israeli govt. is discussing whether to increase restrictions on access to an important mosque in Jerusalem during the Islamic holy month of Ramzan, leading to predictions of unrest if the additional limits are enforced.

Cabinet ministers discussed whether to bar some members of Israel's Arab minority from attending prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound during Ramzan, according to two officials briefed on the deliberations, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The office of PM Netanyahu said a decision on the matter had already been reached, without saying what it was. But the two officials said a final decision would be made only after the govt. received recommendations from the security services in the coming days.

Israel has long limited access to Al-Aqsa for Palestinians from the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, it has imposed extra restrictions on Arabs in Israel. But some had hoped those limits would be largely lifted for Ramzan, which starts in early March.

The mosque complex is sacred to both Muslims and Jews, who call it the Temple Mount because it was the site of two Jewish temples in antiquity that remain central to Jewish identity. Tens of thousands of Muslims visit the mosque everyday during Ramzan.

Israeli police raids at the site, riots there by young Palestinians and visits by

far-right Jewish activists have often been a catalyst for wider violence, including a brief war between Israel and Hamas in 2021.

The move to further restrict access was promoted in the Israeli cabinet by Itamar Ben-Gvir, the far-right minister for national security, who has long pushed for greater Jewish control over the site and less Muslim access to it. In recent days, he had warned that Muslim worshippers might use access to the mosque to display support for Hamas.

Analysts say Netanyahu is wary of angering Ben-Gvir because his ruling coalition depends on Ben-Gvir's support. But Arab leaders as well as some Jewish Israelis have warned that by allowing Ben-Gvir to dictate policy at the mosque, Netanyahu could inflame an already volatile situation. Dan Harel, an ex-deputy chief of staff in the military, said the move would be "unnecessary and foolish" and might "ignite the entire Muslim world,"

At World Court, Palestinians Seek End to Israeli Occupation

The Palestinian foreign minister Riad Malki accused Israel of apartheid and urged the UN's top court to declare that Israel's occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state is illegal and must end. The case opened at the International Court of Justice, also known as the world court, against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war, which became a focal point of the day — even though the hearings were meant to centre on Israel's control over the occupied West Bank, the Gaza Strip and annexed east Jerusalem. ■

The West's Veil of Hypocrisy Under Threat

- A. Hussain

In this world of stark divides, where shadows loom,
Choosing neutrality may feel like a safety room.

Outside the debate, in guarded repose,
Yet danger persists, injustice steadily grows.

Islam's mandate is clear, despite the odds,
To rise against injustice, to be the voice for the flawed.

Tested in times where deeds are engraved,
By the Honourable Scribes, our legacy saved.

In Gaza's shadows, where masks are torn,
Truths unravel, leaving hearts forlorn.
International law, once a radiant guide,
Now a puppet, dancing in imperial pride.

Cries echo from Palestinian soil,
Unanswered pleas, justice trapped in turmoil.

A sinister truth, exposed and raw,
International justice, tainted by imperial law.

Beneath the veneer of peace it feigns,
A narrative where imperialism remains.
The West, bold and powerful, takes the lead,

Championing laws selectively, truths left to bleed.

Post-world wars, the UN emerged grand,
A promise of unity, an equal stand.
Beneath the surface, a dance of deceit,
Dominance continues, powerful nations repeat.

"Rules-based" proclamations ring,
Yet old habits persist, fuelled by power's sting.
Ajax and Condor unfold in tales untold,
International law, a narrative of stories cold.

Operation Iron Swords, a siege unjust,
A world watches, trust hanging in mistrust.
Decades-long occupation in Israel's tale,
Apartheid and injustice, an endless gale.

Children slain, untold destruction unfolds,
Gaza's tragedy, a tale of stories untold.
Western nations silent, in a deafening hush,

Palestinian lives turned to ashes and dust.

South Africa's outcry against genocide's art,

Yet the West, in silence, plays a
heartless part.

Israel's military, an unyielding force,
Leaving Gaza bleeding, a discourse
remorse.

A struggle not just against occupation's
might,
But for justice, humanity, pleading for
light.

How many more must fall, victims of
war's crime,
Before nations rise and declare
"Enough!" in time?

In the heart of the struggle, the call
resounds,
For justice, equality, breaking
oppression's bounds.

Gaza's frustration, a plea to be heard,
To free a troubled world from injustice's
absurd.

Ibn Hazm's wisdom, profound and deep,
Unveils a truth in words that passionately
seep.

"To criticize is to care," he declared,
A friendship's bond, a connection
repaired.

In the mirror of critique, friendship
gleams,
A testament of love, beyond mere
dreams.

For those who, with sincerity, faults
discuss,
Their hearts echo, in friendship's
undying trust.

Believers, stand firm for justice you
must,

Witness for Allah in actions that thrust.
Against kin or self, let fairness be,
A guide in truth's decree, an unwavering
decree.

In life's crucible, every soul shall face,
Fear, hunger, loss, in this earthly space.
Yet those unwavering, against the tide,
Shall savour the fruits on the other side.

In the tapestry of justice, play your part,
A witness for Allah, with a steadfast
heart.

Guided by justice, let faith soar high,
A beacon shining bright in the darkened
sky.

In the halls of ICJ, proceedings unfold,
A critical stance, a story to be told.
Slowing the tide of normalization,
For the "moral army's" mass acts, a just
implication.

Charged with crimes of a nameless
affair,
A step against impunity's long-lasting
snare.

In this poetic drama, a legal stage,
South Africa's stand, a turning page?

In South Africa's plea against
humanity's plight,

An opportunity arises, stand for justice,
stand for right.

Rare chances unfold, grasp them
without delay,

Supporting truth and fairness, let them
guide your way. ■

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