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Chief Editor
Asghar Ali Imam Mahadi Salafi

Editor
Dr. Abul Hayat Ashraf

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Address:
Markazi Jamiat-e-Ahle Hadees Hind

Ahle Hadees Manzil
4116, Urdu Bazar, Jama Masjid,
Delhi-110006

Ph: 011-23273407

Fax: 011-23246613

websit: www.ahlehadees.org

E-mail: Jamiatahlehadesshind@hotmail.com

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WORLD REFUGEE DAY AND MAYANMAR MUSLIMS

The widespread killings of Rohingya Muslims in Burma (or Mayanmar) have received only passing and dispassionate coverage in most media.

Not all Muslims in Burma are from the Rohingya ethnic group. Some are descendants of Indian immigrants, some have Chinese ancestry, and some even have early Arab and Persian origins. Burma (Mayanmar) is a country with a population of an estimated 60 million, only 4 percent of whom are Muslims. Unfortunately, the country is found embroiled in one of the worst ethnic cleansing of its own people-the Rohingya Muslims-at the hands of Rakhine Budhists. Their plight is indeed no better than those being suffered by the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. The recent bloodshed of the Rohingya Muslim Community at the hands of the Rakhine extremist Buldhists in Mayanmar has broken all the record of religious cleansing.

The Burmese government's step motherly treatment of its Muslim citizens is not new. According to reports, till 1999 there have been no less than 20 major operations of eviction campaigns directed against the Rohingya Muslims that were carried out by the successive governments of Burma.

In the recent months thousands of Burmese

Muslims have been butchered, while brutal methods of torturing, killing, inflicting physical and causing mental harm on them were employed by the Budhists who are in majority in the country.

Although the US and some western countries which claim to be the champion of human rights in the world have issued some verbal statements regarding humanitarian tragedy in Mayanmar, yet no practical action has been taken against the brutal rulers of the country. Recently wooden boats carrying between 6000 to 20000 Rohingya refugees were stranded in Andaman Sea braving all odds and adverse circumstances. They were forcibly displaced by Budhists.

United Nations High Commisisoner for Refugees (UNHCR) will mark World Refugee Day 2015 in some 120 countries and will organize campaign programmes in this regard.

In India, there are 6500 Rohingya migrants with refugee status but there are thousands more living without any source of livelihood and without the support from the government.

Let us feel their pain as human beings without narrow nationalism. The very horrible and painful condition of Rohingya Muslims questions our humanity. Won't our conscience drive us to do the needful.

THEY WANDER ABOUT

“As for poets, only the wayward follow them. Do you not see that they wander about in every valley and say things which they do not act upon, except those who believed and acted righteously and remembered Allah much, and when they themselves were subjected to wrong, they exacted retribution no more than to the extent of the wrong? Soon will the perpetrators of the wrong know what they shall end up with”. (Surah As-Shua’ra 26-224-227)

These verses emphasise that those who frequent the company of poets are quite different from the Companions of the Messenger (S.A.W.). Those belonging to one group are known for their sobriety, their civilized and gentle behaviour, their uprightness, fear of God, and their deep sense of responsibility. They are distinguished by their high degree of honesty and trustworthiness in their dealing with others. Their tongues utter nothing except good.

The other group is those whose pastime is to zestfully portray erotic adventures to the applause of an audience who has a penchant for such stuff. They try to arouse enmity against others.

Explaining the verse, Abdullah Yusuf Ali Writes: “The poets to be read along with the exceptions mentioned in verse 227 below. Poetry and other arts are not in themselves evil, but may on the contrary be used in the service of religion and righteousness. But there is a danger that they may be prostituted for base purposes. If they are insincere (“they say what they do not) “or are divorced from actual life or its goodness or its serious purpose, they may become instruments of evil or futility. They then wander about without any set purpose, and seek the depths (valleys) of human folly rather than the heights of divine light.

The verse 227 makes four exceptions to the general condemnation of poets in the previous verse; first, those who believe in God, in His Prophets, in His Books and in the Hereafter; secondly those who are pious and live within moral bounds; thirdly, those who constantly remember God; and fourthly, those who do not arouse racial and nationalistic prejudice.

Here “perpetrators of wrong” signify those who brazenly resorted to the vile propaganda against the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.)



MAKING HASTE IN BREAKING THE FAST

1) Sahl Bin Sa'ad (R.A.A.) relates that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said: "The people (Muslims) will remain on the right path as long as they make haste in breaking the fast immediately after the sun has set and the time to pray after breaking of fast has arrived. (*Bukhari and Muslim*)

2) Salman Bin 'Amir Zabai as-Sahali (R.A.A.) relates that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said: When somebody breaks his fast then he should do so with a date. If he does not get it, then with water for it is pure and purifies others. (*Abu Daud and Tirmizi*)

3) Abu Hurairah (R.A.A.) says that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said: Allah, the Almighty and Master of Honour says: All other actions of a person are for himself, except the case of his fasting which is exclusively for Me and I shall pay (recompense) for him for the same. The fast is a shield (against vice and the fire of Hell). Therefore when anyone of you is fasting he should abstain from loose talk and avoid verbosity and noisy exchange of words. If somebody starts abusing him or picks up a quarrel with him, he should tell him that "I am observing a fast. "By Allah in whose hands is

the life of Muhammad (S.A.W.) the breath of the mouth of one who is fasting is more pleasant in the sight of Allah than the fragrance of musk. A fasting person gets two kinds of pleasure. Firstly he reads pleasure when he breaks his fast, and secondly he will be joyful by virtue of his fast, when he meets his sustainer (*Bukhari and Muslim*)

4) Abu Hurairah (R.A.A.) relates that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said: A person who spends a pair of anything for the sake of Allah, will be called from the gates of paradise thus: "O servant of Allah, this gate is better for you. Thus a person who is regular in offering Salat (prayer) will be called from the gate of Salat and those persons who observe Fast for the sake of Allah, will be called (to enter into heaven) from the gate of Raiyan i.e. the gate of freshness. The person who gives alms, will be called (to enter paradise from the gate of Charity). Abubakr said, "O Messenger of Allah! May my parents be sacrificed for you, although a person who is called (to enter heaven) from any of those gates, does not need this, yet will anyone be called from all these gates? He (S.A.W.) answered: Yes, and I hope that you will be one of them? (*Bukhari and Muslim*)

CHARITY: ITS REALM AND IMPORTANCE

By Dr. Aisha Hamdan

Let us consider for a moment just one aspect of Muslims' duty regarding sadaqah as highlighted in the hadeeth of Prophet Muhammad, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam, "Sadaqah is obligatory every day on every joint of a human being." (*Bukhari and Muslim*). If humans were to adhere to this simple instruction, how much poverty could be eliminated? How happier the world we live in would be?

What is Sadaqah?

Sadaqah is an Islamic term that means charity or charitable act. It comes from the root word sadq or sidq which means "to speak the truth, to be sincere." This is related to the idea that only those who are sincere-in faith will easily give of what they possess and also that being true to one's religion obligates one to perform charity. Although giving of money to the poor and needy comes to mind when discussing sadaqah, the meaning goes far beyond that to cover its comprehensive nature. Sadaqah (charity) is any good deed that benefits some one and for which a Muslim will receive due reward from Allah. It requires sincerity of intention, altruistic motives, and seeking Allah's, pleasure (for His sake alone). Giving money can

be easy at times, but it is the true and sincere effort to assist others in various ways, while requiring sacrifice, that represents the genuine nature of sadaqah.

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, "Whoever relieves a Muslim of some distress in this world, Allah will relieve him of some distress on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is easy-going with a debtor who is facing hardship, Allah will make it easy for him in this world and in the Hereafter. And whoever conceals a Muslim's faults Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah will help His servant so long as His servant helps his brother." (*Muslim*)

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, "Every Muslim has to give in charity." The people asked, "O Allah's Prophet! If someone has nothing to give, what will he do?" He said, "He should work with his hands and benefit himself and also give in charity (from what he earns)." The people further asked, "If he cannot find even that?" He replied, "He should help the needy who appeal for help." Then the people asked, "If he cannot do that?" He replied, "Then he should perform good deeds and keep away from evil deeds, this will be regarded as charitable deeds." (*Bukhari*)

Recommended Nature of Sadaqah

Sadaqah is an essential element of the religion of Islam that is heavily emphasized. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, “Every small bone of everyone has upon it a charity for every day upon which the sun rises...” (*Bukhari and Muslim*) Allah’s Messenger (S.A.W.) also said, “Give (as a sadaqah) and do not give reluctantly lest Allah should give you in a limited amount; and do not withhold your money lest Allah should withhold it from you.” (*Bukhari*)

Although the wording in these ahadeeth may seem to point to the obligatory nature of sadaqah, most commentators understand this to mean “strong recommendation”. Some scholars interpret the charity to refer to acts of gratitude. In that case, some of these would be obligatory and some would be recommended. The obligatory aspect of gratitude toward Allah, for His bounties would entail performing the mandatory duties and refraining from the prohibited deeds. The recommended aspect of gratitude would go beyond this and include performance of voluntary, recommended deeds (such as those highlighted in the ahadeeth) and avoidance of disliked actions. In either case, the sadaqah that we are discussing would fall into the category of voluntary and strongly recommended deeds.

Hasten in Giving Sadaqah

The Prophet (S.A.W.) in several ahadeeth encouraged the people to hasten in giving charity as that would benefit them the most. It should not be delayed until time when the person is no longer able to donate or until he or she no longer

finds an eligible recipient. A man asked the Prophet, “O Messenger of Allah! What kind of charity is the best?” He replied. “To give in charity when you are healthy and greedy, hoping to be wealthy and afraid of becoming poor. Don’t delay giving in charity till the time when you are on the deathbed when you say, ‘Give so much to so-and so and so much to so-and so, and at that time the property is not yours but it belongs to so-and-so (i.e., your inheritors).’ (*Bukhari and Muslim*) This means that giving of charity should not be postponed until the time of death or after death. In these times, many people leave their wealth and belongings in a written will to be distributed after death, but this is some thing that is discouraged in Islam. Giving should be carried out when the person is strong and able and in a state of desiring wealth. One of the purposes of sadaqah is to purify the soul of the yearning for material possessions and this cannot be realized after death.

The Prophet (S.A.W.) provided the finest example of this principle. Uqbah ibnul Harith narrated “Once the Prophet (S.A.W.) offered the Asr salah and then hurriedly went to his house and returned immediately. 1 (or somebody else) asked him (as to what was the matter) and he said, ‘I left at home a piece of gold which was from the charity and I disliked to let it remain a night in my house, so I had it distributed.’” (*Bukhari*) The Prophet did not want to keep the gold in his house for even one night. Oftentimes, we see the opposite in the world today, with people finding it difficult to part with even the smallest piece of gold or jewelry.

There will also come a time when it will be difficult to find someone who is eligible to receive charity (primarily in monetary form). A person should not delay in giving as this may occur in their lifetime. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, “(O people!) Give in charity (for Allah’s cause) because a time will come when a person will carry his object of charity from place to place (and he will not find any person to take it) and any person whom he shall request to take it, I will reply, ‘if you had brought it yesterday I would have taken it, but today I am not in need of it.’” (*Bukhari*)

Be Persistent

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, “O people! You should do whatever good deeds you can, for Allah does not stop giving reward until you stop doing good deeds. And the most beloved of deeds to Allah is that which a person persists, even if it is a little. If the family of Muhammad started to do something, they would persist in it.” (*Bukhari and Muslim*) It is not enough to sporadically carry out acts of goodness, but a Muslim should be persistent in sadaqah, even if it is only something small. This is something that the Prophet (S.A.W.) encouraged for it provides ongoing benefit to the individual and society.

Recipients of Sadaqah

Zakah can only be given to Muslims, while other forms of sadaqah may be given to both Muslims and non-Muslims alike as long as the non-Muslims are not in a state of war against the Muslims. Allah says, “*Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion*

nor drove you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity.” (60:8)

It is allowed to give sadaqah to non-Muslim family members as well in order to maintain and strengthen the ties of kinship. Asmaa, the daughter of Abu Bakr said, “My mother came to me when she was still a polytheist. I consulted the Messenger of Allah saying, ‘O Messenger of Allah, my mother has come to me and she is asking for help. Should I uphold the ties of kingship with her? He said, ‘Yes, uphold the ties of kinship with her.’” (*Bukhari*)

It is preferable, however, to give sadaqah to the poor and needy Muslims since this may help them obey Allah and assist them in both the worldly and spiritual affairs. It also strengthens the bonds of brotherhood among Muslims, especially when the poor among the Muslims far outnumber the rich (as is today). If it is known that the Muslim will use it for sinful purposes or to harm another Muslim, then it is not allowed to give it to that person.

Specific Types of Sadaqah, Paying Zakah

Zakah is a specific form of sadaqah that is compulsory for every Muslim who has wealth beyond his or her needs. The requirement is that 2.5% of wealth beyond necessities should be given each year. The focus of zakah is on material wealth and its purification, while sadaqah is a more comprehensive term applied to any good deed. The goal of both is to achieve a spiritual, moral, and just climate in which all individuals can live in peace and contentment. While zakah deals primarily with the economic aspect, sadaqah encompasses the economic, the social,

and the moral. Zakah is also an obligatory action, while sadaqah is recommended.

Feeding the poor and needy

Feeding the poor and needy is one of the obvious forms of sadaqah. Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala, says, *"And what can make you know what is (breaking through) the difficult pass? It is the freeing of a slave; or feeding on a day of severe hunger, an orphan of near relationship; or a needy person in misery; and then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion. Those are the companions of the right."* (90:12-18)

He also says, *"No! But you do not honor the orphan; and you do not encourage one another to feed the poor; And you consume inheritance, devouring (it) altogether; And you love wealth with immense love."* [89:17-20] And, *"Every soul, ... what it has earned, will be retained; except the companion of the right, (who will be) in gardens, questioning each other about the criminals, (and asking them), 'What put you into hellfire? They will say, we were not of those who prayed nor did we use to feed the poor. And we used to enter into vain discourse with those who engaged (in it), and we used to deny the Day of Recompense."* (74:38-46)

When we understand the hunger and suffering that million of people experience due just to the lack of food and potable water, it is truly astounding. It is even more astonishing to learn that the planet contains a sufficient supply of food to feed every human being and that the real problems are distribution and politics. In some

countries perfectly good food is dumped in order to raise prices. Governments without food and encourage poverty as a form of control of its own people. Sanctions are used as a form of punishment against whole countries, with the weakest members of the social suffering the most. At the root of this is the love of wealth and power. As Allah says, *"And you love wealth with immense love."*

Muslims, on the other hand, are encouraged to give monetary charity beyond the obligatory zakah, when they know that others are in need. They should share their food and belongings with those who have less than them since this eases the pain of others and strengthens the bonds of brotherhood. A Muslim would not sleep well at night knowing that his neighbor went to bed on an empty stomach. This purifies the wealth and soul of the believer even more.

Caring for the Orphan

In addition to the Quranic verses mentioned above, there are several Ahadeeth related to orphans. The Prophet (S.A.W.) was an orphan himself and he encouraged Muslims to take care of these children. He said, *"I and the one who sponsors an orphan will be in Paradise like these two"* and he gestured with his forefinger and middle finger, holding them apart. (*Bukhari*) He also said, *"This money is fresh and sweet. Blessed is the wealth of the Muslim, from which he gives to the poor, the orphan and the wayfarer."* (*Bukhari and Muslim*)

Sponsorship may mean spending wealth, but it particularly means looking after him, guiding him with regard to religious and worldly affairs, educating him, and treating him kindly until he

reaches adulthood. Basically, a sponsor takes on the role of the parents who would have completed these responsibilities if they had lived long enough. The religious and educational affairs of the orphan are even more important than material needs since this will guide them towards good morals and manners.

Freeing Slaves

Allah says, “And what can make you know what is (breaking through) the difficult pass? It is the freeing of a slave; or feeding on a day of severe hunger, an orphan of near relationship; or a needy person in misery.” (90:12-18) He also says, “*Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but (true) righteousness is (in) one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, and the Prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler; those who ask, and for freeing slaves; ...*” (2:177)

When Islam was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) slavery was a common social phenomenon. Slavery was deeply rooted in every society to the extent that it was impossible to imagine a civilized society without slaves. In spite of this social fact, Islam was first religion to recognize the rights of slave. Slavery itself is not considered a social illness, but the way some people dealt with their slaves is considered an illness. So Islam came to denounce such cruelty and injustice and come to protect the right of the slaves that needed to be addressed. Since slavery was deeply rooted in the society, Islam did not abolish it at once.

Rather, Islam dealt with slavery in the same methodology of gradual elimination in dealing with this social disease as it did with other social defects, Islam established rules, which leads to the eventual freedom of slaves. It declared the act of freeing slaves as a good deed, which is tremendously rewarded by Allah. Therefore, Muslims were encouraged to participate in freeing slaves. The freedom of slaves was also encoded in the legal system of Islam by requiring it as part of the penance for sins and as the punishment for criminal acts. Islam listed freeing slaves as one of the eight elements for which zakah (state collected alms money) could be used.

There are several verses in the Qur’an that outline the legal code for the freeing of slaves. Allah says, “...*And whoever kills a believer by mistake-then the freeing of a believing slave and a compensation payment presented to his family..*” (4:92) He also says, “*And those who pronounce dhihar from their wives and then (wish to) go back on what they said then (there must be) the freeing of a slave before they touch one another...*” (58:3)

The Prophet (S.A.W.) stated the importance of treating slaves well and of the rewards for educating them and freeing them. He said, “*Your servants and your slaves are your brothers. Anyone who has slaves should give them from what he eats and wears. He should not charge them with work beyond their capabilities. If you must set them to hard work, in any case, I advise you to help them.*” (Bukhari) He also said, “*If any of you have*

a slave girl, whom he gives good education and excellent training, and then he emancipates her and marries her, he shall have a two-fold reward.” (Bukhari)

Waqf. (Endowment)-Ongoing Charity

A Waqf (pl: awqaf) is a permanent, irreversible transfer of one's wealth or property for the sake of Allah and to gain His pleasure. The asset becomes the property of Allah forever and can never be returned back. In essence, it means the holding of specific property or wealth, preserving it for certain benefits, and prohibiting any use outside of its specific purpose. The establishment of a Waqf is considered to be an act of worship and a form of sadaqah and as such is highly recommended in Islam (mustahabb). All that we own actually belongs to Allah and He confers it upon his servants whom he chooses.

It is narrated in Bukhari and Muslim that Umar said, “O Messenger of Allah, I have got wealth from Khaybar and I have nothing that is more precious to me than that. What do you command me to do with it?” He said, “If you wish, you can put it aside and give in charity it (from what it produces), but the original property should not be sold, given away or inherited.” So Umar gave it in charity to the poor and to relatives, used it to set slaves free, gave it for the sake of Allah, helped wayfarers and honored his guests. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, “When the son of Adam dies, all his good deeds come to an end except three ongoing charity, knowledge from

which others may benefit after his death, and a righteous off spring who will pray for him.”

Types of awqaf.

There are basically three types of awqaf: religious Waqf, philanthropic Waqf, and family Waqf. The religious Waqf basically pertains to mosques and any real estate or properties designated for providing revenues for the maintenance and operations of the mosques. This form of Waqf contributes to the social welfare of the community since it fulfills the religious needs of the people. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, “Whoever builds a mosque for the sake of Allah, even if it is like the nest of a sand grouse, Allah will build for him a house in Paradise.” (Ahmed) A philanthropic Waqf has the goal of assisting the poor and needy of a society and the various activities that are of benefit to the people. This includes libraries, scientific research, education, health services, hospitals, care of environment, parks, roads, bridges, public utilities, etc. The family or posterity Waqf refers to the case where a condition is put by the benefactor that the revenues or fruits of the Waqf must first be given to their own children or descendents. Only the extra or surplus would be given to the poor, orphans, and so on. The family Waqf is considered charitable since it provides income to persons without charge and helps to improve the welfare of the future generations.

The Comprehensiveness of Sadaqah

As mentioned earlier, sadaqah is a comprehensive term that is used to refer to many acts of kindness and good deeds. It may refer

to something as small as removing a harmful thing from someone's path or helping a person mount his ride. The opportunities are numerous and are available even to those without wealth. This is evident in several well-known ahadeeth of the Prophet (S.A.W.). The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, *"Every small bone of everyone has upon it a charity for every day upon which the sun rises. Bringing about justice between two is an act of charity. Helping a man get on his mount, lifting him onto it or helping him put his belongings on to it, is a charity. A good word is a charity. Every step you take towards the prayer is a charity. And removing a harmful thing from the path is charity."* (Bukhari and Muslim)

Allah's Messenger (S.A.W.) said, *"In the morning charity is due from every bone in the body of every one of you. Every utterance of Allah's glorification (tasbih) is an act of charity. Every utterance of praise (tahmid) of Him is an act of charity, every utterance of profession of His Oneness (tahlil) is an act of charity, every utterance of profession of His Greatness (takbir) is an act of charity, enjoining good is an act of charity, forbidding what is disreputable is an act of charity, and two rak'at which one prays in the forenoon will suffice."* (Muslim)

Allah's Messenger (S.A.W.) said, *"Never a Muslim plants a tree, but he has the reward of charity for him, for what is eaten out of that is charity; what is stolen out of that, what the beast eats out of that, what the birds eat out of that is charity for him. (In short)*

none incurs a loss him but it becomes a charity on his part." (Muslim)

Some poor people came to the Prophet and said, "The wealthy people will get higher grades and will have permanent enjoyment and they pray like us and fast as we do. They have more money by which they perform the Hajj, and Umrah; fight and struggle in Allah's cause and give in charity." The Prophet said, "Shall I not tell you a thing upon which if you acted you would catch up with those who have surpassed you? Nobody would overtake you and you would be better than the people amongst whom you live except those who would do the same. Say 'Subhana Allah, 'Alhamdulillah' and 'Allahu Akbar' thirty three times each after every (compulsory) salah." We differed and some of us said that we should say, "Subhana Allah" thirty three times and "Alhamdulillah" thirty three times and "Allahu Akbar" thirty four times. I went to the Prophet who said, "Say, 'Subhana Allah' and 'Alhamdulillah' and 'Allahu Akbar' together for thirty three times." (Bukhari)

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, *"Whoever says 'La ilaha ill-Allah wahdahu la shareekah, lahul mulk wa lahul hamd wa huwa ala kulli shay' in qadeer' one hundred times a day, it will be as if he freed ten slaves, and one hundred sayyi at (bad deeds) will be erased from him, and it will be a protection for him against Satan all that day until the evening comes. No one can do anything better than that except one who does more."* (Bukhari and Muslim)

From these ahadeeth comes the understanding that there are two main categories of sadaqah or charity. The first category includes acts of kindness that are performed for other human beings. They may include such things as ordering good and eliminating evil, not harming others, teaching others about the Deen, helping someone mount his ride, smiling at some one, and so forth. Some scholars point out that many times these types of charity are more beneficial than financial assistance.

The second category includes acts of goodness that are done for oneself. These, of course, will run over and be beneficial to others as well. In this category are those acts that fulfill the responsibility that a person has toward his or her own soul. This includes such things as performing dhikr or remembrance of Allah, supplicating to Allah, and so forth. As noted in the hadeeth, saying "Subhana Allah", "Alhamdulillah", "Allahu Akbar" are acts of charity toward a person's soul. This is due to the fact that there is great benefit in saying these words and remembering Allah. The effects will also extend to others because the more pious a person becomes the more he will be willing to assist and benefit others. The interconnection of the various elements in Islam is truly amazing.

Benefits of Sadaqah

There are many benefits for the believer who performs sadaqah for the sake of Allah and with pure intention. To be known as someone who gives sadaqah is one of the favours of Allah. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, "Do not wish to be the like except of two men. A man whom

Allah has given the knowledge of the Book and he recites it during the hours of the night, and a man whom Allah has given wealth, and he spends it in charity during the night and the hours of the day." (Bukhari) This is because the benefits are magnificent, including numerous and enduring rewards, expiation for sins, protection from the Hellfire, the Shade of Allah, and Paradise.

Numerous and Enduring Rewards

Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala, rewards charity beyond its worth and enlarges it of that person. Allah says, "Whoever comes (at Judgment) with a good deed will have better than it, and they, from the terror of that Day, will be safe." (27:89) He also says, "Whoever comes (on the Day of Judgment) with a good deed will have ten times the like thereof (to his credit)... " (6:160) And "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it." (99:7) Allah's Messenger (S.A.W.) said, "If one gives in charity what equals one date fruit from the honestly earned money-and Allah accepts only the honestly earned money-Allah takes it in His right (Hand) and then enlarges its reward for that person (who has given it), as anyone of you brings up his baby horse, so much so that it becomes as big as a mountain." (Bukhari)

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said, "Who among you is fasting today." (Abu Bakr said, "I am." He said, "Who among you has attended a funeral today?" Abu Bakr said, "I have." He said, "Who among you has fed a poor person

today?" Abu Bakr said, "I have." He said, "Who among you has visited a sick person today?" Abu Bakr said, "I have." The Messenger of Allah said, "These traits are not combined in a person but he will enter Paradise." (Muslim) Charity is thus a deed that is followed by bounteous rewards and goodness, increasing beyond imagination. It is a means to attain Allah's pleasure, which is the believer's ultimate goal in life. It is path to Paradise.

The rewards of certain types of charity are enduring and continue even after a person's death, as highlighted in the following hadeeth. Allah's Messenger (S.A.W.) said, "When a man dies, his acts come to an end, but three, recurring charity, or knowledge (by which people) benefit, or a pious son, who prays for him (for the deceased)." (Muslim) This form of charity is known as sadaqah Jariyah, an ongoing, continuous or permanent charity (waqf). Some examples of this include giving someone a proper education, monetary assistance to establish social welfare institutions (such as for the poor, needy, orphans, etc), helping someone to establish himself in business, digging wells to provide drinking water, etc. Obviously, continuous sadaqah is one of the best things a Muslim can seek as a good deed and useful contribution to the society or humanity.

Expiation for Sins

In addition to rewards, sadaqah may also provide expiation for sins. Umar asked the people, "Who remembers the narration of the Prophet about the affliction?" Huthaifah said, "I heard the Prophet saying, "The affliction of a

person in his property, family and neighbors is expiated by his salah, fasting, and giving in charity." (Bukhari) In general, performance of a good deed erases that sins that a person commits and this would certainly apply in the case of charity. It may also ease the suffering of death and the questioning in the grave. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, "Verily, charity appeases the wrath of Allah and eases the suffering of death." (Tirmithi) The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, "Whoever relieves a Muslim of some distress in this world, Allah will relieve him of some distress on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is easy going with a debtor who is facing hardship, Allah will make it easy for him in this world and in the Hereafter. And whoever conceals a Muslim's faults Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah will help His servant so long as His servant helps his brother." (Muslim)

In the Shade of Allah

On the Day of Judgment, sadaqah is one of the means through which a person will obtain the Shade of Allah, His Protection, and Pleasure. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, "Seven (people) will be shaded by Allah's Shade on the day when there will be no shade except His Shade. (They will be), a just ruler; a young man who has been brought up in the worship of Allah, a man who remembers Allah in seclusion and his eyes are then flooded with tears, a man whose heart is attached to mosques (always wanting to spend time and to offers his compulsory salah in them), two men who love each other for Allah's sake, a man who is called by a charming lady of noble birth to

commit illegal sexual intercourse with her, and he says, 'I fear Allah, and (finally), a man who gives in charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given.' (Bukhari)

A Gate to Paradise

Allah's Messenger (S.A.W.) said, "*Whoever gives two kinds (of things or property) in charity for Allah's way, will be called from gates of Paradise and will be addressed, 'O servant of Allah! Here is prosperity.'* So, *whoever was amongst the people who used to offer salah, will be called from the gate of the salah; and whoever was amongst the people who used to participate in jihad, will be called from the gate of Jihad; and whoever was amongst those who used to observe fasting, will be called from a gate called Ar-Rayyan; whoever was amongst those who used to give in charity, will be called from the gate of charity.* "Abu Bakr said, "*Let my parents be sacrificed for you, O Allah's Apostle! No distress or need will befall him who will be called from those gates. Will there be any one who will be called from all these gates? The Prophet replied, "Yes, and I hope you will be one of them."* (Bukhari)

So, there is a gate in Paradise from which the people of charity will be called, as there are gates from which believers will be called due to their salah, Jihad, and fasting. A person will be called from this gate if they performed sadaqah sincerely during their lifetime with the intention of pleasing Allah. Charity itself then may open the door to Paradise.

As the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said, "Cleanliness is half of faith and Alhamdulillah

(Praise be to Allah) fills the scale, and Subhana Allah (Glory be to Allah) and Alhamdulillah (Praise be to Allah) fill up what is between the heavens and the earth, and salah is a light, and charity is proof (of one's faith) and endurance is a brightness and the Quran is a proof on your behalf or against you. All men go out early in the morning and sell themselves, thereby setting themselves free or destroying themselves." (Muslim)

(Cont on Page 20)

A VERY HAPPY RAMADHAN AND EID

A very happy Ramadhan and Eid to our readers. Since this is the month of Ramadhan, the month of Quran, Tawbah (repentance) and restraint, we as Muslims can at the very least moderate ourselves in an attempt to reap the blessings that Allah has promised us.

Let us pray that Allah may grant us peace, felicity, success and forgive our sins, comitted by mistake, forgetfulness, or by compulsion. Amin!

Hafiz Mohd Yahya

Ameer Markazi Jamiat

Ahle Hadeeth, Hind.

Maulana Asghar Ali Imam

Mahadi Salafi

General Secretary

Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadeeth, Hind.

ZAKAT: AN OBLIGATION

“The alms are meant only for the poor and the needy and those who are in charge thereof, those whose hearts are to be reconciled; and to free those in bondage, and to help those burdened with debt, and for expenditure in the way of Allah and for the wayfarer. This is an obligation from Allah. Allah is All-knowing, All-wise.” (Al-Quran-9:60)

The verse stipulates eight different heads of Zakat funds. Therefore, one is bound to spend Zakat money only on these accounts.

The first recipients of Zakat are *fuqara*, those who depend for their sustenance on others. They include orphans and destitute widows, and those who are needy like the disabled, the employed and the old. Second, *masakeen*, those who are in greater distress than the ordinary poor people. Third, those employed to administer them, means those appointed to collect Zakat, to ensure safe-keeping of the funds collected, to maintain their accounts and to disburse them. Fourth, Zakat funds may be used to provide succour for and rehabilitate the converts to Islam. Fifth, *fir-riqab*, means Zakat funds may be used to secure the emancipation of slaves or release of the unjustly jailed persons. Sixth, *gharimeen*, refers, to the debtors who would be reduced to a state of paupership if they were to pay off all their debts from their available resources. Such debtors do not include those who incur heavy debts as a result of their extravagance. Seventh, *fi sabilillah* signifies the struggle to establish the Islamic system. And, eighth, a traveller who needs such help during journey.

ZAKAT IS MANDATORY

Abu Hurairah reported Allah’s Messenger (S.A.W.) as saying: “If any owner of gold or silver does not pay what is due on him, when the Day of Resurrection would come, plates of fire would be beaten out for him; these would then be heated in the fire of Hell and his sides, his forehead and his back would be cauterized with them. Whenever they cool down, (the process is) repeated during a day, the duration of which would be fifty thousand years, until judgement is pronounced among servants, and he sees whether his path is to take him to Paradise or to Hell.....” (Sahih Muslim)

The Quran as well as the Holy Messenger (S.A.W.) has repeatedly exhorted believers to pay the annual due amount of Zakat. There is a grave punishment on the Day of Judgement for the wealthy persons who refuse or do not care to pay Zakat.

If the owner of gold or silver of the specific measure or equivalent cash does not pay Zakat, the Blessed Messenger warns him that he would be subjected to an unending process of grave punishment. The specified form of this punishment is cauterizing his sides, forehead and back with the plates of fire beaten out and then heated in the fire of Hell. When these plates cool down, the process would be repeated until the judgement is pronounced. This is the end result of one who amasses wealth, heeds not to circulate it and pays not its due.

(Courtesy: Radiance, 28 June, 2015)

HOW DID THE PROPHET, HIS COMPANIONS CELEBRATE EID?

By Rahla Khan

The month long fast of the month of Ramadhan is over and is followed by Eid on Ist Shawwal. It is a day of joy, bonding, helping one another and spreading happiness all over the globe: “..Alladhi ja’altahu lil Muslimina Eidaa”.

However, Eid celebrations are changing with times. There is an ever-increasing ostentation, impermissible celebrations and extravagance. But would the people during the times of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and his Companions fritter away their time on frivolities and vanities. How did they celebrate?

The purpose of ‘Eid is deeper than mere celebrations and relaxation. Lexically, Eid in Arabic is derived from awd i.e. to return or recur. In his book *Al-Ayad Fil Islam*, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Jibaly defines Eid as “any day of gathering, from awd (meaning returned), because people return to it periodically. Some scholars say that it comes from *Aadah* (custom or practice; plural Ayaad) because people are accustomed to celebrating it. According to *Lisan ul Arab*: “It is called Eid because it returns every year with renewed happiness.”

In the past when an afflicted community found relief and erstwhile prosperity and comfort returned, that occasion too was called ‘eid. In Islam, after the month long fast and at the end

of Hajj, the human celebrations of ‘Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Hajj.

We learn about the Sunnah (traditions) of Eid from various narrations:

- The Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) used to recite Takbeer during the night of Eid from sunset on the last day of Ramadan until the Imam came to lead the Eid prayer in the morning.
- They raised their voices in supplication and remembrance of Allah in the marketplaces, mosques and homes, but the women did so inaudibly.
- The Prophet would not go out on Eid al-Fitr until he had eaten an odd number of dates. (*Ahmad and Al-Bukhari*) In Al-Muwatta, it is recorded from Sa’id Bin Al-Musayyib that the people were ordered to eat before they went out for prayer on the day of breaking the fast.
- They performed *Ghusl* (ritual bath) and wore their best clothes and applied perfume. Ibn Al-Qayyim writes: “The Prophet (S.A.W.) had a special (Yemeni) cloak that he would wear on the two Eids and Jumuah.”
- The Prophet (S.A.W.) would take his wives and daughters to the two Eids, and after he prayed and gave a Khutbah, he went to the

women and admonished them, reminded them of Allah, and ordered them to give charity. (*Al-Bukhari*) Umm ‘Atiyah reports: “We were ordered to go out with the single and menstruating women on the two Eids in order to witness the good and the supplications of the Muslims. The menstruating women would be separate from the others.” (*Al-Bukhari and Muslim*)

- The Prophet and his Companions paid Zakat Al-Fitr before the Eid prayer, or even a day or two in advance.
- After the Eid prayer, they dispersed by a route that was different from the one they took to approach the *Musallah*.

The Islamic Tarbiyah (upbringing) imparted by the Prophetic traditions is not restricted to the outward aspects of worship, it goes deeper and teaches us the correct spirit of celebration.

Sheikh Muhammad Al-Jibaly writes: “The major part of the celebration is not eating or drinking rather, it is a prayer that brings Muslims together to remember Allah’s bounties and celebrate His glory and greatness. The Eids and their celebration in Islam carry a distinctive meaning and spirit. They are completely different from the celebrations in other nations and cultures. For other nations, a holiday is a chance to immerse in worldly pleasures, or to involve oneself in prohibited acts to the utmost.

“Not so for Muslims! For Muslims, the Eid is an occasion to increase in good deeds. Each Eid marks the conclusion of an important worship, and the determination to continue in obedience and submission to Allah. In moments of extreme pleasure or sadness, a Muslim never

forgets his Lord’s greatness, might, glory and watch fullness. A Muslim’s actions are always controlled by this continued remembrance and awareness.

“Thus the Eid is not an occasion to take a vacation from Islamic responsibilities and commitments nor to waste time and money in extravagance. It is not fun for the sake of fun. Rather, it is controlled and directed rejoicing that is of ultimate and definite benefit for the Muslim. The Eid is a chance to multiply good deeds by bringing happiness and pleasure to the hearts of other Muslims, by helping and supporting the poor and needy, and by getting involved in pastimes that emphasize the strong and serious character.

When the Prophet came to Madinah he found the people celebrating two days of sport and amusement. He then said: “Allah the Exalted, has exchanged these days for two days better than them: the day of breaking the fast and the day of sacrifice”. (*Ahmad, Abu Dawood*)

There are several instances where the Prophet (S.A.W.) permitted Ayesha (my Allah be pleased with her) to indulge in suitable recreation on Eid.

Ayesha (my Allah be pleased with her) said: “The Messenger of Allah, entered the house and I had two girls who were singing about the battle of Buath [a 120-year battle between the tribes of Aws and Khazraj that ended with the advent of Islam]. The Prophet (S.A.W.) lay down on the bed and turned his face to the other direction.

Abu Bakr entered and spoke harshly to me, ‘Musical instruments of the Satan in the presence of the Messenger of Allah!, The Messenger of

Allah (S.A.W.) turned his face to him and said: 'Leave them.' When Abu Bakr became inattentive I signaled to the girls to leave. It was the day of Eid and the Africans were performing with their shields and spears. Either I asked him or Prophet (S.A.W.) asked if I would like to watch them [I don't recall now]. I replied in the affirmative. At this the Prophet (S.A.W.) made me stand behind him and my cheek was against his. He was saying: 'Carry on, O tribe of Arfidah,' until I tired. The Prophet asked: 'Is that enough for you?' I replied: "Yes," so he said: 'Leave [then].'"

(Courtesy: MWL journal, Makkah September 2012)

HOW TO CALCULATE ZAKAH

Zakah is obligatory upon all Muslims in possession of wealth equal to Nisab (minimum amount or which Zakah must be paid for a period of one lunar year.

Nisab for gold is 3 oz; for silver is 21 Oz; and for cash, it is equivalent to the value of gold or silver (which ever is less). At present Nisab of silver is less, so cash may be calculated according to silver. 2.5% of the total value of Gold, silver, Cash, and assets such as Bank Accounts stocks, and Real Estate investments (not house under personal use) are required to be included in Nisab when calculating Zakah.



(From Page 16)

Conclusion

From the Quran and ahadeeth text of the Prophet (S.A.W.) we learn a great deal about the concept of sadaqah. Sadaqah is a comprehensive term that is used to refer to acts of charity that are performed to benefit others or one's self. It includes many deeds as outlined in several ahadeeth of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and the opportunities for its performance are numerous. Giving sadaqah is strongly recommended and encouraged because it benefits the giver, the recipient, and the society as a whole. Imagine a society in which each person practiced charity on a regular basis.

Sadaqah reflects the gratitude that a true servant for his Creator and Master. It becomes part of the personality of a Muslim to treat others with kindness and giving. This is because he realizes the many wonderful blessings that he has received from Allah, subhanahu wa taala and he desires to demonstrate his gratefulness. In thankfulness to Allah, he uses the blessings that he has received (such as ability, wealth, health) to assist and improve those around him. He never misses any opportunity to perform an act of kindness because he realizes that no matter how much he performs he can never match the wonderful blessings that he has received from Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala. Sadaqah is truly a beautiful component in the religion of Islam and that may be the reason that it is mentioned in so many Quranic verses and ahadeeth of the Prophet (S.A.W.).

(Courtesy: Al-Jumuah, July, 2005)



PROPHET MUHAMMAD AND THE CONCEPT OF MASS EDUCATION

By Prof. Zafarul Islam Islahi

This is a well-known fact that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) is the role model for all of us in every aspect of our life, including educational one. The educational system established by him has great importance and relevance to the modern period also.

The Prophet took care of education of the people of different sections of his society. In the *Suffah* education centre (adjoining the *Masjid-i-Nabawi*), he made an arrangement for providing education for his Companions, who were of different age groups and were occupied with the various kinds of work. In fact, the *Suffah* was an ideal centre of education wherein teaching and learning went on day and night; and significantly enough, the facility of imparting knowledge at this centre was availed by children, youth, the aged and old (persons of all ages) and people of different professions (agriculture, horticulture, business, trade and handcraft). On the other hand, it was so well-managed a centre of adult education working round the clock that it stands matchless even in the modern period with all kinds of resources and energies spent for the same by government and private agencies.

In fact, it was the impact of the guidance and *tarbiyah* of the Prophet (S.A.W.), that his Companions accorded so much value to the seeking of knowledge that they did not like to miss the *dars* (learning) for even one day. This is quite evident from confirmed sources that two Companions (who had daily routine of some work) used to have an agreement that if any day on account of some work one could not attend the *dars* at *Suffah*, the other would teach his absentee companion whatever he had learned that day at the *Suffah*. As a matter of fact, history has failed to present examples of such passion for knowledge (*ilm*).

This was obviously the result of the training which they had got from the Prophet (S.A.W.) who told them that for a Believer (*Mumin*) the point of wisdom or knowledge is just like a lost thing and that he, most of all, deserves to get it wherever he could get the same. He also enjoined upon them to be educated by declaring that it is obligatory for every Muslim (whether male or female) to seek knowledge. Moreover, the Greatest Teacher of humanity (*Muallim-i-Insaniyat*) gave him an exemplary lesson (*Sabaq*) that this noble work should start from

the very early part of his life and should continue to the last moment of his life, as he is reported to have said: *utlubu al Ilm min al-Mahde ila al Lahd* (seek knowledge from the cradle (of your mother) till the time of going to the grave).

It may be also pointed out here that during the Prophet's time, apart from the *Masjid-i-Nabawi*, in other mosques of Madinah and at the houses of a number of his Companions (including *Sahabis* and *Sahabiyat*), facility of education was available and the Prophet appreciated and encouraged the Companions who devoted themselves to this noble and beneficial work.

Moreover, the Suffah Educational Centre had also a provision for the education of women and this is a well-known fact that the Prophet not only permitted but also encouraged female education. It is interesting to note here that the noted scholar Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah stated on the authority of Ibn Ishaq, the famous Sirah writer, that whenever the Quranic ayaat were revealed, the Prophet, first of all, used to recite them before his Sahabah and then recited them in the special *majlis* of *Sahabiyat*. In the light of this Tradition, the learned author stressed the point that the Prophet used to pay equal attention to the education of male and female.

The Prophet (S.A.W.), as is well-known, reserved one day in a week for the cause of teaching women and responding to their queries. He exhorted the literate *Sahabiyat* to educate the illiterate ones. Of course, it was the result of the facilities of education for women during the Prophet's time that a number of *Sahabiyat* became famous as scholars (*aalimah*) of Tafsir,

Hadith, Fiqh, genealogy, as well as masters of scribing (*Kitabat*) and nursing or technique of attending to the injured and sick. They obviously contributed to the promotion of learning their own manners.

In the same way, the Prophet (S.A.W.) used to advise and motivate his Companions to take care of the education of their children (boys and girls), slaves or servants. Moreover, it cannot be overlooked that the Prophet advised his followers to seek useful knowledge (*Ilm-i-Nafi*) and exhorted them to learn other subjects or arts (in addition to the Quran, Hadith and Ahkam-i-Shariah) which were useful for them in their daily life, as well as beneficial for others such as the Hebrew language, *fann-i-kitabat* (skill or writing/scribing), archery, horse riding, wrestling and swimming.

This is recorded in all important Sirah works that the Prophet made an excellent arrangement for the education and religious and moral upbringing of not only of the people of Madinah, but also those of other regions (outside Madinah). He deputed teachers (*muallimin*) from among his Companions for new Muslim tribes of other regions and made a special arrangement for teaching and giving *tarbiyah* to the delegations (*Wufud*) coming to Madinah from outside for learning and making themselves aware of the essentials of Islam, the commands of Allah Almighty and Sunan of the Prophet about daily life.

(The writer teaches at Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University)

(Courtesy: Radiance, June 6, 2015)

EARTHQUAKES REVISITED

Sameen Ahmed Khan

An earthquake (also known as a quake, tremor or temblor) is the perceptible shaking of the surface of the Earth, which can be violent enough to destroy major buildings and kill thousands of people. An earthquake is what happens when two blocks of the earth suddenly slip past one another. The surface where they slip is called the fault or fault plane. The location below the earth's surface where the earthquake starts is called the hypocenter, and the location directly above it on the surface of the earth is called the epicenter.

The radius of the Earth is about 6400kms. The earth has four major layers: the inner core, outer core, mantle and crusts. The crust is the outer layer of the earth. It is a thin layer up to solid rock layer upon which we live. There are two different types of crust: continental crust, which carries land, and oceanic crust, which carries water. The mantle is the widest section of the Earth. It has a thickness of approximately 2900kms.

The mantle is made up of semi-molten rock called magma. In the upper parts of the mantle the rock is hard, but lower down the rock is soft and beginning to melt. The outer core is the layer surrounding the inner core. It is a liquid layer, also made up of iron and nickel. It is still

extremely hot, with temperatures similar to the inner core. The inner core is in the centre and is the hottest part of the Earth. It is solid and made up of iron and nickel with temperatures of up to 5500 C°. With its immense heat energy, the inner core is like the engine room of the Earth.

The crust is like a thin skin which is not uniform and made up of many pieces called plates. These plates are under constant motion. Earthquakes and volcanoes are most likely to occur at or near the plate boundaries.

The size of an earthquake depends on the size of the fault and the amount of slip on the fault. Since the slip is inside the Earth, it cannot be measured directly. The power of an earthquake is measured using a seismometer. A seismometer detects the vibrations caused by an earthquake. It plots these vibrations on a seismograph.

The strength, or magnitude, of an earthquake is measured using the Richter magnitude scale, which assigns a magnitude number related to the energy released by the earthquake.

The earthquakes cause damage to buildings and other permanent structures; landslides and avalanches; fires; tsunami and floods. Many methods have been devised to predict earthquake but all have failed. Even animals have been kept under observations as they do have

some sense in detecting them; but understanding the unusual behavior of animals just before the earthquakes has been inconclusive. The objective of earthquake engineering is to foresee the impact of earthquakes on buildings and other structures and to design such structures to minimize the risk of damage. Existing structures can be modified by seismic retrofitting to improve their resistance to earthquakes.

Earthquakes have been under discussion since ancient times across all cultures. In the Glorious Quran the word used for the earthquake is *Zalزالah* (possible English translations: Earthquake and Convulsion). The word *Zalزالah* occurs explicitly twice in the Holy Quran, that is in the first Ayat of Surah Al-Hajj and the first Ayat of Surah Al-Zalزالah. We shall use the meaning in English by Muhammad Asad.

1. *O men! Be conscious of your Sustainer: for, verily the violent convulsion of the last Hour will be an awesome thing! [Surah Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 22:1]*

On the Day when you behold it, every woman that feeds a child at her breast will utterly forget her nursling, and every woman heavy with child will bring forth her burden [before her time]; and it will seem to thee that all mankind is drunk, although they will not be drunk but vehement will be [their dread of] God's chastisement. [Surah Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage), 22:2]

2. *WHEN THE EARTH quakes with her [last] mighty quaking, and [when] the earth yields up her burdens, and man cries out, "What has happened to her?"- on that Day will she recount all her tidings, as thy Sustainer will have inspired her to do! On that Day will all men come forward, cut off from one another, to be shown their [past]*

deeds. And so he who shall have done an atom's weight of good, shall behold it; and he who shall have done an atom's weight of evil, shall behold it. [Surah Al-Zalزالah (The Earthquake), 99:1-8]

The earthquakes and their destructive power are described in several other places in the Holy Quran which include:

3. *Those who lived before them did, too, devise many a blasphemy whereupon God visited with destruction all that they had ever built, [striking] at its very foundations, so that the roof fell in upon them from above and suffering befell them without their having perceived whence it came. [Surah An-Nahl (The Bee), 16:26]*

4. *Can, then, they who devise evil schemes ever feel sure that God will not cause the earth to swallow them, or that suffering will not befall them without their perceiving whence [it came]? [Surah An Nahl (The Bee), 16:45]*

5. *Can you, then, ever feel sure that He will not cause a tract of dry land to swallow you up, or let loose upon you a deadly storm wind, where upon you would find none to be your protector? [Surah Al-Isra (The Journey by Night), 17:68]*

Earthquakes (so also hurricanes, tornados, typhoons, cyclones, tropical storms, tropical depressions, heavy rains, floods, and other natural disasters) are a form of Divine punishment to deviators of His Commands and ill-doers of His Creation. May Allah Almighty Guide us to follow the righteous path and save us from what is forbidden, Amen.

(Courtesy: *The Radiance*, 30 May 2015)

PRESERVE HERITAGE OF NATURE TO SAVE LIFE ON EARTH

Is the destruction of environment not an act of encroachment on the rights of all living beings of today and tomorrow? Wonders PROF. SHAISTA BANO and suggests “Zero Tolerance” as the formula to save the life on the planet earth.

With the onset of industrialization has arisen the ecological crisis to pose a big challenge to the world. Many of man’s schemes designed to improve the condition of life are, in fact, ill-conceived due to the lack of appreciation and understanding of interdisciplinary approach. The world is a cosmos, an ordered system and not a chaos. The Environment encompasses climate and its various components: plants, animals, human beings, oceans, rivers, mountains, all things found in the ground and atmosphere, all inter-dependent.

The pernicious activities of man and manmade machines, endangering the cleanliness of air, water and soil disturb and upset Nature. Consequently, Nature retaliates; floods, water logging, salinity and alkalinity of soil, air and water pollution and noise are some of its manifestations. The environmental crisis-the Ecocide of environment-is fast reaching its pinnacle.

There has been a sudden buzz around air pollution of NCR region in the last four or five months and Delhi’s air quality has been dubbed by many as the worst in the world.

Breathing in a Stroke (*Indian Express*, May 4, 2015)

Long term exposure to ambient air pollution is associated with cerebrovascular disease and cognitive impairment, but whether it is related to structural changes in the brain is not clear. Researchers studied the associations between residential long-term exposure to ambient air pollution and markers of brain aging, using magnetic resonance imaging.

The study showed that exposure to elevated levels of MP 2.5 was associated with smaller total cerebral volume, a marker of age-associated brain atrophy, and with higher odds of cover brain infarcts. The findings suggest that air pollution is associated with insidious effects on structural brain aging even in dementia and stroke free persons.

Participants in the study in the United States were at least 60 years of age, and free of dementia and stroke.

Climate change could kill 1 in 6 of Earth species (*Indian Express*, May 2, 2015). Washington: One in six species on Earth could be threatened with extinction from climate change unless steps are taken to reduce global warming emissions, new research has warned. According to an analysis of more than 100 smaller studies, up to one sixth of the species could disappear if climate change remains on its current course. Emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases have boosted the global average temperature by about 0.8 degrees Celsius since the Industrial Revolution.

The main air pollutants are carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (N²O and, NO²) ammonia (NH³), benzene vapours, Sulphur dioxide (SO²) and microm level particulate matters (PM). Particles up to a size of 2.5 microm (PM 2.5) can be inhaled like other gases.

Carbon monoxide, a highly poisonous gas, reaching the blood circulatory system combines with haemoglobin (red colouring matter) of blood and converts it into carboxy haemoglobin (a cherry red compound) thus rendering the haemoglobin useless as oxygen carrier. If inhaled in its pure form, it first produces giddiness then unconsciousness and finally death. A concentration of one (1) in eight hundred (800) volumes of air will produce death in 30 minutes. Nitrogen dioxide (NO²) is also a highly toxic gas which corrodes the skin and on inhalation causes headache and sickness. Benzene vapours are very harmful and toxic and can produce unconsciousness. Its poisoning in the

long term can prove fatal by destroying red and white blood corpuscles. Ammonia with characteristic pungent odour brings tears into eyes. It is used in ice-plants for refrigeration. The leakage of vast amount of ammonia in the wee hours of April 10, from a cold storage in the village of Navangarh, Iglas (U.P.), played a distractive role among the villagers, leaving one employee and 14 cows dead and many people and animals unconscious and sick (*Inquilab*, Urdu, April 13, 2015). Sulphur dioxide with pungent sulphur burning smell can cause inflammation of the lungs and induces asthmatical complaint.

Nitrous oxide (N²O) is poisonous in nature. If inhaled in small amounts, it causes hysterical laughter (so termed as laughing gas). Mixed with oxygen, it is used as an anaesthetic. Large doses might prove fatal.

These poisonous gases have very very low permissible limits and are monitored by CPCB and DPCC regularly.

Carbon dioxide, a minor constituent of air (about 0.03% by volume), about 1.5 times as heavy as air, is very crucial as regards the life on earth. It is neither combustible nor a supporter of combustion. It does not support the life and animals exposed to it die due to the lack of oxygen. Large amount of CO² are produced as a result of combustion of carbon and its compounds, fermentation of plants and their products. Animals breathe in oxygen and exhale CO² (respiration). Decay of dead animal bodies also produces CO², besides evolution from volcanoes.

During day times plants take up CO² from air and return oxygen (Photosynthesis) while at night plants take in oxygen and give out CO². These opposing processes constitute carbon dioxide-oxygen cycle, keeping the percentage of CO² practically constant in air.

Carbon dioxide, water vapours absorb long wavelength (2.5-15 micrometre (um) infrared (IR) light. This heat trapping process caused by CO², water vapour, methane, nitrous oxide and many other greenhouse gases is termed as Global Warming or Green House Effect.

The increase in concentration of greenhouse gases results in global warming. Thus the temperature of the earth is slowly but steadily increasing. The greenhouse effect may differ in magnitude with latitudes and altitudes and seasons. The rise in temperature in Himalayan and Tibet regions is higher compared to that in other parts of the world. The world observes 5 June as Environment Day. As the 1972 Stockholm Conference for global efforts to protect the environment was organized on June, 5, the World Environment Movement celebrate 5 June every year as World Environment Day.

The impact of air pollution is also delocalized as air accepts no barrier or boundary and so it is a matter of grave concern for all of us.

Many people pay respect to land and rivers as “Dharti Mata” and “Ganga Mayya”. The serious and positive measures to check and control the pollution of all rivers including the Ganga would be a step in the right direction.

Over 500 years ago, the downfall of

Mesopotamian Civilization was the result of environmental destruction. Then came the downfall of Sindh Civilization as the rivers there changed their course due to undesirable human activities. Ethiopia and Africa also suffered due to the same cause. Acid rains in Kuwait, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia are the result of burning of huge amounts of oil and heavy bombardment on Iraq. History stands witness to the havoc played of the innocent citizens there, especially children. Now the present crisis in that region is a cause of grave concern for the whole world.

Exploitation of mountains should also be stopped. Is the destruction of environment not an act of encroachment on the rights of all living beings of today and tomorrow?

In Islam the environment is a very vast subject and its protection has been given attention in very unambiguous terms. The cutting of green trees and destroying agriculture are prohibited even during war times. Polluting water reserves is condemned. So “Zero Tolerance” here is the formula to save the life on the planet earth. The consequences of unchecked and indiscriminate use of natural resources in the reckless race of industrialization are inevitable. When man puts the heritage of Nature at the altar of industrialization, disturbing the balance and harmony of environment he must face its fury too.

(courtesy: Radiance, 6 June, 2015)



THE MIDDLE PATH

Perhaps the most overwhelmed being on planet earth at this moment is the young Muslim. Think about it. You are the news. Every time you turn on the television, listen to the radio, surf the Net, all you see is news about you. Actual recent sample headlines range from “Prominent Islamic Group Launches Inquiry into Youth ‘Radicalisation’” (*Agence France Presse, 9 August 2005*), “Radicals Tried to Recruit Muslim Teenagers for Training Camps” (*Press Trust of India, 12 August 2005*), and “Call to Protect Young Muslims from Radical Imams” (*Bernamea, 28 July 2005*).

Of course, you know and I know that you are not a “radical” or an “extremist” or a “radical extremist” or a “terrorist.” You know and I know that neither of us has actually ever come across a Muslims who is a “radical” or an “extremist” or a “radical extremist” or a “terrorist”. And yet the word on the streets is that there is an imminent threat to civilization from the growing numbers of young Muslims who hate society and are willing to kill themselves in the process of destroying society. Having to prove constantly that you neither hate society nor want to kill yourself in the process of destroying society is overwhelming, to say the least. But the real

challenge is whether you can survive this phase in history and rise above the propaganda to demonstrate to the world that, indeed, young Muslims are steering a steady course. And you know and I know that more young Muslims are choosing the middle path!

Ambassadors of Islam

Much of what the average person of another faith knows about Muslims, and especially about Muslims, and especially about young Muslims, is based on some first hand contact, on perception, on second or third hand information, and mostly on inaccurate depictions of Islam and Muslims in the media. Whether we like it or not, as young Muslims, you are the new ambassadors of Islam. In your role as ambassador, you will often be called upon to clarify and defend Islamic teachings. Therefore, it is important for you to equip yourself with accurate information about Islam, internalize the Islamic teachings, and, most importantly, practice those teachings in your daily life.

Accurate Information

Accurate information on Islam might seem like a strange notion to think about because the obvious next question is, isn't all information

about Islam accurate? Yes, the Quran and the authentic, agreed upon sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) are two accurate, authentic sources. However, outside of those two authentic sources, there is always the potential that a book written by a human being contains factual errors, misinterpretations, and even outright skewed interpretations of Islamic teachings. Young people who do like to read articles and books or surf the Net or listen to audio tapes or watch video lectures are at risk of consuming information about Islam that might not be accurate. There is a widespread false notion that accuracy is guaranteed just because a piece of knowledge appears in print, or a lecture has been recorded, videotaped, or uploaded onto the Internet. But it is all too easy for any person to access printing facilities, audio and video recording devices, and, of course, Web technology.

Importance of Study Circles

While it is important that you learn about Islam, it is even more important that you do not attempt to do so entirely on your own. It is highly recommended that you join a study circle in your locality so that people of your age group can engage in a dialogue about issues ranging from the philosophy of Islam to the practice of Islam. Two immediate concerns that arise from the suggestion to join a study circle are, what would you study and who would lead the circle? Thank God there are many Muslim scholars who follow the middle path and who are skilled in teaching and interacting with young Muslims. Be sure to consult family members, friends, and relatives as well as your own intuition before joining a

particular study circle. A knowledgeable, trustworthy teacher is critical ensuring that the content and interpretation of the Islamic teachings are aimed at keeping the circle attendees on the middle path.

Balancing Islamic Practice With Cultural Traditions

Another source of potential misinformation about Islam is our own family, relatives, and community, whose knowledge about Islam is sometimes based more upon oral transmissions of their culture as Muslims from a particular locality than from the two authentic sources, the Quran and the *Sunnab*. Reflect upon the state of your own family. How are you being taught Islam? From the Quran and the Sunnah or from how Grandpa or Grandma practised Islam? While both Grandpa and Grandma might have been very knowledgeable about Islamic teachings, our experience tells us that this is more an exceptional case. If you are being raised in households where adherence to cultural practices takes priority over adherence to Islamic teachings, it is possible that the family culture will not allow for any questioning of the cultural practices. There is a strict insistence on following blindly what is being taught, and any attempt at questioning the practices is tantamount to being characterized by the parents as disrespect at the least and outright rejection at the worst. The middle path of Islam emanates from the universal and timeless teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah. While Islam allows for amazing flexibility with regards to incorporating local cultural practices into one's daily life, there is never an expectation in Islam for any Muslim

to follow blindly the cultural traditions of his parents or forefathers. If any or all of what is written here applies to your family situation, be patient, make lots of *du'aa'* to Allah, and undertake long-term efforts to help your family understand what you learn from the study circle.

What Is Your Community Like?

Sometimes, even if your family situation is very promising and helpful to maintaining a strong Muslim identity, it is possible that the community itself is very narrow minded and completely unhelpful to your desire to follow the middle path. What is your community like? How do you feel after the Friday khutbah? Do you feel upbeat, ready to engage the world around you in a merciful, tolerant manner? Or does the *khutbah* content and tone make you feel like you want to isolate yourself from the so-called devil-filled world around you? What sort of voices are dominant in your community? *In sha'Allah*, the prevalent and dominant voices are those calling to the middle path. More and more, members of Muslim communities are taking proactive measures to ensure that the message being disseminated to our youth is one that helps them to feel great about being Muslim while at the same time helping them to understand their role in improving the quality of life for Muslims and people of other faiths.

Final Thoughts

As you go about preparing yourself to journey on the path that is little traveled, the middle path, you should realize that this will certainly be a difficult and challenging journey. Be prepared. Depending on your personal educational

background, you can begin by reading the Quran first, with a reliable and accurate English translation, and books of *Hadith*. Supplement your understanding of the two authentic sources by reading books that explain how to pray, fast, and give charity, as well as other books such as *Islam the Natural Way* by Abdulhamid Wahid and *What Islam is All about?* By Yahya Emerick. There are many other books, but these two are particularly aimed at helping young people understand, appreciate, and internalize Islamic teachings.

Remember that while you are on your journey, you are not only a seeker of truth, but, in this current socio-political climate, you are our ambassador to the world! Don't be overwhelmed. Seek solace and comfort in the company of Allah Most High through prayer and consistent remembrance of Allah! You were not created to shun this world, to isolate yourself from it, or to hate it. You were created as a part of a community; indeed, the best community, whose duty it is to worship Allah and "*to invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency.*" (3:104). You are created as members of "*a nation that is justly balanced, ummatan wasatan, so you will be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger be a witness over you.*" (2:143). As a young Muslim, you have great potential to serve Allah while serving humanity, and all the while to balance your views such that you choose the path that is little-travelled, the middle path!

Altaf Husain is a licensed social worker in the United States