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The Fragrance of East

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Prophetic Call and Reformatory Movements

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

There are also revivalist and reformatory movement which expound the concept of Hereafter, its underlying wisdom, the benefits flowing from it and the invaluable contribution of the concept in establishing a stable society imbued with the sense of moral responsibility, but, evidently, the philosophy of after-life employed by them only as a means of educating the people and impressing upon them the spiritual-moral view of life preached by Islam. There is no denying the fact that their endeavour is praiseworthy, for one cannot have a congenial, orderly and ethical society without inculcating the belief in the Hereafter. At the same time, however, the method adopted by these movements is quite different from the way of thought, procedure of reform and the behaviour and deportment of the prophets and their followers. The methodology of reform evolved by the apostles, of God is inspired by an unflinching faith and sincere conviction, a heart-left sentience and fervid enthusiasm: it is a living faith which encompasses the entire being of the believer. The reformist movements on the other hand, are simply an external, outward expression of these deep-seated emotions of faith. The discourses of the former on sequel and life-after-death are marked by their instinctive conviction, glowing ardor, passionate eagerness, impressive earnestness and delicious ecstasy while the latter promote the idea as an expedient to social and moral reform of their people in order to build up a coherent, stable and ethical society. The difference between logical disputations and the secret springs of conviction, and the results achieved by the two, are too well known to be discussed here to explain the difference between the two. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

“(Adhere to the True Faith and) turn to Him, and establish Prayer, and do not be of those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity.”

(Al Qur'an – 30-31)

“To turn to God means anyone who opts to act independently of God’s directives and thus deviates from the path prescribed for him by God, or whoever betrays God by accepting to serve aught apart from the One True God, should give up that attitude and revert to serving God Whose born servant he is.

Man should dread the punishment which he will incur by acting independently of, or worshipping others besides God, despite the fact that it is God Who brought him into being. Man should, therefore, shun all attitudes that lead to God’s wrath.

Turning to God and holding His wrath in awe are acts of the heart. In order that this state of heart might become manifest and be reinforced, one needs to engage in physical acts which indicate that one has truly returned to the service and worship of the One True God, One Who has no associates in His Divinity. The regular performance of these acts helps develop in man the state of returning to and fearing God. This is why God asks him to engage in the establishment of Prayer.

The performance of the five daily Prayers at their stated times is the most effective means to develop God-consciousness and God-fearing. Thus man rehearses over and over again the Qur’an’s teaching that man should believe in God and submit to Him in his day-to-day life. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Abu Hurairah relates that Allah’s Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said: “A person who calls people towards doing good deed will get the same reward as those who follow him and do good; and nothing will be diminished from the requital of the latter. Similarly, those who call the people towards vice will have the same punishment as those who follow him without any diminution in the punishment of the perpetrators.”

(Sahih Muslim)

This hadith gives good tidings to one who invites people to virtue, and warns a person against inviting his fellow beings to vice. Calling people towards doing good deeds is in itself a virtuous act. It wins the pleasure of God. Contrary to it, the act of inviting people to some evil is in itself a vicious act. It earns the Divine wrath.

God can give reward and likewise award punishment, here on earth and in the hereafter as well, to whom He wills. But this does not mean that His judgement is baseless. He knows perfectly well the deeds done by His servants as well as the intention working behind the commission of the deeds. Hence His judgement is based on human actions. He however can forgive whomsoever He wills.

This hadith encourages Muslims to call people towards doing good deeds because it will yield to him the same reward as those who in response to his call do good deeds. Similarly, it forbids them to invite people to do evil because it is a sin and earns the same punishment. ■

Editor's Note 

Beauty of Islam

The Creator of the universe laid down rules for its inhabitants for a peaceful and pious life. With the passage of time and increasing population God sent messengers (Prophets) to guide them and make them believe that they should not forget their Creator and follow the path which has been shown to them.

Mosses came to guide the people on right path. After his demise his followers deviated from the marg shown by him and made additions and deletions in book which he had left behind. Similarly Jesus Christ was born to make reforms as God wished. But when he was crucified his followers declared him as the son of God and forgot noble messages brought by him.

In the end God sent the last prophet Muhammad (PBH). He successfully spread the message of Creator and helped in establishing a pure and pious community. Since instructions of God sent through Muhammad (PBH) have been compiled in the Holy Quran no room was left for any omission or insertion in it and thus Islam was spread smoothly. There are beauties in this religion. They are beyond what pens can fully right and enough expressions cannot be found to describe the virtues of this religion; because it is the religion of Allah. Just as the eye cannot encompass the perception of Allah and man cannot encompass His Reality on Knowledge, so can the pen not encompass His law in description. Ibn Al-Qayyim said, "If you reflect on the dazzling wisdom in this Upright Religion, this pure faith and the Law enacted for mankind which no expression can perfectly describe, whose description cannot be perfected, the likeness of which wisdom of the wise cannot propose - even if all wise men are to be as perfectly wise as the wisest one among them, who's beauty and virtues are

perceived and attested to by the perfect and honourable intelligence, that the world had not known a law better and greater than it even if the messenger of Allah had not brought any proof in support of it, all that would have been enough an evidence that it is from Allah. Every aspect of this religion shows perfect knowledge, perfect wisdom, expensiveness of mercy, righteousness and kindness, absolute inclusion of all that is hidden and manifest and the knowledge about the beginnings and ends. It also shows that it is one of the greatest favours that Allah has bestowed on His slaves, for He bestows not on them a favour greater than the fact that He guided them to this religion, made them its adherents and chosen it for them. Hence reminds His slaves of the fact that He guided them to it. He says,

“Indeed, Allah conferred a great favour on the believers when He sent among them Messenger (Mohammad) from among themselves reciting unto them His Verse (the Quran), purifying them and instructing them in the Book and the wisdom (the Sunnah) while before that they had been in manifest error.”

He also says, making Himself known to His slaves and reminding them of His great favour on them, calling them to thank Him for making them among its adherents,

“This day I have perfected your religion for you.”

It is therefore part of showing gratitude to Allah on this religion. ■

S.A.

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e-mail: shariqalavi4@gmail.com
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The Methodology of Da'wah

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Invite [mankind] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His way, and He is the best to know those who are guided.

(al-Nahl16:125)

The above directive is addressed by Allah to His final Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), and in turn, to the last community of believers - the Muslims. For they are not to be followed by another faith community. This passage occurs at the conclusion of *Surah al-Nahl*, spelling out the methodology of *Da'wah*. Allah proclaims: *"Invite [mankind] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair preaching."*

It is one of the hallmarks of the Qur'an that it has not strictly identified the limits of carrying out *Da'wah*. Rather, its methodology and its details have been left to the discretion of those engaged in it. In keeping with the ground realities and acting on common sense preachers to the truth are free to work out its exact form and method. They are urged to decide the course of action in light of their own understanding and perception. The Qur'an provides only an outline, giving some broad principles which capture the essence of *Da'wah*.

The above Qur'anic passage makes two points in particular. Those engaged in *Da'wah* have both their freedom and their constraints. They are

free to pursue *Da'wah* up to a particular extent. At the same time, they are forbidden from going beyond certain limits. As for the scope and sphere of *Da'wah*, they are directed to invite the whole of mankind. The directive is to call mankind not to faith or sound beliefs but to their Lord. The addressees are not asked in the first place to offer prayers or practise excellent morals and manners or to respect their fellow human beings. All these exhortations are nonetheless implicit in calling them to their Lord. This directive opens up a wide field for both reflection and action. Reference should of course be made to other faiths, human needs and all that affects human life. Yet the most important concern is the call. The Qur'an does not specify whether the call should be oral or written. Nor is it narrowed down to sermonising alone. Rather, the invitation is an open-ended expression, encompassing all forms of persuasion. As and when situations arise, recourse may be made to the oral or written mode, or to sermonising or any other means of communication. All forms of making the call are valid, as long as these do not violate the norms of the *Shari'ah*. Attention should be paid to energetic and effective *Da'wah*. The overarching principle is that the call should be made, asking people to ensure their participation in *Da'wah*. This constitutes a golden opportunity for carrying out the call to truth.

The Qur'anic expression *hikmah* is pregnant with meaning. Owing to its

numerous nuances it is not easy to translate it into a single expression. Likewise, the Qur'anic directive that *Da'wah* should constitute fair preaching is open to several interpretations. Once again, the Qur'an grants freedom in this exercise and at the same time prescribes some limits. In the above cited passage the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is directed to invite mankind to the way of their Lord with wisdom and fair preaching. Wisdom stands for common sense, tact, persuasive charm, preaching in a way which does not betray any opportunism or bowing down to someone or politicisation. Let it be realised that politics and preaching are poles apart.

Allah directed His beloved Messenger, the Prophet Moses (peace and blessings be upon him) to approach the accursed tyrant of the day, Pharaoh, inviting him to the divine faith. Yet Moses was instructed to speak to Pharaoh leniently. He was of course to state the truth firmly yet his mode of preaching was to be decent and gentle. For this might help Pharaoh take heed willingly or he may grow fearful of divine punishment. (*Ta Ha* 20:43-44) In either case it would bring an end to his disbelief and rebellion. If the truth is stated in a harsh way, it cannot bring about the desired results. Wisdom consists in articulating the truth properly. A dialogue or debate with an unbeliever should be characterised by decency and good manners. The Qur'an instructs that good practices be observed even in a polemical debate. Those present should be impressed by the preacher's conduct. Even if the main addressees are not won

over, the audience is likely to form a good impression of the call. This truth is put across in the following verse: "*Abraham was a community unto himself, obedient to Allah exclusively and he was not of the polytheists.*"

(*al-Nahl*16:120)

Notwithstanding his engagement in polemical debate, Abraham (peace and blessings be upon him) is praised in the Qur'an for his excellent mode of preaching, marked by cogent argument, tact, wisdom and fairness. Elsewhere too, he is spoken of as a devout Muslim who had nothing in common with polytheists. (*Al 'Imran* 3:67.) His *Da'wah* work stood out for its underlying wisdom and tactfulness. It was not tainted by any political motive or timidity. Every Muslim is thus obliged to emulate his role model. To assist others to profess sound beliefs, the same method of *Da'wah* is preferable. Those involved in *Da'wah* should adopt the attitude of a physician who treats his patients with tenderness, love and affection. A competent physician, notorious for his rudeness, is shunned. Muslims are, therefore, given this directive: *There has come to you a Messenger [Muhammad] from among yourselves. It grieves him that you receive any injury or difficulty. He is anxious over you. For the believers he is full of pity, kind and merciful.* (*al-Tawbah* 9:128)

It is incumbent on every Muslim to act on the above Qur'anic advice to carry out *Da'wah* with wisdom, a suitable strategy and with concern and love. This will help win over people to the true faith. ■

The Importance And The Necessity of Madrasas

- S. Bilal Abdul Hai Hasani Nadwi*

Indian Islamic scholars were the first to envision the dream of a free India. Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824) issued a Fatwa (Islamic juridical edict) for Jihad against the British colonialists and the practical initiative in this endeavour was started by Syed Ahmad Shaheed (1786-1831).

He wrote letters to Maharaja of Gwalior and motivated him for the freedom struggle. Ulema fought with the Britishers tooth and nail in the field of Shamli and offered sacrifices for this cause. The Silk Letter Movement (Tehreek-e-Reshmi Rumal) was led by Shaikh-ul Hind Maulana Mahmud Hasan Deobandi and Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar invited Mahatma Gandhi for leading this movement. No doubt, they made very valuable contribution to the national struggle for the freedom of India. They took an uncompromising stand against the British and fought with them a relentless war until India's independence. To further the importance of freedom it was necessary to train the younger generation about it. Thus came up the concept of establishment of Madrasas.

In the words of Hazrat Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, "Madrasa is the biggest institution in which human beings are nurtured and moulded, where preachers and heroes of Islam are prepared. Madrasa is the powerhouse of Islamic world, from where the energy is supplied to the Islamic world, as well as

the entire world. Madrasa is the practical laboratory, where the heart and eyes, brain and mind are moulded in a sublime manner. Madrasa is the place from where the entire world may gain inspiration and spirit to lead the life.

Needless to add that the education system of Madrasas assumes immense significance which makes man the real and true man.

We can say that Madrasas play a leading role in character building and moulding humanity with sublime qualities and ethical values of human life.

Generally speaking, other educational institutions have become commercial hubs. Immodesty and immorality have been the order of the day in colleges and universities. They themselves prove to be a nuisance for the teachers and the taught. Their impact is obviously felt on the Madrasas. Despite these genuine facts, Madrasas are committed to impart education by observing morality, modesty, love, dignity of humanity in letter and spirit. Today, Madarasas may play an extraordinary and remarkable role to make a value based and knowledge oriented society in the country.

Thus, it is imperative to safeguard these Madrasas from all sorts of evils and disruptive forces. These Madrasas are, no doubt, powerhouse of knowledge and fountains of love, brotherhood, fraternity, and humanity, ■

(English Rendering: O.R. Nadwi

* Rector Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.

Nadwatul-Ulama And The English Language

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

The mutiny of 1857 was the turning point for the Indians particularly for Muslims. They were more affected because of the shifting of political power from their hands to British.

In 1866, Maulana Qasim Nanatvi and his enlightened friends established Darul Uloom Deoband to protect Islam from the onslaught of British and to prepare them to make up what they have lost in 1857. The syllabi of Darul-Uloom consisted of Quran, Hadith, Tafsir, fiqh and Usul-e-fiqh. There was no provision of modern subjects in its curriculum.

In 1875, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan founded M.A.O. College at Aligarh to impart teaching of social sciences and pure sciences. Whereas Deoband started promoting Islamic scholars. Aligarh school helped in pushing out scholars of English and other modern subjects.

The two different streams of knowledge caused a piquant situation in Muslim society. Ulama from Deoband started denigrating Aligarh school products and Aligarh looked on Ulama as fundamentalists and persons of obscure understanding. The gulf widened between the two institutions.

To meet this situation and find out its cure some Muslim intellectuals thought to establish an institution 'that may cater both the streams of knowledge' "With this aim in view Maulana Muhammad Ali

Mungeri, Maulana Shibli Nomani, Maulana Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani, Maulana Mahmudul Hasan, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, Maulana Lutf-Ullah of Aligarh, Maulana Sulaiman Phulmari met in Kanpur in 1892/1310, and laid the foundation of Nadwatul Ulama. Syed Muhammad Ali Mungeri was elected its first Rector (Nazim). They thought that the modern education and traditional education had to be studied side by side. Apart from it the curriculum of Madarasas too needed reform.

After wide publicity of Nadwatul-Ulama in India as well as in foreign countries its first meeting was held on 22, 23, 24 April 1894 in Madaras-e-Faiz-Aam, Kanpur. Having kept their differences aside Muslims of almost all sects and groups participated in the meeting. It should be noted that the head office of Nadwa was in Kanpur since 1897/ 1315 and on 2nd September 1898 it was shifted to Lucknow.

Reform in syllabi of Madrasas is one of the main objectives of Nadwatul-Ulama. It played a remarkable role in improving the syllabi of Madrasas. Great emphasis had been laid on the up to - date curriculum in every meeting, every lecture and every pamphlet of Nadwa. Members of Nadwatul - Ulama realized and experienced that without establishment of new Darul - Uloom, it was impossible to introduce the reformed curriculum. Accordingly, they

established Darul - Uloom in Khatun Manzil, Golaganj, Lucknow. Primary classes started functioning from 26 September 1898. On the invitation Allama Shibli, Sir Agah Khan attended the meeting of Nadwatul Ulama, which was held in the incomplete central hall of Darul Uloom on February 3, 1910. The editor of al-Manar 'Allamah Rashid Raza was also received on April 6, 1912 in the same hall. In 1914 Darul Uloom was shifted in this incomplete building from *Khatoon Manzil*.

Darul-Uloom started functioning. It introduced modern subjects along with religious subjects. Its reputation spread not only in India but abroad within a short span of time. Founder members of Nadwatul-Ulama played a constructive role in Nadwa's establishment and its progress and prosperity. Besides, they tried their best to lessen differences between various communities and restore peace in the society through this forum.

The basic objects of Nadwatul Ulama

- I. To bring about basic and far-reaching reforms in Syllabi of Madrasas and chart out such one, in the light of Islamic principles and Shariah, as could fulfill the need of the day.
- II. To produce such Ulama who become well-versed in the teaching of Qur'an and Sunnah and create awareness of modern thoughts and ideologies. Besides, they may keep pace with the time and may feel pulse of the community.
- III. To unite Muslim community by

lessening differences prevailing among them and foster feeling of Islamic brotherhood as well.

- IV. To disseminate teachings of Islam particularly to acquaint the people of the country to its virtues and values.

Maulana Syed Mohammad Ali Mongeri did his best to achieve the said objectives. He wrote letters and essays in newspapers regarding the necessity of Nadwa and highlighted its objectives. To acquaint the people with its aims and objectives, a delegation was sent, headed by Maulana Mustaq Ali Naginvi to different parts of India with letters of Maulana Mongeri. He visited Deoband, Rampur, Patna, Nagina, Najibabad, Etawa, Aligarh, Jhansi, Bhopal and Bumbay.

The delegation reached Aligarh. Here they met Maulana Shibli and explained their scheme. Shibli at that time was a teacher in M.A.O. College, Aligarh. Besides Indian Madrasas, he had also seen degradation, debasement and low standard of education of Madrasas in Italy (Rume), Egypt and Syria. It seemed that he found a solution of his dream and ointment of his sores in objectives of Nadwatul-Ulama. Hence, he gave full consent and completely agreed with aims and objects of Nadwa.

From Bombay the delegation led by Maulana Mustaq Ali Naginvi went to Jeddah (Mecca and Madina). The first debut of Nadwatul Ulama was made in Hijaz by Maulana Mustaq Ali Naginvi. Scholars of Hijaz acknowledged Nadwa's necessity

and its significance. He also put forward aims and objectives of Nadwatul Ulama before the Ulama of Madina. During this visit, he met Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki in Hijaz and showed him all written documents and proceedings. He expressed immense pleasure and signed the papers too.

Nadwatu Ulama produced hundreds of scholars, reformers, thinkers, and writers of world repute. It is Nadwa which first paid due attention to Arabic language and literature in sub-continent. Keeping in view that it is the language of Quran and Sunnah (Sayings of Prophet Muhammad). It prepared its own syllabus. A good number of religious seminaries adopted its syllabus in and out of India. Achievements of graduates of Nadwatul-Ulama cannot be ignored in the field of Arabic language and literature.

Scholars of Nadwatul-Ulama have made a distinguishing position in the arena of education, Journalism, national integration and social reforms due to their erudition and knowledge. For instance Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadwi's monumental work Siratun Nabi is regarded an Islamic Encyclopedia. Thus Mulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's extraordinary contributions in the field of Arabic language and literature will always be remembered.

Nadwatul-Ulama played an important role to the development of journalism. It publishes academic journals in Urdu, Arabic, English including Hindi. It started Al-Nadwa (monthly) from 1904-

1916, again in 1940-1945. Ad-diya (from 1932-1935), Al-Bath-al- Islami (monthly) since 1955, Al-raid (fortnightly) since 1959, Tamir-e-Hayat (fortnightly) since 1964, the Hindi journal Sachcha Rahi since 2002, the English journal The Fragrance of East since 1998, which help the teachers and students get acquainted with latest trends and issues and provide guidance for the dissemination of Islamic faith and learning.

Founder members of Nadwatul-Ulama were far sighted, provident and sagacious. They realized that unless the syllabi of madrasas are reformed and changed good scholars may not be produced. Accordingly, they introduced modern subjects along with Islamic sciences so that the students might be able to face the challenges of time. Apart from it they laid great stress on promoting Arabic language and literature. For one cannot study the original sources of Islamic sciences without acquiring proficiency in Arabic language and literature.

To a great extent Nadwatul- Ulama succeeded in bringing peace and restoring amity between different communities. Students hailing from various schools of thought come here to quench their thirst of learning.

Inclusion of the English language in the curriculum of Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama

Right from the beginning the main thrust of Nadwatul Ulama had been to produce such scholars who may rectify the wrong interpretation of the Qur'anic

injunctions by orientalist and to refute the westerners' attack. Besides, they may check the unbridled interpretation of Islam by westernized Muslim scholars.

Maulana Shibli advocated the inclusion of English in the curriculum of Nadwa and it was introduced in primary classes in 1901.

In 1905, Nadwa's administrative infrastructure was divided under three heads, e.g. (1) Registrar Office (Daftar Murasilats) Maulana Syed Abdul Hai Hasani elected Registrar, (ii) Finance Office (Daftar Mal) Munshi Ihtisham Ali Kakori became Finance officer and (iii) Dean Office (Daftar Talim) Maulana Shibli took the charge of Deanship.

After Maulana Shibli became Director of Education in Nadwa in April, 1905, he made English as compulsory subject in the curriculum of Nadwatul Ulama. Due to his hard work and efforts, students started taking interest in learning the language. Maulana Abdul Bari a Nadwa passed out translated the books on Modern Philosophy of Barklay and Hume into Arabic and also wrote an English treatise on miracles. Maulvi Zainul Abedin and Maulvi Ahmadullah Journeyed to America and London respectively and served there for the cause of Islam. As a matter of fact, Shibli wanted to give a significant place to English language in the curriculum so as to produce trained theologians acquainted with modern intellectual trends through English education.

It goes without saying that Nadwatul

Ulama has produced a galaxy of scholars in English language like Maulana Ziyaul Hasan Alavi Nadwi Dr. Abdullah Abbas Nadwi, Dr. Muzzammil Husain Siddique Nadwi, Dr. Salman Nadwi, Dr. Habibul Haque Nadwi, Dr. Syed Zeyaul Hasan Nadwi, Dr. Mazhar Alam Nadwi, Dr. Muhsin Usmani Nadwi, Dr. Ayyub Tajuddin Nadwi, Dr. Qazi Abdul Majid Nadwi, Dr. Mujib Akhtar Nadwi, Dr. Nasim Akhtar Nadwi, Dr. Shafiq Ahmad Khan Nadwi, Dr. Ehtisham Ahmad Nadwi, Dr. Wali Akhtar Nadwi, Dr. Mujibur Rahman Nadwi, Dr. Sanaullah Nadwi, Dr. Ehsanul Haque Nadwi, Dr. Akram Nadwi, Dr. Iqbal Husain Nadwi and others.

The teaching of Hindi and Sanskrit was also subsequently started in the Darul Uloom. The reason behind this was mainly the desire to defend Islam because at that time Aryans were openly attacking Islam. In this situation, Allamah Shibli advocated for the teaching of Hindi and Sanskrit in Darul Uloom in order to enable the Muslim Ulama to understand the nature of Aryan's attack on Islam and counter-pose the ideological weakness of Hinduism and also preaching Islam among Hindu Communities.

English language holds a very important position in the world for more than one reason. It is not merely the language of the English people, but spoken daily by several hundreds of millions in four continents. As a matter of fact, this language is found extensively used in different countries in Asia and Africa, and it is also the language of the U.S.A. Nearly

260 million people speak in this language, whereas Russian, Spanish, German and French are spoken by 140 million people, 135 million people, 90 million people and 60 million respectively. Actually, the number of English-speaking people constitute about one-tenth of the population of the world.

As a language, English has not merely cosmopolitanism in flexibility, but also universality in applicability. The influence of this language is dominant in the East as well as in the West. English is taught, as a compulsory subject, in most of the higher schools in Europe, Asia and Africa. A good number of eastern countries have even adopted it as a second language. All this clearly adds to the belief that English will become, in a natural way, the single inter-communicating term of the world. Its resourceful and cosmopolitan vocabulary, inflectional simplicity and logical yet flexible grammar are all the chief factors to make it an easy and popular language, among different people in the world. This is certainly a strong factor for the international status of the English language.

Maulana S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi was a multifaceted genius. On account of his extraordinary erudition and deep scholarship of Islam, he became a world figure. Decidedly he was an undisputed leader of Islamic world. Nadwatul Ulama made all round progress under his inspiring stewardship. He was a staunch believer in national unity and communal harmony. Besides, his ardent wish was promoting

English language and popularizing internet studies among students. Mr. Shariq Alavi Editor of the Fragrance of East once said it was Maulana Ali Miyan's wish to publish an English Magazine from Nadwa. Al-Hamdulillah, this desire of him was fulfilled in his life time. Mr. Alavi stated that how happy Maulana Nadwi felt whenever a new issue of the Fragrance was presented to him. He also reminded Maulana's message. "Use of the pen in spreading amity, brotherhood and patriotic feelings amongst different classes of the society". Moreover, it was on Maulana desire that Media Research Centre came into being in 1994 and Department of Journalism and Languages was established in 1995.

Keeping in view the significance and importance of the English language Executive Committee of Nadwatul Ulama has decided to start one-year diploma course in English. The main purpose of this department is to train students for Dawah activities. It is hoped that having completed one-year diploma course in English, they may surely able to communicate teachings of Islam throughout the world. Besides, they may excel and enhance spoken English and communication skills including letter drafting, debates, resume writing and interview communication.

Its inaugural ceremony was held on September 3, 2018. Hazarat Maulana S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi, Rector Nadwatul Ulama and President All India Muslim Personal Law Board, presided over the event. In his presidential address he said,

“Muslims are in minority in the world and from the very outset it has been felt that as compared to majority scant attention is always paid towards the minority. Today knowledge is the most dominant element in the world. It is knowledge through which developed countries gained influence, excellence, progress and advancement in every spheres of life. Lack of knowledge is the main cause of Muslims’ backwardness and their marginalization in every walk of life. Every country whether it be Germany, France, England and other countries prefer its own language. The English ruled over India for a long time. They made English language as the language of motherland in India. Even today intellectual circles have good command over English language and are unable to understand Urdu or Arabic. They fail to comprehend teachings of Islam. Hence it is imperative that Ulama must learn English well and have excellent proficiency and profundity over it so that they may easily convey the true message of Islam to them. He further said, “Though English is incorporated in the syllabus of Nadwa yet we will have to produce experts of English language. So that real picture of Islam may be presented before the world in a good sublime way. It is obvious that without profound and deep knowledge of English language it is impossible.

In his thought-provoking speech Maulana S.M Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi, Director of Education, Nadwatul Ulama said; “Onslaught on Islam is being perpetrated from time immemorial. Due to lack of the knowledge of Western

languages, Ulama could not refute allegations, doubts, scepticisms made by orientalist against Islam. Even a wide range of doubts were created regarding the Qur’an, Hadith and biography of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but they failed to retort them due to unawareness of their languages. It is incumbent for Ulama to learn prevailing languages of the world so that they may response them in their own languages and styles.

Dr. Saeedur Rahman Azami Nadwi, Principal of Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama laid great stress on acquiring the English language. He stated that today English language has been language of Dawah. Ulama should learn it and also aware of pros and cons of this language. Being heirs of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) a great responsibility lies on Islamic scholars. They must gird up their loins to undertake this great job. The need of opening a special department for English language was being felt for a long time of which today has been given final shape. It is hoped that this newly department will certainly bear good fruits and will bring credit to Nadwatul Ulama.

The dedicated English Department has started with ten students. The Department has five member team- head of department is former principal of Islamia College Dr. Muhammad Aslam Siddiqui and four teachers namely Dr. Obaidur Rahman Nadwi, Anis Ahmad Nadwi, Shakir Nadwi and Yusuf Mustafa Nadwi. The diploma students get a monthly stipend of Rs. 3,000 and free hostel facility on campus. ■

Guiding The Quom: Tazkirah

- Syeda Saiyidain Hameed

Azad's first autobiography, Tazkirah, was written during his Ranchi days, at the insistence of his friend and admirer Eazluddin Ahmed. A native of Gurdaspur in Punjab and an engineer by profession, Fazluddin claims in the preface to have known Azad since 1902, when having completed his education in Japan, he came to live with his brother in Calcutta. Being a close friend and admirer of Azad, he saw how his early journalistic phase matured into the spectacular period of Al Hilal and Al Balagh. Later as the manager of the Al Hilal press during the trying days of its closure by the government, he came closer to Azad. His preface to Tazkirah is a glowing tribute to what Azad's 'flaming writings' (sholabar tehiren) meant to the Muslims plunged as they were in the deepest caverns of jihalat (ignorance).

The growing fame of the twenty-four year old editor of Al Hilal made Fazluddin realize the importance of recording his sarguzisht (story). This was the beginning of a pattern which would repeat itself several times during Azad's life - a friend using every persuasive device to overcome Azad's reticence in revealing anything about himself. In 1914, when Fazluddin first broached the subject of an autobiography, Azad laughed it off with the words, 'How many great and glorious lives of our times have gone unrecorded. Recording my life instead of theirs would

be ludicrous'. Fazluddin Ahmed did not give up so easily. Persisting in his mission, he finally cornered Azad in May 1916, while he was under detention at Morabadi near Ranchi. 'I knew', he writes in his preface, 'that his twenty-five years of rich experiences far surpassed what most people can gather during their entire lifetime. Thousands would benefit from a study of his life.'

Fazluddin made Azad promise to send him whatever he wrote during the course of one week. On his part Azad extracted a promise from Fazluddin that under no circumstance would he publish anything he had written without his prior consent. Fazluddin writes that he received the first installment of sixteen pages, two weeks after leaving Ranchi. Reading the contents, he realized that before saying anything about himself, Azad wanted to write about his ancestors. As other pieces trickled through the post, it became evident that there was no foreseeable end to this account of ancestors. Fazluddin expressed his honest concern to Azad in a letter, that the background seemed to be taking over from the real subject, but Azad wrote back, 'Don't create an impediment in the flow of my thought. Whatever the pen writes spontaneously, I pass on. Keep on gathering it. You won't be the loser.'

This process continued for four

months. But I was really interested in his (Azad's) life;...therefore continuously suggested brevity. I was afraid that the flow of his thoughts in this direction would never allow the book to end'. The ancestral account ended with the life of his father, Maulana Khairuddin. Once again Fazluddin's requests started pouring in. When no excuse worked, Azad, to end the subject, sent a twenty-page chapter with the remark, 'I can't write any more about myself'. Fazluddin records his own reaction to this in the Preface. The truth is that he never really wanted to accede to my request. He used my persuasion as an excuse to write about his ancestors—knowing that when it came to writing about himself he could always come up with one excuse or another.'

What further pains Fazluddin took to record the autobiography are not relevant because, in fact, nothing survives except the first part, which was essentially an account of his ancestor Hazrat Shaikh Jamaluddin Dehlivi. One important insight one gets from this 'autobiography' is Azad's attitude towards recording his life. First, one is struck by the fact that he gives the highest priority to writing about his ancestors and the lowest to saying anything about himself. Second, the seriousness with which he approached his autobiography can be ascertained from the fact that he referred to it as *Tafrih-i-Dimagh* (mental diversion), undertaken whenever he wanted to rest his mind from the monumental task of *Tafsir-i-Quran*. He says that he gave no importance to writing

about his life, considering it nothing more than a piece of trivia, hence his indifference to its revision or publication. On the other hand, Fazluddin writes that he had hoped to have given the world a magnificent autobiography of Azad because of what he foresaw would be its importance for future generations:

Like thousands of others, I believe that his literary and academic accomplishments, achieved in these few years, are just preliminary indications of great things to follow. God will preserve him for the quom for years to come, and who knows what future glories are written against his name! Time is not far when great scholars would devote themselves to writing about his life...It may be no surprise, therefore, even if my humble effort is of great usefulness.

Time has vindicated Fazluddin's hope and prophecy.

Azad's role in the eventual publication of *Tazkirah* reveals another interesting aspect of his personality which has a recurring pattern. First, he forbids Fazluddin to publish it unless he has had a chance to revise. When Fazluddin arrives in Ranchi armed with the manuscript, to fulfill the condition of revision, Azad first tries to postpone the issue. When Fazluddin persists, he says, 'I wrote these pages entirely due to your insistence. I did not really intend to have them published', adding that he would look at them as soon as time permitted. Fazluddin was only too aware of the implication of '*Ba-waqt-fursat*' (when time

permits), so he quietly packs up the manuscript and slips away to Raipur. He re-appears in February 1917, at which time, according to his own statement he stays for six months and presents Azad with a list of fifteen questions which he has prepared as introduction to Azad's life. He knows that once Azad's 'pen starts moving' nothing can stem the flow. Azad, although he starts writing with great indifference and reluctance, ultimately performs miracles with his pen. Fazluddin writes that once his mind was activated, 'thoughts gushed on paper.'

What does this sequence of events reveal? Does it reveal Azad's modesty compared to most people in his position who would have welcomed an opportunity to write about themselves? Or does the account of his ancestors reveal pride in his glorious antecedents which distinguishes him above the rest of the populace? A further question may be posed to probe the consistency of this attitude with the leadership role in which he was beginning to see himself. Does an individual who considers himself somehow 'chosen to lead his people to the Straight Path (Siratal Mustaqeem) from which they have gone astray, reject the opportunity of public attention that such an autobiography would bring about? The answer may lie in how he viewed his leadership. One recalls that he deliberately eschewed the piri-muridi tradition which would automatically have given him sway over thousands of human beings. Not only that, he sought employment outside

Calcutta, putting distance between himself and his father's area of influence. He says enough in his writings to leave no doubt about his intense desire to 'fight with his own jauhardaar talwar (well-sharpened sword) rather than rattle borrowed sabres'. This desire led him to reject his father's ready-made fiefdom. But why then the ancestor-adoration in Tazkirah? What he rejects he also, exults in. The matter of shying away from any attempt at autobiography is traced to the personality of Azad which is revealed in his own writings, particularly Ghubar-i-Khatir.

Returning to Tazkirah, Fazluddin's justification for his decision to publish the book without Azad's authorization is based on his awareness of Azad's habits. He writes that Azad never revised what he wrote. During the Al-Hilal days he often made changes only when the article was at the proof stage. But even these, says Fazluddin, were not substantive. It was Azad's practice to produce overnight finished articles for the entire journal. Fazluddin's announcement of the book came to Azad as a surprise and annoyance. As expected, he immediately stopped the press. Fazluddin rushed to Ranchi and pleaded for permission. Finally, Azad relented. The intended three volume autobiography was thus reduced to one volume, the subject of which was his ancestor Sheikh Jamaluddin Dehlivi. Appended to it was a twenty page poetic essay about him. The other two volumes were about family history, and his own life -in the form of answers to fifteen

questions. The whereabouts of volumes two and three which are described in India Wins Freedom, will forever remain a mystery.

In October 1919, Azad wrote the aitezar (apologetical foreword) to Tazkirah. Beginning with a discussion about spelling and printing, it moves on to a subject of great importance for any student of Azadiyat. In an extremely lucid paragraph, Azad lays down his standards for scholarship and intellectual labour. In so doing he sets out the criteria for what he

calls the 'normal' and the 'super scholars'. The latter, he says, are elevated to the level of saints, a status which entitles them to invite common people to follow the path that they prescribe and the lead they give. In a variety of ways, this foreword outlines the role Azad had demarcated for himself. His comments on the difference between the role of a scholar and the daiyee (a guide, a reformer, a creative interpreter of truth, a proselytizer), are a transparent veil for describing himself as the daiyee of the quom. ■

(To be continued)

Israel using water access as a weapon in Gaza: MSF report

Israeli authorities are systematically depriving people in Gaza of the water they need to live, Doctors Without Borders warned , decrying a campaign of "collective punishment" against Palestinians.

The extensive destruction of civilian water infrastructure in Gaza coupled with obstruction of access constitutes "an integral part of Israel's genocide", said the medical charity, which goes by its French acronym MSF.

In a report entitled "Water as a Weapon", MSF said the "engineered scarcity" was occurring alongside "direct killing of civilians, the devastation of health facilities, (and) the destruction of homes". "Together, this amounted "to "the deliberate infliction of destructive and inhumane conditions of life on the Palestinian population in Gaza", warned the report, based on testimonies and data MSF collected in 2024 and 2025.

Israeli authorities know that without water, life ends," MSF emergency manager Claire San Filippo said in a statement. "Yet they have deliberately and systematically obliterated water infrastructure in Gaza, whilst consistently blocking waterrelated supplies from entering."

The report, which was slammed by Israel, pointed to data from the UN, EU and World Bank indicating that Israel had destroyed or damaged nearly 90% of water and sanitation infrastructure in Gaza.

(The Hindu, 29-04-2026)

The Wages of War, For Trump And Netanyahu

- Shashi Shekhar*

Every war leaves behind soul-searing questions. The war on Iran isn't an exception. In the future, a question will haunt us whenever tales of victory and defeat are told, in a bid to recalibrate the new landscape of nationalism: What was the logic of the war?

In 1982, Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister of Britain. After assuming office, she privatised government corporations, restrained labour unions, slashed government spending, and moved towards a free-market economy, all on mission-mode. This led to a spike in temporary unemployment and social unrest. Thatcher's public approval ratings fell. It was clear she would lose the coming elections.

And then, she got a lifeline. Argentinian general and leader of the country's military junta Leopold Galtieri attacked the British-controlled Falkland Islands close to the Argentinian maritime borders. Britain declared war which was fought between April 2 and 14, 1982, killing 900 soldiers and civilians. Britain won, and Thatcher's fortunes changed overnight. She emerged as "Iron Lady". She entered the House of Commons with a massive majority of 397 seats compared to 339 in her preceding term. Galtieri, on the other hand, was banished to political wilderness.

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Lady, but no one talks about the death of those 900 people sacrificed at the altar of political ambition.

Similarly, in December 1971, India and Pakistan got locked in war. Indira Gandhi had won the elections earlier with a massive majority but the image of "goongi gudiya" (mute doll) was still sticking to her. Pakistan's Yahya Khan gave her the chance to shrug off that image.

In 1970, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League won 160 out of 162 assembly seats in East Pakistan to command a majority in the National Assembly. Rightfully, he should have been made Pakistan's Prime Minister (PM), but the Punjabis, Sindhis, Balochs and Pathans in West Pakistan weren't ready for a Bangla-speaking PM.

Yahya Khan ordered the Bangla-speaking military units in East Pakistan to crush the people there. Tens of thousands of refugees poured into India and eventually, led to a war between India and Pakistan. Indira Gandhi led India to a crushing win over Pakistan and helped create Bangladesh. This enhanced India's standing; Indira Gandhi, the "mute doll", became "Durga" overnight. Yahya Khan was forced out of power and lived out the rest of his life in disgrace.

Now let's look at the war in West Asia. Last year, after 12 days of incessant air raids, US President Donald Trump

declared that Iran's nuclear facilities had been completely destroyed. If this were true, what was the need to wage war now, painting Iran as a nuclear threat? It is here that Trump's war is unlike Thatcher's or Indira Gandhi's. This unnecessary war has killed several thousands in West Asia and consigned to flames the US's democratic traditions. No one would have ever imagined a US president threatening to wipe out a civilisation.

People intent on finding a political rationale for the war link it to Trump's bid to deflect attention from the Epstein files. Israeli PM and Trump's partner in the war, Benjamin Netanyahu, faces serious allegations of corruption at home, too. Among the many allegations against Netanyahu one is that he had been

channelling funds to Hamas.

In terms of perception, Trump seemed to have suffered at home because of the war while Netanyahu seems to have bolstered his strongman image at home. Several surveys in both countries indicate this. Some in the US are even demanding Trump's impeachment. The only way out for him is a deal with Iran that helps fill the US's coffers. That is neo-colonialism for you, done US-style.

The US will go for mid-term polls in September and Israel will hold elections in October. Will the war and its bloodbath help Trump and Netanyahu win the polls? Can the two leaders be brave enough to offer an honest answer? ■

(Hindustan Times, 20-4-26)

Khamenei says country will protect its nuclear and missile capabilities

IRAN'S SUPREME leader said that the Islamic Re-public will protect its "nuclear and missile capabilities" as a national asset, likely seeking to draw a hard line as US President Donald Trump seeks a wider deal to cement the shaky ceasefire now holding in the war.

Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, speaking in a written statement read by a state television anchor as he has since taking over as Iran's supreme leader, struck a defiant tone, insisting the only place Americans belonged in the Persian Gulf is "at the bottom of its waters" and that a "new chapter" was being written in the region's history.

However, his remarks come as Iran's oil industry has begun to be squeezed by a US Navy blockade halting its oil tankers from getting out to sea.

Meanwhile, benchmark Brent crude for June delivery reached as much as \$126 a barrel in trading as Iran maintains its chokehold "on the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all crude oil and natural gas traded passes.

All this is putting additional pressure on the world's economy as Trump likely weighs how to respond. "By God's help and power, the bright future of the Persian Gulf region will be a future without America, one serving the progress, comfort and prosperity of its people," Khamenei said in the statement, read like all others since he reportedly was wounded in the February 28 attack that killed his father, the 86-year-old Khamenei. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali.

(The Indian Express, 01-05-2026)

Muslim's Contribution To The Freedom Struggle of India

- Mohammad Idris

The purpose of this research article is to share with the reader brief information about the contribution made by Muslim Nawabs, rulers, soldiers, and other sections to the freedom struggle of India. Around 65 per cent of those who were martyred during the freedom movement of India were Muslims. Sources of Information and data are available through contemporary newspapers and other historical accounts. The number of sacrifices, especially Muslim martyrs, who were martyred during the freedom movement may be even more. The reason for this was the lack of means of communication, the repressive policy of the British officers, poverty, and illiteracy in the Muslim society, and the Muslims of the rural areas of India silently making sacrifices for their cause to achieve independence.

The sacrifices made by many Muslims have been lost in the untold pages of Indian history. There are very interesting, serious, and inspiring persecution stories of the fierce struggles and collective martyrdoms of Muslim rulers, soldiers, rebels, and other freedom fighters in different parts of India during the struggle against the East India Company and the British Empire. First of all, the representatives of the East India Company were asked

to leave India by the Mughal Emperor Moinuddin Mohammad Aurangzeb in Surat in CE 1686.

In 1871, British officer W.W. Hunter, in his book *The Indian Muslims*, wrote that Indian Muslims had been a serious threat to the British Empire for the last many years. Talking about its historical background, he has written that Hyder Ali of Mysore and his son Tipu Sultan had successfully formed powerful organisations against the British Empire in the years 1780 to 1790, which the British Empire had to work hard to deal with the two local powerful Muslim rulers.

After the Battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764), a joint military uprising was launched by Muslim fakirs and Hindu ascetics against the administrative and economic control and growing imperialist policies of the British East India Company over Bengal. Under the leadership of Majnu Shah, a Muslim Sufi Saint from Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), in the uprising, about 2000 rebels looted the government treasury and distributed it among the poor and needy people. From 1763 to 1786, Majnu Shah aggressively commanded activities against the British East India Company. He was a 'dangerous rebel' and was killed by British officers in Guerrilla warfare. After his martyrdom, Hindus and Muslims

fought jointly against the British under the leadership of Musa Shah and the Hindu ascetic leader Bhavani Pathak.

In 1857, after the uprisings in cities like Ambala, Patna, Malda, Delhi, Meerut, and Rajmahal, Muslim leaders like Ahmadullah, Yahya Ali, Zafar, Ibrahim Madel, Rafiq Madel, and many others were arrested and sent to Andaman, where they were brutally punished and hanged. It was in Andaman that Sher Ali Afridi assassinated the British Viceroy Lord Mayo, the Governor General of India from 1869 to 1872.

Bipin Chandra Pal, a historian of great repute, in his autobiography, *Memories of My Life and Times (1857-1864)*, mentions in detail the sacrifices, struggles, and battles of the Muslim people. He has written that the sacrifices of Muslim rulers, soldiers, and common people have a deep impact on his life. According to the famous revolutionary Trailokiya Chakraborty, "From the martyrdoms, unyielding attitude and courage of the Muslim revolutionary brothers, we get a lesson for patriotism, while we also get information about the mistakes made by those great patriots unknowingly." The fierce rebellion of the rulers through guerrilla warfare under the leadership of a Rohilla Muslim Ibrahim Khan, in the state of Maharashtra, is worth mentioning.

In 1905, Sheikh-ul-Islam Maulana Masood Hasan and Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi started the Silk Letter movement. Under this, all the Indian states were to be united against the British Empire. Both the leaders were sent to Malta and Kalapani and were sentenced to death. During the peasant movement that started in Punjab in 1907, Sardar Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai were accompanied by Syed Haider Raza and many other Muslims, who actively participated in the Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement. The rebellions of Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi and Maulana Masood Hasan during the World War-I (1914-18) are also worth mentioning. In Punjab, hundreds of Muslims were martyred during the freedom struggle. Under the leadership of Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Asif Khan, a large number of Muslims participated in the Jallianwala Bagh Morcha. On 13 April 1919, out of the 379 unarmed people martyred in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, 58 were Muslims.

The Moplah Rebellion of 1921 in Malabar, Kerala, was a very ferocious one. The term Mopilah or Mapilah is used for the Muslims living in the Malabar area. This rebellion by the Malabari Muslims was so cruel, according to the historical, official records of the British officers that 2337 Muslim rebels were killed, 1652 were injured, and 45000 were arrested. According to non-governmental reports,

4500 to 5000 Moplah Muslims were martyred.

Many Muslims also sacrificed in the strikes, agitations, and sessions launched by the Indian National Congress during the freedom struggle of India. Some of the prominent Muslim leaders of the freedom movement were Badruddin Tyabji, Rahmatullah Sayani, Muhammad Ali Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Hasrat Mohani, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Allama Iqbal, Aga Khan, Maulana Muhammad Ali, Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, Chaudhry Rahmat Ali, Ashfaq Ullah Khan, Frontier Gandhi Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, Mian Akbar Shah, Lieutenant Colonel Aziz Ahmed, Ehsan Qadir, Shah Nawaz, Dr. Zakir Hussain, Inayatullah Khan Mashriki, Syed Muhammad Sharfuddin Qadri, Abbas Ali and Bakht Khan, etc. In short, from the Mughal Emperor Mohiuddin Muhammad Aurangzeb to the achievement of Independence and the Partition of India in 1947, as mentioned above, Muslims from all walks of life, including Nawabs, Pirs, Fakirs, Mansabdars, Zamindars, the rich, the poor, soldiers, paramilitary forces, had given their sacrifice.

Contrary to the British policy of 'Divide and Rule' of the East India Company (1600-1857) and British Empire (1858-1947), every revolutionary uprising, whether it was the

first war of independence of 1857, the Ghadar Party, or the Azad Hind Fauj, the Muslims actively participated in all major peaceful and revolutionary movements at large scale with great enthusiasm. Similarly, the Indian National Congress and regional parties had participated in various movements like Khilafat, Civil Disobedience, Non-Cooperation, and Quit India, along with national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi. According to Khushwant Singh, a famous scholar of modern India, Indian independence is written in the blood of Muslims. Their contribution to the Indian freedom struggle is immense, even though Muslims constitute a small percentage of the population.

This article is an attempt to mention in brief only those very important Muslim patriots, events, revolts, battles, and names of martyred Muslims that were very important. The patriotic Muslim freedom fighters were fully aware of three aspects: first, to achieve independence from the British Empire; secondly, to fight jointly against the British rule under the Hindu-Muslim common unity against the British policy of 'Divide and Rule'; and thirdly, to maintain the integrity and unity of India under the nationalist policy. ■

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Our Relationship With The Prophet

- Abdur Rashid Siddiqui

We have truly sent you as a witness, as bearer glad tidings, and as a warner in order that you (O people) may believe in Allah and His Messenger, that you may assist him and honour him...

(al-Fath 48: 8-9)

The basis of our relationship with the Prophet (saws) is part of our iman. By reciting the Kalimah (Declaration of Faith) we acknowledge the Prophet Muhammad as Allah's Messenger. As a Messenger he brought and delivered Allah's (swt) message to mankind. There are two aspects of his Risalah (Prophet-hood). First, he delivered the message to his contemporaries living in Arabia. Second, his message was for the whole of mankind till the end of time as he was the last of the glorious chain of prophets. After his death this responsibility of conveying the message was assigned to this Ummah. He was sent as a witness unto mankind and this is exactly the task given to the Muslim Ummah. The Qur'an explicitly mentions this in Surah al-Hajj:

It is He Who named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation); that the Messenger may be a witness for you and you be witnesses for mankind..

(al-Hajj 22: 78)

As a witness unto mankind, he brought the glad tidings to those who accepted him as Allah's Messenger and

believed in him. They attained success in this life and falah (salvation) in the Hereafter. For those who rejected his message and followed the path of disobedience there was a dire warning: they could enjoy and indulge in lustful pursuits in this world but in the end they would be the losers and earn eternal damnation.

Believing that the Prophet (saws) is Allah's Messenger requires that we should obey him. Obedience to him is on a par with obedience to Allah as the Qur'an commands: "O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger..." (al-Nisa: 59). Obeying the Prophet is in fact obedience of Allah. He is the one who delivers Allah's message and we have no other means of knowing Allah's commands. Thus, verse 80 of Surah al-Nisa' explicitly lays down: "He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah." We should also take note that this obedience is without reservation. We should accept his commands willingly and not feel any hesitation or skepticism. Allah (swt) emphasises this point categorically in the following verses:

But no, by your Lord, they cannot have faith until they make you judge in all disputes between them and find in their hearts any resistance against your decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.

(al-Nisa'4: 65)

It is not fitting for a believer, man or woman, when a matter is decided by Allah and His Messenger to have an option about their decisions. If anyone disobeys Allah and His Messenger he is indeed on a clearly wrong path.

(al-Ahzab 33:36)

So take what the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you..

(al-Hashr 59: 7)

The same message is given in this hadith:

What I have forbidden to you, avoid: what I have ordered you [to do] do as much as you can.

(Bukhari and Muslim)

Unlike obedience of national laws in a country where one happens to reside and finding them repulsive but feeling compelled to obey, obedience of the Messenger has to be with full faith and fervour and not half-hearted and perfunctory. One cannot be a believer unless one surrenders oneself fully. It is narrated by ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As that Allah’s Messenger said:

None of you [truly] believes until his inclination accordance with what I have brought.

(Kitab al-Hujjah)

Obedience equates with formal adherence of laws and regulations to fulfil the legal requirements of the Shari’ah. However, believers are required to follow the Messenger diligently. This is called ittiba’ which

means to follow in the footsteps of others. The instruction given to the believers is: “Say: If you do love Allah follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins...” (Al-‘Imran3:31). The circle of ittiba’ is wider than that of ita’ah (obedience). The latter covers obligatory and compulsory requirements whereas the former covers optional and supererogatory works. Obedience at times maybe superficial and lacking sincerity whereas ittiba can only be performed with love and devotion. This is illustrated by the Companions’ conduct. For example ‘Abdullah ibn Umar was so strict in following the Prophet (saws) that he used to stop and pray where the Prophet happened to have done so. It is narrated that Shaikh Byazid Bustami did not eat watermelon as he did not know whether the Prophet had eaten this fruit and if so how he had eaten it.

Yet a much higher stage of our relationship with the Prophet is his love. Believers should have the utmost respect and love for the Prophet. It is reported that the Prophet (saws) said:

None of you [truly] believes until you love me more than your parents, children or any other person.

(Bukhri and Muslim)

This love manifested itself in the lives of the Companions. They were utterly devoted to the Prophet. When he performed wudu’ (ablution) the Companions usually collected the used water and sprinkled it on their faces. The Prophet once asked them why they

were doing so they replied because of their love for him (Mishkat). The Prophet (saws) once remarked:

Those who love my Sunnah (really) love me and those who love me will be in Jannah with me.

(Tirmidhi)

Once a father and his son travelled from their village and visited the Prophet (saws) and this was probably the only time they met him. They noticed that the top button of his shirt was undone. Thereafter, they always left their top buttons unfastened. When Abu Makhdhurah embraced Islam the Prophet (saws) touched his forehead and blessed him; from then on out of love for the Prophet he never clipped the hairs from his forehead. There are numerous such instances to be found in the lives of the Companions, love of the Prophet is indeed part of one's Iman.

Manifestation of one's love is not just an emotional outpouring but should also be reflected in strict obedience and following of the Prophet's path (saws). As he emphasised in the hadith quoted above about following his Sunnah to those who used the water from his ablution:

“Those who are pleased to love Allah and His Messenger should always speak the truth and if anything is entrusted to them they should keep it safe and return it to their owners.

They should also treat their neighbours well.”

(Mishkat)

Today the hearts of the Muslim Ummah, Al-Hamdulillah, are filled with love and respect for the Prophet (saws). People are ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of safeguarding his honour. Yet not much fervor is shown in obeying his commands and following his path. There are some people who are very particular about some of the Prophet's minor Sunnah as regards dress and appearance, yet they neglect his first and foremost Sunnah which is Da'wah. Allah (swt) addressing the Prophet (saws) said: “O Prophet! Truly We have sent you as a Witness, a Bearer of Glad Tidings, and a Warner and as one who invites to Allah's grace by His leave and as a Lamp Spreading Light” (al-Ahzab 33: 45-46). His greatest Sunnah, which he carried out from the day of his messenger-ship until his death, was to invite people to Islam. His parting message on his last Hajj was: “Those who are here should convey this message to those who are not here.” He asked the assembled gathering on the plains of 'Arafat three times: “Have I conveyed the message?” and the Companions replied “Yes you have” He raised his hand pointing towards the heavens and said: “May Allah be witness to this.” This is the Sunnah of the Prophet (saws) which we have to follow if we truly love him.

May Allah (swt) strengthen our bonds of love, affection and respect of the Prophet (saws) and guide us to follow his Sunnah to the best of our ability. ■

Scope of Cooperation Between Islam And Other Religions

- Justice K.A. Abdul Gafoor

Islam promotes peaceful coexistence among people following different faiths. So they are taught to live in a pluralistic society. As the Holy Qur'an teaches us, "In the beginning all the people followed the same way. (Afterwards there came change and differences arose)." See 2:213 Adam was the first Messenger of God Almighty and he is accepted by now by all as the common ancestor of mankind. All Muslims believe, as taught by the Holy Book, that several thousands of messengers were sent to different parts of the world when men went astray from the teachings of God, though names of only few among them are revealed in the Qur'an. Few of them have been given the divine books as well showing the humanity the right track. Authentic researches reveal the number of such messengers as about 124,000 and of the revealed books as 115.

So far as the Muslims all over the world, "They all believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books and Messengers. And they say, "We do not discriminate against any of His Messengers. We have heard the Message and submitted to it. Our Lord, we look up to You for forgiveness, for to You we shall all return." See 2:285. Thus, God enjoins the believers to equally respect all the Messengers and Books.

Islam holds that all Prophets came with the same message: there is only one God, and that He is indivisible, all-powerful, and God of every nation, tribe and people - whether they accept it or not. Islam's

vision has from the outset been a universal one. Moreover, the orientation and evolution of the early Muslim community under the Prophet Muhammad's guidance was worldly and pragmatic, with public good as the overarching principle.

As Samuel P. Huntington, a known political scientist, said, of all the objective elements which define civilisations, however, the most important usually is religion, as the Athenians emphasised. To a very large degree, the major civilisations in human history have been closely identified with the world's great religions. All the oriental faiths have this heritage, as Islam has. At the Same time, unfortunately, religions in every part of the globe have contributed all too often in human history to the aggravation of conflicts and wars. "Time and again we see leaders and members of religions incite aggression, fanaticism, hate, and xenophobia -even inspire and legitimise violent and bloody conflicts. Religion often is misused for purely power political goals, including war. We are filled with disgust", Parliament of the World's Religions in 1993 noted with regret. Throughout history we can observe brutal acts of individuals in the name of religions religion. And similar attitude among violent groups within the same religions were also not uncommon. Contemporary history is also not an exception.

This dialectics has to be handled carefully, and to defeat the destructive and

divisive elements of religions and to foster the inspiring and peace-building elements among religions, more strategic and effective ways of dialogue and cooperation among themselves and between the world of politics and that of religions are the only way out. In the words of former US President Jimmy Carter, "Religious representatives need to exercise their moral authority and mobilise the vast human resources of their communities in the service of peace making. The rest of us, in turn, must recognise the growing importance of religious factors for peace making and develop ways, both informal and formal, to cooperate with religious leaders and communities in promoting peace with justice." (Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (eds), *Religion. The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, Oxford University Press: New York, 1994, p. VIII).

Highlighting the urgent need for dialogue among civilisations and cultures in order to prevent major conflicts and the imminent need for inter-cultural and inter-religious peace-building, Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations asserted once, "All sensible people must wish to avoid such a clash. Certainly most Muslim leaders do.... One far-sighted leader of a Muslim country, President Muhammad Khatami of Iran, made a memorable speech on the subject to the United Nations General Assembly. He said, "The Islamic Revolution of the Iranian people... calls for a dialogue among civilizations and cultures instead of a clash between them'. At his suggestion, the assembly has since decided to proclaim the year 2001 as the United Nations Year

of Dialogue among Civilisations." (Kofi Annan, *Dialogue of Civilisation and the Need for a World Ethic*, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies: Oxford, 1999) Because, to borrow the words from Hans Kung, the foremost authority on interfaith relation: "There will be no peace among nations unless there is peace among religions. And there will be no peace among religions unless there is authentic dialogue among religions," (Hans Kung, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*, Crossroad: New York, 1991, p. xv).

Existence of diverse religions all over the globe is an accepted fact and that fact demands tolerance and respect to the 'other' from everyone.

Almighty taught us, "Then We revealed the Book to you (O Muhammad!) with Truth, confirming whatever of the Book was revealed before, and protecting and guarding over it. Judge, then, in the affairs of men in accordance with the Law that Allah has revealed, and do not follow their desires in disregard of the Truth which has come to you. For each of you We have appointed a Law and a way of life. And had Allah so willed. He would surely have made you one single community: instead, (He gave each of you a Law and a way of life) in order to test you by what He gave you. Vie, they one with another in good work. Unto Allah is the return of all of you; and He will then make you understand the truth concerning the matters on which you disagreed." See, 5:48

To those who do not believe the way you do, tell them, the Holy Qur'an guide us, "O disbelievers, I do not worship those

whom you worship, Nor are you worshippers of Him Whom I worship, Nor am I a worshipper of those whom you have worshipped, Nor are you worshippers of Him Whom I worship. For you is your religion and for me is mine." See. 1-6: 109. Perhaps the source of secular thought, the world has ever seen.

So far as Muslims world over are concerned, We believe in God and what was revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and to Issac and Jacob and his descendants, and the teachings which God gave to Moses and Jesus and to other Prophets. We make no distinction between any of them.'See3:84.

There is no compulsion and coercion in regard to religion. See 2:256. As is borne out by this command in the Qur'an, Muslims are to believe in all of the prophets sent by God as all of them were sent to guide the humanity. What this entails is that they are not permitted to show any form of disrespect to any prophet or to the specific religion which he taught to his followers. To a Muslim, religious belief must come out of choice, as God has also commanded not to use any kind of coercion in the matter of religion. It is the conviction of the followers of one faith, and certainly, not the compulsion they try to impose on others, that establish the moral force of their religion on earth. This was principle evident in the life and practice of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be to him), as well as the Madinan constitution, which he drew up, keeping in

mind the multi-religious community of Madinah. This great document guaranteed freedom of worship to all religious communities. Such step was in tune with the spirit of the Qur'an that shines into the hearts of all its perceptive readers. God says in the Qur'an that He has made people into nations and tribes so that they can know and deal with each other in an equal temper of kindness and generosity.

And all these And all these are messages for mutual respect, cooperation, doing virtue to others, and for peaceful coexistence.

According to the Holy Qur'an, Adam was the first man and God's first messenger to humanity. God ordained thousands of His messengers in various lands with the duty to do his best to bring back the humanity on the right track (See 2:213). Like this, on occasion after occasion, God went on appointing messengers from out of the men living in a given phase of human history and in a given part of the world. No phase of history nor any part of the world was left out without messengers. Only some of these messengers have been named in the Holy Book. Likewise only some of the revealed books find mention by name. Cod enjoins upon the believers to equally respect all these messengers and books (2:285).

Historically, Islamic scholars have agreed that the Qur'an gives "People of the Book" special status, allowing those who live in Muslim lands (called dhimmi – protected people) to practise their own religions and to own property. They were not subject to certain Islamic rules, such

as the prohibitions on alcohol and pork. Under the Islamic state, they were exempt from the draft, but were required to pay a tax known as jizyah, part of which went to charity and another part to finance churches and synagogues. They were, however, exempt from zakat, which is obligatory on Muslims. This practice later led Islamic countries to follow religious toleration towards Christians and Jews, although they were never accorded full status enjoyed by Muslims.

The Holy Qur'an teaches us, "It may well be that Allah will place love between you and those whose enmity you have now earned, Allah is All-powerful, and He is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful. Allah does not forbid you to treat kindly and act equitably towards those who have neither fought you in the matter of religion nor driven you out of your homes. Indeed Allah loves the just.

"He only forbids you to take for friends those who fought you in the matter of religion, and drove you out of your homes, and cooperated with others in your expulsion. Those who take them for friends are indeed the wrong doers. See 60:7-9, Muslims, therefore, accept other religions as the faith of the fellowmen and believe that true tolerance means permitting every adherent of a religion to live his life in accordance with the values and traditions of his religion; no matter how incorrect they may seem from the Islamic point of view.

It is not tolerance to try to pretend that differences do not exist. For example, when presented with two objects one of

which is black and the other white, it is not tolerance to say that both are grey. Neither is it tolerance to say that one particular religion is the same as another religion. Allow each one to follow the faith he chooses.

Muslims, and the millions of others who chose to remain Zoroastrians were accorded the same privileges and duties accorded by the Constitution to the Jews. Christians also received the same treatment. Following the conquest of India by Muhammad bin Qasim, the Muslims could see new religions like Buddhism and Hinduism, never known to them until then. It is said that Muhammad Bin Qasim sought instructions from the caliph in Damascus on how to treat Hindus and Buddhists. They were idol worshippers and their doctrines were at the farthest to Islam. Their founders were unheard of by Muslims. The caliph called a council of Ulema and asked them to render judgement on the basis of the governor's report. The judgement was that as long as Hindus and Buddhists did not fight the Islamic state, as long as they paid the jizyah or tax due, they must be free to worship their gods as they please, to maintain their temple, and to determine their lives by the precepts of their faith. Thus, the same status as that of the Jews and Christians was accorded to them. These historical facts revealed a new situation occurred after the Qur'an and paved a new way for coexistence in tune with the divine orders and the precedents shown by the Prophet.

"Verily, Great is the Glory of the

Divine Creator.” This is not a verse from the Qur’an, but from the Rig Veda 5:81:1. In every respect it is similar to “Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds. The Qur’an:1:2. When Arjun preferred not to fight, having his conscience burdened with the prospect of killing of his relatives, Lord Krishna advised Arjun to strive for Yoga, which is the art of all work. There are several verses in the Bhagvad Gita where Krishna advises Arjun to fight the enemies even though they were his relatives. Fight for Dharma is thus promoted and such fight is what is termed in the Qur’an as Jihad, which nowadays is totally misunderstood or misinterpreted by many.

The fundamental virtues do not differ in religions. Those who believe in the Great Creator of the universe and of the best creation, the humanity, cannot live in enmity, as the Creator orders them to be kind to others. The reason for the feud among the believers that may crop up at times is not the difference in belief. Poverty, underdevelopment, unjust treatment, discrimination and corruption when manifest towards a particular group in a locality, are fertile grounds for the rise or growth of extremist religious tendencies, In such societies those who reject the status quo or who oppose the government in power, may find it easy to gather the support of the suffering poor who are the vast majority in that group, by making appeal to extravagant religious claims. The social or economic reasons for such impairments never come to light to address solutions. The resources of the State will have to be deployed for

maintaining law and order. Building up of common platforms to address the problems in its real perspective will be the better option to outlive such outbursts.

In pre-independent India, when the soul of the country was against colonialism, all rose to the occasion to fight for swaraj with the different flags along with the then tri-colour. That historical feeling of oneness shall be nurtured again to fight the common enemies like poverty discrimination and other vices in the society. Relations between various religionists will make more progress if there is increased attention on all sides to the true spiritual dimension. Knowledge of other religions, religious freedom, meetings and common projects are important aspects and have to be promoted by all. But they alone are not enough. Greater attention to God is necessary. The true spirits of all religions call for egalitarianism and justice. So they can jointly fight against all types of injustice, whether social, political or economic. Statistics reveals that 20 per cent of humanity consumes 80 per cent of the earth’s resources, leaving only 20 per cent to four-fifths of humanity. Moreover, certain rich countries restrain food production for the sake of balancing market prices, while there are poor countries whose inhabitants do not have enough to eat. And no one needs the experts to know that the earth’s resources can be devastated or slowly depleted by greed, carelessness and war.

The money spent for purchase of weaponry world over can very easily

eradicate hunger from the earth. Here is a rich area for collaboration in a world in which people realise more and more their interdependence. Islam makes it incumbent upon every Muslim to respect other religions. And Muslims feel that Islam should also be understood and respected by the others and vice-e-versa. The people of the east have also to work along with those in the west agreeing to fight the common enemies of the men on earth.

In the present day world of global warming, interfaith cooperation should agree on the need to protect the environment, a principle which no religion disputes. Religions, organising for dialogues have to find out new understandings and areas of agreement, where immediate interventions are required, whether it is local, regional, national, or international issues.

To understand each other and to know that another's faith does not revolt mine is an important aspect. Today a large majority among us are guided by notions and not knowledge, to judge others. Our understandings are far from the truth and reality. Many even do not know the fundamental principles of their own religions, in the right perspective. When misgivings govern us, misunderstandings lead us to misdeeds. Interfaith dialogue helps us to understand ourselves as well as others.

We have attained greater technological progress, and yet we are faced with worldwide poverty, hunger, unemployment, misery and the destruction

of nature at more levels than before. Many peoples are threatened with economic ruin, social disarray and political marginalisation. In such a critical situation humanity needs not only political progress and actions, but also a vision for a peaceful life. Laws, prescriptions and conventions, which are in plenty everywhere, alone cannot promote justice and peace. Of course, religions, by themselves, also cannot solve the economic, political and social problems. Religions, however, are able to provide people with a meaning for their lives, ultimate standard of life. For this they have to eliminate the conflicts which spring from the religions themselves and dismantle mutual hostile images and prejudices, fear and mistrust.

Let us therefore chalk out plans for cooperation among our religions focusing on common issues staring at our folk and thus build bondage, knowing more about each other through meaningful dialogues and fruitful interactions. We shall reaffirm "That we all have a responsibility for a better global order; that involvement for the sake of human rights, freedom, justice, peace and the preservation of the earth is reasonable and necessary; that our different religious and cultural traditions must not prevent our common involvement in opposing all forms of inhumanity and working for greater humaneness." ■

[Extracted from a paper presented by Justice K.A. ABDUL GAFOOR at International Dialogue between Islam & Oriental Religions held in New Delhi on February 20-21, 2010]

The Hakim Who Cultivated Indigo & Promoted Astronomy

- P.C. Sarkar

Nawab Mirza Mehdi Ali Khan, also known as Muntazim-ud-Daula, was born in around 1743-44 in Kashmir, although his family originally hailed from Persia, from where they later migrated to Delhi in the early 18th century. Following his father's death, Mehdi moved to Lucknow, embarking upon a remarkable trajectory that would transform him from a native doctor to an enormously wealthy entrepreneur and, ultimately, the reformist wazir of Awadh.

He also became part of a circle of emerging entrepreneurs, including indigo cultivation later on, amassing enough wealth - first assuming the role of a 'chak-ladar' (revenue collector) and then as 'nazim' (revenue official) under Sa'adat Ali Khan, the sixth nawab of Awadh. Initially stationed at Muhammadi (present-day Kheri district), Hakim Mehdi broadened his writ in additional districts such as Khairabad (present-day Sitapur), Bahraich and Gonda.

In 1819, the Hakim experienced a conflict with Agha Mir, the wazir (prime minister) of Ghazi-ud-Din Haider; he acquired land in the nearby British territory of Farrukhabad transferring Rs 8,00,000 across the border. At an opportune moment, he successfully left Awadh, thus evading the harsh penalties he would have faced had Agha Mir

succeeded in deposing and arresting him.

By 1820, Hakim Mehdi had formed a partnership in the indigo trade with one William Morton, who saw the influential Hakim as a means of securing funds, rather than resorting to traditional borrowing.

As per his financial status, the Hakim's house was reported to be 'magnificently furnished in the European style with a profusion of pier glasses, mirrors, French organs and fancy clocks of the most costly description as well as coo-coo [sic] clocks, musical boxes etc.'

Ironically, Hakim Mehdi was appointed as wazir of Awadh in 1830, after the dismissal of Agha Mir (discussed in an earlier article). By this time, he was reported to be 'one of the richest men in India.' The Hakim promptly took several steps to correct the faltering economy of the kingdom, but in the process, managed to antagonise the king and also his begums within a short period of time. The king was enraged that the Hakim had obtained the titles of 'Nizam-ul-Mulk' and 'Sipahdar Jang' directly from the Mughal emperor, without the former's consent.

The begums were furious as their extravagant religious practices, which were actually proving to be a burden on the royal coffers, had been curtailed by

the new wazir. Hakim Mehdi also drastically downsized the armed forces of the king from 50,000 to 35,000, which included the disbanding of foot and cavalry soldiers, as well as artillery men.

Although Hakim sahib tried to economise spending, and it goes to his credit that his efforts yielded a surplus for the exchequer, he also proposed several grandiose plans for execution. Among these were the establishment of the observatory (Taaron Wali Kothi), the Ghazi-ud-Din Haider canal, which aimed to link the Gomti and Ganga, the erection of the Iron Bridge, a college aimed for 'improving the social condition of the natives of Oude', a native hospital, Dar-ul-Shifa, and another educational establishment, specifically for Kashmiri students.

The Hakim also established a shawl factory, which employed 300 Kashmiri artisans, who sourced wool from their state. This brought a sizable number of Kashmir migrants to Lucknow, who were encouraged to settle in the 'gulam gardish' of the late Sa'adat Ali Khan's maqbara (mausoleum).

Hakim Mehdi also managed to convince the king, Nasir-ud-Din Haider, that the British should vacate the Residency and move bag and baggage to the Dilkusha, so that a new palace complex could be built along the Gomti. For all his efforts, he was dismissed from the Wizarat in 1832 at the instigation of Badshah Begum and

exiled to his home turf of Farrukhabad.

He continued to languish there till 1837, when he was reinstated as wazir in September 1837 by the then reigning king, Mohammad Ali Shah. The Hakim, who, by now, was of advanced age, did not survive his second innings for long and died shortly afterwards in December 1837. Thus ended the life and times of a person sometimes referred as 'the stormy petrel of Awadh politics' - who rose from a family of sufis, flourished as a native doctor, became an enormously wealthy entrepreneur and lived out his last days as wazir of the kingdom of Awadh.

Hakim Mehdi lies buried in a formerly ornate tomb in the old city, on present-day Jagat Narain Road. The tomb had prominent cupolas in its four corners, with the usual central dome and stucco ornamentation on its exteriors and interiors. There was a square chamber in the middle with chamfered corners, containing the graves of not only Hakim Mehdi but also his elder brother and nephew.

The structure is now in a ruinous condition, having collapsed in parts and whatever remains of the building being encroached upon. The locality of Mehdiganj, located in the old quarter of the city, was established by the Hakim and so named in his honour. ■

PC Sarkar, former scientist, has authored several books on the forgotten heritage of Lucknow (The Hindustan Times, 19-04-2026)

Ja 'far bin Abu Talib (R.A.)

- Abdul Aziz Ash-Shanawi

'Abdullah bin Ja'far (RA): The First Muslim Born In Al-Habashah

Allah (SWT) provided Ja'far bin Abu Talib (RA) with a son, and he named him 'Abdullah (RA); he was the first Muslim born in A-Habashah, and on the same day, a child was born to An-Najashi (RA) as well. An-Najashi (RA) summoned Ja'far (AS) and said to him, "What name did you give to your child?"

"I named him 'Abdullah," said Ja'far (RA). An-Najashi then declared that he named his son 'Abdullah as well, and Ja'far's wife, Asma bint 'Umais (RA), suckled both her own child and An-Najashi's son. The two 'Abdullahs thus became nursing brothers.

Some Of The Prophet's Companions Return To Arabia

Through various means, the Prophet's Companions (RA) in Al-Habashah gained news of the events that were taking place in Makkah. They learned that, after the Ansar had pledged allegiance to the Prophet (SWS) at Al-Aqabah, the Muslims in Makkah began migrating to Al-Madinah, until finally the Prophet (SWS) and Abu Bakr (RA) migrated as well. Then news reached them of how the Muslims defeated the polytheists in the Battle of Badr and of how many of Islam's staunchest enemies died in the battle - such as Abu Jahl, 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah, Shaibah bin Rabi'ah, Umayyah bin Khalaf, An-Nadr bin Al-Harith, and 'Uqbah bin Mu'ait. In all, seventy polytheists were killed during the battle, and seventy were taken as prisoners, among whom were Suhail bin 'Amr and Al-'Abbas bin 'Abdul-Muttalib.

All of this good news indicated that it was time for some of the Muslims in Al-

Habashah to return, not to their homes in Makkah, but to the new land of the Muslims, Al-Madinah. Thus did Ja'far (RA) and many others return; among them were Ja'far's son, 'Abdullah (RA); Ja'far's wife, Asma bint 'Umais; (RA) the Mother of the Believers, Umm Habibah bint Abu Sufyan; and 'Amr bin Umayyah Ad-Damri. They boarded a sea-vessel and began their journey to the city of the Messenger of Allah (SWS).

The Prophet (SWS) was very happy with the return of his cousin, Ja'far, and of the other Muslims who returned from Al-Habashah. He embraced Ja'far (RA), kissed him between his eyes, and said, "I cannot say which of two matters I am more pleased with - with the return of Ja'far or with the conquering of Khaibar."

Of the spoils of war that were gained at Khaibar, the Prophet (SWS) gave shares only to those who participated in the expedition with him and to those who returned from Al-Habashah (52 Companions (RA) had returned).

"I Have The Greatest Right Over Her"

As the Prophet was leaving Makkah after having performed 'Umrah, he was followed by his niece, 'Umarah, (RA) the daughter of Hamzah bin Abdul-Muttalib (RA), who was still a child at the time. 'Ali (RA) picked her up, but a dispute then ensued between 'Ali, Ja'far, and Zaid bin Harithah (RA). Each one of them wanted to keep her and rear her. Zaid bin Harithah (RA) said, "I have the greatest right over her, for she is the daughter of my brother (he and Hamzah (RA) weren't blood brothers; rather, while they were in Makkah, the Messenger of Allah (SWS), established a bond of brotherhood between the two)."

"I have a greater right over her, for

she is the daughter of my uncle, and I brought her from Makkah,” said ‘Ali (RA).

“ I have a greater right over her, for she is the daughter of my uncle, and her Khalah (mother’s sister) is under me,” said Ja’far (RA)

The matter was then left for the Prophet (SWS) to decide. He (SWS) said to Zaid, “You are my brother and Maulá (here meaning: supporter, helper).” He (SWS) then said to ‘Ali (RA):

“You are from me, and I am from you.”

And finally, he (SWS) said to Ja’far (RA):

“You have resembled me in your physical appearance and in your character.” He (SWS) then ruled that Ja’far (RA) had the greatest right over the child because the child’s Khalah (mother’s sister) was under him, and a Khalah is of the same ranking as a mother.

The Death Of An-Najashi

When Jibril (AS) informed the Messenger of Allah that An-Najashi (RA), the king of Al-Habashah, had died, he (SWS) said to his Companions (RA), “Indeed, your brother An-Najashi .has died, so, ask forgiveness (from Allah) for him.”

He (SWS) then went out to the place of prayer, and there he lined his Companions in rows; and he said to those who were seated: “Indeed, your brother An-Najashi has died, so stand and pray over him.”

Meanwhile, the hypocrites said, “Look at him; he is praying over a Christian disbeliever, and he is commanding us to pray over a disbeliever from the disbelievers of Al-Habashah.” Then Allah revealed the Verse:

“And there are, certainly, among the people of Scripture (Jews and Christians) those who believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to you, and in that which has been revealed to them, humbling

themselves before Allah. They do not sell the Verses of Allah for a little price..”

His Closeness To The Prophet (SWS)

One day, while Ja’far (RA) and other Companions were seated in the Masjid, the Messenger of Allah (SWT) came out and sat beside Ja’far (RA) .He then addressed him, saying,

“You have resembled me in your physical appearance and in your manners, and you are from the tree that I am from..”

And he (SWS) looked at Ja’far’s son, ‘Abdullah (RA) who was seated beside his father, and he (SWS) said: “Ja’far resembles me in his physical appearance and in his character. And as for you, O’ Abdullah, among Allah’s creation you most resemble your father.”

The Battle Of Al-Umara

The Muslim army made camp at Al-Jurf, and the Prophet’s instructions were clear. He (SWS) said:

“Zaid bin Harithah is the leader of the people (i.e., of the army), and if Zaid is killed, then Ja’far bin Abu Talib (becomes leader). And if he is killed, then ‘Abdullah bin Rawahah (becomes leader); and if ‘Abdullah bin Rawahah is killed, then let the Muslims be pleased with a man among them and then make him in charge of them.”

Ja’far (RA) said, “O Messenger of Allah, I did not want you to choose Zaid over me.”

“Go forth, for indeed, you do not know what is better (for you),” answered the Prophet (SWS) Ja’far bin Abu Talib (RA) obeyed the Prophet’s command, and soon thereafter the Muslim army began its march towards Ash-Sham (Syria and surrounding regions; it was then a province under the control of the Roman Empire). Soon after they arrived at their destination, the leaders of the Muslim army came to know that the Romans had prepared an army of 10,000,

while their army consisted of only 3000 fighters. Zaid bin Harithah (RA) and Ja'far bin Abu Talib (RA) both voiced the same thought: "We will write to the Messenger of Allah (SWS) informing him of our enemy's numbers. Then he will either help us by sending more men or he will give us an order (to go forth as we are), and we will then execute it for him."

But 'Abdullah bin Rawahah (RA) encouraged the people, calling out, "O people: by Allah, that which you dislike is that which you came out for in the first place. You came out seeking martyrdom. And we do not fight people with numbers or strength ...rather, we fight them only with this religion, with which Allah (SWT) has honored us. Therefore, it is one of two good things: either victory or martyrdom."

The people echoed the same answer: "By Allah, Ibn Rawahah has spoken the truth," Seeing this commitment and courage, the leaders of the army decided to go ahead and fight. When the Muslims met with Hiraql's army [Hiraql(Heraclius) was the governor of Ash-Sham for the Roman empire], they assembled their forces at a place called Mu'tah. Zaid bin Harithah (RA) had organized the army well, appointing Qutbah bin Qatadah to lead the right flank, 'Ubadah bin Malik Al-Ansari (RA) to lead the left flank, and himself along with the two other leaders Ja'far (RA) and Ibn Rawahah (RA)– to lead the heart of the army.

The fighting then commenced, and Zaid bin Harithah (RA) with the Prophet's flag, fought until he (RA) was killed. Ja'far (RA) then picked up the flag, and continued the fight on horseback. Then he descended and continued to fight on foot, until his right arm was cut off; he took the flag with his left hand, but then it too was cut off. He then hugged the lag, so that it would not fall to the ground; and he continued to fight

as he could until he was killed (RA) was killed as well. Then 'Abdullah bin Rawahah (RA) picked up the flag.

Meanwhile, the Messenger of Allah (SWS) was able, by the will of Allah, to see the battle while he himself was in Al-Madinah. The Messenger of Allah (SWS) called out, "The prayer is gathering." He (SWS) then climbed the pulpit, with tears flowing from his eyes. He (SWS) said:

"O people ...I will inform you about your attacking army; they went forth and met the enemy, and Zaid -may Allah be pleased with him - was killed a martyr, so ask forgiveness (from Allah) for him. Then Ja'far -may Allah be pleased with him –took the flag, and he fought strongly against the people (the enemy) until he was killed a martyr, and so ask forgiveness (from Allah) for him. Then 'Abdullah bin Rawahah -May Allah be pleased with him -took the flag, and he kept his feet firm until he was killed a martyr, so ask forgiveness (from Allah) for him. Then Khalid bin Al-Walid took the flag, though he was not from the (appointed) leaders ... but he is a sword from the swords of Allah, and so he returned (safely) with His help.

The Prophet (SWS) then got up and entered Ja'far's home; he (SWS) informed Ja'far's wife, Asma bint Umais (RA), of what had happened, and she began to cry. The Prophet (SWS) said:

"For one such as Ja'far should a female crier cry."

The Prophet (SWS) then hugged 'Abdullah bin Jafar (RA) and said:

"O Allah, Ja'far has went forth to the best of rewards, so provide for his offspring with the best that You provide for the offspring of one of your slaves."

At the time of his death Ja'far -may Allah be pleased with him -was 41 years old. ■

(Concluded)

Around the World

Obama, Mamdani go to Preschool in NYC

New York: Former US President Barack Obama met with New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani for the first time at a child care centre where they read to pre-schoolers and led a sing-along. Obama and Mamdani did not take questions after reading the book “Alone and Together” to the children and leading a sing-along of “The Wheels on the Bus.” ■

Break Thought Prizes Awarded To Scientists in US

Los Angeles: French mathematician Frank Merle received the Breakthrough Prize for his work on nonlinear equations describing the behaviour of waves, fluids and other systems in Santa Monica, California. The prizes are popularly known as the “Oscars of Science”. Big names from the worlds of technology, music and sports and Hollywood A-listers gathered at the ceremony. Jean Bennett and Albert Maguire, professors of ophthalmology, and Katherine High, professor of paediatrics, received the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences. Six \$3million prizes were awarded in Life Sciences, Physics and Mathematics. ■

North Korea Fires Multiple Ballistic Missiles Into Sea

SEOUL: North Korea test-fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles, South Korea’s military said. The launches add to a series of weapons tests Pyongyang has carried out in recent weeks, including ballistic missiles, anti-warship cruise missiles and cluster munitions. ■

Canada’s US Ties Have Become A Weakness: Carney

CALGARY: Canada’s close ties to the US were once strength but have become a weakness, Prime Minister Mark Carney said, in a video message to his country in which he so praised the heroism of military leaders who fought against U.S. invasion more than two centuries ago. ■

Duterte to Face Trial on ‘Crimes Against Humanity’ Charges

JUDGES AT the International Criminal Court confirmed crimes against humanity charges against former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte for deadly anti-drugs crackdowns he allegedly over-saw while in office. A three-judge panel found unanimously there were “substantial-grounds” to believe the ex-leader was responsible for dozens of murders, first as mayor of the southern Philippine city of Davao and later when he was president from 2016 to 2022. Duterte, 80, was arrested in the Philippines last year. ■

Bill To Restrict Social Media For Teens Passed

TURKISH LAWMAKERS passed a bill that includes restricting access to social media platforms for children under 15, state media reported. The legislation is the latest in a global trend to protect young people from dangerous on-line activity. The bill will force social media platforms to install age-verification systems, provide parental control tools and require companies to rapidly respond to content deemed harmful, the state-run Anadolu news agency said. ■

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