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Islamic Morality

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Among the moral attributes which have particularly influenced the Islamic culture are hospitality, liberality and open-handedness. These qualities, again, are a heritage from Hazrat Ibrahim about whose generous reception of guests there has occurred the following verse in the Quran:

Has the story reached these of the honoured guest of Abraham ? (LI: 24)

Pilgrims and foreign chroniclers who had the occasion to' live, for any length of time, among communities, tracing their descent 'from him either racially or spiritually, have recorded most pleasant memories of their stay in this respect. They have invariably been impressed by their warm hospitality and friendly feeling towards guests and strangers. One can still notice in the countries of the Middle East, which have not yet been swept off their feet by the mounting tide of Western Civilization, glimpses of the hospitality that had enabled globetrotters-like Ibn-e-Batuta and Ibn-e-Jubair to enjoy the comfort and warmth of home during travel. The Indian Muslims in spite of their being placed so far away from the natural seat of Islamic Civilisation and the fact that Islam had reached their, country long after it had passed the peak of its glory, also are conspicuous for their cordial treatment of the guests. Hospitality is a part of the tradition of Muslim homes, and although modern economic conditions have put a 'curb on it, Muslims still feel happy on the arrival of a guest and consider it a source of good fortune and an Islamic virtue to entertain him open-heartedly.■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

- 1. Freedom from (all) obligations (is declared) from Allah and His Messenger () to those of the Mushrikun (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah), with whom you made a treaty.
- 2. So travel freely (O Mushrikun see V.2:105) for four months (as you will) throughout the land, but know that you cannot escape (from the Punishment of) Allah, and Allah will disgrace the disbelievers.
- 3. And a declaration from Allah and His Messenger to mankind on the greatest day (the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah the 12th month of Islamic calendar) that Allah is free from (all) obligations to the Mushrikun (see V.2:105) and so is His Messenger. So if you (Mushrikun) repent, it is better for you, but if you turn away, then know that you cannot escape (from the Punishment of) Allah, And give tidings (O Muhammad) of a painful torment to those who disbelieve.
- 4. Except those of the Mushrikun with whom you have a treaty, and who have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor have supported anyone against you. So fulfill their treaty to them to the end of their term. Surely Allah loves Al-Mattaqun (the pious see V.2:2).
- 5. Then when the Sacred Months (the 1st, 7th, 11th, and 12th months of the Islamic calendar) have passed, then kill the Mushrikun (see V.2: 105) wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and prepare for them each and every ambush. But if they repent and perform As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and give Zakat, then leave their way free. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.
- 6. And if anyone of the Mushrikun (polytheists, idolaters, pagans, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah) seeks your protection then gram him protection, so that he may hear the Word of Allah (the Qur'an), and then escort him to where he call be secure, that is because they are men who know not. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Umar ibn Al-Khattab reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: Verily, deeds are only with intentions. Verily, every person will have only what they intended. So whoever emigrated to Allah and His Messenger, then his emigration is for Allah and His Messenger. Whoever emigrated to get something in the world or to marry a woman, then his emigration is for whatever he emigrated for

Abdullah ibn Masud reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: Verily, the creation of each one of you is brought together in his mother's womb for forty days as a drop, then he is a clot for a similar period, then a morsel for a similar period, then there is sent to him the angel who blows the spirit into him and he is commanded regarding four matters: to write down his provision, his life span, his deeds, and whether he is happy or miserable. By Allah other than whom there is no God, one of you acts like the people of Paradise until he is but an arm's length from it, and what is written overtakes him so he acts like the people of Hellfire and he enters it. Verily, one of you acts like the people of Hellfire until he is but an arm's length from it, and what is written overtakes him so he acts like the people of Paradise and he enters it.

An-Nu'rnan ibn Basheer reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: Verily, the lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between the two of them are doubtful matters about which many people do not know. Thus, he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honor, and he who falls into doubtful matters will fall into the unlawful as the shepherd who pastures near a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Verily, every king has a sanctum and the sanctum of Allah is his prohibitions. Verily, in the body there is a piece of flesh which if upright then the entire body is upright, and if corrupt then the entire body is corrupt. No doubt it is the heart. ■

Editor's Note 🗷

"Read"

Before the advent of Islam people had made idols their source of inspiration and benefaction. They had forgotten the teachings of Prophet Musa and other preachers. There was no concept of the existence of God Self Carved Stones were their part of worship. Now came Muhammad (PBUH) to whom this form of worship appears false. His heart started inclining to worship Allah in solitude and no ponder over the religious and moral degradation among his people. He used to think that my people have made these idols their god. Their moral condition is worst. He used to think of ways to eradicate these evils. He wanted to show them the right path. He used to ponder over the ways that how to worship the Creator of this boundless universe. Such thoughts used to hover over his mind. He used to spend hours in solitude pondering over these thoughts.

Cave Hira: There was a cave at a distance of three miles from Makkah. Muhammad used to stay in this cave for hours worshipping Allah. He used to take eatables with him, when he run out of eatables he used to come back to his house for provisions or Hazrat Khadija used to fetch eatables for him.

First Revelation: One day Muhammad was busy in worshipping Allah as usual. It was the month of Ramzan that an angel sent by Allah, appeared before him. This angel was Hazrat Jibril (peace be

upon him), who has the most elevated place among angels and who has been bringing Allah's message to prophet, "read". Prophet Muhammad replied that "I am illiterate". Hearing this Hazrat Jibril started pressing the Prophet so much so that he got tired. Then, Hazrat Jibril loosened his grip and said to prophet, "read". The **Prophet Muhammad** again repeated the same reply and Hazrat Jibril again pressed him and loosed his grip and asked him "read". But **Prophet Muhammad** again denied, then Hazrat Jibril pressed him the third time and after loosening his grip, he asked the prophet to say:

Proclaim! (or read!) In the name of thy

Lord and Cherisher, who created -

Created man, out of a leech like clot:

Proclaim! And thy Lord is the most

Bountiful

He Who taught (the use of) the pen, —

Taught man that which he knew not.

(Q,96: 1 - 5) ■

S.A.

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Sharing Other's Sufferings

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

If man loses the ability of sharing other's sufferings, he will become bankrupt. Even if a nation is blessed with the wealth of America, administration of Russia and petrol wells of Saudi Arabia, even if rivers of gold and silver flow in it, and even if wealth showers over its land like rain, it will still be truly pauper if its stream of love is dried. The blessings of Allah will not descend on it. It is a matter of great satisfaction that man's eyes can still shed tears and that his heart can still suffer with the pain of others. The heart which loses this quality is not a heart; it is just a piece of stone. Such a heart has no value in the sight of Allah, no matter whether it is the heart of a Muslim, or a Hindu, or a Christian. The value of the human heart, in fact. lies in its quality to long, shiver, cry, and love. The human heart should be greener than the land, broader than the universe, more affluent than the waterfall, and more bountiful than the heavy clouds ready to stream down.

The eye which does not become wet is not a human eye; it is the eye of a daffodil. The heart which does not feel pain of others is not a human heart; it is the heart of lion. The forehead which does not become wet with the perspiration of penitence is not a human forehead; it is a piece of

rock. The hand which does not move forward to serve humanity is virtually paralysed and lifeless. The claw of a lion is better than that hand of a person which cuts the throat of another human being. Had the Creator wished man to live to kill, He would have created man with swords in place of hands. If the aim of man's creation were to store wealth, he would have been born with an iron safe in place of a throbbing heart. If man had been created to plan destruction, he was born with a devil's mind instead of men.

People marvel at the wonders of man's physical self but the wonders of heart are so much more curious. Man has such a sensitive heart that if one person suffers in the east, another person feels the pain in the west. It was the same kind of heart which kept the Prophet of Allah restless at home all night because the non-Muslim captives of the Battle of Badr (who were his arch enemies) were tied down and groaned in pain. It was the same sympathetic human heart which made him shorten his prayers when he heard a baby crying, thinking that its mother praying behind him in congregation might become restless. How can then a heart be called a heart if it inflicts pain on another heart?

Man's Ultimate Responsibility

If human beings subjugate themselves to the supremacy of material things and become slaves to their selfish desires, life on earth will become hellish and unbearable. Man has to remember that his place in the scheme of creation is that of God's vicegerent. As the Quran bears testimony, Allah ordered the angels to bow down in front of man as a mark of respect. This clearly establishes that it is highly humiliating for man, God's deputy on earth, to bow down in front of anybody except his Creator. Had there been any such scope, Allah

should have allowed man to bow down in front of the angels as they carry on Allah's orders on the earth: they, for instance, bring rain and make the wind blow. By masking the angels bow down in front of man Allah clearly revealed His will that the world has been given to the care of man as His vicegerent and that he himself is created for the worship of Allah the Almighty. Man must look at his present miserable lot and tell himself that he is supposed to do better. He must rise to his appointed position as Allah's vicegerent, take none else except Allah as his Lord, and save himself and the world from eternal suffering.■

Sindoor befitting response to India's adversaries: Prez

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu Thursday said Operation Sindoor will go down in history as an example of "humanity's fight against terrorism" and stressed that the unity of Indians was the most befitting response to those seeking to divide the country.

"In our response, what was most notice-able was our unity, which was also the most befitting reply to those who wanted to divide us," the President said, referring to the segregation of tourists by faith by terrorists who killed them at Pahalgam.

In her Independence Day-eve address, Murmu called the killings "cowardly and utterly inhuman" and said India responded "decisively and with steely resolve". She praised the armed forces for "strategic clarity and technical capability" in destroying terror hubs across the border.

"The world has taken note that we will not be the aggressor, but we will not hesitate to retaliate in defence of our citizens," said Murmu. She noted multiparty delegations of MPs had reached out to other nations to explain India's position.

Calling Operation Sindoor a "test case" for Atma-nirbhar Bharat in defence, she said it proved India is on right path. Indigenous manufacturing, she added, now meets many security needs — a "landmark achievement" since Independence.

PM Modi, responding to her speech, said Rashtrapatiji had "highlighted the collective progress of our nation and the opportunities ahead" and reminded citizens of the sacrifices that paved the way for freedom.

In her fourth I-Day address, Murmu urged remembrance of Partition's pain, and paid tribute to its victims. She hailed the new rail link to Kashmir as a historic milestone and praised India's expanding space programme, saying Shubhanshu Shukla's ISS mission will inspire the upcoming Gaganyaan human spaceflight. ■

(The Times of India, 15-8-2025)

The Divine Gift

The favours and blessings of Allah:

The favours of Allah Almighty on human beings are countless. He is the Sustainer of the divine power. All the rest of creation is subjugated to serve humans. The earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the rivers, the air, the water, the treasures under the earth, the fish of the sea, the diamonds and gems, the oil springs, the gold and silver mines, all these blessings are for all human beings. There is no difference between black and white, rich and poor, nor is there any division of family or region. Allah has set needs for every human being, and he uses the intellect given by Allah to fulfill them. Allah Almighty has made these blessings of the world so common that there is no discrimination among anyone. Whoever wants to use his intellect and intelligence and strives and progresses as far as he wants.

The greatest favour:

Among all these blessings of Allah, His greatest blessing is faith (Iman), which not everyone is able to attain. Whoever Allah considers worthy of His mercy, He takes him out of the pit of Hell and grants him the heights of Paradise. Allah says, "let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject it: for the wrongdoer We have prepared a fire whose

- S. Bilal Abdul Hai Hasani Nadwi*

smoke and flames, like the walls and roof of a tent, will hem them in: if they implore relief they will be granted water like melted brass, that will scald their faces, how dreadful the drink, how uncomfortable a couch to recline on". (Surah Al- kahaf: 29.

Indeed, man has power, but the final decision is in Allah's hands. Hazrat Abu Talib, the beloved uncle of the beloved Prophet (PBUH), embraced Islam, but faith was not in his destiny. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Uncle, utter Kalima once in my ear, and bear witness." But the answer was what the people would say. The Holy Qur'an clearly states: "Indeed, you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He wills." (Surah al-Qasas.V.56)

The blessing of faith is in Allah's hands. The sight of Wahshi who killed the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Hazrat Hamza (R.A.) used to cause him pain, and he would remember his beloved uncle. The hand of divine mercy takes him out of the darkness of misguidance and gives him the light of faith. He accepts Islam at the blessed hand of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The Divine Grace:

Faith is a divine gift that Allah can bestow upon whomever He wishes. Whoever receives this blessing while

^{*} Rector Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.

sitting at home should thank Him a thousand times. Even if one is filled with gratitude and thanks, the right may not be repaid. Ego sometimes leads a person astray. A person cannot perform even the smallest act of goodness without the help of Allah. These two statements are being said in the last verses of Surah Al-Hujurat.

The crux of matter is that a person should not be complacent about any work he has done, thinking that he has done it perfectly and has fulfilled its right. There may be dozens of shortcomings and faults in it that he is not aware of. The second thing is that he should not attribute the work to himself. The truth is that a person cannot do even the smallest work without the knowledge and permission of Allah. Truly speaking, faith is a great phenomenon. No one should be under the illusion that he has achieved this wealth himself. Every believer should be most grateful to Allah.

Clearing up the misunderstanding and misconception:

When the delegation of Banu Asad arrived, they were suffering from two misconceptions. First, they had the idea that they had believed without anyone else's effort, and they were proud of it, and they were considering it a favour to Islam and the Messenger of Islam (PBUH). Second, they thought that they had completely attained the wealth of faith, while at that time they were only familiar with the nature of Islam, but they

had not become familiar with the reality of faith(iman). That is why they were told at the very first stage.

The Holy Qur'an declares, "Say, ye have no faith; but ye only say, we have submitted our wills to Allah" (S.49.V.14)

When this was said to them, they probably said more clearly and forcefully that we are Muslims, and we have fully accepted the faith.

These verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed upon it. The Holy Qur'an says, "say, What! will ye tell Allah about your religion? But Allah knows all that is in the heavens and on earth: He has full knowledge of all things." (S.49.V.16)

The aforementioned verses make it very clear that the faith you are loudly expressing, or rather, proclaiming is not necessary; Allah knows the truth of your hearts well.

The delegation came and mentioned their kindness to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) that the tribes of Hawazin, Ghatafan and Muhareb fought against him and said, we ourselves came without fighting and then brought our families and property, this distinction is only ours, Allah Almighty has mentioned their kindness. The Holy Qur'an says," They impress on thee as a favour that they have embraced Islam." (S.49.V.17)

Allah disapproved it and He ordered them to amend their ways and (Cont. on page 28)

Secularism - Implicit From Day One, Explicit In 1976

- Faizan Mustafa

"God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. Yet his shadow still looms...", said Friedrich Nietzsche. As many as Constitutions make some reference to God in their Preamble. True. Nehru led from the front in India's adoption of secularism. He explicitly said in his autobiography of how what he called "organized religion" filled him "with horror... almost always it seemed to stand for a blind belief and reaction. dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation". Nehru's strong views on religion did play a significant role in India's choice of secular polity. Unlike today's politicians, he did not need religion to succeed in politics.

Though the Supreme Court has said more than once that the term secular in India does not connote either strict separation between religion and state like in France or the non-establishment of religion like in the United States, the debate on the artificial imposition of secularism during the Emergency and the urgent need for its deletion continues though Indian secularism is rooted in

Emperor Ashoka's Dhamma and is consistent with noble ideals of India's freedom struggle. Article 51A (b) makes it a fundamental duty of every citizen "to cherish and uphold noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom". Secularism was one such ideal.

Secularism spells autonomy

The Advocate of Hindutva thinks that minorities have got some special privileges through secularism and that the time has come to bring an end to neutrality of the state in religious matters. Unfortunately, supporters of a theocratic state do not understand that secularism is basically good for religions as it protects religions from state domination and interference. Religions remain independent and autonomous under secularism. If a religion becomes state religion, the state takes over the control of such religion.

Our secularism ensures autonomy of the Hindu religion and the proponents of Hindutva must understand this. Has not Islam been destroyed through various so-called Islamic states? Mahmud Ghazni and Illtutmish defied the caliph and assumed the title of king. Zawabit or

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state-made laws prevailed over Shariah during medieval India. Did not Henry VIII defy Papal authority just to marry Anne Boleyn and create the Anglican Church with the King as its head. In the consecration of the Ram temple in January 2024, the state's decision prevailed over the theological view of the Shankaracharyas. The state, not religion, decided what is auspicious.

Is the salvation of souls really the mandate of a modern state? British Political theorist John Locke in his famous 'A Letter Concerning Toleration' (1689) forcefully said no because the state was brought into existence only for 'procuring, preserving, and advancing' citizens' civil interests. Care of souls, he argued, was not given to the state because the state consists of only outward force while religion consists of the inward persuasion of mind. Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, favoured separation of the church from the state to protect the garden of the church from the 'wilderness of secular order".

Secularism could triumph in the 18th century because reason triumphed over religions. While secularism is nothing but an idea of modernity, a non-secular theocratic state is the relic of the past. Even if

we are fed up with modernity, the moot question is this: should we become a Saudi Arabia, an Iran or a Pakistan? An overwhelming majority of Hindus do not want to emulate these regressive countries.

The Importance of the Ashokan edicts

Should we reject secularism because this term as not used in the original Constitution? To gay at India's Constitution became secular in 1976 is blatant lie. Like several other things borrowed from Ashoka the Great who ruled from 268-232BC, the seeds of Indian secularism too can be aced back to Ashokan edicts. Rejecting the idea of one particular religion as a state religion, Rock Edict 7 said that all religions should reside everywhere, for all of them desire self-control and purity of heart. One of the biggest problems of today's India is hate speech. Rock Edict 12 prohibited glorification of one's religion and condemnation of others' religions. Ashoka's dhamma was not religion but the principles of governance, i.e., constitutional morality and ethics that a king must follow. He favoured the acceptance and co-existence of different religions and went beyond mere toleration.

The Motilal Nehru Committee's constitution (1928) which was the first

attempt to draft the Constitution clearly stated in Clause 4(11) that "there shall be no state religion for the Commonwealth of India or for any province in the Commonwealth, nor shall the state either directly or indirectly endow any religion or give any preference or impose any disability on account of religious belief or religious status".

The Karachi Resolution of the Congress in 1931 which presented the blueprint of a future Swaraj in Resolution no 2(9), specifically declared that the "state shall maintain neutrality in regard to all religions". Even the Hindu Mahasabha's draft constitution of 1944 with V.D. Savarkar's blessings too declared in explicit terms in Article 7(15) that 'there shall be no state religion or either centre or provinces.' Why do we refuse to follow even Savarkar?

On October 17, 1949 when the Preamble of the Constitution was under discussion in the Constituent Assembly, H.V. Kamath proposed that the Preamble should begin with the words 'in the name of God'. We should thank god that in an overwhelmingly religious country, god lost by 17 votes in a tally of 68 to 41. Similarly, the word 'secular' was not specifically included: yet, members, in one voice, spoke of it being a fait accompli of a liberal

democratic constitution and consistent with the ideals of our freedom struggle. No member of the Constituent Assembly ever proposed a Hindu Rashtra including Syama Prasad Mookerjee.

Three years prior to the insertion of the word secular, the Supreme Court had held secularism to be the basic structure in the Kesavananda Bharati case (1973). Silences of the Constitution are equally important. For instance, the words federal, judicial review rules of law too have not been used in the Constitution. But these ideas have rightly been held as part of the basic structure.

On the Jurisdiction model

If we are really fed up with the separation model of secularism, we should consider the jurisdiction model. We have several options from modern democracies. Certainly, we may declare in the Constitution that Hinduism (not Hindutva) is the dominant spiritual heritage of India just like in England where the Anglican Church is the official Church of England and the king is the defender of faith but recognises equal rights to all citizens ensuring freedom of religion prohibiting and discriminations on the basis of religion. The Irish Constitution is another model. Its Preamble begins with the name of the Most Holy Trinity, but the state cannot endow any religion or discriminate on religious grounds. Article 3 of the Greek Constitution declares the Greek Orthodox Church as the dominant religion. The opening words of the Preamble are - 'In the name of Holy, Consubstantial and Undivided Trinity'. But Article 4 talks of the right to equality. Article 5(2) guarantees the right to life, liberty and honour without any discrimination based on religion and gives freedom of religion to all faiths. Muslims of Western Thrace in fact have the right to elect their own Mufti (religious and judicial officer) and their disputes are resolved in accordance with Islamic law. They have an option of either using civil courts or sharia courts.

Article 2 of Pakistan's Constitution declares Islam as the state religion. Only a Muslim can occupy high constitutional office. But even the Preamble itself explicitly lays down that the 'adequate provision shall be made for the minorities freely to profess, practice freedom of religion and develop their culture'. Moreover Article 36 again says that the state shall safeguard the legitimate rights and the interests of minorities including their due representation in the federal and provincial services. Accordingly, the Constitution makes a

provision of reservation for them.

Though Article 9 of the Sri Lankan Constitution falls short of declaring Buddhism as state religion, it does give "Buddhism' the 'foremost place' and places an obligation on the state to protect and foster Buddha Sasna. Of course, it not only guarantees freedom of religion but (unlike India) in Article 10, explicitly gives 'freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice'. Minorities are governed by their personal laws and sharia courts function within the premises of regular courts and High Courts.

Our secularism based on Ashoka's Dhamma was designed to allow people to live together in civility and promote equal respect for all religions. The state must remain religion neutral. India's opposition to Pakistan was based on the separation of religion and state. The framers of the Constitution too intended a secular state, and not a theocratic state. Even the Bharatiya Janata Party has been insisting on its opposition to the Congress's negative secularism and used to promise positive secularism. If what was implicit from day one was merely made explicit in 1976, 'Humgama Hai Ku barpa (what is the fuss about')? ■

Mea Culpa: Why Europe's Recalibrating On Palestine

- Rashmee Roshan Lall*

It's a measure of the depths of horror evoked by images and accounts from Gaza that even colonialists of yesteryears seem seized by an attack of conscience. Or karma? With Israel promising to take over Gaza City, even Germany announced a break with the country for which it has always felt a special responsibility due to the Holocaust. Chancellor Merz promised to suspend arms exports that Israel could use in Gaza. Germany is Israel's biggest supplier of arms after US — this would be Berlin's first punitive measure against a country it has unwaveringly supported.

Some are calling Europe's new attitude towards Israel a 'rupture' in relations. Recalibration may be a more emollient word. Days before Germany's move, Britain, principal Israel's creation, acknowledged the historical injustice which continues to unfold" for Arabs who lived on the land before it was given away nearly 80 years ago to those seeking a Jewish homeland.

Britain was following in the wake of France, with whom it had secretive Sykes-Picot deal to carve up West Asia to mutual benefit after WWI. In late July, France led the way for western countries to finally rebalance equation by championing a Palestinian state and resurrecting hopes a just peace for both

Palestinians and Israelis.

In committing to recognising Palestinian statehood, France and Britain triggered a mini tsunami in geopolitical terms. Canada, Malta, Portugal and Australia have followed with promises on recognition of Palestinian statehood. Slovenia recently became the first of the 27-member EU bloc to bar two far-right Israeli ministers from entering its borders over their "genocidal" rhetoric toward Palestinians. Soon enough, Netherlands did the same.

The surge of western support for Palestinian rights and statehood is welcome, if a tad late, considering 147 of UN's 193 member states including India signed on long ago. This recalibration comes at an especially bleak moment. Nearly two years into Israel's brutal war in Gaza, an estimated 60,000 Palestinians are dead, mass starvation grips the territory amid widespread fear Israeli govt. may act on its loudly advertised aims to depopulate Gaza and annex West Bank.

Even so, it's right to read the French and British initiative as more than the sum of its parts. These are the first members of the G7 club to promise recognition of a Palestine state come Sept. As permanent members of UNSC-just five countries enjoy veto-wielding privilege both countries' newly resolute stance Palestinian statehood may leave

^{*} Columnist based in London

US isolated as the holdout. The two other permanent members China and Russia—recognised Palestinian statehood long years ago.

France, Britain and others are reframing the problem. Rather than waiting for a two-state solution to emerge from the ground, i.e. with Israeli and Palestinian agreement, recognition of a Palestinian state becomes a starting point rather than the end goal, a paradigm shift. In tandem, France has laboured with Saudi Arabia produce the so-called York declaration, a statement of Intent backed by Arab League, EU and 17 other countries. It envisions Palestinian Authority governing all Palestinian territory condemns Hamas and calls for the militant group to disarm and relinquish power. France has described the declaration "unprecedented" because it's the first time the 22-nation Arab League has backed a joint statement to this effect.

Palestinian issue aside, Britain's latest recounting of its role in the creation of Israel is noteworthy. UK foreign secretary David Lammy's speech at the French-Saudi UN conference was a mea culpa of sorts, an acknowledgement of the mess colonial Britain left in West Asia nearly 80 years ago.

Lammy said his country would recognise Palestine statehood "with the hand of history on our shoulders", a reference to the 67-word Balfour Declaration signed by another British

foreign secretary in 1917. That transformational document promised to "view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" but Lammy said one other promise was not kept. It stated "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine" The broken promise to Palestinians is yet to be addressed, he indicated.

Historians still deliberate the real reason Britain issued the controversial and game-changing Balfour Declaration but in the pithy criticism of writer Arthur Koestler, it really only meant that "one nation solemnly promised to a second nation the country of a third."

Colonisers of yore have much to answer for. Lenin called the Franco-British Sykes-Picot deal "the agreement of the colonial thieves". After WWI, Britain ignored and France rejected findings of an Inter-Allied Commission sent by US president Woodrow Wilson to Greater Syria to ascertain the local population's views on the Balfour Declaration. It found locals wanted a unified Greater Syria with Palestine incorporated.

There is no way Britain or France can elide their role in creating the cesspit that is Palestinians' situation today. But they can atone by correcting the historical imbalance they instituted. The only question: Does it come too late?

(The Times of India – 15-8-25)

The World of Dreams

Ru'ya-i-Tamthili (Those Pertaining to Similitudes)

Anas b. Malik reported Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying: I saw during the night that which a person sees during the sleep as if we are in the house of 'Uqba b. Rafi' that there were brought to us the fresh dates of Ibn Tab. I interpreted it as the sublimity for us in the world and good ending in the Hereafter and that our religion is good.

Abu Musa reported Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying: I saw in sleep that I was about to migrate from Makkah to a land abounding in palmtrees and I guessed that it would be Yamama or Hajar, but it was the city of Yathrib (the old name of Madina) and I saw in this dream of mine that I was brandishing a sword and its upper end was broken and this is what fell in the form of misfortune on the believers on the Day of Uhud. I brandished the sword for the second time and it became all right and this is what came to be true when Allah granted us victory and solidarity of the believers. And I saw therein cows also and Allah is the Doer of good. This

- Syed Sulaiman Nadwi

meant the group (of martyrs) from amongst the believers on the Day of Uhud and the goodness which Allah brought after that and the reward of attestation of His Truth which Allah brought to us on the Day of Badr.

'A'isha reported: When we came to Madinah, it was an unhealthy and uncongenial place. The Muhajirin were panic-stricken due to the epidemic fever due to which the Muhajirin were disturbed. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw in a dream a dark-complexioned woman with dirty dishevelled hair who was leaving Madinah and entering Juhfa. He interpreted it that the fever of Madinah had been transferred to Juhfa.

Abu Huraira reported that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: While I was sleeping I saw in my hands two bangles. This had a disturbing effect upon me and I was given a suggestion in the sleep that I should blow over them, so I blew over them and they were no more. And I interpreted these (two bangles) as the two great liars who would appear after me and the one amongst them was 'Ansai, the inhabitant of San'ai and the other Musailima, the inhabitant of Yamama.

Hamza b. 'Abdullah b. 'Umar b. Khattab on the authority of his father that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: While I was asleep I saw (in a dream) a cup containing milk being presented to me. I took of that until I perceived freshness being reflected through my nails. Then I presented the left-over to 'Umar b. Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him). They said: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), how do you interpret it? He said: This implies knowledge.

Abu Sa'id Khudri reported Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying: While I was asleep I saw people being presented to me (in a dream) and they wore shirts and some of these reached up to the breasts and some even beyond them. Then there happened to pass 'Umar b. Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) and his shirt had been trailing. They said: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), how do you interpret the dream? He said: (As strength) of faith.

Abu Huraira reported that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him): Bilal, narrate to me which act you did in

Islam for which you hope to receive good reward, for I heard during the night the sound of your steps before me in Paradise. Bilal said:

I did not do any act in Islam for which I hope to get any benefit but this that when I perform complete ablution during the night or day I observe prayer with that purification what Allah has ordained for me to pray.

Some of the signs of the Last Hour (Qiymah) were shown to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He said in the presence of the people: I saw in a dream in the night that near the Ka'bah there was a man fair-complexioned, fine among the white-complexioned men that you ever saw, his locks of hair were falling on his shoulders, he was a man whose hair was neither curly nor too straight, and water trickled down from his head. He was placing his hands on the shoulders of two persons and amidst them was making a circuit around the Ka'bah. I said: Who is he? The people replied: Al-Masih, son of Mary. And I saw behind him a man with twisted. contracted red hair. He was fat and ugly and blind of one eye and his eye was like a full swollen grape. I said: Who is he. They said: It is Dajjal.

Zainab bint Jahsh, the wife of Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said that he came out in a state of excitement with his face quite red. And he was saying: There is no God but Allah; there is destruction in store for Arabia because of the turmoil which is near at hand as the barrier of Gog and Magag has been opened like it, and he (in order to explain it) made a ring with the help of his thumb and forefinger. I said: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would we be destroyed despite the fact that there would be pious people amongst us? He said: yes when the evil would predominate.

Samura b. Jundab reported that one day Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: In the night I saw two persons in the dream who said to me: He who kindles the fire of Hell is the guardian of hell. I am Gabriel and he is Michael.

Visions and Voices (In a State of waking)

The visions of the Prophets (peace be upon them) are not the visions of common human beings because the level of consciousness of a Prophet is quite different from that of an ordinary person. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Their (Prophet's) eyes are asleep but their hearts do not sleep.

Among the visions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) the first vision (in a state of waking) was that of the angel Gabriel who came to him in the cave of Hira and then he did not visit for a small span of time and there was a break in revelation. While he was coming down in the valley completing his stay in the cave of Hira, he heard a voice from the sky and raising his head saw the angel who had come to him in Hira, sitting on a Throne between heaven and earth. It was for a number of times that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had seen Gabriel. He, however, saw him in his original form on two occasions—in the cave of Hira and during his ascent to heaven. According of Sahih Ahadith, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw Gabriel in his (original) form and he had six hundred wings and he saw him descending from the heaven and filling (the space) from the sky to the earth with the greatness of his body structure.

The other creature, being quite different from the angel is the devil. He is an evil force and it is difficult to resist him. He deluded Adam (peace be upon him) first.

Ayyub (peace be upon him) was put to trial but he showed patience and

perseverance. It is mentioned in the Bible that the devil tried to seduce 'Isa (peace.be upon him) but he (the devil) could not succeed in his evil design. As narrated in the Sahih Hadith, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The Satan is with every one of you. Someone inquired: O Allah's Messenger (peace one blessings of Allah be upon him), is he also with you? He (the Holy Prophet) replied- Yes, but has surrendered He related an incident that once during the prayer, the Satan annoyed me and suggested to break the prayer but with Allah's help, I overcame him.

The Paradise and the Hell are the things of the next world but when the veil was withdrawn from the eyes, the hidden realities of the next world became manifest to him. There was solar eclipse during the life time of Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He went to the mosque and stood up for prayer. The people formed themselves in rows behind him. He made along recital of the Holy Qur'an and observed long Rukus and long prostrations. In the meantime, the people saw him (Allah's Messenger) moving forward and then moving back. After prayer the people inquired the cause thereof. He said: I saw in my

place everything which you have been promised. I even saw myself desiring to pluck a bunch (of grapes) from the Paradise (and it was at the time) when you saw me moving back. Had I taken it, you would have eaten of it as long as the world endured. I saw the Hell also. No such (abominable) sight have I ever seen as that which I saw today. I observed that most of its inhabitants were women. They said Messenger of Allah, on what account is it so? He said: For their ingratitude or disbelief (bi-kufraihinna). It was said: Do they disbelieve in Allah? He said: (Not for their disbelief in God) but for their ingratitude to kindness. If you were to treat one of them kindly for ever, but if she later saw anything (displeasing) in you, she would say: I have never seen any good in you. I also saw in it (in Hell) the owner of a cat whom she had tied and did not feed her, nor set her free so that she could find the creatures of the earth, till the cat died of starvation.

Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) one day went out and he offered prayer over the martyrs of Uhud. He then came back and sat on the pulpit and said: I perceive as if I am seeing with my own eyes my cistern at this very state and I have been given the keys of the treasures of the earth. I am not

afraid that you would associate anything with Allah after me, but I am afraid that you may be (allured) by the world and (vie) with me another (in possessing material wealth).

When the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) got up to observe the Tahajjud prayer he woke up his wives also. Umm-ul-Mu'minin Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) said. One night when Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) got up from sleep, he said. Allah be glorified! What sort of treasures of wealth and turmoil have I seen tonight. Who is there to wake up the residents of these apartments? Alas! How may women have decorated themselves with worldly adornment but they would be naked in the Hereafter.

Osama b. Zaid reported that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) climbed up a battlement among the battlements of Madinah and then said: You do not see what I am seeing, and I am seeing the places of turmoil between your houses as the places of rainfall, (this alluded to the events which took place after the murder of 'Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him).

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) always

thought about his Ummah. He said: Allah drew the ends of the world near one another for my sake. And I have seen its eastern and western ends. And the dominion of my Ummah would reach those ends which have been drawn near me, and I have been granted the red and the white treasures. And I begged my Lord that my Ummah not be destroyed because of famine, nor be dominated by an enemy who would not be amongst it and my Lord said: Muhammad, whenever I make a decision there is none to change it, Well, I grant you for your Ummah that it would not be destroyed by anything but by the enemy who is amongst them. The history bears ample testimony to this fact.

The events of the life of the prophets of the past were also shown to him. It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that he said: We travelled with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) between Makkah and Madinah and we passed by a valley. He (the Holy Prophet) asked which valley is this? They said: This is the valley of Azraq. Upon this the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) remarked: I feel as if I am seeing Moses (peace be upon him) who is responding loudly to Allah

(saying): I am at Thy service! my Lord, white passing through the valley. We then travelled (further) till we came to the mountain trail. He (the Holy Prophet) said: (I perceive) as if I am seeing Yunus (peace be upon him) on red camel, with a cloak of wool around him. The halter of his camel was that of the fibre of date-palm, and he was passing through the valley saying: I am at Thy service! my Lord.

Ibn 'Abbas reported: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) happened to pass by two graves and said: They are being tormented, but they are not tormented for a grievous sin. One of them carried tales and the other did not keep himself safe from being defiled by urine. He then called for a fresh twig and split it into two parts and planted them on each grave and then said: Their punishment may be mitigated as long as these twigs remain fresh.

Abu Huraira stated that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: I saw 'Amr b. 'Amir al-Khuza'i dragging his intestines in fire and he was the first who devoted animals to deity.

It has been narrated in Sahih Muslim that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was going towards the dwellings of Bani an-Najjar, riding upon his pony, it shied and he was about to fall. He found four, five or six graves there. He said: Who amongst you knows about those lying in the graves? A person said: It is I. Thereupon he said: In what state did they die? He said: They died as polytheists. He said: These people are passing through the ordeal in the graves. If it were not the reason that you would stop burying (your dead) in the graves, on listening to the torment in the grave which I am listening to, I would have certainly made you hear that.

Zaid b. Argam reported that once he was with Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) He called for something to drink. The people brought water and honey on seeing which he began to weep. They inquired the cause of his weeping. Thereupon he said: One day I was sitting in the company of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and I saw that he was repulsing something with his hand and I did not see there any such thing. I inquired O Allah's Messenger! What are you repulsing? He said: The world had been brought before me in a similitude and I bade it to go away from me. It replied: If you have kept yourself away from me; the people coming after you would not do so.■

(Concluded....)

The Last Message of God And The Last Scripture

- S. M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi*

God sent His messenger on this earth to guide human beings in believing their Creator and to thank Him for His bounties. Also to mould their lives according to His dictates. These messengers were deputed to convey His orders and the scriptures were also meant for the same. The last of these apostles is Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the last scripture is Qur'an Majeed. Both have the unique characteristic that up-till the day of Judgement the sayings of the Prophet, Peace be upon him, and the book would keep guiding all on the path of truth and virtue. He was the greatest of the Prophets who were sent to provide guidance to all the classes, ranks and grades.

With the Prophet, Peace be upon him, the religion was perfected and completed. The faith and truth would guard against any interpolation and mutation, addition and deletion in the Holy Book. The directives of Qur'an, the teachings and deeds of the Prophet, Peace be upon him, would act as source of light up-till the Last Day.

The Qur'an has taken the place of all scriptures. This is the base of the religious Jurisprudence (Shariah) and to abide by it would make Allah happy and satisfied.

For the faithful it should be kept in his mind that to draw maximum benefit out of it, he should have complete faith that these are the words of Allah and each letter is leading towards virtue and truth. He should have complete faith that these are the holy diction from God and he is honoured and blessed by its study. God's greatest gift to the mankind is the Qur'an and His last Messenger. He was chosen for the good of the whole mankind and God had created in his person an embodiment of love and truth.

He has no parallel in the whole history of mankind. It should be noted that the devotion to him does not lie in just reading about him but to love him, to carry out his directions and to follow him in all aspects of life.

God told the believers about the exalted status of the apostle and bade him to draw inspiration from the Prophet and to glorify him.

The Prophet has said, "No body among you can be true believer if he does not love me more than his parents, children and all human beings. The Holy Qur'an says.

By the name of your God those people cannot be true believers unless they come to you for the settlement of all their disputes and feel not a bit of annoyance with your judgement.

^{*} Former Rector, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.

Then again Qur'an says.

'We have indeed, in the messenger of God, a good example (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in God and the Final Day.

People who believe in God would find the Prophet a true ideal and an excellent example for them to follow.

These orders clearly indicate that every Muslim should have such a perception of the love, grandeur and piety of the holy Prophet that he should make these qualities as an ideal believer in all the ups and downs of his life. He should see in the person of the holy prophet a man superior to all the outstanding persons in the world.

God has sent His blessings on holy Prophet. He says. "Allah and His angles send blessings on the Prophet O you that believe! Send your blessings on him and salute him with all respects."

If the name of Holy Prophet mentioned in any talk it is obligatory to send blessings on him. If a Muslim does not do it he is acting against the directions of the Prophet.

The Holy Prophet was born in a clan of Arabia and his life span was that of sixty three years. The early forty years of his age were spent in making him perfect to bear the burden of Prophethood and the remaining twenty three years were spent in the application and transmission of the prophetic mission.

Allah would have made these sixty

three years of life a period of rest and comfort and would have saved ham from all the ordeals and difficulties. He was beloved of Allah and nothing could have stopped Him to bestow all the pleasures of life on him but the work allotted to him required that he should be well-versed in performing his job and bear the burden of extreme responsibility.

In forty years a man becomes fully matured and his physical and mental qualities come to the top. His personality takes its full shape. Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, was blessed with the Prophethood at this age and was made a guide for the whole world and a grand teacher for humanity. He was a symbol of gracefulness, courtesy and mannerly behaviour. His supplication to God was exemplary. God put him to the strong experiences of self-abnegation and unearthly dispositions.

He was born an orphan, the mother parted in his childhood. The kind grandfather died before he came to age, then only the uncle was left and the Prophet, Peace be upon him, got his whole-hearted support in the early ten years of the Prophethood. His pious and loving wife Khadeja gave him all her love and attention. She was a companion and helper. She knew and acknowledged his qualities and gave him all the help. Both the uncle and wife died in the tenth year of his Prophethood. Now there was no one left to treat him with love and kindness. Only the devotion to God was his comfort, He endured all the persecutions, the

indifference of relatives, the insolence and threats of the outsiders. He bore it with dignity and honour. He treated his worst enemy with kindness and never abandoned hope.

When the kind uncle and the loving wife expired and the apostle was persecuted by all, he left for the neighbourly city of Taif. He expected to find some chieftain there whose help might have been a relief from the tortures of Mecca. He met the Chiefs and leaders and invited them to Islam. They proved very cruel and rude. They stirred up some rubble of the town to harass him. These riffraff's followed the prophet abusing and throwing stones on him. The feet of the prophet were injured and smeared with blood. He could not get a cup of water to drink. He left the city and took refuge in an orchard. The oppression was so great that a prayer complaining about his helplessness and pitiable condition and seeking the succour of God came to his lips, "O Allah", said the Prophet, "to Thee I complain of my weakness, resourcelesness and humiliation before the people. Thou art the most Merciful, the Lord of the weak and my Master. To whom wilt thou confide me? To one estranged, bearing ill will, or, an enemy given power on me?If Thou are not wroth on me, I care not, for Thy favour in abundant for me. I seek refuge in the light of Thy countenance by which all darkness is dispelled and every affair of this world and next is set right, lest Thy anger should descend upon me or Thy displeasure light on me. I need only Thy pleasure and satisfaction for only Thou enablest me to

do good and evade the evil. There is no power and no might save in Thee.

He had taken the job of spreading Islam in pursuance to the commands of God. The omnipotent God would have checked these cruel deeds and given sol ace to the Prophet. In spite of extreme disappointment the prophet did not complain. He only referred to his helplessness and pitiable condition. He was afraid lest the God might not feel annoyed. He repeats his determination to keep the Almighty pleased and satisfied.

The mercy of God was touched by the prayer he sent the angel of mountains who sought the prophet's permission to join together the two hills between Taif was located but the prophet replied, "No I hope God will bring forth from their loins who will worship God alone, associating nothing with Him.

The quality of pity and mercy was absorbed in his soul. Compassion was the special favour granted to him by Allah. God says in the Holy Qur'an:"And we sent thee not save as a mercy for the worlds."

Again he says:

"Now hath come unto you a messenger from amongst yourselves. It grieves him that you shall suffer, ardently anxious is the over you: to the believers is he kind is he most merciful.

The holy Prophet, Peace be upon him, has passed from ordeals and very adverse circumstances since his birth. It had given him a very molten heart and he

understood the miseries of the downtrodden and aggrieved. Also it had given him the strong determination to face hardships and bear responsibility. He had to announce and declare and apply the mission of Prophethood in extreme difficulties. This he did with perfection and after the expiry of twenty three years when the time came for his parting from this mortal world he asked his companions at the end-of the sermon on the occasion of the farewell pilgrimage. "And you would be asked by God about me so what you would say." The companions replied, "We testify that you conveyed the message and fulfilled your mission.

Then he said, "O God be witness.

God made the prophet to undergo in a variety of conditions and state of affairs only to become an excellent example for the believers.

You indeed in the messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct).

The prophet had to deal with hypocrites and hidden enemies. He underwent both adversity and prosperity. He had the pleasure of having children and also faced the grief of his son who died in infancy. In his deep sorrow over the infant's death the apostle of God said. "The eyes weep and the heart grieves, but we say nothing that displeases God and we are grieved on being separated from you, lbrahim.

There was a solar eclipse on the day Ibrahim died. Some of the companions attributed the eclipse to Ibrahim's death,

but the prophet corrected them in a speech wherein he said, "The sun and the moon are the two of the signs of God; they are not eclipsed on account of anyones death." He instructed to remember God and offer prayers at such occasions.

Here is the difference between the prophet and a worldly leader. No such a man would have rejected this observation of the people and used it for his glorification.

The prophet was always solicitous for. the pleasures of God and was always apprehensive of His displeasure. When the wind blew he thought that it might be a token of His displeasure. This was when the God said that He would not punish the pagans of Mecca because the prophet lived between them. He always remained engaged in thought to find ways to create passion among the people for the worship of God. The narrators have described him to be always pondering and in a mid of slight gloom. Often he would remain silent but this mood prevailed only when he was alone, otherwise when with companions he was always happy and polite. His tolerance, forbearance, sympathy and wide heartedness was beyond limits.

He was of cheerful disposition. Sometimes he shared some light joke with his companions. He laughed but his laugh was always manifested in smile, never he laughed loudly.

If anybody asked him for something, he gave it. If it was not possible he comforted him with kind and sweet words. Never gave him any stern reply. He did never strike anybody. He was angry only when the honour of God was concerned or the limit set by Him was transgressed. For youngsters he was like a father, for equals he was companion and friend, for elders he showed due honour.

The prophet used to say, "whoever leaves some property as a legacy, it belongs to his heirs, but his unpaid debts are my responsibility. At the time of danger he was foremost. In any gain he shared it with all. He paid such attention to everyone attending his meetings that everybody thought that none attracted his notice like himself.

God had endowed the prophet with an impressive personality. His features displayed grace and splendour. This automatically attracted a new comer and he recognised him immediately though he never cared to occupy any special place in any sitting. Anybody who saw him for the first time was overawed but when he kept his company he became attached to him with all the warmth of his heart. They used to say that they never saw a man like him either before or after him.

This cheerful disposition and kind behaviour does not mean that he should be called a miraculous personality. This God's gift throws light on his exalted position. He was an ideal for the believers and they are instructed to follow him in every walk of life. He was the favourite of God but he had to undergo all the hardships for twenty years.

He wished good to everybody, he always sought God's pleasure, he always

thought of the Day of the Judgement and weighed his noble deeds for that Day. He always expressed his humility before God. This he did for all his life.

God had forgiven his all sins, past or future, yet he was most eager and earnest in paying homage to Him. Once in a night he stood praying for such a long time that his feet got swollen. He said, why should not I be grateful servant. He never indulged in exacting retribution for any offence or excess to himself. He was angry only when the honour of God was trifled.

The life of the prophet is described by the most trustworthy narrators, his truthful and pious companions. Its knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim. This should act as a guide line for all.

The Holy Qur'an says, "There was indeed for them an excellent example for you to follow, for those whose hope is in Allah and in the last Day".

Qur'an Majeed, the Book of Allah, and the sayings and deeds of the holy Prophet, Hadith and Sunnah, are the grand sources of the religion of Islam. To be true believer one is to follow these sources and to mould oneself according to the directions. The holy prophet has said, "I leave for you the two things of grand magnitude. If you clutch them strongly you would never be misled. One is the book of Allah and the other is to adopt my conduct of life."

In the words of his wife, the mother of all Muslims, Hazrat Aisha "The Qur'an was his life sketch. ■

(Cont. from page 10)

notions mentioning that, "say, count not your Islam as a favour upon me: Nay, Allah has conferred a favour upon you to the faith, if ye but true and sincere.(S.49.V.17)

This is a miracle of the Divine Word, that it has been said before that you are not believers but Muslims.

And if you consider yourself a believer and if you are also true in your opinion, then understand that it is the favour of Allah upon you that He gave you guidance. Remember, human heart is between the two fingers of Rahman i.e. Allah, He can do as much as He wants.

The Holy Qur'an is a book of guidance. It presented the story of the Bedouins so that the Ummah would continue to learn a lesson until the Day of Judgment. More importantly, whoever gains faith, should not forget the fact that all this is the grace of Allah. Whatever we do, we do it by the command of Allah. No one should be proud of his actions. He should be grateful to Allah and bow his head in submission.

No doubt, the last verse of Surah makes it clear that no matter how much a person may boast and claim his Islam, and mention good deeds, Allah is well aware of the reality of the situation.

This verse has a very clear connection with the previous verses, but the truth is that this verse is the soul of the entire Surah. From the beginning to the present, it is being exhorted to create reality. And this is the great characteristic and distinction of Islam that it has linked the appearance with reality. This creates that power in the action and such results are achieved only by expressing Allah's gratitude and thankfulness.

The Holy Qur'an says," Verily Allah knows the unseen of Heavens and the earth: and Allah sees well all that ye do" (S.49.V.18)

No matter how much a man may cover up his actions, he cannot hide anything from his Creator and Master, in Whose Court he will have to appear and give an account of his deeds. Needless to add that belief in Allah can save a person from a host of evils and bad notions. It also plays a significant role in the reformation of society. A Russian thinker has written that the greatest means of reforming society is the belief in the reward and punishment of the Hereafter. As belief increases, human life becomes better.

Accordingly, we must take step forward carefully and fear Allah that nothing goes against the will of Him so that we may not have to face the punishment and chastisement of the Hereafter. To sum up, faith is the most valuable asset. It helps us promote good qualities, sublime norms and steering life on the right path. Hence, it is imperative for us to safeguard our faith (Iman) at any cost. For our life is worthless sans faith.

(English rendering by Obaidur Rahman Nadwi)

Zakir Hussain-An-Ambassador For Rejuvenation of Education In India - Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

India has produced a galaxy of eminent personalities. One of them was Dr. Zakir Hussain.

He was an educationist, politician, thinker, nationalist, freedom-fighter, translator, philosopher and a passionate proponent of educational reforms. He served as the second Vice-President of India from 1962 to 1967 and the country's third President from 1967 to 1969. He was the first Muslim to become President of India.

He was born on 8 February, 1897 in Hyderabad and died on 3 May, 1969 in New Delhi.

Education:

He received his early education in Hyderabad and completed his high school at Islamia High School, Etawah and graduated from Christian Degree College affiliated with the University of Lucknow. Thereafter, he pursued higher studies at Mohammadan Anglo- Oriental College, Aligarh, and obtained his Ph. D in Economics from the University of Berlin, Germany.

Besides, he was awarded honorary doctorates (D. Litt.) by several universities, including Delhi Aligarh, Allahabad, Calcutta, and Cairo.

As Vice-Chancellor:

He played a significant role in the field of education. He served as Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia for 22 years from 1926 to 1948. Under his leadership, Jamia Millia Islamia made great strides in various branches of learning. The university achieved unprecedented name and fame during his leadership. Even Mahatma Gandhi got admitted his son Dev Das in the said institution.

Similarly, he had been the Vice-Chancellor of Aligharh Muslim University for about eight years from 1948 to 1956.

More importantly, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru got Dr. Zakir Hussain as a member of the Rajya Sabha in 1948. He was also the Governor of Bihar from 1957 to 1962.

The Government of India honoured him with Padam Vibhushan in 1957 and also conferred "Bharat Ratna" for his exceptional contributions to education and public service in 1963.

As President of India:

He served as the third President of India, holding office from May 13,

1967, until his death on 3 May, 1969.

His presidency was marked by his erudition, commitment to the principles of democracy, and deepseated belief in the power of education. He also became the first Indian President who died in office.

As a writer:

Dr. Zakir Hussain was a prominent writer and a good translator. He authored several books and short stories. He translated Plato's well-known and influential book "The Republic" into English. It brought him a good name and recognition. He wrote a book titled "Shikchha" i.e. "Education" in Hindi.

Some of his well-known children's stories are as follows:

(1) Abbu Khan ki Bakri (2) Shahid ki Amma, (3) Uqaab, (4) Andha Ghoda, (5) Puri jo Kharai se nikal bhagi (6) Maa, (7) Murghi Jo Ajmer Chali, and the like.

No doubt, Dr. Zakir Hussain was genius. He left an indelible imprint behind him. P. N. Chopra has says," Zakir Hussain was a much-tested person whose patriotism was unquestioned, whose nationalism was unsullied, and whose integrity was of a high order. He was content to describe himself as a teacher, and though of a high distinction of intellect

and character, he was a man of deep humanity. When the number of people who were Indians above everything else was diminishing, he was a Indian. representative embodiment of the composite culture of the country. He belonged to no community and no party; he belonged to the nation, filling every post of duty which was assigned to him with success. I watched him at work on the Press Commission. He spoke little, but when he spoke, he spoke with authority and finality. "(Indian Muslims in Freedom Struggle, p, 162)

Dr. Zakir Hussain and Education:

Dr. Zakir Hussain was a passionate advocate for education and played a leading role in shaping young minds. He believed that education should foster both intellectual and moral development and he dedicated his life to creating a more inclusive and effective educational system for all children.

His commitment to education extended to his writing for children, aiming to create engaging and enriching content. He believed that no nation can achieve progress and prosperity without education.

No doubt, his contributions significantly shaped the field of education in India. Besides, he was involved with various educational

bodies like the University Education Commission, the University Grants Commission and UNESCO. He also supported Gandhi's Wardha Scheme of education which emphasized vocational training. His legacy continues to inspire educators and policymakers in India and beyond, demonstrating the transformative power of education and the profound impact of a teacher's love and dedication. He always used education as a tool for social progress and national unity, emphasizing its role in fostering a more egalitarian and enlightened society. His dedication to education, particularly for the underprivileged and his emphasis on character development shaped his vision for India's future. He advocated for an education system that not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates

ethical and moral values.

Truly speaking, Dr. Zakir Hussain was a leading figure in establishing educational institutions in India, notably Jamia Millia Islamia. This institution became a symbol of the Indian freedom struggle, actively resisting British educational control.

Besides, he was a prominent personality in the Indian independence struggle. He actively, participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement along with Mahatma Gandhi.

To sum up, Dr. Zakir Hussain will always be remembered for his remarkable contributions and extraordinary selfless service to nation-building and his outstanding achievements to education and his commitment to humanistic values.

Gujarat school told to submit report after play triggers row

The Gujarat Education Department has sought a report after a primary school in Bhavnagar staged an Independence Day play in which burqa-clad girls were shown as "terrorists", sparking protests from local Muslim groups. The District Education Officer issued a notice to the Bhavnagar Municipal School Board, which runs the institution, asking for an explanation within seven days, officials said. The move came after members of the Muslim community, under the banner of Bandharan Bachao Samiti, demanded stern action against the teachers for depicting the community "in a bad light". ■

Why voting rights at 16 is the way forward - Karan Thapar

The United Kingdom has decided to permit 16-year-olds to vote in general elections. Incidentally, they can already vote in elections to the devolved parliaments in Scotland and Wales.

That's one of the interesting quirks about Britain. And there's no doubt this will happen. It's a Labour manifesto promise and Prime Minister Keir Starmer has the numbers to push it through.

Now, what it does is create a rather interesting situation for British 16-year-olds. In addition to voting in national elections, they can also marry with parental consent, enter into a civil partnership, consent to lawful sexual intercourse, leave home without their parent or guardians' permission, join a trade union, pay taxes and work as a waiter or waitress. They also have to pay full brain fares.

But there are also things they can't do. For instance, they can't buy a lottery ticket, drive a on their own, purchase alcohol from an off licence or drink a pint of beer in a pub. Paradoxically, they can't stand for elections. So, they can't vote for themselves.

If this creates a confusing picture, you would not be the first to say so. That seems to be the response of the opposition Conservatives.

However, the essential question is: Are 16-year-olds mature enough to decide who should rule the country? You'll notice I haven't qualified that question by including the adverb intelligently.

Do people in their 20s and 30s or 50s and 60s decide intelligently? Or do they do so emotionally? Or just out of habit and prejudice? If it's ok for them, why not 16-year-olds?

That still leaves the core question: Are they mature enough to vote?

Some clearly are. The BBC interviewed Alex Nurton, the chair of the UK Youth Parliament's Vote at 16 Campaign, and, frankly, he was better informed and certainly more thoughtful than most adults I know. Leave aside granting him the right to vote, he could even be given the right to rule!

But are people like him an exception? I tend to think so. Perhaps because I'm more than half a century older, I'm inclined to believe 16-year-olds are still in the process of making up their minds. They're feeling their way. Learning through experience what could right or what might turn out to wrong.

That was certainly true of me in the early '70s. If I was eligible, would I have been able to sensibly choose between Indira Gandhi's Congress and the opposition's Grand Alliance? Or would I have been swayed by my parents' opinion and, as young people often do, make it my own?

Of course, there are young people who think for themselves. I wouldn't deny that. But I suspect the majority accept the view of the adults around them and hold on till they realise they disagree or just grow beyond it.

Now, should you be voting when that's how you approach politics? It's easy to say no because we assume a vote is cast only after carefully considering the choices on offer.

But think again. Is that really what adults do? Aren't we influenced by others just as 16-year-olds might be? Are we any more committed to or convinced of the person we vote for than a 16-year-old would be? I don't think so

In fact, in 1989, when India gave the vote to 18-year-olds, these very issues and concerns were debated. Time proved the doubters wrong. Wouldn't you say that's likely to happen again?

The truth is — and it's probably difficult for the elderly to accept — young people today are far more astute and intelligent than we were at their age.

Actually, that was also true of our grandparents and us and their grandparents and them. Every generation is brighter than its predecessor. Just watch a four-year-old with an iPhone and you'll know I'm right.

So I applaud the Brits for what they intend to do. Is it time for us to consider something similar? ■

* Karan Thapar is the author of Devil's Advocate: The Untold Story.

(Hindustan Times, 3-8-2025)

Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib (The Chief of Martyrs)

- Abdul Aziz Ash-Shanawi

His Lineage

He is Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib bin Hashim bin 'Abd Manaf bin Qusai. His mother's full name is Halah bint (daughter of) Wuhaib bin 'Abd Manaf bin Zuhrah; she is the first cousin (from the father's side) of Aminah bint Wahb, the mother of the Prophet. Hamzah is not only the Prophet's uncle, but he is also his brother from breast-feeding, for they were suckled by the same woman, Thuwaibah the freed slave of Abu Lahab bin 'Abdul-Muttalib. Hamzah was two years older than the Messenger of Allah.

His Kunyah

By dint of his two sons, Ya'la and 'Umarah, Hamzah's Kunyah was either Abu Ya'la or Abu 'Umarah.

Pre-Islamic Times And Then His Acceptance Of Islam

Hamzah was as physically strong as he was respected among the Quraish. In pre-Islamic days; the days of ignorance, he spent his nights at a club of sorts, where he would while away the hours of the night by drinking alcohol and listening to musical instruments as well as songs. He would spend his days hunting in the desert. His immersion in these worldly

pursuits diverted him from paying any attention to the message of his nephew, Muhammad; he thus had no intention of leaving the gods of his fathers - Al-Lat, Al-'Uzza, and Hubal—and instead worship one God only.

One day, as was his wont, Hamzah left his home, carrying his bow and heading towards the desert, where he practiced his favorite sport and pastime, one that he excelled at greatly - hunting. At the end of that day, he returned as usual to the Ka'bah, where he would always perform Tawaf (walk around the Ka'bah) before finally returning to his home. But on that day, before he reached the Ka'bah, he met the servant of 'Abdullah bin Jud'an, who said in a most anxious tone: "O Abu 'Umarah, you should have seen the treatment that your nephew Muhammad received at the hands of Abul-Hakam bin Hisham (i.e., Abu Jahl). The latter found him to be sitting down; he then harmed him, cursed him, and did that which he detested."

Hamzah seethed at the temerity of Abu Jahl: hot blood rushed to his head, his veins popped out, and his eyes turned red. "Did he indeed do that?" asked Hamzah. The servant responded, "By Al-Lat, yes he did."

Only for a second did Hamzah stop to think before he took his bow, placed it on his shoulder, and headed with hurried steps towards the Ka'bah, in the hope of meeting Abul-Hakam. And even if he didn't find him at the Ka'bah, he would not rest until he found him.

But no sooner did he reach the Ka'bah than he saw Abu Jahl, seated among Makkah's chiefs, in the courtyard of the Ka'bah. With dreadful calmness did Hamzah approach the group; he then took his bow and smashed it on the head of Abu Jahl, injuring him, and causing his head to bleed. Before the Quraish could revive from their initial shock, Hamzah said, "Do you curse Muhammad while I am upon his religion: I say as he says. Now retaliate if you are able to do so."

The chiefs all but forgot their humiliated and wounded compeer; they were too busy absorbing the shocking, and for them devastating news, they had just heard. They understood all too well that, if Hamzah had indeed accepted Islam, the Muslims would become much stronger with him as one of their protectors. Then the members of the Banu Makhzum clan (Abu Jahl's clan), having finally regained their senses, stood up to defend Abu Jahl. They said, "We only perceive from you that you have Saba't (a derisive way of

saying, 'you have changed your religion')."

"And what should prevent me from doing so, for his (Muhammad's) matter has become clear to me. I bear witness that he is indeed the Messenger of Allah and that what he says is indeed the truth. By Allah, then, I will not desist. Prevent me, then, if you are indeed truthful." Abu Jahl then spoke: "Leave Abu 'Umarah alone, for by Allah, I did indeed curse his nephew with vile curses." When the Quraish realized that Hamzah had truly accepted Islam, they also realized that Muhammad had gained more protection, and so they subsequently desisted from harming him as much as they used to do.

'Umar bin Al-Khattab's Acceptance Of Islam

Only three days after Hamzah embraced Islam, 'Umar bin Al-Khattab accepted Islam as well. Up until that time, the Muslims were not able to pray safely at the Ka'bah, and so 'Umar said, "O Messenger of Allah, are we not upon the truth, regardless of whether we are dead or alive?" The Prophet said:

"Yes. By the One Who has my soul in His Hand, you are indeed upon the truth, regardless of whether you are dead or alive."

'Umar then said, "Then why hide

(ourselves)? By the One Who has sent you with the truth, from now on there will be no gathering I sit in that contains Kufr (disbelief), except that I will openly manifest my Islam, without being timid or frightened. By the One Who has sent you with the truth, we will go out; by Allah, Allah will not be worshipped in secret after this day."

The Prophet's Companions then set out in two organized rows, with Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib at the front of one of them, and 'Umar bin Al-Khattab at the front of the other. So hard did the Companions strike the ground as they marched, that clouds of dust were raised. And they raised their voices behind the voices of Hamzah and 'Umar b, with the words: None has the right to be worshipped but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

His Assigned Brother

It is related that, two years after receiving revelation for the first time, the Messenger of Allah established a bond of brotherhood between Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib and Zaid bin Harithah.

The Bearer Of The First War Banner

The Prophet sent a group headed by Hamzah for a special mission to Saiful-Bahr, in the land of Juhainah. Thus Hamzah was the recipient of the first banner that the Messenger of Allah gave out.

The Day Of Badr

Hamzah shined during the Battle of Badr, so much so that the leaders of the Quraish thereafter specifically planned to have him killed during the next battle, the Battle of Uhud, during which he was in fact martyred. Donning his full armour on the Day of Hamzah adorned, for identification purposes, the feather of an ostrich. And without a doubt, he was the most effective horseman during the battle; fighting valiantly, he managed to kill important chiefs of the Quraish. All by himself, he killed Shaibah bin Rabi'ah, and he took part in the killing of 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah and Tu'aimah bin 'Adi bin Naufal.

When he was taken prisoner, Umayyah bin asked in astonishment: "Who is the man that is marked by the feather of an ostrich?' 'Abdur-Rahman bin Awf said, "Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib." Umayyah said, "He alone has inflicted much harm upon us – the valiant fighters of the Quraish."

His Ranking Among The Companions

Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib enjoyed a very high ranking with the Messenger of Allah. It is said that the 'Swords of Allah' are three: Kalib bin Yuquna, during the era of Musa; Uriya bin Hanan, during the era of Dawud; and Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib, during the era of the Prophet.

He was reported to the Prophet in two ways, by way of blood, and by way of nursing. The Prophet said:

"Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib is my brother from nursing (i.e., the same woman breast-fed them both)."

The Battle of Uhud

After the Messenger of Allah was informed that the Quraish were coming with their army to exact revenge for the Battle of Badr, the Muslims gathered for the Jumu'ah (Friday) prayer; then the Prophet stood on the pulpit, praised and extolled Allah, and said:

"O people, I have indeed seen a dream during my sleep. I saw that it was as if I were in impenetrable armour. And I saw that it was as if my sword, Dhul-Fiqar (the name of his sword), shattered from the edge of its blade. I also saw a cow being slaughtered. And I saw that it was as if I were seated behind (a rider) on a ram."

His Companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah, how have you interpreted it?" He said:

"As for the impenetrable armour, it is Al-Madinah (i.e., they would be safe by staying in Madinah instead of

going out to meet the oncoming army). As for the shattering of my sword, then it is the killing of a man from the people of my household. As for the slaughtered cow, it is some of my Companions being killed. And as for me sitting behind (a rider on) a ram, it is the ram of the fighters — the bearer of the polytheists' banner — we will kill him, by the will of Allah."

Before of the Friday prayer, the Muhajirun and the Ansar surrounded the Messenger of Allah, and he said to them, "Give me your counsel." The Prophet perhaps based mainly on his dream, felt that it was best to stay in Al-Madinah. He said:

"Remain in Al- Madinah, and place your women and children on the top of high buildings. If they (the enemy) enter upon us, we will fight them in the narrow roads, for we are better acquainted with those roads than they are. And they can be shot at (with arrows) from the tops of high buildings.

However, many young men who had missed the Battle of Badr were eager to go out and meet the enemy, and so they pleaded with the Prophet saying, "Take us out to our enemy." Agreeing with them, but for other reasons, were some of the more wise and aged Muslims from the Muhajirun and the Ansar — such as Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib, Sa'd bin 'Ubadah,

and An-Nu'man bin Malik. They all echoed the same opinion: O Messenger of Allah, we indeed fear that the enemy will think that we are cowards if we do not go out to meet them, and that they will then become bold against us. On the Day of Badr, we were 300 men, and Allah made you victorious through them. And today, we are many people, and we were hoping for this day and supplicating for it. And Allah has indeed brought it to us in this arena of ours.

Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib said, "I will not eat any food today until I fight them with my sword, outside of Al-Madinah." An-Nu'man bin Malik. Isaf bin 'Aus bin 'Atik, and Khaithamah these too urged the Prophet, to go out and meet the enemy. Thus the prophet decided to go out and meet the enemy outside of Al-Madinah. But before leaving, some prominent Companions felt that they had done wrong in pleading too much with the Prophet and so they recanted and suggested that they should stay in Al-Madinah. By then, however, the Prophet had already donned his armour, and he made it clear to them that, when a Prophet dons his armour to meet the enemy, there is no turning back, but rather he goes forth, waiting for Allah's decision between him and his enemies.

When the two armies finally met for battle, Hamzah fought at least as valiantly as he did during the Battle of Badr; in fact, not much time elapsed before he killed 30 polytheists from the Quraish. Things were going well for the Muslims in general, for the polytheists turned their backs to flee. However, certain archers disobeyed the command of the Messenger of Allah, which led to the weakening of the Muslims. Only the Messenger of Allah and a few along with him remained firm, continuing to fight with all of their strength.

It was during this battle that Hamzah became martyred, not through hand-to-hand or one-on-one combat, but through trickery and deception. The Quraish hired a slave named Wahshi bin Harb (who later accepted Islam) to kill Hamzah promising to free him if he succeeded in the task. On the battlefield, Wahshi was impervious to the fighting that was going on around him; truth be told, he cared not who won or who was killed. His sole aim was to kill Hamzah bin 'Abdul- Muttalib by any means necessary and thus gain his freedom.

At first, Wahshi simply watched Hamzah from a distance, calculating and plotting — and looking for the right moment to catch him unawares, for he could not hope to defeat the valiant fighter in one-on-one combat. So it

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was that the battle continued until Hamzah killed Siba' bin 'Abdul-'Uzza: he then went on in search of another fighter with whom to engage in combat. But he then tripped and fell into a disguised ditch that Abu 'Amir Al-Fasiq prepared; he landed on his back, and part of his armour fell off, leaving his stomach vulnerable. This was the moment that Wahshi was waiting for; he leveled his spear and threw it; it pierced through the navel of Hamzah and came out from between his legs. The brave fighter, and uncle of the Prophet, was thus martyred.

When the Messenger of Allah learned of Hamzah's death, he went

to him, only to find that he was brutally mutilated; perhaps the Prophet never saw anything that brought more pain to his heart.

And according to yet another narration, the Prophet, said:

"The chief of the martyrs with Allah on the Day of Resurrection is Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib."

The Prophet later led Hamzah's funeral prayer. During the burial, 'Ali bin Abu Talib, Az-Zubair, Abu Bakr, and 'Umar descended into the grave, while the Prophet sat at its edge. Hamzah was buried alongside his nephew (Umaimah bint 'Abdul-Muttalib's son), 'Abdullah bin Jahsh.■

B'DESH'S YUNUS CALLS FOR FULL POLL SECURITY

DHAKA: Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has called for "complete security' at polling for the country's general elections set to take place in February 2026, stressing the need to make the polls "free, fair and peaceful", a media report said. The interim government head made the remarks at a high-level meeting at the state guest house Jamuna here, reported the state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS).

"We must guarantee complete security at all polling centres, no matter the cost. Our goal is to make the February election the most free, fair, and peaceful in the country's history." Yunus was quoted as saying. The polls next year would be the 13th Parliamentary elections. At the meeting, Yunus' special assistant on Telecommunications and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Affairs Faiz Tayeb Ahmed said the process to procure 40,000

body cameras was in the final stages. ■

Around the World

Arab nations denounce Bibi's remarks on 'Greater Israel'

Cairo: Arab nations have slammed comments by Israel PM Netanyahu apparently expressing support for the idea of an expanded "Greater Israel", calling the remarks a threat to their sovereignty.

The term "Greater Israel" refers to a biblical interpretation of the nation's territory during the time of King Solomon, encompassing not only the present-day Palestinian territories of Gaza and the occupied West Bank, but also parts of modern Jordan, Lebanon and Syria Reacting on the remarks, a US state department spokesperson said: "A stable West Bank keeps Israel secure and is in line with this administration's goal to achieve peace in the region."

Jordan condemned the remarks as "a dangerous and provocative escalation" and "a threat to the sovereignty of states". Egypt also said that it had "requested clarification on this matter". Iraq's foreign ministry condemned the comments. Qatar also decried Netanyahu's statements calling them "absurd" and "inflammatory".■

An Israeli minister announces plan that will effectively split West Bank into two

TEL AVIV: Israeli far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich announced work would start on a long-delayed settlement that would divide the West Bank and cut it off from East Jerusalem, a move his office said would "bury" the idea of a Palestinian state.

The Palestinian govt. allies and campaign groups condemned the scheme.

The construction on a tract of land east of Jerusalem named E1 has been under consideration for more than two decades, and is especially controversial because it is one

of the last geographic links between the major West Bank cities of Ramallah and Bethlehem. The two cities are 22 kilometres apart by air. But once an Israeli settlement is completed, it would require Palestinians travelling between cities to drive several kilometres out of their way and pass through multiple checkpoints.

Standing at the site of the planned settlement in Maale Adumim Smotrich, a settler himself, said PM Netanyahu and US President Trump had agreed to the revival of the E1 development, though there was no immediate confirmation from either.

"This reality finally buries the idea of a Palestinian state, because there is nothing to recognise and no one to recognise," Smotrich said. "Whoever in the world is trying to recognise a Palestinian state today will receive our answer on the ground. Not with documents nor with decisions or statements, but with facts. Facts of houses, facts of neighbourhoods," he said.

Israel froze construction plans at Maale Adumim in 2012, and again after a revival in 2020, because of objections from the US, European allies and other powers who considered the project a threat to any peace deal with the Palestinians.

Palestinians fear the settlement building in the West Bank will rob them of any chance to build a state of their own in the area.

Smotrich's spokesperson said the minister had approved the plan to build 3,401 houses for Israeli settlers between an existing settlement in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, the Palestinian president's spokesperson, called on the US to pressure Israel to stop settlement building.■

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