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Malice a Serious Evil

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The view of life arising from prophetic teachings has equity and moderation as its two immutable bases. Speaking of the right-guided persons, the Qur'an says:

"And those who, when they spend, are neither prodigal nor grudging; and there is ever a firm station between the two."

(*Al-Furqan* : 67)

Again, the dominant characteristic of the followers of the Qur'an is stated to be their remarkable moderation:

"Thus we have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be a witness against mankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you." (*Al-Baqarah*: 143)

The Prophet himself afforded an illustrious example of complete and ennobling moderation. The distinguishing feature of Islam too, described as "the straight path" and "a right religion", is natural temperance and moderation and refraining from the aberrations of excess and extremism. Addressing the Prophet of Islam, says. God Almighty :

"Say: Lo! As for me, my Lord hath guided me unto a straight path, a right religion, the community of Abraham, the upright, who was no idolater."

(*Al-Anam*: 162) ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

Remember when you were few and were reckoned weak in the land, and were afraid that men might kidnap you, but Allah provided a safe place for you, strengthened you with His help and provided you with good things so that you might be grateful.

(al-Anfal 8:26)

Allah reminds Muslims in the above passage of their small number and weakness in the early days of Islam. The Muslims being weak were persecuted. They lived then in constant fear of annihilation. It was then that Allah blessed Muslims with refuge and helped them as a special favour from Him. They were provided with good things which enabled them to thank Allah.

On studying the above against the backdrop of the early days of Islam, one can better appreciate life in Madinah. On reading this, one is readily reminded of Dar al-Arqam and the valley of Abu Talib. At Dar al-Arqam Muslims sought refuge against the persecution unleashed by the unbelieving Makkans. There they could remember Allah and mention His name in relative peace. They were free there to offer Prayers. It was there that many-leading Companions declared their acceptance of Islam. To the best of my knowledge, 'Umar too embraced Islam there. In sum, Dar al-Arqam served as a refuge for early Muslims. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of God said: "He who has fear sets out at the beginning of the night and he who sets out at the beginning of the night reaches the destination safely. Remember, the bargain of the Lord is not cheap, but extremely dear. Remember, the bargain of the Lord is Paradise."

—Tirmidhi

Commentary— In Arabia the Caravans, generally, started in the last part of the night and, therefore, the highwaymen too, made their raids during the early hours of the morning. The travellers who were careful, however, preferred to begin their journey in the earlier part of the night so that they reached the destination without being attacked by the robbers. The Prophet, accordingly, says that just as prudent travellers forgo the night's sleep and start on the journey soon after dusk, those who are keen to attain Paradise should, also, proceed energetically towards the goal and be ready to suppress their desires and give up comforts for the sake of it. He, further, emphasises that what the bondsman is looking forward to obtaining from the Lord is not a thing of a poor quality that can be given away without a price but Heaven, the abode of celestial bliss, which no one can hope to gain without making a sacrifice of the most valued things like life, property and carnal appetites. Says the Quran: Lo! Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs. [ix: iii]. ■

Editor's Note 

Constitutional Values of Madrasas

It is unfortunate that a section of our leaders of right wrong parties consider Madrasas are cradle of terrorism. How misinformed they are. These institutions apart from religious education train students to become a source of strength to the country. Eschew bad habits and prove themselves as the honest and loyal member of the Indian society. Recently UP Madrasa's Act of 2004 was challenged in Allahabad High court which decided the act invalid. However, an appeal to the supreme court the high court order was set aside.

If State make the education free and make it

possible for financially weak students to take admission in state run schools a good deal of problem will be solved. Madrasas which now provide modern education along with religious teachings are boon for the community.

In October 2024 Supreme Court while discussing the UP Madrasa Act 2004 has made valuable observation. It is for information of readers we reproduce

the proceedings of the court separately. ■

S.A.

We solicit articles for publication in The Fragrance of East. Suitable remuneration will be paid to writers. We prefer receipt of articles on:
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along with a hard copy, duly signed, by post.

Value of Man In Islam

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, elevated the position of human being and value of human sympathy and compassion to a height which was beyond human imagination. According to the teachings of Islam, if a person fails to sympathize and support an aggrieved person, he is like one who fails in obeying Allah. The following saying of the Prophet, which is a Divine Tradition (Hadith Qudsi), underscores this theme very effectively.

“Allah will tell one of His bondsmen on the Day of Judgement, ‘I fell ill, but you did not visit Me’. He will reply, ‘Lord! how could have I visited You, for You are the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds?’ Allah will tell him, ‘Didn’t you know that such and such slave of Mine was ill, but you did not visit him. Had you visited him, you would have found Me there. O son of Adam! I asked you for food but you did not give food to Me’. He will submit, ‘My Sustainer and Cherisher how could have I provided You with food, for You Yourself are the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds?’ Allah will tell him, ‘Don’t you

remember that such and such slave of Mine asked you for food, but you did not give food to him. Had you given food to him, it would have reached Me. O son of Adam, I asked you for water but you did not give Me water to drink.’ He will submit again, ‘Lord! how could have I given You water to drink, for You are the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds?’ Allah will tell him, ‘Such and such bondsman of Mine asked you for water but you did not give him water to drink. Had you given him water to drink, you would have found it with Me’ (Muslim).”

This is, indeed, the highest level of Allah’s appreciation of a person’s help to his fellow beings. There is yet another Tradition in which the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him has emphasized the value of having compassion and goodwill for one another:

“None of you could
be a perfect believer
unless he wishes for
his brother [in faith]
what he wishes for
himself “■

Distinction Of A Muslim In The World

- S. Bilal Abdul Hai Hasani Nadwi*

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

result that their sole aim of life is merely achieving worldly gains. The main plank of their discussion about Allah, messenger and Hereafter is only to strengthen unity.

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

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

It should be noted that Muslims can not be free merely by observing

* Rector Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.

outward Islamic phenomena, worship and adoration. On the contrary Islam urges them to fulfill their obligations and accord due attention to others rights' and spend their valuable time in proper way and not to become frustrated. Islam teaches that if someone came to know that he was about to die after a while nevertheless he might not be inactive. Islamic teaching is that if anyone plants a sapling and his days are numbered in this world, he shouldn't stop his work in its waiting. He should always be engaged in his business and make his every moment useful. He should also keep himself busy in pleasing Allah and shaping his Hereafter. A host of people may derive benefits from this act of him. And this act will be a perennial and enduring charity for him. The Holy Prophet says, "The best of you is who proves himself more profitable to others." The most striking aspect of a Muslim is that he always strives to spend every second with sagacity and wisdom and doesn't indulge in silly talks, frivolity and anti-social activities. The Holy Prophet says, "These are the virtues of Islam that its followers don't go near obscenity and mischievousness".

Despite these real teachings of Islam unemployment and joblessness appear in bulk in Muslim community. The religion which always exhorts its adherents to become aim oriented, they seem oblivious in achieving purposeful and fruitful life. Today, Muslims are far lagged behind on every front. Especially, the youth upon whom Almighty Allah bestowed extraordinary powers and calibers, they also show criminal negligence in every spheres of life. In a Hadith it is warned that every Muslim should be covetous of profit. And he should always think of the profits. Obviously, the genuine profits are the profits of the Hereafter. This world was definitely created for the cause of the Hereafter.

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

(English Rendering: O.R. Nadwi)

We The Teachers

- Sumana Roy

The pen that finds its life from human fingers feeding ink into its body is different from the pen whose intestines are consumed, used and discarded. That relationship, of keeping and throwing, can be seen in their forms, in the difference between the body — and skin — of the fountain pen and a biro. One looks for a button to match the rest on the shirt when it gets lost. That effort, along with the enterprise of sewing, makes the shirt a little more valued than it might have been before. And so with relationships between humans. Repair, with its rituals of attention, renews affection — the old becomes temporarily new. Repairing requires skills — of the hands, but, more importantly of the mind, for it to return over and over again to the same place of tear, injury and incompleteness; it is also a gesture towards a renewal of commitment, to carry along with what has been given instead of raising a ticket for a new purchase. Repair, then, is a form of updating.

That any form of art is a practice

* *Roy, a poet and writer, is associate professor at Ashoka University.*

of repair is so self-evident that neither teacher nor student needs to say it to each other. Riyaz is repair, and it's possible for this repairing to happen without the obvious corollary — our art is only a synecdoche of our condition that we too are in need of gentle repair. How this rifu (or rafu), this mending of cloth through stitches, that happens in our art makes us the artists we are, is only an extension of how we are constantly repairing ourselves. That creation is actually repair doesn't occur to us because of our conditioning in stories of origin and anthems about originality. The "and" in the Bible is much more than a conjunction, for instance — it reminds us that all creative practice begins with "and", in the middle, from the middle, but, more importantly, it is a reminder that creation is restoration, an unpredictable balance of scraping and adding, sawing and joining, loss and gain: The "and" is the manifestation of an urge to stay connected to what was, and to continue. This form of repair is like the self and the world that, while remaining in flux, continues to retain an essence of its identifiability.

It's with brokenness that one comes to poetry. Think of the vocabulary, the violence in "cutting" lines, line "breaks" or "run on lines", in which is the phonetic intuition of being "run over". But enjambment is neither surgery nor recuperation — it is a gardener's trick to allow the plant to grow more fluently. "Repair" comes from an etymological history of preparation, a line of living that connects the empirical with the spiritual, the functional with the aesthetic.

It has begun to seem to me that much of the idea of the Creative Writing workshop comes from the idea of repair. We must fix the writing. The workshop begins to feel like a garage — a space that provides the equivalent of a spare tyre, a painting job, and so on. I'd have given up on the analogy had it really not been as true — the writing must approximate a model, something as ready-made as an automobile. We've been bullied to believe in a preset idea of an efficient model — what we write must fit into that mould. Irrespective of the approach one takes — to demonstrate one's unease with the writer's style or suggesting ways in which the writing could be made more efficient

— the idea of language needing repair is made obvious. It is a hurtful model of critique and pedagogy. This becomes even more complicated when we come to an Indian Creative Writing workshop where there are different degrees of language fluency.

But craft is not a skill alone. If it were, it would have remained tied to *techne*, the Greek word for craft a concept that emphasises expertise. The more we are able to move away from this idea of craft, the easier it would be to liberate it from this capitalist model of training in creative practice that funds workshops and university programmes. Repair — as concept and practice — is far more equitable and democratic than the bullish investment in craft, whose industrialisation and consequent marketing has turned writers into the likeness of fortune cookies, with something stored inside them as ready-made response, no matter who bites into it.

If repair, like prayer, is available to everyone, creativity is, too. That we can repair ourselves makes us all teachers — we are our closest but most difficult students. ■

(The Indian Express – 6-9-2025)

Maulana Azad's Vision: Scholarly Excellence, National Unity, And Service To Humanity

- Ahmad Fawzan

Dr. Zakir Hussain once said, "When people forget their benefactor, Allah will keep the community bereft of the benefactor. May Allah not make Indians among them. I affirm that Maulana Azad was not just a leader of Muslims but a leader of the entire nation, and Muslims are bound to remember him and be grateful that Allah blessed us with such a leader."

Muslim leadership in the country's political landscape is decreasing, as evident in the declining representation within the legislative, executive, and judicial spheres. There may be various reasons to consider, but one clear factor is the inadequate introduction of past leaders as significant and influential figures, which should have been done more effectively. Even though we see Abut Kalam Azad's photo among freedom fighters, few truly know the extent of his contributions. Abu! Kalam Azad is often mentioned as a freedom fighter, sometimes to highlight the Muslim contribution to India's independence. However, his impact was much greater than just representing one community. Azad played a crucial role in the broader national movement, and his influence shaped the country in

many ways. It's important to recognise him not just as a representative of Muslims but as a key figure in India's history.

Early Life and Education of Abul Kalam Azad

Ghulam Muhiyuddin Ahmad was born on November 11, 1888, to Moulana Khairuddin and his Arab wife, Aliyah, as one of their five children, who later became to known as Abul Kalam Azad. Moulana Munawwaruddin, the father of Azad's grandmother, and Moulana Khairuddin, Azad's father, grew frustrated with the prevailing conditions in the country during 1855 and intended to migrate to Hijaz (now Saudi Arabia). However, Moulana Munawwaruddin died in Bombay on their way to Hijaz.

Azad's parents exercised considerable influence in shaping his character and personality. Moulana Khairuddin was a learned scholar and a master of theology. He was the only Indian Muslim scholar of his time to have been selected to teach the tenets of Islam in the holiest Muslim seminary in the world, in Mecca. His mother belonged to a family of scholars from Mecca and was thirteen only when his

father arranged his marriage to Zuleikha Begam. Zuleikha Begam had also received a good education in Urdu and Persian and knew elementary Arabic. She was an accomplished woman, well-versed in household affairs and of a very hospitable nature. She took good care of Moulana Azad and showed keen interest in his books and writings. Azad and his brother, Abu Nasr, studied together in Mecca. They completed their study of the Quran and learned the fundamentals of Arabic, Urdu, and Persian from prominent scholars of the time until they left for India in 1897. His education continued in Calcutta with the help of local teachers. He received rigorous training in all fields of Islamic knowledge from tutors chosen and closely supervised by his father, enabling him to complete the Darse Nizami when he was only fifteen years old, taking only one-third of the normal time to complete this course. By 1905, at the age of seventeen, he had attained such proficiency in Islamic learning that he was recognized as a trained theologian among scholarly circles. The influence of Allama Shibli and Syed Ahmed Khan's writings acted as further stimuli, leading to a significant now of literary output in India in the years to come.

Scholarship and Intellectual Legacy

Abul Kalam Azad was an Islamic scholar with expertise in Tafsir al-Quran (Quranic exegesis). He wrote the renowned Tafsir in Urdu, Tarjumanul Quran. His explanation of Surah Al-Fatiha is a remarkable masterpiece that explores unique aspects of understanding the Creator. By pondering over the wonderful job the creator has done. According to him, the initial feeling of awe when reflecting on creation is not just temporary but a lasting experience that deepens over time. This profound wonder shapes one's understanding of the world, continuously influencing the mind and driving a lifelong pursuit of knowledge and insight. He examines and discusses a wide range of philosophical and religious ideas, concluding with the statement: "Islam has the adaptability to address the spiritual needs of every kind of seeker." Allama Shibli Nomani, the respected Islamic scholar and founder of the Nadwa school of thought, quickly noticed Maulana Azad's exceptional talent. Recognizing his potential, Allama Shibli invited Azad to Lucknow. There, under Shibli's guidance, Azad wrote insightful articles on topics like "The Muslims' Treasury of Knowledge and the West," which were published in Al-Nadwa magazine, marking the start of his influential intellectual journey. One of the main

reasons for his popularity among impact, was his literary work. He had a unique talent for expressing his ideas clearly and powerfully, making a significant impression on his readers. His writing conveyed profound ideas and resonated with people, inspiring and shaping their perspectives. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote, "He is a man who could turn mountains into wax, infusing his writings with spirit and enthusiasm." In 1912, Maulana Azad founded a magazine named Al-Hilal with the goal of intensifying the Indian freedom struggle. However, following its ban, Maulana Azad launched a new magazine, Al-Balagh, in 1915. While both magazines shared a similar spirit, they had different focuses. According to Dr. Khaleeq Anjum, Al-Balagh differed from its predecessor by focusing more on the aspect of moral values, religious observances, literature, and religious preaching, indicating a move away from political activism towards cultural and religious growth. His magazines always focused on the quality of their content and presentation. He published articles and poetry by Allama Shibli Nomani. The editorial board included prominent literary figures and expert scholars such as Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadwi, Abdu Ilah Imad, Maulana Abul Salam Nadwi, and several others.

A great scholar and renowned

literary expert In Arabic, English, and Urdu, Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi, says "Al-Hilal revolutionized the world of Urdu literature with its innovative design, content, and creativity. Its publications showed remarkable progress compared to other magazines, with a strong emphasis on quality in printing, paper, images, and overall presentation". Maulana Azad, in an interview with India's Wins Freedom, discussed the journey of Al-Hilal and Al-Balagh. He explained that, seeing the success of Al-Hilal, the British government became cautious and demanded a pledge of 2,000 rupees to try to suppress their voice. Despite this challenge, they remained undeterred. The government then confiscated this pledged amount and increased the rupees, which was also confiscated eventually, they banned Al-Hilal. A few months later, Maulana Azad started Al-Balagh. When the government realized they could not stop them using the Press Act, they turned to the Defense of India Regulations Act and ordered him to leave Calcutta. Already banned from entering Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Bombay provinces, he moved to Ranchi. After six months, he was placed under house arrest in Ranchi until December 31, 1920.

Political Activism and Contributions to the Freedom Movement

From the very beginning, Maulana Azad was opposed to British rule in India. His political journey began in 1912 with the launch of the *Al-Hilal* magazine in Calcutta, which had a significant impact on Indians and ultimately led to its ban. Pandit Nehru noted that Maulana Azad's weekly magazine *Al-Hilal* engaged with Muslims in a unique way, using a style of language that was entirely new to Indian Muslims. *Al-Hilal* advocated for the fight for freedom and promoted Hindu-Muslim unity long before Gandhi's arrival. Even the Congress had not yet started preaching "Purna Swaraj," which means "complete self-rule" or "total independence" from British rule. Malik Ram writes, "The dimming spirit of the freedom struggle was reignited by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad through *Al-Hilal* magazine. During that period, even the Congress party was still pledging obedience to the British government in their programs. *Al-Hilal* began educating people about freedom as their birthright. Despite being barred by the British government from entering various states and being jailed multiple times, Maulana Azad's primary focus remained on Hindu-Muslim unity. He was at the forefront of resolving communal tensions." In 1923, as the youngest president of the Congress party, Azad spoke words that

no one would dare utter today for fear of being hauled up as "anti-national." He said: "If an angel was to descend from the Heaven's and from the heights of Qutab Minar announce that provided Congress abandons its policy of Hindu-Muslim unity, Swaraj would be granted in 24 hours, I would turn my back on that Swaraj. Shunning it for the cost being demanded may delay Swaraj and harm India for a short period. But abandoning our unity as a price for freedom will be lethal for all humanity," Writes Syeda Hameed, author of *Islamic Seal on India's Independence: Abul Kalam Azad—a Fresh Look*. Further, she says: That it is insufficient to merely acknowledge his significant role as a key leader in the freedom movement alongside Mahatma Gandhi or to recognize him as Nehru's mentor, whom India's first prime minister called *Amir-e-Karwan* (leader of the group). His contributions and stature are far greater than these titles suggest.

He made significant contributions in resolving the Internal conflicts within the Congress party. Along with this, he always worked to mediate disputes, such as the disagreements between pro-changers and no-changers that erupted after the Gaya session.

S. Irfan Habib, in his book *Maulana Azad: A Life*, writes:

“It is pertinent here to refer briefly to Maulana’s role as Congress president twice—both occasions were equally challenging. Maulana was released from prison on 1 January 1923 after the Khilafat Non-Cooperation protests but found the political climate in the country rather dismal. The Congress party was on the verge of a split over the issue of council entry, with the two groups being ‘No-Changers’ and ‘Pro-Changers,’ and the senior Congress leadership was divided on the issue. Azad was asked to chair the special session of the Congress in Delhi on 15 December 1923. This speaks volumes about Azad’s stature, as he was accepted by all despite being just thirty-five years old. He succeeded in reconciling the two Congress factions, thus preventing a catastrophic split.”

The fact that he was one of the tallest leaders of the freedom movement, standing shoulder to shoulder with Mahatma Gandhi, is not enough. The fact that he was Nehru’s mentor—India’s first prime minister referred to him as Amir-e-Karwan, the leader of the group—is not enough, says Syeda Hameed.

Indeed, the fact is that nowadays we are not ready to put in the effort or make sacrifices for the greater cause. We lack scholars who can understand

the problems and exert the energy needed to guide the community through diverse challenges. At the same time, we expect scholars to assure us of our hereafter despite our own lack of effort and sacrifice. The notion of a saved sect also fuels the demand for such scholars, leading to disunity within the community based on philosophical differences. We tend to emphasize ideas and thoughts more than actions and execution. The Prophet’s message was very clear: d” (Say, “We have believed,” so remain upright). Maulana Azad was a living example of facing various challenges.

In one of his speeches, he said: “Dear brothers, embrace the changes. Never say that we cannot adapt to them. Though stars may have broken (indicating shattered dreams, such as the partition), the sun remains steadfast. Use its rays to illuminate the dark paths where light is needed and pave the way forward.”

Maulana Azad spoke passionately about Muslims’ core responsibility to serve humanity. He conveyed that Muslims are meant to be the guardians of human dignity and compassion, and that every corner of the world is sacred to them. For every person, regardless of their background, deserves the utmost respect and kindness. □

Revolutionary Teachings

- Khalid Saifullah Rahmani*

The Quran affirms that the Prophet (SWS) has been sent as mercy for the entire world:

This signifies that the transformative and revolutionary teachings brought by the Prophet (SWS) hold immense benefit and offer a path to success for all of humanity. The Quran also speaks of the revolutionary qualities of the Prophet (SWS) and assures that Allah will ensure the dominance of the religion he brought:

This is not mere rhetoric but a historical reality. The intellectual initiated by the Prophet (SWS), leading to advancement in human development and justice, serves as a testament to the prevalence and impact of Muhammad's (SWS) message. Through his righteous revolution, the Messenger of Islam (SWS) has contributed to making the world a better place. The companionship of the Prophet (SWS) has transformed a mere particle into the brilliance of the sun, illuminating the path to a more just and enlightened world. Akbar ilahbadi has stated this in a beautiful way:

Your wisdom turned droplets of

water in to ocean

Lightened the darkened hearts
and gave eye-light to the blind

Those who was mislead,
became leaders of the world

What a magic that raisal dead
from the graves and turned them into
dynamic leaders

Oneness of God

The Prophet Muhammad (SWS) brought about far-reaching changes in every aspect of life, and several key changes are worth highlighting. Foremost among these is the concept of the oneness of God. While the belief in one God may appear simple, in the face of atheism, polytheism, and idol worship, it stands as a revolutionary creed. Denying God can lead individuals to become irresponsible, engaging in immoral and materialistic behaviors. Without the fear of being held accountable by a higher power, life becomes a mere playground for one's desires and pleasures. They are free from worship and become slaves to their desires and pleasures. The concept of the oneness of God instills respect and honor in humanity. It signifies that bowing one's head to anyone God is reprehensible and highlights the virtue bestowed upon humans over the rest

* President All India Muslim Personal Law Board.

of the universe. Belief in the oneness of God also eradicates superstition, as it teaches that creations are incapable of causing good or harm. This belief fosters love and fear of God within individuals, motivating them to strive to please Him. Furthermore, it nurtures a sense of duty and responsibility towards fulfilling obligations and alters the way humans perceive the world. It transforms the world into a testing ground, where every step must be taken with care. Monotheism is a remarkable gift and a tool of divine mercy bestowed through the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SWS).

Indeed, monotheism, the belief in the oneness of God, has been a recurring message throughout the history of prophet-hood. From the time of Prophet Noah (AS) to the advent of Prophet Muhammad (SWS) humanity has been exposed to polytheistic ideas despite the efforts of various prophets and reformers who advocated monotheism. Even religions initially founded upon the concept of the oneness of God eventually became susceptible to corruption and the infiltration of polytheistic elements. For example, within Christianity, the concept of the divinity of Christ emerged, while in Hinduism, although it contains elements of monotheism, a plethora of deities were introduced. Buddhism,

historically seen as a tradition devoid of God, saw the veneration of Buddha by some of its followers. However, the message of the Prophet Muhammad (SWS) was so powerful and enduring that it has remained unaltered and will continue to do so until the Day of Judgment. Even in religions primarily associated with polytheism, there have been movements and sects that have embraced monotheism. For instance, there are Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj movements within Hinduism, as well as Protestant denominations and other groups within Christianity that reject the concept of Christ as God or the son of God.

Human Unity

The concept of human unity brought by the Prophet Muhammad (SWS) is indeed a remarkable and transformative teaching. Prior to his arrival, societies across various cultures and religions were marred by discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and social hierarchy.

For instance, in the Jewish tradition, there existed a hierarchy where Israelite Jews had privileges over non-Israelite Jews, and those descended from the family of Jacob were considered superior by virtue of their birth. This hierarchical concept still exists in some form today. The people of Iran thought that whoever

belonged to the family of the kings was special to God and close to God. The situation in India was even worse, a rigid caste system divided society into four groups: Brahmins, Vaishyas, Kshatriyas, and Shudras. People were believed to be born from different parts of God's body, such as the head, limbs, legs, and with Shudras at the lowest rung. And there is no example of a more oppressed group in history. The doors of education were closed to them, the most shameful occupations were reserved for them, and they were thought to be the born slaves of the upper castes. This pattern of discrimination and hierarchy was prevalent in various societies and nations across the world. The Prophet (SWS) introduced the concept of human unity to eliminate the concepts of superiority and inferiority based on race, color, or birth. An Arab has no virtue over a Non Arab, nor does a Non Arab have virtue over an Arab, a red skinned person is not more virtuous than a dark skinned person nor is a dark skinned person more virtuous than a red skinned person. He announced that only piety and righteous deeds would determine a person's virtue. This announcement led to the tribes considered of high honour standing with Bilal (RA) from Abyssinia and Suhaib (RA) from Rome. Non-Arab slaves, who were once seen with contempt, became the envy of Arab leaders, even Umar

Farooq (RA), who addressed them as "Leader" As Islam spread, the concept of human unity began to break down the shackles of discrimination. Slogans of equality were raised everywhere, and oppressed people from all walks of life were freed from slavery due to race. Those who continued to oppress people by power and force were denounced from all sides, and the oppressed had a chance to protest. This aspect of the Prophet (SWS) mercy is so profound that no insightful person can ignore it.

The profound concept of human unity, championed by the Prophet Muhammad (SWS), has brought about transformative changes in every facet of life. Its impact has been far-reaching, reshaping societies and institutions in remarkable ways. It has opened the doors of every occupation to all people, eliminated the idea of a lowly or a dignified profession, made knowledge public and education accessible to all, made it possible for people to live with respect in society, ensured that justice is served according to crime and punishment, and allowed everyone to preserve their culture and traditions.

The concept of human unity, promoted by Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (SWS), has also left a profound impact on the political landscape. In the pre-Islamic era, monarchy was the predominant

political system globally, with civilizations such as Rome, Iran, Abyssinia, Yemen, India, and China all governed by monarchies. The world was gripped by authoritarian rule and tyranny. Even the Greek philosophy of democracy was based on the concept of the rule of the “elite,” and there was no provision for the participation of the common people in power.

The concept of human unity and the Islamic system of khilafat (caliphate) challenged the notion of obedience to rulers based on family hierarchy and gave rise to the concept of democracy. The Prophet (SWS) set an example of this in practice by appointing Abdullah Bin Umm Maktoom (RA), as a temporary governor of Madinah on several occasions. He also appointed Zaid Bin Harithah (RA), a freed slave, as the commander of an army that included honorable leaders of the Quraish tribe. Today, democracy is the prevailing political system in the world. It is borrowed from the concept of khilafat, albeit with some drawbacks. It is the pioneer of human unity and equality. Kingship has become virtually extinct, and even constitutional or ideological kingship is viewed with contempt and condescension. Dictatorial monarchies are found in only a few countries, and they are met with disdain and disgust.

Encouragement To Learn

The third important aspect of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SWS) is the promotion of education. In the society of his time, illiteracy was a point of pride, and people referred to themselves as “Ummi” (illiterate) with arrogance. However, the Prophet (SWS) actively encouraged the pursuit of and made it accessible to all, regardless of their social status. He did not distinguish between religious and worldly knowledge, emphasizing the importance of both. He prayed to Allah (SWT) for beneficial knowledge and encouraged his followers to seek wisdom wherever it could be found. It should be held onto with the same tenacity as a person clings to a lost possession:

Wisdom is the lost treasure of a believer

The Prophet (SWS) even arranged for Muslim children to learn from non-Muslim prisoners of war from the Battle of Badr, highlighting his commitment to knowledge. Additionally, he visited the lectures of Jewish scholars in Madinah, demonstrating his open-mindedness and eagerness to acquire knowledge from various sources.

The Prophet’s (SWS) emphasis on learning had a profound impact on human intellectual development. It ushered in an era where scientific

imagination triumph over unscientific beliefs, and the chains of superstition were shattered. In polytheistic worldviews, various creations were elevated to the status of deities. However, monotheism, particularly the belief in the oneness of God, redirected human curiosity towards the magnificence of the Divine and encouraged the pursuit of knowledge, research, and science. The concept of monotheism removed barriers to intellectual development, fostering an environment of exploration, inquiry, debate, and scientific investigation. As humans continue to advance their knowledge and uncover the hidden truths of the universe, they simultaneously free themselves from the constraints of superstition.

Unity Of The Worldly And The Spiritual

Fourth: Prior to Islam, certain religious groups had separated worldly matters from spiritual ones, leading to deviations from the natural order. For instance, some considered marriage undesirable, enforced celibacy as a means of attaining closeness to God, and condemned the natural attraction between men and women as sinful. The notion that hard work to earn a livelihood contradicted religiosity was prevalent. Moreover, monasticism was so widespread that during a period in

Europe, people thought that bathing, cleansing, wearing clean clothes, and applying fragrance were against godliness, and some people did not bathe for decades. This concept was common even among followers of other religions. One important aspect of the Prophet's (SWS) mercy is the elimination of the concept of monasticism. He emphasized that religion encompasses all aspects of life, including the pursuit of worldly well-being in accordance with Allah's guidance. Religion, in its true essence, involves distinguishing between what is permissible and what is forbidden while engaging with the world, rather than forsaking it entirely. The Prophet (SWS) encouraged marriage and regarded it as a tradition followed by the Prophets. He discouraged a life of isolation, endorsed the importance of earning livelihood, promoted cleanliness, and did not prescribe any practices that contradicted the natural order. Instead, he permitted and set reasonable boundaries for fulfilling the innate needs and desires of human beings.

Status of Women

Fifth: One of the remarkable accomplishments of the Prophet Muhammad (SWS) is the elevation of the status of women and the recognition of their vital role in human society. At the time of Islam's emergence, women were often

regarded as the source of sin and misfortune. They were considered to be the property of their fathers before marriage and of their husbands after marriage. As they were themselves property, they did not have the right to own anything. Because of that, they were not given inheritance. Before the advent of Islam, women were treated as mere property, devoid of any rights or autonomy. In some regions of Arabia, the practice of burying infant girls alive was tragically prevalent. Even Greek philosophers held the belief that women possessed souls of inferior quality compared to men, yet superior to animals, placing them in a category between humans and animals.

The arrival of the Prophet Muhammad (SWS) in this era brought forth a transformative message that challenged prevailing notions of gender inequality and established the fundamental equality of men and women. He emphasized that both men and women share a common origin, being born of the same parents. The Prophet Muhammad (SWS) dispelled the unjust stain cast upon Eve (AS) in the story of Adam (AS) and Eve (AS):

Clarifying that Satan was the true tempter:

In the Prophet's teachings, women were granted elevated status in various roles: as daughters, wives,

and mothers. They were endowed with rights that included the right to marry, manage their financial resources, seek knowledge, express their thoughts, and engage in lawful economic activities. Importantly, women were accorded due respect and dignity in society. The revolutionary teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SWS) have had a profound and lasting impact on the rights and status of women. While women in the West had to wait until the 19th century to secure inheritance rights, and in India, until 1950, Islam established the inheritance rights of daughters, mothers and wives from its inception. Moreover, it granted inheritance rights to other female relatives in certain cases. Even today, in some non-Muslim societies, women are not asked for their consent when choosing their life partners. But Islam centuries ago made it a condition that women must consent to their own marriages and even adult women have the right to marry a man of their own choice. From East to West, the rights that women are given today, or the slogans that are raised for their independence, are all the results of the revolutionary teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SWS).

There is indeed no doubt that the Prophet Muhammad (SWS) is a mercy to not only Muslims, but to all of humanity.■

Madrasas Not A Threat To Constitutional Values: SC

- Utkarsh Anand

The Supreme Court on Tuesday highlighted the importance of institutions such as madrasas, Vedic schools and Buddhist monasteries, asserting that in a pluralistic society where diverse cultures and religions coexist, such institutions should not be seen as a threat to constitutional principles.

Even as it reserved its judgment on a series of petitions challenging the Allahabad high court ruling in March that declared the 2004 Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education Act unconstitutional, the top court said that institutions imparting religious instructions are not an “anathema” to constitutional values or the rule of law. Instead, the bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud emphasised that it is the responsibility of the State to regulate these institutions and ensure that children receive modern education alongside religious teachings, ultimately in the national interest.

Ultimately, we have to see it through the broad sweep of the country. Religious instructions are there not just for the Muslims. It is

there in Hindus, Sikhs, Christians etc. The country ought to be a melting pot of cultures, civilisations and religions. Let us preserve it that way. In fact, the answer to ghetotisation is to allow people to come to the mainstream and to allow them to come together. Otherwise, what we essentially would be doing is to keep them in silos,” remarked the bench, also comprising justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra.

The bench added that flaws in the syllabus of madrasa system should not invalidate the entire Act, emphasizing that the state has wide powers under existing laws to address any deficiencies through proper regulatory mechanisms. “But to throw out the entire Act is like throwing out the baby with bathwater,” it commented.

Acknowledging that religious educational institutions operate within the broader fabric of Indian society and should not be dismissed simply because they impart religious teachings, the court warned that all such institutions, including those teaching Hindus scriptures such as

Vedas and Upnishads, would have to be shut if religious instructions are completely barred.

Remember, what we decide in this case and in the context of Islam will apply to all religions across India_ From Vedic pathshalas to Buddhists monasteries to Jain School.” It added.

On the second consecutive day of the hearing the bench predominantly heard submissions of additional solicitor general (ASG) KM Nataraj, who appeared for the Uttar Pradesh government a group of parties who had assailed the Madrasa Act before the High Court, and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

Senior counsel Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Mukul Rohatgi, Salaman Khusrshid, Menaka Guruswamy and MR Shamshad appeared for the petitioners opposing the high court judgement.

Uttar Pradesh Government supports madrasa system.

ASG Nataraj submitted that the state stands by its stand in the High Court, and supports the statue even though it agrees with some parts of the March judgement in so far striking

down a few provisions of the Madrasa Act is concerned. He added that the high court should have only struck down the provisions which are violative of the fundamental rights instead of nullifying the entire regulatory framework.

“As a state, you have wide powers to ensure basic quality of education. Nobody denies that power because it’s by virtue of a state. Nobody deprives you of the power. This is what you said in the High Court. While you defended the Act, you said you have wide powers to regulate them,” the bench responded. The 2004 Madrasa Act was enacted by the then ruling Samajwadi Party.

Senior counsel Guru Krishnakumar, appearing for one of the parties opposing madrasas, argued that the Act does not ensure secular education and is mostly focused on theological studies. He added that singling out the religious institution of one particular community for recognition was unconstitutional.

But the bench differed. It referred to the historic context of religious education across various faiths, including Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic traditions, adding that their

historical and socio-cultural significance cannot be denied.

The bench drew comparisons between madrasas and other religious institutions, highlighting that the issues concerning religious education are not unique to one community. Rather, the court's concern was with the broader need for regulation across all religious educational institutions to ensure students are equipped for life in the modern world. The court further noted that validating the high court judgement would mean complete absence of oversight of such institutions.

Why single out madrasas?

Appearing for NCPCR, senior counsel Swarupama Chaturvedi contended that NCPCR has no objection if madrasa education is a supplement to the school education trust it cannot be an alternative. The bench questioned whether NCPCR adopted a similar stance against institutions of other religions after Chaturvedi claimed that the agency had submitted a support on the shortcomings of the madrasa system and had written to the state to inspect them.

“Has NCPCR issued a directive

that across communities, that don't send children to any monasteries, pathshalas - has NCPCR issued a directive that when children are sent to these institutes, then they must be taught science, maths etc.? Why are you only concerned with madrasas? We would like to know if you have dealt with other institutes. Has NCPCR been even handed in its treatment of all communities?” the bench asked Chaturvedi sought time to get instructions and under look to file an additional statement.

Criticising the high court judgment. Rohatgi argued that it was contrary to the principles of secularism by depriving minority student of their rights. He pointed out that students shouldn't be forced into mainstream education.

“Secularism means – live and let live” the CJI said in response.

On Monday, the top court had barred the Centre and states from enforcing a series of order issued by NCPCR to shift students from madrasas to government schools even as it emphasized that the State has a “vital interest” in ensuring that all children get quality and modern education.■

(Hindustan Times, 23-10-2024)

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam-The Missile Man of India

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam was one of those Personalities who were born in an ordinary family and with their remarkable contributions and unprecedented services brought honours to the country, and earned international fame and recognition with his researches and experiments. He created turmoil in the scientific society. His full name was (Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam) widely known as the “Missile Man of India” and he served as the 11th President of India, from July 25, 2002 to July 25, 2007.

He was born in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu on October 15th 1931 in a middle class family. His father Jainulabdeen, was a boat owner and Imam, while his mother, Ashiamma was a house maker. He had three elder brothers and one elder sister and one younger sister. His family faced financial difficulties. Kalam had to sell newspapers to support the income of his family. His dream as a child was to become a fighter pilot.

No doubt, Dr. Kalam came from a humble background and remained frugal throughout his life. Even after achieving significant success and earning a substantial salary as president, he maintained a simple lifestyle. He donated a significant portion of his income to various charitable organizations and educational trusts. He also established the

“Purush Arambha” program to support underprivileged students and provided scholarship.

Dr. Kalam received his basic education in Ramanathapuram, then attended Schwartz Higher Secondary School. Thereafter, he joined Saint Joseph’s College, Tiruchirappalli, and later the Madras Institute of Technology (MIT). He specialized in aerospace engineering at MIT.

His contribution to the nation building:

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam’s achievements are vast and varied, spanning science engineering and leadership. He is best known for his pivotal role in India’s civilian space program and military missile development, earning him the moniker the “Missile Man of India”. Beyond his scientific contributions he served as India’s 11th President and was a strong advocate for youth empowerment and national development.

His leadership at DRDO and ISRO was instrumental in India’s advancements in missile technology and space exploration. From 1992 to 1999, Dr. Kalam was the chief scientific adviser to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of DRDO. He played a crucial role in the development of missiles like the Agni and Prithvi series and contributed to India’s nuclear capabilities. Besides, he proposed a comprehensive roadmap for India’s

development, focusing on key areas like agriculture, healthcare, education infrastructure and IT.

Dr. Kalam's seven best inventions are: (1) India's first Indigenous Hovercraft, (2) India's first Satellite Launch Vehicle, (3) INCOSPAK Committee (4) Ballistic Missile Project, (5) Integrated Guided Missile Development Program, (6) Kalam - Raju Stent (Universal Healthcare Plan.)

As a matter of fact, Dr. Kalam was a National Hero. He made the country's heart swell with pride with his myriad achievements in the field of missile research and development.

His biggest achievement in ISRO came with the successful launch of SLV-3, which jettisoned Rohini Satellite in the near earth orbit.

Kalam's legacy extends far beyond his technical achievements. He was a true visionary who inspired generations to strive for excellence and contribute to the betterment of society.

Dr. Kalam as the President:

He is widely known as the "People's President". Because he was always down to earth, refusing VVIP treatments on several occasions.

Undoubtedly, as President, he exemplified servant leadership and promoted transparency, honesty, neutrality, and inclusivity. He advocated for using technology to address issues in healthcare energy and other sectors.

More importantly, Dr. Kalam, pushed for increased access to education and technology for all Indians, regardless of their background. He also advocated for peace and human rights, and played a role in major economic reforms that boosted India's GDP. Kalam's tenure also saw him address controversial issues like the Office of Profit's bill and the imposition of President's rule in Bihar. He also handled a significant number of mercy petitions, making decisions on a few, including one for Dhananjoy Chatterjee.

Kalam championed the spread of education and technology, aiming to empower all citizens. His approachable nature and focus on citizen engagement earned him the affectionate title "People's President".

Besides, his presidency was marked by a focus on national development, peace and harmony. His contributions to India's societal development were multifaceted, spanning science, technology, education and leadership.

Kalam's work significantly contributed to making India self-reliant in missile and space technologies. He advocated for skill-based technology-enhanced education, emphasizing the need for employment generation.

Dr. Kalam and the Youth:

Kalam was a strong advocate for youth empowerment, believing that they are the key to India's future development. He emphasized education, innovation, and

a strong moral compass as essential tools for young people to shape their own destinies and contribute to the nation's progress and prosperity.

Kalam viewed education as the most powerful tool for personal and national development. He encouraged young people to pursue knowledge with passion and purpose, emphasizing critical thinking, creativity and innovation. His vision included an education system that fostered holistic development encompassing physical, mental and spiritual growth.

He frequently interacted with students, urging them to dream big and pursue their aspirations with determination. He believed that every young person has the potential for greatness and should be encouraged to use their abilities to make a positive impact. His famous quote "What is your dream?" encapsulates his belief in the power of individual aspirations and drive societal change.

He encouraged young people to think outside the box and find innovative solutions to the challenges facing India and the world.

He emphasized the importance of taking calculated risks and not being afraid to fail, viewing failures as stepping stones to success. His own journey a humble background to becoming a leading scientist and President served as an inspiration for many. He stressed the importance of moral values, integrity,

honesty, and compassion in personal and professional life.

He believed that a strong ethical foundation is crucial for building a strong and prosperous nation.

His emphasis on values aimed to instill a sense of responsibility and social consciousness in the youth.

He encouraged the youth to become leaders in their respective fields and to take responsibility for shaping India's future. He believed that the youth are the future leaders and should be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and values to guide the nation forward.

Needless to add that Dr. Kalam's "Ignited Minds" program was a testament to his commitment to empowering young people. He actively engaged with students through lectures, interactive sessions, and his writings, inspiring them to pursue their dream and contribute to national development.

In essence, his vision for youth empowerment was multifaceted, encompassing education, innovation, values and leadership, all aimed at creating a developed India.

Dr.Kalam as a writer:

Dr. Kalam was a prolific writer. He authored a plethora of books. His illustrious publications are : (1) Wings of Fire: An Autobiography, (2) Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power with India, (3) The Luminous Sparks: A Biography in Verse and Colours: Spark of Desires, (4) Mission

India: A book about India's Future, (5) Turning Points: A Journey Through Challenges, (6) India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium, (7) Beyond 2020: A Vision for Tomorrow's India: A Sequel to India 2020, (8) Target 3 Billion: A book Focusing on development initiatives, (9) You Are Unique: A book aimed at inspiring young people, (10) Indomitable Spirit: A collection of his thoughts and writings, (11) The Scientific India: A Twentieth Century Perspective: A book focusing of India's scientific achievements.

Truly speaking, titles of Dr. Kalam's books vividly indicate how deep and profound love he had regarding his country, India. No doubt, he dedicated his entire life for the sake of the country. Besides, he always thought and discussed to make India a developed country.

It is significant to note that Dr. Kalam's every book was sold like hot cake in the market. His books, especially, "Wings of Fire", "Ignited Minds", and "India 2020" inspired millions and became household names.

The comprehensive knowledge and intellectual brilliance of Dr. Kalam had been acknowledged by his contemporaries. He has been accorded numerous degrees from various universities and institutions in and out of India.

Dr. Kalam received honorary doctorates from about 48 universities and institutions from both India and abroad. He has also been conferred several prestigious awards including Bharat Ratna.

Among his numerous awards were three of the country's highest honours: The Padma Bhushan (1981), The Padma Vibhushan (1990) and the Bharat Ratna (1997).

Kalam and Religion:

Dr. Kalam was a devout Muslim. He regularly performed Namaz, fasted during the month of Ramazan and read the Holy Qur'an. Besides, he demonstrated a deep respect for all religions. He believed that all religions share the common goal of spiritual well-being and emphasized the importance of spirituality in his own life. In his autobiography "Wings Of Fire" Dr. Kalam explicitly says, "I do not wish to set myself up as an example to others, but I believe that a few readers may draw inspiration and come to experience that ultimate satisfaction which can only be found in the life of the spirit. God's providence is your inheritance. The bloodline of my great-grandfather Avul, my grandfather Pakir, and my father Jainulabdeen may end with Abdul Kalam, but His grace will never cease, for it is Eternal. (P.178)

This illustrious son of India died on July 27, 2015, at the age of 83. He passed away due to cardiac arrest while delivering a lecture at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Shillong. He collapsed during lecture and was later declared dead at Bethany Hospital in Shillong.

He was buried at Pei Karumbu Rameswaram, Tamilnadu on 30th July 2015. ■

Abu Bakr As - Siddiq (R.A.)

- Abdul Aziz Ash-Shanawi

His Lineage

He is 'Abdullah bin 'Uthman bin 'Amir bin 'Amr bin Ka'b bin Sa'd bin Taim bin Murrah Al-Qurashi At-Taimi. He was born two years and six months after the Year of the Elephant, the year in which the Prophet (SWS) was born. Not only was he a high-ranking member of the Quraish, but he was a scholar as well. Having an in-depth knowledge of the lineage of Quraish tribesmen in particular and Arabs in general, Abu Bakr was perhaps the most knowledgeable genealogist of his time. And he (SWS) was like the Prophet (SWS) in that, during the days of ignorance (i.e., before the advent of Islam), he stayed away from the revelry and merrymaking that was common among Makkan youths. Instead, he dedicated himself to more serious pursuits; in addition to being a scholar in genealogy, he was also a respected tradesman, known to all for his noble manners and honest dealings.

His Acceptance Of Islam

Before another journey to Yemen, Abu Bakr's son, 'Abdul-Ka'bah, hugged him without letting go. His mother, Umm Ruman, said to Abu Bakr (RA), "Take him with you."

'Abdul-Ka'bah was his eldest child, and he loved him a great deal; and so he took him along to Yemen. On the way there, Abu Bakr met a man from Azd, who had read the Scriptures. He said to Abu Bakr, "I would say that you are Haramiyyan (i.e., from the inviolable place Makkah)."

"Yes," replied Abu Bakr (RA).

"I would say that you are from the Quraish."

"Yes," answered Abu Bakr (RA) for the second time.

"I would say that you are Taymiyyan (from the children of Taim)," said the man.

"Yes."

"There remains one point for me about you," said the man.

"And what is that," asked Abu Bakr (RA).

"Lay bare your stomach for me," said the man from Azd.

"I will not do so until you tell me why."

"From true knowledge I have found out that a Prophet is about to be sent in Al-Haram (i.e., in Makkah)

and that he will be helped in his affair by a youth and by a man of middle age. As for the youth, he is one who fights (well) in battle and who is good in solving difficult problems. And as for the middle-aged man, he is white and skinny; upon his stomach there is a mole, and on his left leg there is a mark."

Abu Bakr (RA) then laid bare his stomach, and he saw a white - or black - mole above his navel; and he saw a mark on his left leg." The man from Azd said, "By the Lord of the Ka'bah, you are indeed him."

When Abu Bakr (RA) was finished with his business in Yemen, he prepared for the return journey, when the man from Azd came to bid him farewell. The man said, "Remember verses of poetry from me, and say them to that Prophet (who is to come)."

No sooner did Abu Bakr (RA) return to Makkah than did 'Uqbah bin Abu Mu'ait, Shaibah bin Rabi'ah, 'Amr bin Hisham, An-Nadr bin Al-Harith, and Umayyah bin Khalaf accost him and say, "O Abu Bakr, the orphan of Abu Talib (i.e., Muhammad (SWS) claims that he is a Prophet ..." Abu Bakr (RA) was able to get rid of them, for his sole purpose was to then meet Muhammad (SWS), and ask him about his claim.

The Prophet (SWS) came out to

Abu Bakr (RA) when the latter knocked on his door. He (SWS) said:

"O Abu Bakr, I am indeed the Messenger of Allah to you and to all people, so believe in Allah."

"And what is your proof for that?" asked Abu Bakr (RA).

"The Shaikh who informed you about the verses (i.e., the man from Azd)."

With expectation mingled with happiness, Abu Bakr (RA) said, "My beloved (friend), who told you about that?"

"The mighty angel who came to the Prophets before me."

And without any further hesitation, Abu Bakr (RA) said, "Extend your hand, for I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that, indeed, you are the slave of Allah and His Messenger." Soon afterwards, every member of Abu Bakr's household accepted Islam, except for his father, 'Uthman bin 'Amir (Abu Quhafah) and his son, 'Abdul-Ka'bah ('Abdur-Rahman).

His Migration And Closeness To The Prophet

When the polytheists' savage cruelty towards the Muslims reached its pinnacle, and when there remained

no choice other than to abandon home, property, and even family, the Messenger of Allah (SWT) gave his Companions (RA) permission to migrate to Al-Madinah. Abu Bakr (RA), never making any important decision without the Prophet's leave, sought permission from the Prophet (SWS) to migrate. The Messenger of Allah (SWT) answered, "Do not rush; perhaps Allah will provide you with a companion (to migrate with)." Here, Abu Bakr (RA) imagined and hoped with all his heart that the Messenger of Allah (SWT) was referring to himself. In preparation for the fulfilment of his hope, Abu Bakr (RA) got two mounts ready, one for himself and one for the Prophet (SWS), for their journey to Al-Madinah. The Prophet (SWS) did not explicitly say that he would be Abu Bakr's companion for the journey, but he did suggest it, and that was enough to keep Abu Bakr (RA) prepared and expectant for any developments.

'Aishah said:

The Messenger of Allah (SWS) would unerringly come to Abu Bakr's house every day at one of two times: either in the early morning or in the evening. On the day that Allah (SWT) gave permission to His Messenger (SWS) to migrate and leave Makkah and its people, the Messenger of Allah (SWS), came to us at noontime, at an hour when he normally wouldn't come.

When Abu Bakr (RA) saw him, he (RA) said, 'The Messenger of Allah (SWT) has not come at this hour except that something important has happened.' The Messenger (SWS) entered, and Abu Bakr (RA) moved away from his bed, and the Messenger of Allah (SWT) sat down. No one was nearby other than my sister, Asma bint Abu Bakr (RA), and me. The Messenger of Allah (SWT) said, 'Remove from my presence those that are with you (i.e., so that they do not hear of his plans for migration).' Abu Bakr (RA) said, 'O Messenger of Allah, they are my daughters. And what is the matter, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you.' He said, 'Verily, Allah (SWT) has given me permission to leave and to migrate.' Abu Bakr (RA) said, 'Companionship (i.e., will you indeed be my companion on the journey to Al-Madinah!)' (Confirming Abu Bakr's hopes,) the Messenger of Allah (SWS) said, "Companionship." By Allah, until I saw Abu Bakr (RA) crying on that day, I had never before thought that anyone (really) cried from happiness.

It is reported that the Prophet said to Abu Bakr (RA).

"You are my companion over the Haud (the Prophet's Basin on the Day of Resurrection) and my companion in the cave (in which they were hiding together during their migration to Al-

Madinah),”

Their ties of closeness became even stronger when the Prophet (SWS) married Abu Bakr’s daughter, ‘Aishah (RA). The Prophet (SWS) said:

“No one (created being, of course) has a greater favor over me than Abu Bakr. He supported me with his self and his wealth, and he married his daughter to me.

‘Aishah (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (SWT) said:

“Whoever wishes to look at one who has been set free from the Hell-fire, then let him look at Abu Bakr.”

And according to another narration from Ibn ‘Abbs (RA), the Prophet (SWS) said:

“Abu Bakr and ‘Umar rank with me as hearing and eyesight rank with the head.”

And the Prophet (SWS) said:

“Among those of my nation, the most merciful one to (the people of) my nation is Abu Bakr; the sternest of them regarding the command of Allah is ‘Umar; the most truthful of them in his modesty is ‘Uthman; the most well-read of them concerning Allah’s Book is Ubai bin Ka’b; the most knowledgeable of them regarding the laws of inheritance is Zaid bin Thabit;

the most knowledgeable of them regarding the lawful and the prohibited is Mu’adh bin Jabal; and every nation has a trustworthy one, and the trustworthy one of this nation is Abu ‘Ubaidah bin Al-Jarrah.”

One day, the Prophet (SWS) asked his Companions (RA), “Who from you woke up fasting today?”

“Me,” answered Abu Bakr (RA)

“And who among you followed a funeral procession (i.e., prayed over the deceased and then participated in the burial)?”

“Me,” Abu Bakr (RA) again answered.

except that he enters Paradise.”

On another occasion, when ‘the Earthquake (AzZalزالah)” Chapter was revealed, Abu Bakr began to cry. Warnings such as in the Verse:

“And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant), shall see it.”

of course have the effect of moving a pious person to tears. The Prophet then said:

“If it had not been that you (referring to humans in general) make mistakes and sin and then Allah forgives you, He would have created a nation who makes mistakes and sins, and He would then forgive them.

Indeed, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

Abu Bakr (RA) recited this Verse in the presence of the Prophet (SWS):

“(It will be said to the pious — believers of Islamic Monotheism): ‘O (you) the one in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back to your Lord, — well-pleased and well-pleasing (unto Him)!”

He (RA) then said, “How wonderful is this, O Messenger of Allah.” The Prophet (SWS) said:

“O Abu Bakr, Lo! The angel will indeed say this to you upon (your) death.”

In another narration, ‘Amr bin Al-’As (RA) asked the Prophet (SWS), “Who is the most beloved of people to you?” The Prophet (SWS) said, “‘Aishah.” ‘Amr (RA) then asked, “And from among men?” The Prophet (SWS) answered, “Her father.”

The First Khalifah (Caliph)

The Messenger of Allah (SWS) never clearly mentioned — not on his deathbed and not before that — who was to be the Khalifah after him. But during his final sickness, when he could no longer go out to pray with the people, the Messenger of Allah (SWS) said, “Order Abu Bakr (RA) to lead the people in prayer.” ‘Aishah (RA) said,

“O Messenger of Allah, he is indeed a man with a soft heart. If he stands in your place, he will not be able to lead the people in prayer.” ‘Aishah (RA) feared that her father (RA) would break down in tears, not being able stand in the place that was specifically for the Prophet (SWS).

The Prophet (SWS) repeated his Command: “Order Abu Bakr (RA) to lead the people in prayer.” ‘Aishah (RA) gave the same reply. The Prophet (SWS) then said, “Order Abu Bakr (RA) to lead the people of prayer, for you (women) are indeed like the women (that) Yusuf (RA) (met with).” A messenger delivered the Prophet’s command to Abu Bakr (RA) and so he had the distinction of leading the people in prayer during the lifetime of the Prophet (SWS). A group of scholars inferred from this incident that the Messenger of Allah (SWS), did appoint Abu Bakr (RA) as the Khalifah after him. They drew this inference from the premise that leading the Muslims in prayer was the first duty for the new Khalifah.

Yet that inference did not dawn upon the Companions (RA) immediately. The Ansar (original dwellers of Al-Madinah) gathered together in Saqifah Bani Sa’idah. Among themselves, they discussed choosing Sa’d bin ‘Ubadah as the

Khalifah. When some of the Muhajirun (Muslims who migrated from Al-Makkah to Madinah) — such as Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, and Abu ‘Ubaidah — heard of the Ansar’s gathering, they went there, and heard the speech of a man from the Ansar.

‘Umar (RA) wanted to speak, but Abu Bakr (RA) signaled to him to remain silent. Then Abu Bakr (RA) spoke, mentioning all of the merits and virtues of the Ansar, including any praise the Ansar received in Allah’s Book or in the Prophet’s sayings. He (RA) said, “You indeed know that the Messenger of Allah (SWS) said, ‘Had the people traveled in one valley, while the Ansar traveled in another valley, I would travel through the valley of the Ansar.’ And as to any good I mentioned about you, you are most deserving of it. But the Arabs know of no people for this matter (that of leadership) except the Quraish; they are the center (or best) of the Arabs in location and lineage. I am pleased with one of these two men for you; choose whichever of them you wish.” He then took ‘Umar and Abu ‘Ubaidah (RA) by their hands.

When Abu Bakr (RA) finished his speech, the Ansar suggested that there be two leaders - one from the Ansar and one from the Muhajirun. Here, it was ‘Umar who drew the

inference we mentioned above; he (RA) said, “Do you not know that the Messenger of Allah (SWS) put Abu Bakr (RA) forward for the prayer?” They answered, “Yes, (we know).” He (RA) said, “So which one of you would be pleased with himself that he should step forward, in front of the man that the Messenger of Allah (SWS), put forward.” They said, “No one.”

Abu Bakr (RA) stood and said to ‘Umar (RA), “Put your hand forward, we will pledge allegiance to you.” But ‘Umar (RA) refused, stood up, took Abu Bakr (RA) by the hand, and pledged allegiance to him. Then Usaid bin Hudair (RA) and Bashir bin Sa’d (RA) stood, racing to make Bai’ah (pledge allegiance) to Abu Bakr (RA). Then all who were present from the Muhajirun and the Ansar — rushed to make Bai’ah. On the following day, the people were called to prayer; Abu Bakr (RA) then stood on the pulpit, and the masses made Bai’ah to him.

The Apostate Wars

Soon after the Messenger of Allah’s death, people began to apostatize; it became a widespread phenomenon, most tribes, except perhaps the people who lived just north of Al-Madinah. They witnessed Usamah’s army leaving, and so they were convinced that the Muslims must

be strong at home if they were sending an army to such a far-off place.

Those who rebelled were of two groups: the first group comprised of those who left the fold of Islam and followed liars who claimed to be prophets, such as Musailamah, Tulaihah, and others as well. The second group of rebels did not leave the fold of Islam: they continued to believe that none has the right to be worshiped but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah (SWT). Nonetheless, they refused to pay Zakat; they even sent an envoy to negotiate terms with the Khalifah.

Some Companions (RA) were in favor of accepting their terms, and they voiced their opinion to Abu Bakr (RA); among them was 'Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA). Yet again, Abu Bakr (RA) was faced with a critically important decision, and yet again he had the vision, the knowledge, the foresight, and the resolve to make the correct decision. He (SWS) was adamant, not willing to negotiate or compromise in the matter, nor did he (SWS) fear the consequences of his stance. He (SWS) retorted to their reasoning, "By Allah, were they to refuse me a head cord that they used to give to the Messenger of Allah (SWS) I would fight them over it."

This matter allowed for no compromise: Zakât is Allâh's right over one's wealth and it is one of the five pillars of Islam, one of the foundations upon which the religion is structured. To refuse giving Zakat is tantamount to refusing any of the other pillars of Islam. Abu Bakr (RA) perceived this, though the other Companions initially did not. 'Umar (RA) said to Abu Bakr (RA), "How can you fight them, in spite of the fact that the Messenger of Allah (SWS) said, 'I have been ordered to fight people until they say: None has the right to be worshipped but Allah. Then whosoever says, none has the right to be worshipped but Allah, then he has protected from me his self and his wealth, unless it is by a right, and his reckoning is with Allah.'"

Abu Bakr (RA) said, "By Allah, I will fight whomsoever distinguishes between the prayer and Zakat, for Zakat is the right of wealth. By Allah, were they to refuse me an 'Anaq (a small, female goat) that they used to give to the Messenger of Allah (SWS), I would fight them over it." The Companions (RA) felt that Abu Bakr (RA) should deal gently with the rebels. 'Umar (RA) said, "O Khalifah of the Messenger of Allah, unite the people and be gentle with them."

Being angry with 'Umar's

response, Abu Bakr (RA) said:

I had hoped for your support, yet you come to me with your desertion? Mighty and tough in pre-Islamic days, fainthearted and weak now! Revelation has ceased to descend and the religion is complete; shall I allow the religion to decrease while I am alive! Did not the Messenger of Allah say, 'unless it is by a right,' and prayer and paying Zakat are from (Islam's) rights. By Allah, were all people to forsake me, I would fight them by myself.

Then 'Umar (RA) and the other Companions (RA) realized that Abu Bakr (RA) was right. The envoys of the rebels who came to negotiate noticed how few the soldiers were that remained in Al-Madinah after Usamah's army left, a situation that served to entice them to make an attempt at attacking Al-Madinah, Abu Bakr (RA), however, was vigilant, and he had placed many eminent companions at all passages that led to Al-Madinah from the desert. Thus the Muslims defeated every group of Bedouins that tried to attack Al-Madinah.

Usamah's army soon returned, and as soon as its soldiers took their share of rest, Abu Bakr (RA) prepared twelve banners for twelve units of soldiers to fight apostates throughout

the Arabian Peninsula. Among the leaders of the different units were the following Companions: Khalid bin Al-Walid, 'Ikrimah bin Abu Jahl, 'Amr bin Al-'As, Suwaid bin Muqrin, and Al-'Ala bin Al-Hadrami (RA).

A Narrator Of Hadith

Being occupied with concerns for the nation, Abu Bakr (RA) was perhaps not as prolific a narrator as certain other Companions, but he did narrate a number of Ahadith from the Prophet (SWS). And many prominent Companions (RA) related narrations on his authority — such as 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, 'Abdur-Rahman bin 'Awf, Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Umar, Ibn 'Amr, Ibn 'Abbas, Anas bin Malik, Abu Hurairah, and his two daughters, 'Aishah and Asmā' (RA).

His Death

During the days of Abu Bakr's final illness, a group of people visited him and said, "O Khalifah of the Messenger of Allah, shall we not call a doctor to come look at you?" Abu Bakr (RA) said, "He has already looked at me." They asked, "And what did he say?" Abu Bakr (RA) answered, "I indeed do and carry out that which I please."

And as death was approaching for Abu Bakr (RA), he called 'Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA) and said to him:

O 'Umar, fear Allah, and know that for Allah are deeds of the day that He does not accept at night; and deeds of the night that He does not accept during the day. And indeed, He does not accept the voluntary deed until the compulsory one is performed. As for those whose scales are heavy on the Day of Resurrection, their scales are only heavy because they followed the truth in the abode of the world and because that was heavy upon them. And it is suitable for a scale in which the truth is placed tomorrow to be heavy. As for those whose scales are light on the Day of Resurrection, their scales are light only because they followed falsehood in the world and (because of) the lightness of that upon them. And it is suitable for a scale in which falsehood is placed tomorrow to be light. Indeed, Allah (SWT) mentioned the people of Paradise; He mentioned the best of their deeds, overlooking and pardoning their evil deeds. When I remember them, I say, 'I indeed fear that I will not catch up to them.' And Allah (SWT) mentioned the people of the Hell-fire; He mentioned their worst deeds and rejected their best deeds. When I remember them, I say, 'I indeed fear that I will be with them.' And He mentioned the Verse of mercy and the Verse of punishment, so that a slave (of Allah) will be both hopeful and

fearful, hoping upon Allah based only on the truth, not losing hope of His mercy, and not destroying his own self. If you preserve and follow my advice, then let no matter from the unseen be more hateful to you than death, and (know) that it will come to you (at its appointed time). And if you do not heed my advice, then let no matter from the unseen be more hateful to you than death, and you will not be able to ward it off.

The last words of Abu Bakr (RA) were, "Make me die as a Muslim, and make me join the company of the righteous ones." The Prophet's promise became fulfilled when Abu Bakr (RA) died and the people heard a caller call out:

"O (you) the one in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back to your Lord, — well-pleased (yourself) and well-pleasing (unto Him)! Enter you, then, among My honored slaves, and enter you My Paradise!"

Abu Bakr's caliphate lasted for 2 years, 3 months, and 22 days. He (RA) died on a Monday in the month Jumadal-Ula, in the year 13 H; and he (SWS) died at the age of 63. It was in the apartment of his daughter, 'Aishah (RA), and beside the one he loved most (i. e. Prophet (SWS) that Abu Bakr (RA) was buried.■

Around the World

At least 21,000 Children Disabled in Gaza War: UN

At least 21,000 children in Gaza have been disabled since the war between Israel and Hamas began on October 7, 2023, a United Nations committee said.

Around 40,500 children have suffered “new war-related injuries” in the nearly two years since the war erupted, with more than half of them left disabled, said the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Reviewing the situation in the Palestinian territories, it said Israeli evacuation orders during the Army’s offensive in Gaza were “often inaccessible” to people with hearing or visual impairments, “rendering evacuation impossible”.

“Reports also described people with disabilities being forced to flee in unsafe and undignified conditions, such as crawling through mud without mobility assistance,” it said.

Meanwhile the committee said the restrictions on humanitarian aid being brought into the Gaza Strip were disproportionately impacting the disabled.

“People with disabilities faced severe disruptions in assistance, leaving many without food, clean water, or sanitation and dependent on others for survival,” it said.

The committee said 83% of disabled people had lost their assistive devices, with most unable to afford alter natives such as donkey carts. ■

Parliament elects Anutin Charnvirakul PM

Bangkok: Thailand’s Anutin Charnvirakul was elected prime minister after breezing through a parliamentary vote, trouncing the candidate of the Shinawatra family’s once-dominant ruling party to end a week of chaos and political deadlock. With the decisive backing of the opposition. Anutin easily passed the threshold of more than half of the lower house votes required to become premier, capping off days of drama and a scramble for power during which he outmanoeuvred the most successful political party in Thailand’s history. Anutin did not speak to the house before the vote, during which he passed the threshold to become premier with a huge lead. ■

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