In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Economic Islamicity Index

How Islamic are Muslim Countries?

A recent research study says that Muslim countries have failed to apply Quranic teachings of fairness, justice, equity, thrift etc to economic policies. These principles are more in evidence in economy and businesses in the Western countries, which fare better on 'Economic Islamicity Index'.

By A Staff Analyst

A research study by the George Washington University finds that it is Western nations which apply Islamic principles in economics and business more than the countries that are known to be ‘Islamic’ or ‘Muslim’ either by their demography or Constitutional declaration. The two researchers of the University who carried out the study titled “An Economic Islamicity Index” (or EI2 for short) picked up 208 nations to rank them on an Islamic Economic Index. They placed Ireland on the first place, followed by Denmark, Luxembourg, Sweden, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Singapore, Finland, Norway and Belgium. Almost the entire European Union (EU) countries, Japan, Korean Republic and even Israel are shown to be more committed to Islamic principles in dealing with economy and business than any Muslim country. Malaysia is the first Muslim country in the list, at the 33rd place in the ranking of 208 nations. The study was carried out by Scheherazade S. Rehman and Hossein Askari at the Washington DC based George Washington University and was published in the Global Economic Journal (vol. 10, issue 3). Scheherazade is Professor International Finance and Professor of International Affairs and Askari is Professor of International Business and International Affairs. The study is part of the larger ongoing research project and focuses on developing an Economic Islamicity index or EI2 gauging countries on this basis.

Interestingly, India is placed at 97th rank, while Pakistan and Bangladesh, two neighbouring Muslim-majority countries, are placed at the 141 and the 145th rank. The United States occupies 15th place, while the Russian Federation and China are placed 45th and 62nd. Some Muslim countries that are better placed in the ranking are Kuwait (42), Kazakhstan (54), Brunei (55), Bahrain (61), UAE (64), Turkey (71), Tunisia (72), Jordan (74), Azerbaijan (80), Oman (82), and Lebanon (87). Saudi Arabia occupies the 91st place. Indonesia, with the world’s largest Muslim population, is ranked 104th.

One should not mistake Economic Islamicity with interest-free banking alone. Organized religions impact personal behavior as well as economic behaviour, such as work ethics, compliance of contracts, trust building, thrift (practicing austerity) etc. The study applies a broad spectrum of Quranic and Islamic principles on ways economy and business is conducted in the countries concerned. It delineates three principal goals of an Islamic economic system:

(a) Achievement of economic justice and achievement of sustained economic growth
(b) Broad-based prosperity and job creation
(c) Adoption of Islamic economic and financial practices.

These three central teachings of Islamic economics have been disaggregated into twelve areas of fundamental economic principles, which are:

1- Economic opportunity and economic freedom,
2- Justice in all aspects of...
Learning Lessons From Hidaya Foundation

Holistic Planning: Key to Success!

The Foundation has helped the lowest of the low to rise from poverty, learn skills and be self-reliant, besides providing them dignity of living in decent homes.

By A Staff Writer

Dreams take long to materialize in concrete form. Realtors and developers may build highrisers in a couple of years. But gathering a bunch of people in an enclosure and making them coalesce into a community within a small timeframe is no mean task. Land and buildings may be the raw material for the infrastructure, but social bonding needs much more than mere tangible items.

Hidaya Foundation of Mangaluru learnt it quickly. The activists, mostly entrepreneurs and professionals, were endowed not only with a goal, but also had vision and spirit to join the pieces into a beautiful dream. Their basic asset was selflessness and a determination to reach out to the lowest of the low and raise them to a certain level from where they could grow on their own strengths.

It was around 2008 that these activists came together and began to have a feel of the community’s grassroots realities. They could realize within no time that crisis was deeper and wider than what was visible at the surface.

Brainstorming

Not everything was within their means to address. They could figure out five areas after a few brainstorming sessions. These were food, health, education, imparting of skills to create self-reliance and infrastructure. A survey of 1,200 families in Kavalakatte village of Bantwal taluk of DK district revealed prevalence of extreme poverty among Muslim families, lack of skills, absence of a breadwinner in several families, and a physical environment sans proper shelter, water, power and sanitation lines.

Focussed Approach

The 21-member Foundation geared into action fully aware that not all the malaise can be remedied at once and for all. They were convinced that they need to be focused on a small community and the limited needs and were too conscious of the risk of stretching their resources thin over a large area. Headquartered at Mangaluru, they mobilized youth as well as the women to join the work. By 2012, the framework was ready and mission statement i.e., “Empowerment of women, Development of children” had been coined. President G. Mohammed Haneef informs that the organization targeted those families who were abandoned, destitute, chronically sick or disabled individuals who had nowhere to look for assistance. Most of them were without a male head. Around 260 families were selected for supply of monthly ration kits as food was considered their most basic need. This was besides what they were receiving free of cost under BPL scheme of the Government.

Health Issues

Survey had revealed that expenses on hospitalization and medicines were beyond the capacity of 80% of the middle class families and nearly 60% risked falling into debt if someone in the family was afflicted with any major health issue. Though for the start, they conducted health check-up camps with the Kasturba Medical College and Yenepoya Medical College in rural areas covering around a thousand patients, it was later realized that treatment at hospital would deliver better results. “Prevention is better than cure” too came to be applied and target population was made aware of the risk of diseases that afflict vital organs like heart and kidney or how diabetics could wreck the people internally or even post-pregnancy complications that go unattended. They were told about infant care, healthy food and nutrition, cleanliness and hygiene etc. The Foundation entered into an MoU with Yenepoya Medical College whereby expenses on medicine were borne by the Foundation. It was in pursuance of the realization that kids attending the modern schools were growing unaware of the basics of religion. The Institute has so far turned out 170 women, on hospitalization and medicines were beyond the capacity of 80% of the middle class families and nearly 60% risked falling into debt if someone in the family was afflicted with any major health issue. Though for the start, they conducted health check-up camps with the Kasturba Medical College and Yenepoya Medical College in rural areas covering around a thousand patients, it was later realized that treatment at hospital would deliver better results. “Prevention is better than cure” too came to be applied and target population was made aware of the risk of diseases that afflict vital organs like heart and kidney or how diabetics could wreck the people internally or even post-pregnancy complications that go unattended. They were told about infant care, healthy food and nutrition, cleanliness and hygiene etc. The Foundation entered into an MoU with Yenepoya Medical College whereby expenses on medicine were borne by the Foundation. It was in pursuance of the realization that kids attending the modern schools were growing unaware of the basics of religion. The Institute has so far turned out 170 women.

Arabic teachers who are engaged in imparting lessons in Arabic at 25 schools in DK as well as Udipi district.

Its achievements are notable because they focused on a limited area, but took care to plan holistically. They did not provide homes alone, but strove to see that they have income-generating skills, lest their vital assets are mortgaged.

Hidaya Foundation has raised a colony of 39 housing units for families that had no male breadwinner in a record time of four years.

‘Share and Care Colony’

But the most tangible outcome of the Foundation’s effort is the ‘Share and Care Housing Colony’ that has come up on a four-acre plot in Kavalakatte village. It was part of the infrastructure development programme of the Foundation. Of the planned 100 micro housing units, the Colony has already commissioned 39 units, each with a hall, bedroom, toilet and bath and kitchen. Of these, 15 standalone 300 sq. ft. units are built in a row over a platform equipped with all basic facilities. Another 24 are flats in an L-shaped edifice. While the former were commissioned in 2012, the latter were readied in 2013. For an organization that began its operations in 2010, the construction of the colony in a short span of time is a remarkable achievement. The Foundation is still pursuing the 100-unit dream colony. The Foundation has been wise enough to keep the ownership of home with the family and not the occupant.

Yet housing the poor was not the end in itself. Says Mr. Abd Asghar, secretary of the Foundation, “Unless there is a source of consistent income, the homeowners cannot be expected to remain in possession of this vital asset.” The Foundation therefore thought of imparting some skills in order that the household people could attain self-sufficiency. A tailoring unit came up in 2013 with ten high-tech sewing machines. It got tied up with a garment factory for constant orders. Several women and girls from the colony are now engaged in stitching garments and eke out a living for the families. A philanthropist has donated another 10 sewing machines which will be installed as soon as power backup and other attendant infrastructure is ready. Next on the agenda is a cashew peeling unit for the unskilled women whose number goes up to 35 in the 39-unit colony. This would be a much remunerative work. The Foundation has set up a school for the special children whose number is seven. It is registered under Women and...
**Jamia Library Joins National Digital Library**

Dr. Zakir Husain Library has integrated itself with NDL which has 75 institutions to build this giant pan-India knowledge repository.

New Delhi: Jamia Millia Islamia joined the National Digital Library (NDL) Project initiated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development which will enable its students and researchers access large amounts of data through a single window search.

Dr. Zakir Husain Library has integrated itself with NDL which has 75 institutions to build this giant pan-India knowledge repository. NDL has already created an account for all faculty members and students of JMI to explore its resources. This project under MHIRD’s National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT) will allow integrated knowledge gathering on diverse topics across disciplines.

Speaking at the talk on the ‘Overview of NDL’, Vice Chancellor Talat Ahmad, JMI said that a project like this is of tremendous national interest as now individual libraries can be spared the expensive exercise of buying large amounts of e-journals and databases, instead all of this can be accessed through NDL on a single platform. Both students and institutions will be immensely benefitted by this project. Prof. P. P. Das, Joint Principal Investigator, NDL Project and Professor of Computer Science & Engineering, IIT Kharagpur gave an overview of the NDL project, its objectives and rationale.

Prof. Das said that as of now, 75 institutions across the country are contributing to NDL and now JMI will also make its rich resources available to NDL.

He further told the participating students that the mantra behind NDL was to be ‘inclusive and open’ which is also the mandate of any library. Adding that India’s huge population with the largest enrolment of students in the world, besides its linguistic diversity, poses a big challenge in building a platform like this. NDL provides access to resources from all educational areas and subject domain in various formats like books, journals, magazines, theses, question papers, online periodicals, video lectures, Web Courses in 25 languages for school to PG level including researchers and life-long learners of all disciplines.

**British Mosques to Impart Training on Lifesaving Skills to People of all Faiths**

London: Mosques across the United Kingdom have opened their doors recently to thousands of people as part of the British Islamic Medical Association’s (BIMA) Lifesavers project. This collaboration with the British Heart Foundation (BHF) and Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is now in its third year and involved hundreds of Muslim healthcare professionals volunteering to transform 35 mosques into public centers teaching CPR and basic life support skills to over a thousand people.

“In the UK, 80 percent of cardiac arrests happen at home, and the average survival is about 8 percent,” said BIMA Lifesavers Programme Director Dr. Wajid Akhtar. “With over 23,000 cases of out of hospital cardiac arrests happening each year in Britain, we can help save many lives with simple CPR training.”

Other countries have shown that with effective public CPR education, survival improves to over 25 percent, MCB reported. From his side, Secretary General of the MCN Harun Khan said, “This is a great initiative which allows mosques and Islamic centers up and down the country not just to serve as a place of worship, but to be service providers for all communities. To learn lifesaving skills together through interfaith initiatives captures the essence of unity, where communities can learn and come together to save lives”. BIMA Lifesavers is on track to become the largest, free, accredited, national basic life support-training program in the country and is looking to help Britain become a nation of lifesavers.

The MCB is the UK’s largest Muslim umbrella body with over 500 affiliated national, regional and local organizations, mosques, charities, and schools.

**Indian Prisons**

**Jails Continue to be Overcrowded**

There were 4.19 lakh inmates in 1,401 jails in India in 2015. They were crammed in the space meant for 3.66 lakh individuals. This means there were 14% more inmates than the jails were meant for. This however an improvement in situation as the jails contained 17% more inmates than the capacity in 2014. Of these 4,19 lakh inmates, women were only 17,834 while males were 401,789.

Undertrials represented 67.2% of the inmates while convicts were 32%.

The highest number of 88,747 inmates were reported from Uttar Pradesh (UP) followed by Madhya Pradesh 38,458, Maharashtra 29,657, Bihar 28,418 and Punjab 23,645 at the end of the year 2015. A total of 374 women convicts with their 450 children and 1,149 women undertrials with their 1,310 children were lodged in various prisons in the country at the end of 2015.

Muder convicts accounted for 59.6% (70,827 out of 1,18,746) of the total convicts under IPC Crimes. Maximum murder convicts were lodged in Uttar Pradesh (15,516) followed by Madhya Pradesh (11,207) these two States accounting for 21.9% and 15.8% of the total murder convicts at the end of the year 2015 respectively.

Daadra and Nagar Haveli reported the highest overcrowding in prisons (276.7%) followed by Chhattisgarh (233.9%) and Delhi (226.9%).

Of the total inmates, 67.75% were Hindus, 19.2% were Muslims, 4.39% were Sikhs, and 3.79% were Christians. Castewise, SCs accounted for 21.25%, STs 12.72% and OBCs 31.15%. Underprivileged communities therefore had an overwhelming share of 85%.

The prisons have a staff strength of 53,009 jail officials to take care of 4,19,623 inmates which amounts to 1 jail official per 8 inmates. A total of 1,584 deaths in jails were reported (1,469 natural and 115 un-natural) during the year 2015.
**Free Eye Camp at HBS Hospital**

**Bengaluru:** On October 13, a free eye camp was organized at HBS Hospital here in Shivajinagar to mark World Sight Day. A team of doctors from Nayonika Eye Care Charitable Trust and Citrix India spent the day providing medical assistance to some 250 people. Dedicated to serving the poor and economically weak sections of the society, Nayonika’s philosophy of “Your Good Vision Our Mission” has spread far and wide. (For more details, contact HBS Hospital: 080-25541321 and Nayonika Eye Care Charitable Trust: Mr Prashant: 8277491865)

**Clinic Opened in LR Nagar**

Swabhimaan, a registered Public charitable trust, founded by a husband-and-wife team, Venkataraman and Vijaya Iyer, has been managing a free medical clinic for the past 7 years in the slums of Rajendranagara, Koramangala, Bangalore. Many years ago, when Venkataraman visited first visited this slum to provide an English teacher to a Government Urdu school, he realized that most families in this community were from economically-weaker sections, and that most men and many women were daily wage labourers. The inhabitants of the slums are from different communities—Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others. They lived in extremely unhygienic conditions, with poor sanitation, very poor quality drinking water and garbage all around. This meant that they were falling sick very often. A daily wage laborer not only loses his income if does not report to work for the day, but also spends at least 100 rupees on treating himself/herself. Also, the sickness goes round in the poorly-ventilated homes they live in, ensuring that on an average about 20 % of a family’s income was spent on medical needs.

Venkataraman believed that if he could start a clinic that would help both treat the people at a minimal cost and advice them on preventive measures, the money saved on treatment could help augment nutrition for their children. Thus started Swabhimaan’s clinic, in 2009, managed by a senior, committed, caring general physician by name Dr. Venkatesh Kumar. This clinic supports the medical needs of at least 40 sick people each day, apart from providing anti hypertensive and anti diabetic medicines at minimal cost for dozens.

Sensing the need for a clinic in the neighboring slums of LR Nagar, a second clinic was inaugurated on the 20th of October. It is funded by the Sahayatha Trust run by a couple, Alex and Usha Abraham, and anti diabetic medicines at minimal cost for dozens. The charges are nominal.

**S.A. Samad Educational Trust Celebrates International Day of the Girl Child**

**Bengaluru:** The International Day of the Girl Child was declared by the United Nations in 2011 as a day to recognize girls’ rights and the unique challenges that girls face around the world. S.A. Samad Educational Trust, a charitable institution, was set up by Mrs Naima Samad, to promote education for underprivileged girls. The Trust launched a programme for girl children at the Samad House on October 9, where scholarships were distributed to many girl students, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. (For more details, contact Trust Office: “Samad House”, 59, Bowring Hospital Road, Bengaluru: 080-25599310)

**Aasra Distributes Scholarships to Orphans, Physically-Challenged Students**

**Bengaluru:** Aasra, managed by Tanzeem-ul Mohsinath, a Muslim women’s organization, organized a scholarship distribution programme on October 21, at Shadaab Shadi Mahal on Tannery Road. While presenting a report on the activities of Aasra, Mrs. Sajida Begum, President of Aasra, stated that this year, 400 students, right from Class 1 to graduation, were awarded scholarships. Many of them are orphaned and physically-challenged. The programme brought together parents, students, social activists, educationists and intellectuals. Zameer Pasha, former IAS officer, S.M. Zulfikar, CEO, Karnataka Wafk Board, Father Martin, head of labour and migration department, Indian Social Institute, Mohammed Ilyas, Treasurer Wafk Board, and Ascema Parvez, former Principal, Abbas Khan College for Women, were among the guests of honour on the occasion.

**First Waqf Tribunal**

**Bengaluru:** The first of the four Waqf Tribunals in Karnataka will come up in Bengaluru at the Hamid Sha Complex in Cubbonpet. The Waqf Complex has designated a place for the functioning of the Tribunal. District Judge Registrar, Qazi Zaibunnisa Mohiuddin has designated a place for the functioning of the Tribunal. District Judge Registrar, Qazi Zaibunnisa Mohiuddin has been appointed as the first Presiding Officer of the Tribunal. The Tribunal will consist of three members. Of these, first will be of the rank of District or Session Judge. Second will be a member of the Karnataka Administrative Services (KAS) and the third will be one from among those who possess knowledge of the Sharia and Islamic affairs. The Tribunal is likely to start functioning shortly.

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First Internet Addiction Rehab Clinic Opens in Algeria

Health experts at the new clinic agree that internet overuse has emerged as a national issue.

Constantine, Algeria: "When talking about addiction, people usually think about tobacco, drugs or alcohol dependency," says Dr Hakima Boualem, head of the medical staff of the addiction treatment centre of Bachir Mentouri clinic in Constantine. "But, for some, the fight is with internet - especially the ‘magic blue’ of Facebook."

Addiction specialists and psychologists at the Bachir Mentouri clinic, which is 450km to the east of the capital Algiers, have rolled out a rehab programme designed for compulsive users of technology, particularly social networks. This is the first clinic in Algeria, and in Africa - aiming to cure Internet fanatics. Today, the North African country counts more than nine million Facebook users, according to Algerian digital marketing analysts. But this increasing use of the internet has come at a price. "Algeria is experiencing what developing countries have been facing for a few years: the flip side of the internet," Dr Raouf Bougouffa, director of the Bachir Mentouri clinic's rehab department, told Al Jazeera. "An increasing number of internet users are losing control."

Heavy use of the internet is not necessarily pathological, experts say. "People can spend hours each day in front of a screen without being addicted. The critical distinction between an addiction and just a bad habit is that addiction implies a pattern of use that you cannot stop." For some users, going online is as important in their life as breathing, eating or sleeping. We are literally talking about people who put their life at risk," Djamel Berkat, an addiction specialist at Bachir Mentouri clinic, told Al Jazeera.

World Halal Congress

Opatija, Croatia: Opatija Town will host the first major international halal congress in the country, (World Halal Day), which will bring together the world's leading halal institutions, manufacturers, service providers, customers and vendors, academic and research community, embassies, government institutions, representatives of other local and international institutions. The aim of the congress, to be held from November 2 to 4, is exchanging experiences and presenting Croatia and the region as a new destination for tourists demanding halal standards. The third World Halal Day, after the one held in Singapore and India will be entirely dedicated to the halal market, halal tourism, halal food, and nutrition, as well as Islamic banking and finance. This congress will be attended by representatives from Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Mauritius, India, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea. "Centre for Halal Quality Certification was registered in 2010 when we established a halal standard in Croatia. Today, the center is an independent institution, and a great potential that attracts interest from non-Muslims as well, which can help Croatia attract investments and strongly boost domestic exports and tourism", said Aldin Dugonjić, head of the Centre for Halal Quality Certification in Croatia.

Jeddah: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) plans to launch an International Media Award to reward the distinguished media outlets and media professionals in the area of promoting intercultural dialogue and tolerance. The OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) adopted, during its last meeting held in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent, a resolution recommending the creation of a Media Award, proposed by Senegal, to support the Muslim and international press that promote harmony among communities. The CFM called on the OIC member states and financial institutions to provide full support for the Media Award. The OIC Ten-Year Program of Action has put dialogue among the civilizations, cultures and religions on top of its priority, for the development of the culture of peace and moderation among nations and civilizations.

Halal Tourism Awards 2016

Jakarta: Twelve Indonesian entities are competing for the World Halal Tourism Awards head of Indonesia’s halal tourism acceleration and development team, Riyanto Sofyan, has announced the entities that will represent the country. The voting period is from October 24 to November 25, and the winners will be announced in Abu Dhabi on December 7. Indonesia won several awards in this competition in 2015.

IRCICA to Restore 370,000 Manuscripts in Mali

Bamako: The Istanbul-based Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) has signed a collaboration agreement with the government of Mali in efforts to protect the Islamic cultural heritage in the West African nation, Daily Sabah reported. "We will collaborate with the government of Mali to restore 370,000 manuscripts that were in possession of prominent families of Mali and cultural institutions and that were taken to Bamako, the capital, from Timbuktu during the war," said Associate Professor Halit Eren, the IRCICA director general. "We will also assist the process of transferring these manuscripts to the digital platform." he added.

International Media Award by OIC
Morocco to Give 600 Mosques a Green Makeover

Six hundred “green mosques” are to be created in Morocco by March 2019 in a national consciousness-raising initiative that aims to speed the country’s journey to clean energy. If all goes to plan, the green revamp will see LED lighting, solar thermal water heaters, and photovoltaic systems installed in 100 mosques by the end of this year. Morocco’s Ministry of Islamic affairs is underwriting the innovative scheme, paying up to 70% of the initial investment costs in a partnership with the German government.

Jan-Christophe Kuntze, the project’s chief, said: “We want to raise awareness, and mosques are important centres of social life in Morocco. They are a place where people exchange views about all kinds of issues including, hopefully, for gender equality in Morocco too. Many mourchidates (female clerics) have been involved in the project, as well as imams, and about a quarter of the participants in recent seminars have been women, Kuntze said. The first 100 mosques to get a green makeover are mostly based in big population centres – such as Rabat, Fez, Marrakech and Casablanca – but the project will quickly move on to smaller villages and towns. With 15,000 mosques dotted around the north African country, the idea’s growth potential is clear.

(Source: www.theguardian.com)

Human Rights Day in Islam

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is in the process of adopting August 5 of every year, to be the Human Rights Day in Islam. August 5 is the day which marks the adoption of the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights and human dignity in Islam. The move to introduce “Day of Human Rights in Islam,” came after the current global situation and awareness of the conditions prevailing, and the need to strengthen cooperation and efficient coordination between member states, to explore ways and means of spreading Islamic values. In addition to that, the move will enhance protection of the true image of Islam, besides confronting the campaign to distort the image of Islam, and encouraging dialogue between cultures and religions.

Bahrain to Host World Islamic Banking Conference

Manama: The upcoming 23rd edition of the World Islamic Banking Conference (WIBC) in Bahrain will see a global participation with leaders from different regions across the world. The conference to be held in strategic partnership with the Central Bank of Bahrain will take place in Manama, Bahrain, from December 5 to 6, and will feature a groundbreaking lineup of speakers. The World Islamic Banking Conference is the longest running Islamic finance conference with 23 years of heritage. This year, WIBC will engage its audience in discussions on the challenges brought by the uncertainties in the global economic environment and highlight the need for Islamic finance to stay vigilant in order to maintain the current growth rates.

Bearys Group Bags Green Awards

Award (in the Platinum category) has been conferred on Badriya Jun’a Masjed, the World's first Green Mosque in Kodi, Kundapur, the second award has been bestowed on Mr. Syed Mohamed Beary in recognition of his relentless efforts in promoting the Green Building Movement in India. He has been honoured with the “IGBC Senior Fellow” Award. Syed Mohammed Beary hailing from Kundapur in DK district of Karnataka began as a real estate agent 35 years ago and single-handedly built the group of companies that are into development and constructions. Besides, the Group has set up a string of schools and institutes including an engineering college, a college of architecture in the DK district.

The “Bearys Group” has bagged two prestigious awards from the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) in the recently held Green Building Congress 2016, Mumbai. While the first IGBC Green Place of Worship
Jahangir has performed last rites of as many as 1,600 people. As he is used to giving gusl, he is also called by people for giving gusl to their relatives.

By Raqib Hameed Naik

Srinagar: In a significant move aimed at helping hundreds of youth who have been blinded by use of pellet guns in Kashmir, the Catholic Church officials in Jammu and Kashmir have asked for state government permission to establish an eye bank in the state. The Jammu-Kashmir Diocese has already submitted a detailed proposal for establishing an eye bank, to the Directorate of Health Services. According to Father Shaiju Chacko, who is the director of Diocesan social services, the decision was taken in the backdrop of the use of pellet guns in Kashmir which led to injuries to hundreds of protesters.

Over and over again, the stories of people losing their eyes and then the initiative of treating pellet victims for free by Dr Natarajan inspired and motivated us to help, with the resources we have,“ Father Shaiju Chacko said. “Then we realised that there were also legal hurdles as organ donation is eschewed in the state. We have asked for the government’s permission to establish the eye bank,“ he added. Dr Sundaram Natarajan, a renowned retinal surgeon who is also a Padma Shri awardee, had twice visited the Department of Ophthalmology, Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) Hospital over the last three months to conduct eye surgeries on dozens of pellet victims for free. Father Chacko said that they already have a hospital in Jammu where they will establish the eye bank. “We also have an associate hospital in Baramullah. So once the necessary permission is given by the government, then we can work on it. Besides we have consulted eye banks outside the state that are ready to provide the necessary help.”

(Extracted from twocircles.net)
Muslim Women Can Get Protection under Sharia

Female reformers were employing the Sharia to argue for Muslim women’s equality. One of the most influential was the ruler of the princely state of Bhopal, Sultan Jahan Begum.

In the light of the political controversy that surrounds proposals for the abolition of Muslim personal law in favour of a uniform civil code, building on these historical precedents may offer a pragmatic way forward.

**Petition to End Male Guardianship of Women in Saudi Arabia**

Thousands of Saudis have signed an online petition calling for the government to abolish the country’s guardianship system, which prevents women from engaging in fundamental tasks without the permission of a male relative. “Women should be treated as a full citizen,” said activist Aziza Al-Yousef, who, along with other activists, has been fighting against the guardianship system for a decade. “This is not only a women’s issue, this is also putting pressure on normal men, this is not an issue for women only,” she said.

Under Saudi law, women require the permission of a male guardian to travel, marry, or exit prison and it may be needed to be granted employment or access to healthcare. A guardian is typically a woman’s father or her husband if she is married; a widow may have to seek permission from her son if she has no other men of age in her life. But in recent years, a growing protest movement has sought to end the system. Yousef and other activists started holding workshops and performing studies on the religious validity of the guardianship system five years ago. The campaign picked up steam this summer after Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a blistering report on the system. The report gave birth to a hashtag #AmMyOwnGuardian, which spread awareness on the issue. Hala Aldosari, researcher in women’s health, who wrote the petition and worked on the HRW report, said the hashtag gained support among women of all ages and backgrounds. On the two days leading up to the petition, an estimated 2,500 women sent direct telegrams to the Saudi King’s office imploring him to end the guardianship system. The petition racked up 14,682 signatures after promoting it on Twitter, Aldosari said.

(Extracted from hwww.theguardian.com)

**Indian Muslim Girl Takes Yoga to Saudi Arabia**

Mangaluru: She is the only Muslim certified yoga instructor in Jeddah. Hailing from Belvi, a small town near Moodbidri, Fatima Shaikh Abdul Majeed is making yoga popular among the people of Saudi Arabia. “However, initially, it was not easy to convince people to take up yoga. People found it difficult to accept it, although they thought it to be an out of the box idea. Later, when they realized the positive outcome of yoga in getting a healthy mind and body, they included it in their lifestyle”, said Fatima, a commerce graduate, who has been in Saudi Arabia all her life as her parents are settled there. Remembering her first attempt at teaching yoga in her first class, she said, “It was a flop and people rejected it. But, my colleagues gave me the motivation to try again and eventually, it gave positive results.”

Fatima conducts classes only for women and says that these women get some time for themselves to open up. “From teenagers to senior citizens, now, everyone comes to my fitness studio to learn the art”, she says.

(Extracted from timesofindia.indiatimes.com)

**Dame Nemat Shafik**

First Female Director of the London School of Economics

Egyptian-born Dame Nemat Shafik became the first woman to be appointed Director of LSE, one of the world’s most prestigious academic institutions.

Dame Nemat Shafik

Egyptian-born Dame Nemat Shafik is set to become the first female to ever run the prestigious London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The economist, who is a British and US national, resigned from her prominent central banking job as Deputy Governor of the Bank of England only two years into her five-year contract, in order to accept her upcoming position heading up LSE, according to The Guardian. Shafik, who hails from the coastal city of Alexandria will officially commence in her new position as Director of LSE in September 2017. In 2015, Queen Elizabeth II honoured Shafik for her outstanding contributions in her field and named her a Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (DBE).
Dalit women, whether in Haryana or Bihar, remain most marginalized. Muslim women fare no better.

Savita Ali

Patna: Savita Ali remembers the time when she was in school, in a village called Naraina, district Panipat. She had just given her Class 10 exams, and like most of the girls in her village, that was supposed to be the end of her education. However, Savita was not ready to give up. Growing up in a family that converted to Christianity three generations ago (she converted to Islam following her marriage) Ali knew that despite her religion, she was, like the thousands of Dalit families around her, marginalised and without a voice. “As we went to higher levels in education, the number of women students kept dropping drastically,” she says, adding, “In Class 12, less than a dozen girls went with me to study; by the time I was in graduation, the number was down to single digits.”

“I believe that irrespective of which state I live in, the problems remain the same. I will continue to raise these issues.”

A little over a decade has passed since then, but for Savita, who now lives in Bihar, the reality remains the same: Dalit women, whether in Haryana or Bihar, remain the most marginalised within the marginalised communities, and this is the issue that has made Ali work day and night to work for them, first as an activist and now as an activist/lawyer.

Ali thanks her father, who worked in a bank and acknowledged her wish to do graduation. She took up admission in a girls’ college and in 2007 completed her graduation.

Ali has not looked back since then.

In 2007, she joined the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights. She became a programme coordinator and was involved in training Dalit women, along with conducting various capacity building measures. Within a few months, she realised that there were almost no Dalit women leaders in Haryana, who could take up the numerous issues of assault on women. In 2008, Ali joined All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch (AIDMAM) and started focussing on developing women leaders in the community. She remembers one of her first steps were to get young women to rise up against the discriminations they faced.

My Life was at Risk

From 2010, Ali became much more active once she had acquired a law degree, but that also meant she was at the receiving end of constant threats, including her life. “There were times when I was not sure if I would be mowed down by a car while crossing a road. I was constantly scared, but thanks to my family, I never thought of giving up my work. I was so harassed, that I went into depression and stayed out of Haryana for six months, in UP. However, when I came back, to my dismay I found out that many cases I were working upon had reached an ‘agreement’ and the culprits had walked free. I decided that day that I will never again leave my cases, even if my life was at risk,” she says.

In 2013, she married Safdar Ali from Bihar and moved to Patna. However, the treatment of Dalits in Bihar was no different from Haryana, and to ensure that she keeps working on Dalit upliftment, she joined Human Rights Law Network. After working for two years with the legal research team, she joined AIDMAM again last year, and has been trying to document and fight the various cases of atrocities. Then, there is the issue of Muslim women, who Ali says fare no better, if not worse, than Dalit women. It is to look after this issue, that Dalit and Muslim women from Bihar have got together to set up Dalit Muslim Mahila Manch, and the organisation will address the issues and problems that the women in these two communities face. Although Ali has a new home, she continues to work with the same zeal. “Initially, I was a little lost in Bihar, but now I believe that irrespective of what state I live in, the problems remain the same. I will continue to raise these issues. Not everyone likes them, but that does not mean we will remain quiet,” she says in a defiant tone. (Extracted from twocircles.net)

Around the World in a Year!

Solo Malaysian Woman Bikes Around The Globe

Anita Yusof, a 49-year-old lecturer from Malaysia, became the first solo Muslim woman rider to bike around the globe for a year. Exhilarated by her achievement, she says she intends to write a book on her globe travel as there were so many unforgettable experiences, incidents and events that she can share with others. “My solo feat will definitely motivate others, especially women, to embark on. I have been invited to give talks and I will share my experiences with the audience,” she said. The mother of two sons said that she is proud to become the first Muslim woman to travel solo around the globe on a motorcycle. “There is always a negative perception, especially when it comes to women, travelling to countries alone. There were instances when I visited some countries and the people could not believe that I, as a Muslim woman, was travelling alone,” she added. Anita said she had to explain that not all Muslim countries discriminate women.

With only some hard-earned savings in hand, she had to be careful with her expenses. “By God’s grace I did receive some cash and accommodation in some of the countries I travelled,” said Anita, whose bike was sponsored by Hong Leong Yamaha while GIVI Asia Sdn Bhd, (GIVI Malaysia), a manufacturer of motorcycle accessories, supported her with jackets, helmet and other necessities. She travelled a distance of 65,369km from Sept 13, 2015, and returned to the country on Sept 16 this year to make it more meaningful on ‘Malaysia Day’. ■
The exercise on Uniform Civil Code (UCC) must be responded to appropriately and passionately by the Muslim community. The questionnaire issued by the Law Commission Chairman, Justice B. S. Chauhan, on October 7 provides legal luminaries, thinkers, social activists and NGOs enough scope to put up their viewpoint on matters of civil laws, discuss threadbare the legal ramifications, and explain the position of the Sharia on issues that pertain to family integrity and gender justice. An opportunity for intellectual exercise should not be wasted through a boycott.

India’s vast diversity demands that the opinion-seeking exercise should be elaborate and extensive, something that looks impossible within a 45-day timeframe. At the first look, it appears that even a year will not be sufficient. The Law Commission will be better advised to extend the deadline to October 6, 2017. One would be justified in reading divisive motives of the Government if the plea for an extended timeframe is ignored. If the present Government at the Centre feels that it can mount a spectacle on the basis of some quick conclusion, it will be making its lack of sincerity apparent. Article 44 of Directive Principles of State Policy is a matter of public discourse. It does not betray any modicum of suspicion that it merely targets a particular community in order to tamper with or target its personal law. Just as opinion on triple talaq has been sought, there is similar mention of maatrri-karar (a practice in Gujarat’s Hindu society for men to enter into a second marriage); polyandry (surviving mainly among tribals); two-year waiting period for Christian women for grant of divorce; codification of personal laws etc. The questionnaire even goes to the extent of seeking opinion on minimum age for consent of marriage, although there is almost universal concurrence within the country that 18 for girls and 21 for boys is just right as of now. The question no. 2 has listed the subjects that fall under the realm of personal laws and seeks opinion if anyone of them needs to be excluded or there is a need for inclusion of any further subjects. The Muslim community could perhaps find under this head an opportunity to discuss its reservation regarding foster (Razayee siblings) relationships, its definition of incest etc. Even the question whether one favoured the codification for personal laws deserves appreciation. Muslims have sat over the issue for well over a century and action upon it should not be delayed. There is ample scope for saying ‘NO’ to the UCC in the questionnaire. Instead of boycotting, it will be in order that the community responds to it and oppose the UCC. The justification for such a ‘NO’ in a diverse society like India is colossal, although it is always beneficial and desirable for the community to be governed by the same set of laws.

One needs to be reminded that we need to insist on basic values of Islam such as fairness, justice, equity, equality, compassion, charity, hospitality, generosity, truthfulness, piety, accountability, transparency, etc rather than citing sanctity of the Muslim Personal Law. Laws should be based on values rather than sanctity or sacredness or by citing un-impeachability of the source. Only a threadbare discussion on rationality of the law would enable the community to reach a consensual response to the Law Commission’s questionnaire. Ignoring, boycotting or being dismissive about it are not the options currently. By doing this, the community would be skipping an opportunity to explain its standpoint on issues that appear contentious and unjust to so many sections of the people.

Avoiding Partisan Politics

Perhaps only the very credulous would believe Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s words calling for protection of rights of Muslim women against practices like triple talaq. Politicising issues like gender justice or Uniform Civil Code should not be attempted in electioneering. But Mr. Modi’s reference to the issue at an election rally in Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh may be a straw in the wind. One would not miss the significance of the remark especially in a state where Muslim votes (18%) matter much and have been crucial in tilting the balance of power towards parties that are committed to empowering the subaltern communities namely, the Other Backward Communities, Dalits and the Scheduled Tribes together with minorities.

It does not behove the Prime Minister to make such a partisan reference. Gender justice is a long-term goal and no purpose will be achieved by politicizing it or making it an election issue except that it may polarize the voters. It is useful to be reminded that more urgent matters such as 33% reservation for women in legislatures, have been pending in the Parliament for the last 15 years and all political parties have dithered at best, or maintained silence at worst, on the issue. Even as the petition by Uttarakhand resident on triple talaq is pending before the Supreme Court, it is widely suspected that the Union Government is ignoring. If the present Government at the Centre feels that it can mount a spectacle, it will be making its lack of sincerity apparent. It will be in the fitness of things if issues of development for all (sabka saath, sabka vikas) are taken up for mass mobilization. Prime Minister has launched several imaginative initiatives such as Skill India, Make in India, Digital India, Bett bachao, Bett Padhao, Swachh Bharat, Jan Dhan Yojana etc. It would be appropriate if the BJP tries to put its rivals on the mat on the basis of these issues. Partisan politics on the basis of gender prejudices will end up dividing the communities even more. Even the Muslim Personal Law Board would be well advised in keeping the issue away from the electoral politics. Laws are evolutionary in nature and reform is a continuous process. One should not close his or her eyes from this basic reality.

Law Commission Questionnaire

Needed a Sensible Response

The Islamic new year has recently begun and people generally ponder about on how to approach this New Islamic Year and their work, health and relationships. In reality we don’t need a New Year or special occasion to make a resolution for doing or achieving good. It can be done instantaneously!

Common resolutions include cutting down on chocolate/weight, quit smoking, getting in shape, etc. A lot involves benefits to the health and/or improving lifestyle. Others include giving more to charity, being closer to family which boosts a personal lifestyle. Others include giving more to charity, being closer to family which boosts a personal lifestyle. Other than that it is important to set goals for not only our material well-being, but more importantly for our spiritual self. That is not to say that we should not set goals for this material life, by all means go ahead, but let us not forget the journey that lies ahead once our eyes close from this temporary abode.

Yes, set high goals both for our Spiritual and Material progress.

The Qur’an says: “Our Lord! Grant us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and keep us safe from the torment of the Fire” (Quran: Al-Baqarah:201).

Allah mentions in the Quran, “...And I created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me…” (Quran: 51:56)

Prayer is the most essential ingredient for achievement. Ask Allah for the best, in fact ask for everything good. Don’t leave out anything. Allah, The Most Wise, says: “Invoke Me, (and ask Allah for anything) I will respond to your (invocation/dua)…” (Quran: 40: 60)

Eliminate Transgressions:

How can we expect Allah to grant us good if we continuously sin and transgress? To get the help of Allah, we need to move away from sin in our lives. We are not perfect and as humans we often err. But the least we can do to show our sincerity to God is to intend to abandon all forms of sins from our lives.

“O My servants who have transgressed against their own souls, despair not of the Mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Qur’an: 39:53)

Make Spiritual Life the Bigger Circle

Until now we may have made our material desires the Bigger Circle in our life and Islam, the inner Smaller Circle that occupies a very small insignificant place in the Bigger Circle. Now resolve to make Islam the Bigger Circle and make everything else fit into the Bigger Circle. If it does not conform to Islamic values, no matter what it may be, leave it out of the Bigger Circle!

Set Specific Goals:

Leaving our intentions vague and general is not wise. Make specific
9th Ravinder Kumar Memorial Lecture

"Women in Islam: Inventing Reality and Myth"

By Manzur Imam

New Delhi: It was a brainstorming session in which students raised serious questions about Islam in general and about Muslim women’s issues and the role of ulama in particular at Jamia Millia Islamia recently, when women’s rights activist and educationist, Dr Syeda Saiyidain Hameed tried to pull the answers apart by separating certain myths from realities.

She was delivering the 9th Ravinder Kumar Memorial Lecture titled “Women in Islam: Inventing Reality and Myth” organised by the Academy of International Studies (AIS), JMI on October 5.

Calling women in Islam the “hot topic” which you cannot escape when you look at the media today, the former member of the Planning Commission of India suggested that there was need to ‘segregate the myth from the reality’ because we are all “victims of that myth” and mostly relatively “ignorant of the details of the subject”.

Placing the topic into a context, she said that the global image of the Muslim woman could be explained in 3 Bs and 3 Cs. The Bs are burqa, backward and beleaguered and the Cs are chulha, char-diwari, words to define the role of women as being limited to cooking, doing other household chores and being confined to home.

Verses of inheritance

What Islam has given to women is different from what is being portrayed in the media and practised by Muslims, she asserted.

She quoted a verse from the Quran (Verse 35 of Chapter 33) revealed in answer to a question raised by Umm Salama, one of the wives of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) as order for the right of women in inheritance and property was like a bombshell as it deprived men of the old traditional privilege, she said adding that media had damaged the image of Muslim women. Many of the achievements and glories of Islam have been forgotten. “It is very convenient to stereotype Muslim women as meek and voiceless.”

It is important to understand that Islam was born in a context. It was born out of a need to address the ills of the times. Dr. Hameed cited Maulana Abul Kalam Azad that Islam was meant to address the ills of the time which is an era called the Era of Jahiliyah that is an era of ignorance. The problem is that we Muslims hung on to each and every word without understanding the profound spirit behind the language. Despite Islam having everything, Muslims have not taken few strides. They have stood still.

Jamat-e-Islami said, “There could be some elements, good and bad, in a community.” For others to misunderstand and called to forego misunderstanding and ensure communal harmony.

It is important to understand that dharna is a bombshell as it deprived men of the old traditions. The verse clearly stated that the global image of the Muslim woman could be explained in 3 Bs and 3 Cs. The Bs are burqa, backward and beleaguered and the Cs are chulha, char-diwari, words to define the role of women as being limited to cooking, doing other household chores and being confined to home.

The global image of the Muslim woman could be explained in 3 Bs and 3 Cs. The Bs are burqa, backward and beleaguered and the Cs are chulha, chakri and char-diwari, words to define the role of women as being limited to cooking, doing other household chores and being confined to home.

Hameed demanded that any text produced must be understood in the context in which it is revealed. Elaborating that, she said that laws pertaining to inheritance and right of women in land for example should be viewed historically. At the time when the verses of inheritance were revealed, women were completely deprived of any right.

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New Delhi: The Begum Hazrat Mahal Hostel for Girl Students was commissioned at the Jamia Millia Islamia University on September 28 by Union Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar. The 4-storey hostel will accommodate nearly 400 inmates.

Javadekar lauded Jamia’s role in promoting education and compared it with the Banaras Hindu University and Aligarh Muslims University which were all set up around the same time to promote national spirit among the communities benefitting from them. Speaking about the facilities being provided to the students of Jammu and Kashmir by the Central Government under the Prime Minister Scholarship Scheme, he said that since the Modi government took over, the scheme has stabilised. Earlier, there were only 2 supernumerary seats for students from J&K in institutions outside the State, but now with the number going up to 10, there is a sizeable number of students who are availing this scholarship, which amounts to nearly 2 lakh per student per year.

Jaime Vic Chancellor Prof. Talat Ahmad speaking on the occasion said that the University has bagged as many as 18 GIAN (Global Initiative of Academic Networks) courses, which was one of the highest for Central Universities in India. “It is a matter of satisfaction that we have been awarded Grade ‘A’ by NAAC”, he said.

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Remembering Mamburam Sayyid Alavi Thangal

At a time when inter-religious conflicts are tearing their ugly heads across the country, Mamburam Makhan in Malappuram district of Kerala has emerged as a symbol of communal harmony, by carrying forward the legacy of the Sufi Mamburam Sayyid Alavi Thangal.

By Shafeeq Hudawi

Malappuram: A week long spiritual interaction and food distribution marked the 178th death anniversary of Thangal in Malappuram (Kerala) recently. Born in Yemen in 1752, Thangal, a Sufi leader, came to Kerala as part of a missionary group in 1767 and settled at Mamburam. He was called Qutub Zaman, which denotes the spiritual distinction, by the Sunni Muslims in Kerala. He helped the Muslim community grow by drawing them towards education.

Ulema and devotees attended a spiritual session, held as part of 178th death anniversary of Mamburam Thangal

Quoting the Malabar Manual, written by British officer William Logan, historian Dr. K K Muhammed Abdul Satar says that he “was influential not only among the Muslims, but all people in the region, especially among Dalits.”

“Dalits were always drawn towards Thangal. Unlike the Hindu landlords here, he was open to their conversation. Dalits here were following the worst customs of casteism. They […] refused to walk and sit with the landlords. Even conversion didn’t help them to get rid of the compulsion of caste system,” Satar adds.

Many uprisings carried against the landlords who were backed by the British, were motivated by Thangal. In the middle of the 19th century, Malabar witnessed various rebellions by Mappilla peasants at Muttichira, Cheroor and the Puthuppally community, which was denied access to the landlords and upper class leaders, used to approach the Sufi leader to express their grievances and seek solutions,” Abdul Satar says.

Thangal extended stiff resistance against the caste system. “Even conversion, Dalits here were following the worst customs of casteism. They […] refused to walk and sit with the landlords. Even conversion didn’t help them to get rid of the compulsion of caste system,” Satar adds.

Haji Pilgrimage Management

Under Ministry of Minority Affairs

Delhi: The management of Haj pilgrimage, including administration of the Haj Committee Act, 1959 (51 of 1959) and the rules made thereunder will now come under the purview of the Minority Affairs Ministry, instead of Ministry of External Affairs, as per the new rules issued by the Cabinet Secretariat. As per the decision, which received a nod from the President Pranab Mukherjee, the Ministry of Minority Affairs has taken over the work of Haj Division of MEA with effect from 1st October, 2016.

Sadhbhavana Mandap near Ajmer Dargah

Minister announces construction of a thousand toilets in the Dargah complex for pilgrims.

Ajmer: A thousand toilets and bathrooms will be constructed in the Ajmer Dargah complex for the pilgrims visiting the Dargah. This was announced by Union Minority Welfare Minister, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on October 6. The Minister also announced constructing a Sadhbhavana Mandap near the Dargah complex to accommodate pilgrims visiting Dargah and Hindu Pilgrimage town of Pushkar near Ajmer. (Pushkar has the only Brahma Temple of the country. Brahma is the supreme creator in the pantheon of deities in the Hindu religion.) The Mandap can accommodate nearly 15,000 people. Naqvi will be inaugurating several projects like hospital, school, toilets and bathrooms in Ajmer in November.

A delegation of khadims related with the Dargah in a representation to the Minister urged that the Central Industrial Security Force should be deployed for providing security in the Dargah complex and requested that the Dargah too should be included in the Smart City programme of the Union Government. The delegation was led by Sheikh Aaleem, Chairman of the Dargah Khwaja Ajmer committee.

The Committee is constructing a school and a hospital in the complex.

Madrasa Modernisation Scheme

UP Govt. Enhances Teaching Honorarium

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Government has increased the teaching honorarium for teachers hired by Madrassas under the Madrasa Modernization Scheme in the State. The Central Government scheme named as Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrassas (SPQEM) provides Rs. 12,000 to post graduate teachers while graduate teachers are paid Rs. 6,000. The UP Govt. has been adding Rs. 2,000 from its side on the two categories. With the latest decision, the teachers hired under the scheme will be receiving Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 9,000 respectively. The UP cabinet of ministers took the decision on October 16.

Kashmiri Youth Rescue Soldier Trapped in Vehicle

Srinagar: Kashmiri youth rescued a soldier who was trapped inside a mangled vehicle which had met with an accident in Srinagar Bypass road near Lasjan area of the city, police said. An army vehicle veered off the road after the driver lost control at Lasjan and hit a tree. A police official said one soldier was trapped inside the badly damaged vehicle and efforts of other army men to evacuate him did not fructify. Local Kashmiri youth rushed to the spot and managed to bring the injured army jawan out by placing a truck next to the damaged army vehicle,” the official said. The incident comes amidst the ongoing unrest which has claimed 84 lives and thousands others injured in clashes. In July, local residents of Bijbehara in south Kashmir’s Anantnag district defied curfew to rescue over 20 Amarnath pilgrims whose vehicle had met with an accident during the beginning of the current unrest.

Urdu Learning, DTP Centres Set Up

Chikmagalur: The Karnataka State Urdu Academy started its 19th Urdu learning centre and DTP centre at Chikmagalur, 200 kms north-west of Bengaluru on September 29. The Urdu Learning Centres run a six-month course in Urdu which enables a student to read newspaper on completion of the course. The Urdu DTP Centres impart technical skills to computerize the Urdu text. It is a three-month course. The Urdu Academy helps NGOs wishing to set up an Urdu learning centre with Rs. 5,000 a month, while an Urdu DTP Centre is supplied with computers and Urdu software and assisted with Rs. 12,000 to 15,000 a month. Six of these centres are located in Bengaluru itself, while three are operating in Kalburgi (previously Gulbarga). The Chikmagalur centre has been set up by NGO Karwan e Urdu Adab which also commissioned an Urdu library. (By A Staff Writer)

‘Progress Panchayath’ Launched in Mewat

New Delhi: The Union Government launched “Progress Panchayath” on September 29 from Bichor village in Haryana in what is touted as the NDA Government’s Muslim outreach programme, as a follow-up of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s announcement to this effect at the BJP National Executive meeting at Clicquet two months ago. Minority Welfare Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi launched the programme at the village.

The programme will avail all the Union Govt’s welfare schemes. The Minister also inaugurated a 100-bed hostel for Muslim girls in the nearby Hathini village, and staff quarters for school staff in Nuh and Nagina villages, as part of the exercise. Naqvi addressed a meeting attended by nearly 3,000 villagers in Bichor. The next panchayath is scheduled to be inaugurated in Alwar district of Rajasthan. Alwar, Bharatpur and Nuh etc are part of the Mewat region which is inhabited by over a million Muslims who converted to Islam during the period of Alauddin Khilji. Most Mewati Muslims follow an amalgam of rites and rituals common to Hindus and Muslims in the region. It is the region where Shaheed movement of Arya Samaj and Tabligi Jamaat took birth, both targeted at retaining the people following their traditional religion within their faith and community. Mr. Abbas said the positive programme of the NDA Government will take precedence over the destructory, “Agenda of the communal forces.”

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P Sreeramakrishnan, Minister for Local Administration and Minority Welfare, Dr. K T Jaleel, Minister for Ports Kadannappally Ramachandran, Samastha Kerala Jamiyyatul Ulema general secretary Ponnambal Abdul Qadir Musliyar, V T Balram MLA, historian K K N Kurup, Syed Ibrahim Khaleed Bukhari and author K P Ramamunni attended various sessions. (Extracted from twocircles.net and with some modifications)
Scholarships for Plus Two Courses

New Delhi: Maulana Azad Education Foundation has invited applications for the grant of scholarship to minority community students, enrolled in 10th and 12th std classes (variously PUC or Plus Two in different states). The scholarship will be to the tune of Rs. 6,000 for each of the two year course. Students who have enrolled for PUC 1st year and secured at least 55% marks in 10th std (SSLC Board exam) will be eligible to apply.

The scholarship amount is directly sent to the bank account of the successful applicant by the Direct Benefit Transfer. Last date for receiving application is November 30, 2016. The students who have already submitted their application offline or Online are required to resubmit their application, as per revised online format.

Workshop for Urdu Journalists by MANUU

Hyderabad: The Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), in collaboration with the National Council for promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL), New Delhi, is organizing a five-day workshop on “Capacity Building for the working Urdu Journalist of Telangana and Tharaboota” from December 3 to 7, 2016. Prof. Ehtesham Ahmad Khan, Head, Dept. of Mass Communication and Journalism said that the workshop will cover various aspects of Urdu journalism with a view to enhancing the professional skills andproficiencies of journalists and shall be helpful in tackling the demands of the growing media industry.

Lecture on Fr Paul Jackson’s Contribution to Sufi Studies

By Victor Edwin SJ

New Delhi: Islamic Studies Association (New Delhi) and Vidyajyoti Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations jointly organised a lecture on: “In the way of the Sufi: Paul Jackson’s contribution to Sisila Yi Maneri,” by Dr Meenakshi Khanna, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of History, IP College for Women (University of Delhi), on October 1, 2016, at St Xavier’s School, Delhi. Dr Khanna, a scholar in Asian Sufism who wrote her thesis on Sufi interpretation of dreams, has been associated with Vidyajyoti College of Theology for more than two decades. Fr. Paul Jackson’s deep knowledge of Persian and his insightful understanding of Sufi practices in South Asia have eminently prepared him to make a lifetime of contribution to Sufi studies, through his translation of Shaikh Maneri’s letters, Dr Khanna noted. Fr. Jackson brought to light the spiritual treasures of Shaikh Maneri’s teachings in a language that people can easily read and understand.

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We welcome your suggestions for improvement.

Please email to workmailsedit@gmail.com or you may drop a post card to The Editor, Islamic Voice, No 3/1, Palmgrove Road, Victoria Layout, Bangalore-560047.

Manuu Civil Services Coaching

Date for Applications Extended upto Nov. 17

Hyderabad: The Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) will receive applications till November 16 for admission into its coaching centre for the aspirants of Civil Services Competitive Exams Prelims to be held in 2017.

According to a communiqué from Dr. P. E. Munawar Hussain, Joint Director, MANUU Civil Services Coaching Academy, the entrance for the admission will be held on December 4 this year. The aspirants for admission can download the application form from www.manuu.ac.in. The admission fee is Rs. 1,800. The selected candidates will have to make a caution deposit of Rs. 3,000 refundable at the end of the coaching.

Sardarpura Massacre

Life Sentence Confirmed against 17

New Delhi: The Godhra train burning incident was the first of the nine post-Godhra riot cases probed by Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by former CBI Director RK Raghavan.

Out of the 76 initially arrested, two died during pendency of trial, while one was a juvenile. A special SIT court had framed charges against 73 accused in June 2009 and initiated trial in the case. The high court also upheld the decision of lower court to not accept the “conspiracy theory” put up by the prosecution, which had alleged that the attack on the Muslims was pre-planned and a conspiracy was hatched following the Godhra train burning incident. The prosecution had claimed that a conspiracy had been hatched by some local leaders to target Muslims of Sardarpura in Vijapur taluka. As per SIT submissions, villagers had started gathering at the Panchayat office from around 9.30 pm on 28 February, 2002, as part of a conspiracy. A mob of hundreds of people had surrounded a lane, called ‘Sheikh Vaas’, in Sardarpura, after which the house of Sheikh Ibrahim was burnt. The mob also stood there to ensure nobody could rescue people shouting for help inside the house.

Establishment of new School/Collage/University

Admission across India/Abroad. All type of Education related works. Please contact 9845049539 Mr Hanif
Extremism is a Perversion, And Islam Has No Place for It

If at all extremism is to be defeated, Muslims must work sincerely by placing Islam at the centre of their arguments.

By Mohammad Azeemullah

On the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, I updated my Facebook status. Here is a snippet from my post:

“God has ordained kindness (and excellence) in everything. If the killing (of animals) is to be done, do it in the best manner, and when you slaughter, do it in the best manner by first sharpening the knife, and putting the animal at ease” (Saheeh Muslim). Unfortunately, while walking through the streets of different world cities I’ve seen countless sheep/animals in the back of transportation trucks overloaded and sometimes beaten harshly for no reason, as well as animals standing outside in 100 degree weather without any shade or a drop of water to drink.”

A ‘Facebook friend’ took issue with my post, specifically the sentence about animals standing outside without any shade or a drop of water to drink.

He wrote, “But as a Muslim I will say to you ‘Assalam o Alaykum’ not ‘good bye’ like a non Muslim because your thought is not Islamic PURELY.”

Anatomy of An Extremist

It was my first encounter with hardcore extremists, and this motivated me to look at what goes into the making of such persons.

An extremist is a person who possesses features very akin to a mental disorder. This is how the mindset of an extremist unfolds:

He distorts and misinterprets religious (Quranic) texts to suit his arguments without context.

He considers himself as the only truthful (Islamic) person on Earth, thus [thinks that] everyone else is wrong.

He is low in tolerance and easily brands those who disagree with him as non-Muslim.

He finds faults even in jokes, and disapproves of lighter moments.

He is hypocritical to the core, calling whatever is from the West ‘unholy’ while enjoying the material blessings of the West in private.

The sacred texts of Islam and sayings of the Prophet are replete with such examples, containing messages that emphasise respect for the different ways in which people choose to express their faith.

Sadly, much of the Muslim world has lost sight of Islam’s true and essential teachings when it comes to religious freedom and tolerance.

The Prophet’s repeated warnings against the dangers of extremism go unheeded. The Quran says: “And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they should abuse Allah out of ignorance.” [Al-Anaam:108]

To deal with the growing menace of extremism, governments and civil society groups within Muslim communities must draw on diverse Islamic resources.

Chapter 109 of the Quran is of particular importance here:

“Say you, O disbelievers! I worship not that you worship. And nor you worship what I worship and I shall not worship what you worship. And shall not worship what I worship. For you, your religion and for me my religion.”

What It Will Take To Win

Despite the clarity of the Quran on this matter, much of the Muslim world has today lost sight of Islam’s true teachings concerning religious freedom and tolerance.

If at all extremism is to be defeated, Muslims must work sincerely by placing Islam in the centre of their arguments – just as extremists use ‘religion’ with impunity to meet their own narrow agenda.

The problem does not lie in religious doctrine, but rather in the thought that itself has become sanctified in place of a renewal of religious discourse.

(Mohammad Azeemullah is a lecturer at the Islamic University of Al-Asmariya in Zliten, Libya. This is an extract from his article, the full version of which is available on thewire.in/67574/prophet-muhammads-struggle-against-extremism/)
TRIBUTE

Dominique Sila-Khan

Noted scholar known for her commitment to documenting and celebrating religious pluralism in South Asia, Dominique Sila-Khan, passed away in Delhi last month. Of French Jewish background, Khan had settled down in Jaipur, where she lived with her husband, Sattar Khan, a Rajasthan Muslim. Her personal history, transcending religious boundaries, was reflected in her prolific writing—scores of academic articles as well as several books, mainly on religious traditions, spaces and communities in South Asia that transcend neat categorization on religious lines as narrowly and conventionally conceived—s or what are sometimes called ‘syncretic’ or ‘liminal’. She wrote particularly extensively on the Nizari Ismailis, a Shia famous 12th century saint.

TRIBUTE

Dr. Khaleeqe Anjum

New Delhi: Noted Urdu writer, critic and author Khaleeqe Anjum passed away in Delhi on October 15.

Dr. Anjum headed the Anjuman e Taraqqi Urdu Hind for a record 38 years from 1974 to 2012 and represented the Urdu's cause at all forums. He was 84. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.

Dr. Anjum was an expert on textual criticism and Mirza Ghalib. He adopted the German technique of compilation to edit the letters (Khutoot) of Mirza Ghalib. His book Muraqa i- Delhi, Dilli ke asar e Qadeema, Dargah e Shah e Mardan documents the archaeological

Yusuf Arakkal

Bangalore’s renowned sculptor and painter Yusuf Arakkal passed on October 4. He was 71. Winner of several awards and honours, Yusuf was a product of Karnataka Chitrala Parishath.

Bakhtiyar Tangsal

Tangsal broke many barriers by joining Indian Express and proved himself in a very short time and started emerging as an outstanding journalist of the district.

Solapur (Maharashtra): Bakhtiyar Ibrahim Tangsal, a senior English journalist, social worker and an Urdu poet from Solapur district passed away at the age of 54. Tangsal was suffering from a kidney disease for the last four years. Tangsal forayed into the field of journalism in the late 90s, when the number of Muslims in the field of journalism, especially those educated in Urdu-medium schools, was extremely low. Tangsal broke many barriers by joining Indian Express and proved himself in a very short time and started emerging as an outstanding journalist of the district. He also worked with Navbharat Times and Financial Express.

Tangsal was also a well-known Urdu poet and in 2013, when he was suffering extensively, he started publishing Urdu Daily, Solapur Milaap. Although he was running it successfully, his health and dialysis process could not allow him to run it further. In 1996, he started free journalism classes to train 20 youngsters to become journalists.
Need for Reforms and Changes

This book offers a detailed history of madrasas and discusses their nature and the roles they have played in spreading knowledge among Muslims.

Hindustani Madaris ka Taleemi Nizam aur Us Main Islah ki Zarurat: Ek Jayeza
(‘The Educational System in Indian Madrasas and the Need for Reforms: An Analytical Study’)  
Author: Waris Mazhari  
Publisher: Global Media Publication, New Delhi  
Year: 2014  
Pages: 326 pp.

Reviewed by Mohammad Ali

Seeking and imparting knowledge is cherished as sacred in Islam. The Quran lays great emphasis on its importance. This evolutionized the later history of human intellectual endeavour, for education and knowledge were no longer confined to the elites of society. The early forms of educational institutions that developed in Muslim societies were largely due to the efforts of individual scholars well-versed and renowned in their subjects. These were diverse in nature but were later institutionalised when Muslim rulers started building huge educational edifices. These institutions were called madrasas - meaning ‘a place where learning and studying take place’.

Madrasas played a very important role in intellectual advancement of Muslims, being torchbearers of knowledge in the medieval period. As these institutions ceased keeping pace with the times, Muslims lost their vitality in modern world. This obliged them to find out the causes that led them to this disaster. There were voices holding the educational system of Muslims as responsible for their decline. Some advocated for education based on Western or modern values as the only way out, while many others supported, with some changes, the traditional madrasa system - the repository of the Muslim intellectual legacy.

Although the madrasa system is still well-established, there are voices of discontentment from within and outside the system. At the same time, it has been receiving considerable support as well. This book offers a detailed history of madrasas and discusses their nature and the roles they have played in spreading knowledge among Muslims. It focuses particularly on the madrasas in colonial and post-Partition India, especially in the north. The author is well-equipped for the task, having been trained in both traditional and modern educational systems - being a graduate of the Dar-ul Uloom Deoband and a Ph.D. from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Currently, the author says, many madrasas continue with the Dars-e-Nizami, a curriculum which was formulated several centuries ago. Several texts and subjects in this curriculum and the teaching methodology, he suggests, need change and reform. He furnishes a detailed list of the syllabuses prescribed in important madrasas affiliated to different schools of Muslim religious thought in northern India. He reflects on discourses of madrasa curricular reform and some of the challenges that madrasas face. A student is often not able to acquire excellence and competency in the subjects he/she has studied for years in a madrasa. Importantly, the author not only criticises the existing educational system of madrasas and the unbending attitude of many of the ulama, but also offers ways to resolve these issues. He suggests, for instance, training centres in which madrasa teachers could learn modern teaching methodologies and is of the opinion that the curriculum must accommodate English. Hindi and other, local languages. Students in madrasas should be educated in modern subjects, which will help in lowering the rate of unemployment among madrasa graduates and link them with modern realities. He emphasises that the role of madrasas and their graduates should be conceived of in the context of the multicultural society of India. He also envisages that the madrasa graduates should be capable of providing their services in different spheres, not limiting themselves only to issues narrowly conceived of as ‘religious’.

This book is the result of thorough research and sheds valuable light on various issues pertaining to madrasas.

The reviewer is a postgraduate student at Jamia Millia Islamia. He can be contacted at: mohammad91.ali@gmail.com

How Islamic are Muslim Countries?...

- Economic management i.e., property rights and the sanctity of contracts (Quran 2: 188 and 4: 29)
- Better treatment of workers, including job creation and equal access to employment
- Higher education expenditures relative to GDP, including equal access to education
- Poverty eradication, aid, and providing basic human needs, no hoarding of wealth i.e., economic equity and less opulence in consumption
- A more even distribution of wealth and income
- Better social infrastructure and provision of social services through taxation and social welfare
- Higher savings and investment rates i.e., management of natural and depletable resources
- Higher moral standard, honesty and trust exhibited in the marketplace and in all economic interactions, i.e. less corruption (with reference to Quran 13: 11, 17: 16)
- Islamic Financial System

Quranic principles of fairness, equity, justice and trust etc are more in evidence in Western economy and business.

- i.e., risk-sharing, as opposed to debt contracts, i.e., a supportive financial system and elimination of speculation (with reference to Quran 2: 275, 276)
- Higher trade/GDP, higher foreign aid/GDP and higher degree of environmental preservation and vigilantly -supervised markets.

What is an ‘Islamic Country’?

The study notes that identifying a country as ‘Islamic’ is a complex exercise as some countries have declared themselves as ‘Islamic Republics’, some have merely declared Islam to be the ‘State Religion’, while others have stated Islam to be the primary religion. A few others do not take any stand on this issue but are members of the 56-member Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) merely because more than 50% of their people are Muslims.

Why the need for Economic Islamicity Index?

The authors argue that sociologists agree that religion is a force that influences an individual’s financial decisions, although the economy falls into the realm of secular governance. The authors conclude that “These very preliminary results would indicate that the so-called and self-declared Islamic countries have not by-and-large adhered to Islamic principles.” The average ranking of ‘Islamic’ countries is 133 for the group of 56 ‘Islamic’ countries. ‘Islamic’ countries as a whole did not fare very well in an index that measures the degree of economic Islamicity. The study says that although the total population of the 56 OIC countries is about 1.5 billion (around 22% of the world population), they currently generate only 6% of the world’s GDP and 9% of global exports. The average OIC per capita income was $3,600 while the average of the rest of the developing world was about $5,600 (2006 figures). Another measure of the disappointing level of economic development in the ‘Muslim world’ is the fact that the OIC’s GDP was $3.2 trillion (2007 figures) whereas that of the US alone stood at $13.9 trillion. The study attributes the low level of economic development to age-old problems of the developing countries such as failure of governance, inefficient institutions, high level of corruption, etc, which have nothing to do with Islam. The authors conclude that “it is our belief that most self-declared Islamic countries have not adopted economic and financial policies that are in conformity with Islamic teachings”.  

Saudi Arabia is ranked 91st, while India fares better than Pakistan and Bangladesh.
A Remarkable Testimony to Badshah Khan’s Deep Spirituality

Reviewed by Roshan Shah

It might seem incredible, given how endemic violence seems to be among the Pathans of Pakistan’s north-western frontier and neighbouring Afghanistan, but there was a time not very long ago when a completely non-violent movement for personal, social and political transformation gained mass popularity among these very people, led by one of their own. In this book, noted spiritual teacher Eknath Easwaran (d.1999) provides a fascinating account of that amazing man—Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988), also remembered as ‘Frontier Gandhi’ and ‘Badshah Khan’ (‘King of the Khans’). That Easwaran, one of the most well-known and widely-loved spiritual writers of our times, should write this book is a remarkable testimony to Badshah Khan’s deep spirituality and the enduring message of his life. A “Muslim St. Francis” Badshah Khan’s fellow Muslim Pathans, Easwaran writes, were characterised by a fierce sense of independence. Warfare was for them a way of life. He describes repeated British attempts to conquer the Pathans, depicting horrific atrocities committed by the British in graphic detail. This, along with incessant feuding among the Pathans, provided the context for the emergence of Badshah Khan as what Easwaran terms as a “Muslim St. Francis”, comparing him to the medieval Christian saint known for his compassion and love. Easwaran provides us rich details of Badshah Khan’s life, tracing his growing involvement in efforts for social and political reform among his people, including for education and women’s rights. The British, Easwaran explains, did not take kindly to his efforts even though he was committed to entirely peaceful methods. This earned him long spells in jail over the years, often in solitary confinement. As he continued with his work among his people, he joined the Congress and its movement for India’s freedom from British rule and became a close companion of Gandhiji. Easwaran says, he recognised “a kindred spirit, a seeker who was attempting to serve God by serving the poorest of His creation.”

The Khudai Khidmatgars

Badshah Khan set up a team of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Mahatma Gandhi
Published: Jaico Publishing House, Mumbai
Pages: 217
Price: Rs. 350

Given the horrific violence that continues to tear apart the region where Badshah Khan lived and worked, as well as much of the rest of the ‘Muslim world’, Badshah Khan’s story is of immense contemporary relevance.

“The Two Gandhis—Non-Violent Soldiers: The Frontier Gandhi Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Mahatma Gandhi

Easwaran quotes Gandhi’s secretary Mahadev Desai as writing about him: “The greatest thing in him is, to my mind, his spirituality—or better still, the true spirit of Islam—submission to God.” Badshah Khan, Easwaran explains, understood Islam as based on amal (selfless service), yaqeen (faith, or “an unwavering belief in the spiritual laws that underlie all life”) and muhabbat (love, in order to “transform human affairs”), a “spiritual force which, when drawn upon systematically, can root out exploitation and transform anger into love in action”). According to Easwaran, he based his life on this principle, and had his example been better known, he says, “the world might come to recognize that the highest religious values of Islam are deeply compatible with non-violence that has the power to resolve conflicts even against heavy odds.”

Oath of Non-Violent Resistance

The Khudai Khidmatgars were entirely Muslim and the Movement was based, as Easwaran describes it, on “the ancient Islamic principles of universal brotherhood, submission to God, and the service of God through the service of His creatures.” In a short while, it turned into an immensely popular anti-colonial movement in the Frontier Province. Its brave men and women defied savage British repression—even brutal killings of large numbers of their people—but refused to give up on their oath of non-violent resistance. Badshah Khan’s activism was deeply linked to his spirituality. Easwaran quotes Gandhi’s too. That was possibly why he was so attracted to Gandhiji and his work. Easwaran devotes several pages to this close relationship between the “two Gandhis”, as he calls them. We learn, for instance, about Gandhiji’s visits to the Frontier Province, touring the area along with Badshah Khan, and lending support to the movement he was leading. Easwaran tells us that Gandhiji referred to him as “unquestionably a man of God”. Badshah Khan and his elder brother spent considerable time at Gandhiji’s ashram, where, Easwaran says, their ‘childlike simplicity’ ‘charmed’ everyone. Gandhiji was so impressed by the Khan brothers that he remarked, “The brothers’ friendship seems to me to be a gift from God”. “The more I knew of the brothers”, Gandhiji wrote about them, “the more attracted I felt towards them. I was struck by their transparent sincerity, frankness and utmost simplicity. I observed that they had come to believe in truth and nonviolence not as a policy, but as a creed.” He noted that he found Badshah Khan to be “consumed with deep religious fervour”, adding, “His was not a narrow creed. I found him to be a universalist.”

A committed Muslim as well as someone who was dedicated to Hindu-Muslim harmony, Badshah Khan was passionately against the Muslim League and its demand for the partition of India. Even when many Congressmen finally agreed to Partition, Badshah Khan remained firmly opposed to it. When Partition finally happened and Sikh and Hindu minorities in the Frontier Province were attacked, he helped protect them. With Partition, the Frontier Province became part of Pakistan despite Badshah Khan’s opposition to it, and in the new country he was repeatedly jailed by the authorities (In all, Easwaran says, he spent 30 years in jail, that is, every third day of his life). Given the horrific violence that continues to tear apart the region where Badshah Khan lived and worked, as well as much of the rest of the ‘Muslim world’, Badshah Khan’s story is of immense contemporary relevance.

“Like Gandhi in Hinduism and Martin Luther King Jr. in Christianity,” Easwaran tells us towards the end of this fascinating book, “Badshah Khan demonstrated conclusively that nonviolence—love in action—is in perfect harmony with Islam.” His “simplicity, deep faith and selfless service represent the Islamic tradition at its purest and most enduring”, Easwaran says. At the same time as Easwaran believes that Badshah Khan’s understanding of Islam is of particular relevance to Muslims today, he indicates that Badshah Khan has a message for the whole of humankind, not just Muslims alone. Thus, he remarks: But Badshah Khan’s message is scarcely limited to Islam. It can help the non-Muslim world to understand the true greatness of Islam, but more than that, it should help all nations to understand their own potential for love in action. If Badshah Khan could raise a nonviolent army out of a people so steeped in violence as the Pathans, there is no country on earth where it cannot be done.”
Experience shows that no person is the name of the art of life. Allah has the responsibility to present it.

Most misrepresented religion: Islam is indeed Most- lenient, Powerful.

Social Morality

When the new Muslim community undertook the process of establishing a new nation out of the scattered groups of people who were picked up from their little corners of ignorance. After their characters were re-molded by Islam, they were set up on their way to a much higher human standard. They were then assigned their great role of leadership of mankind. One of the elements which helped remodel these characters was to give this community a pure conscience and to purify the general atmosphere of their new social set-up and to set for them a new moral standard.

Superiority of Moral Standards

Allah does not love evil to be spoken openly unless it be someone who has been genuinely wronged. Allah hears all and knows all. Whether you do good openly or in private, or pardon others for evil (done against you), Allah is indeed Most-lenient, Powerful.

Using Foul Language

When forgiveness becomes common, little room is left for evil words said in public. The only condition is that it should be forgiveness granted, when one feels able to retaliate in some other way. We forgive because we like to be forgiven by Allah, who though able to punish us, pardons us: “Allah is indeed Most-lenient, Powerful.”

By giving this exemption, Islam encourages those with evil tendencies to bring them out into the open. Since they are not the first to start evil, as it is already widespread, they need not worry about any reaction. Moreover, familiarity removes the initial shocking effect of evil. People tend not to express their disgust at hearing evil words, or indeed evil acts, when they become widely used or done.

Living with God

Islam requires a person to be God-oriented in both pre-death and post-death periods. Someone has written that Islam is the most misunderstood religion. It is better to say that Islam is the most misrepresented religion. Those who are representing Islam had the responsibility to present it properly but they did not. Islam is the mirror of the art of life. Experience shows that no person has an allergy to God, but they do have an allergy to religion. This is because religious people have portrayed an incorrect picture of their religion. For example there is a verse in the Quran which says, “Kunu rabbaniyin”. This is generally translated as ‘Be worshippers of God’. People often think worship is performance of mere ritual, so they take religion also as ritual.

But this translation of the verse is incorrect. The right translation would be: ‘Adopt a God-oriented life.’ Islam requires a person to be God-oriented in both pre-death and post-death periods. Paradise is defined in the Quran as the neighbourhood of God. In other words, it means living with God. In this world too, our maintenance should be such as if we were living with God.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent

When you do good openly or in private, or pardon others for evil done against you, Allah is indeed Most-lenient, Powerful.

Here, Islam takes its followers, individual and communities, up another stage in educating them and refining their characters. As for the individual who has been wronged, he is encouraged to pardon and forgive, when he is able to take a legitimate step in retaliation in order to remove that injustice. It is forgiveness given freely, despite the ability to retaliate. Needless to say, this stage of forgiveness is higher and more worthy of believers than that of retaliation. All this, helps good to spread in the Muslim community if it is done openly. If it is kept in secret, it helps keep hearts and souls pure. Good is beneficial when done in public or in private. When forgiveness becomes common, little room is left for evil words said in public. The only condition is that it should be forgiveness granted, when one feels able to retaliate in some other way. We forgive because we like to be forgiven by Allah, who though able to punish us, pardons us: “Allah is indeed Most-lenient, Powerful.”
Sincere Attitude Towards Repentance

The main and clear aspect of pilgrimage is that we hasten to respond to God’s call, wearing nothing of the ornaments, which are part of our custom. When we feel our dedication in this way and when our submission is truly sincere, God rewards us richly for our pilgrimage. He wipes off our sins. When we have finished, we start with our slate clean. We know that when we committed those sins, we wronged ourselves and we disregarded our duty to obey God. When we respond to His call with dedication and submission, as we do in the pilgrimage, He accepts our submission and erases our past sins.

Turning to God

God forgives anyone who turns to Him in genuine repentance, even when the sins he has committed are grave indeed. The Prophet is reported to have said: “A person who repents having committed his sins is like one who has committed no sins.” Every time we turn to God in repentance, He turns to us and makes a genuine beginning of a life of obedience to God and proper observance of His commandments.

Mere Verbal Repentance

The emphasis, however, is always on our attitude being genuine. Our dedication must be complete; our repentance genuine. Our attitude being genuine. Our repentance must be complete; our repentance genuine.

A casual attitude cannot earn God’s forgiveness. It is imperative to resolve to make a clean break with the past and make the fact of worship a genuine beginning of a life of obedience to God and proper observance of His commandments.

Feelings and Intentions

If a person who, having committed a sin, says that he is sorry for doing it, yet he will nevertheless go back to it the next minute, if the chance offers itself. This is playing games with the great concept of repentance and forgiveness. God accepts no such verbal declarations, because they are devoid of any real substance. Having said that, we must be clear that what counts is one’s feelings and intention at the time when one declares one’s repentance. If at that particular moment, a person is genuine in his repentance, then he is forgiven his past sins. If, nevertheless, he commits the same sin later, because he is too weak to resist the temptation, his weakness is not taken against him except in as far as the new sin is recorded against him. His case is similar to that of a smoker who, realising how injurious to health tobacco smoking is, decides to quit. He stops smoking, but after a few days he finds the going too hard and succumbs to the temptation to resume smoking. He lights up again. His decision to quit is good, but his weakness later does not mean that his decision was frivolous. It was genuine, but he could not carry it out.

God’s Grace

Similarly, a person who commits a sin again after having genuinely repented it, is forgiven the earlier one because at the time when he declared his repentance, he was sincere. This is indeed a mark of God’s grace which He bestows on us in abundance. He knows beforehand that we will be going back to our sins, but He also knows that at the time we declare our repentance, we are genuine. He, therefore, accepts our genuineness and responds to it accordingly.

When God forgives us for something, He does not record it against us again. A person may commit the same sin many times, but if he genuinely repents every time he commits it, then he is forgiven that sin every time. Eventually, he will acquire, with God’s help, the necessary resolve and strength to be able to resist any temptation to go back. If the attitude is one of playing games, thinking that one can commit all the sins one wants and then have his slate wiped clean because one offers the Umrah or the pilgrimage, then the attitude is one of carelessness and disregard to God’s commands. It is very doubtful that God will accept such an act of worship in which one declares repentance when one has not actually repented. The fact that one intends to go back to it shows that the repentance is only verbal. A casual attitude cannot earn God’s forgiveness. It is imperative to resolve to make a clean break with the past and make the fact of worship a genuine beginning of a life of obedience to God and proper observance of His commandments.

Care for Animals: Prophetic Guidance

“A man was walking on a road in scorching heat; he saw a well and went down into it to quench his thirst. When he climbed up again, he saw a dog panting with thirst and said to himself: ‘This dog is as thirsty as I was.’ He went down into the well again, filled his shoe with water, and climbed up, holding it between his teeth. He gave it to the dog to drink, and God rewarded him for this and forgave his sins.

“The Prophet was then asked: ‘O Prophet, do we get a reward for being good to animals?’ And the Prophet answered: ‘Any good done to a living creature gets a reward.’ On another occasion, he said: ‘A woman was punished for a cat she had imprisoned until it died. Because of this cat, she went to hell. She did not give it food or drink while she confined it, nor did she enable it to eat its prey.’” The Prophet said: ‘Whoever kills a sparrow or a bigger animal without respecting its right to exist will be accountable to God for it on the Day of Judgment.’

(Taken from Tariq Ramadan, The Messenger: The Meanings of the Life of Muhammad)
Peaceful Relations with Neighbours

With the shared teachings of Islam and the Bible on building peaceful relations with one's neighbours, Muslims, Christians, Jews, as well as others whose religions contain similar teachings, can repel enmity and violence with peace and harmony.

By Ghulam Ghaus Siddiqi

Human beings cannot live alone. They need to meet some basic survival conditions. They are bound to get into social relationships for leading a life. No living person is capable of breaking the shackles of mutual dependence. This probably begins between the embryo and the mother and continues till a person’s last breath. Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher, rightly said, “Man is by nature a social animal”. More significantly, what a human being requires in this social relationship especially with his or her neighbours is peace and tranquility, ensuring safety of each other.

**Peaceful Relations with Neighbours in Islam**

Islam recommends establishing good relations with neighbours. In the Quran, God says, “Be good to [your] parents and relatives, the orphans and the needy and the neighbours who are your relatives, and the neighbours who are strangers...” (4:36)

Being good to neighbours includes consoling them in grief, visiting them if they are sick, congratulating them on happy occasions, offering them help when needed, forgiving their mistakes and hurtful deeds and protecting them against every sort of violence and injustice.

**Neighbours in Islam**

In this hadith, the Prophet has laid great emphasis on the safety of one’s neighbour, considering it a cause of perfection for a Muslim’s faith. If you ponder over the word ‘neighbour’, you will find that this hadith denotes general application and encourages safety and peace in the entire world. This hadith enshrines an unprecedented example of global peace in itself.

The books of Hadith are full of sayings which stress the need of good relations with one’s neighbours. A sample of such hadith reports of the Prophet are given below as instances and lessons:

- **The Prophet said,** “Whoever believes in God and the Last Day shall be generous to his neighbour” (Muvatt-e-Imam Malik)
- **The Prophet said,** “If you are kind to your neighbour, you will be a believer; if you like others to have what you like for yourself, you will be a Muslim” (at-Tirmidhi)
- **The Prophet said,** “Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should not hurt his neighbour, and whoever believes in God and the Last Day should serve his guest generously, and whoever believes in God and the Last Day should talk what is good or keep quiet.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)
- **The Prophet observed,** “He will not enter Paradise whose neighbour is not secure from his wrongful conduct.” (Sahih Muslim)
- **It is narrated that Abdullah ibn ‘Amr slaughtered a sheep and said:** “Have you presented a gift from it to my neighbour [who was a Jew], for I heard the Apostle of God (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say: ‘Angel Gabriel has so often recommended to me good companionship to neighbours that I thought he would make him among the heirs?’” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim and Sunan Abu Dawood)

**Peaceful Relations with Neighbours in the Bible**

The Bible supports the Islamic standpoint of peaceful relations with neighbours. The following are some relevant messages of the Bible, including the Old and the New Testaments, which call for peaceful coexistence among all classes of neighbours:

- **“You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”** (Exodus 20:17/ Deuteronomy 5:21)
- **“Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”** “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied, “There is only one who is good.” (Matthew 19:16-19)
- **“Seldom set foot in your neighbour’s house; otherwise, he’ll get sick of you and hate you.”** (Proverbs 25:17)
- **“Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbour as yourself; I am the Lord.”** (Leviticus 19:18)

Being good to neighbours includes consoling them in grief, visiting them if they are sick, congratulating them on happy occasions, offering them help when needed, forgiving their mistakes and hurtful deeds and protecting them against every sort of violence and injustice.

**WORDS OF WISDOM**

**Our Outlook Towards Life**

**Very often, it is one’s outlook which changes a person’s whole life. It can turn hell into heaven, it can turn sorrow into joy.**

By Hazrat Inayat Khan

The spiritual path is easiest if there is not something pulling one from behind; and that force is the life in the world, one’s friends, surroundings, acquaintances, and one’s foes. Remain, therefore, in the world as a traveler making a station on his way. Do all the good you can to serve and succor humanity, but escape attachment. By this in no way will you prove to be loveless. On the contrary, it is attachment which divides love, and love raised above attachment is like a rain from above nourishing all the plants upon the earth. There is only one thing that helps us to rise above conditions, and that is a change of outlook on life. This change is made practicable by a change of attitude. For a Sufi, therefore, not only patience to bear all things is necessary, but to see all things from a certain point of view that can relieve him for that moment from difficulty and pain. Very often it is one’s outlook which changes a person’s whole life. It can turn hell into heaven, it can turn sorrow into joy. When a person looks from a certain point of view, every little pin-prick feels like the point of a sword piercing his heart. If he looks at the same thing from a different point of view, the heart becomes strong, and Death is nature’s way of telling you to slow down. They ask the same foolish question people always make at funerals: ‘He looks so peaceful.’ Rigor mortis will do that. Death is nature’s way of telling you to slow down. They ask the same foolish question people always make at funerals: ‘He looks so peaceful.’ People filed past his casket and wrote about him. Everybody Jesus replied, “There’s no such thing as death. People got up to eulogize him. Mostly, they talked about his accomplishments, because while everybody knew about him, no one really knew him. ‘He was one of the leading entrepreneurs of his day,’ said one. ‘He was an innovator of technology and delivery systems,’ said another. ‘He was a man of principles,’ somebody else said; ‘he would never cheat on his taxes, his expense account, or his wife.’ Another admirer noted his civic achievements: ‘He was a pillar in the community. He knew everybody. This man was a networker.’ They had commissioned a large marble column for him. On it they wrote all these inspiring words:

**Be Rich Towards God**

His obituary was written up in Forbes and the Wall Street Journal. And then guess what happened? Read on!

“He was a pillar of the financial community. His obituary was written up in Forbes and the Wall Street Journal. It’s too bad he was dead, because he would have loved to read what they wrote about him.” Then came the memorial service. Because of his prominence, the whole community turned out. People filed past his casket and made the same foolish comment people always make at funerals: ‘He looks so peaceful.’ Rigor mortis will do that. Death is nature’s way of telling you to slow down. They ask the same foolish question people always make at funerals: ‘He looks so peaceful.’ People filed past his casket and wrote about him. Everybody Jesus replied, “There’s no such thing as death. People got up to eulogize him. Mostly, they talked about his accomplishments, because while everybody knew about him, no one really knew him. ‘He was one of the leading entrepreneurs of his day,’ said one. ‘He was an innovator of technology and delivery systems,’ said another. ‘He was a man of principles,’ somebody else said; ‘he would never cheat on his taxes, his expense account, or his wife.’ Another admirer noted his civic achievements: ‘He was a pillar in the community. He knew everybody. This man was a networker.’ They had commissioned a large marble column for him. On it they wrote all these inspiring words:
Q: What is the basic purpose of worship or prayer from the Islamic perspective?

**Answered by Waris Mazhari**

God made this beautiful planet Earth and settled human beings on it as His heirs. Scientific research tells us that it took millions of years for the Earth to become habitable for plant, animal and human life. This clearly indicates that there is definitely some grand purpose behind human beings having been placed on Earth. In the Quran (51:56), God tells us that this purpose is to worship God: I created the jinn and mankind only so that they might worship Me.

The question then arises as to what the purpose of worship itself is.

**WORDS OF WISDOM**

**A Day in the Life of a Sufi**

Some anecdotes relating to one of the foremost Sufi masters, Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya, indicate how it is possible to lead a life full of love even amidst all kinds of violations.

**By Raziuddin Aquil**

**On Forgiveness:**
The Chishti Sufi master explained that if someone puts thorns in one’s path and one does the same in retaliation, there will be thorns everywhere. The better thing to do is to ignore, forgive and forget. The adversary will eventually mend his ways; his heart will develop compassion, and bitterness will give way to either tolerance or respectful indifference.

This was one of the ways in which Sufis were able to win the hearts of many antagonists; the intransigent detractors needed stronger treatment, but generally Sufis recommended introspection.

**On Renunciation:**
The patron saint of Delhi, Hazrat Nizamuddin observed that the world was like a shadow; it chases you, but if you start pursuing it, it keeps running away from you. The Sufis, therefore, recommended distance from the world and Tark-e Duniya (renunciation).

For Hazrat Nizamuddin, Tark-e Duniya did not mean one should wear a langotta (loincloth) and go to live in a jungle to devote oneself in worship. A greater form of worship is to live in the world, uphold and maintain different values and virtues, and serve the visitor. Therefore, the norm at Hazrat Nizamuddin’s hospice was: Salam, Ta’am, and Kalam. The visitor would enter saying Salam, would be seated and, straightaway would be offered food (Ta’am), and then the conversation (Kalam) would start. In all this, there would be no caste and creed distinctions, uncontouchability or ritual pollution. Feeding the hungry, a poor man or a stray dog, was particularly considered a meritorious act.

Gift a Needle, Not a Knife

Hazrat Nizamuddin has narrated that his spiritual master (pir), Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakar, was once gifted a knife by an innocent disciple. Baba Farid said that a needle may be a better gift for a knife cuts, whereas needle sews. Stitching hearts and minds of people, uniting them in love for God is central to the Sufi mystical practices.

On The Virtue of Feeding:

Hazrat Nizamuddin has said guests visiting a home or hospice (khana or jamatkhana) must be offered food, or at least a glass of water if there is nothing else to serve immediately, else it would appear that the person had gone to a graveyard to visit the dead, when the dead person cannot serve the visitor. Therefore, the norm at Hazrat Nizamuddin’s hospice was: Salam, Ta’am, and Kalam. The visitor would enter saying Salam, would be seated and, straightaway would be offered food (Ta’am), and then the conversation (Kalam) would start. In all this, there would be no caste and creed distinctions, uncontouchability or ritual pollution. Feeding the hungry, a poor man or a stray dog, was particularly considered a meritorious act.

(Extracted, and with some modifications, from newageislam.com, where the full article can be accessed)
Seven Things You Can Do Right Now to Live a Happier Life

By Sheima Salam Sumer

1. Make it a habit to regularly say: “SubhaanAllah w la hammadhi Subhaan Allahil ‘Azeem” whenever you remember to say it. This means: “Glorified is God and praised is He” and “Glorified is God the Most Great”. This dhikr will earn you many blessings, as stated in the following hadith:

Two statements are light on the tongue, weigh heavily in the balance, and are loved by the Most Merciful One: “Glorified is God and praised is He” (Subhaana-l-lah wa bihamdih) and “Glorified is God the Most Great” (Subhaana-l-lahil-Azeem). (Recorded in Al-Bukhari (7/168), Muslim (4/2072)) You will be more pleasing to God, which is our main purpose in life. Also, when you remind yourself to say this dhikr, you are becoming more mindful of your thoughts.

2. Also make it a habit to say: “Say this: You will be more pleasing to God, Muslim (4/2072)). Said the Messenger of God (peace be upon him): “Glorified is God the Most Great” (Subhaan Allahil ‘Azeem) and His name, Subhaan Allah, is an amazing useful dhikr of God. If one does not have the ability to rectify the wrong, then the hadith says, one should speak out against it. The hadith certainly does not say that on seeing something wrong one must begin to unleash violence against people or resort to suicide bombing. One cannot derive sanction for violent activities from this hadith.

This hadith speaks about reforming or rectifying a wrong. If one does not have the ability to rectify the wrong, then the hadith says, one should speak out against it. The hadith certainly does not say that on seeing something wrong one must begin to unleash violence against people or resort to suicide bombing. One cannot derive sanction for violent activities from this hadith.

This hadith talks about taghayyur-e munkar, which means rectifying or remodeling a wrong. The Arabic word taghayyur means ‘replacement’. Hence, in the above hadith the word taghayyur means replacing a condition of evil or wrong with a condition that is not evil or wrong. In other words, this hadith ordains the reforming of a certain condition, not engaging in conflict and causing destruction. The well-known Arabic dictionary Lisan al-Arab explains the word taghayyur as follows: ‘Taghayyur means to change something. That is, to change it into something that it had not been earlier.’ (5/40) The eleventh-century Muslim scholar of Quranic exegesis and the Arabic language, Raghib al-Isfahani (d.1108) has written a dictionary of Quranic terms, Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran, in which he explains the word taghayyur thus: “It is said ‘I changed (taghayyur) my house’, which means that you changed the construction of your house and constructed it anew.”

Self-Styled Muslim Leaders

Today, in various parts of the world violence is taking place in the name of jihad. This so-called ‘sacred violence’ is being led by self-styled Muslim leaders. Facts tell us that this violence has produced no positive results at all. There is only one result that is following everywhere from this violence—and that is, destruction, and nothing constructive at all. In this situation, then, one can, without any doubt whatsoever, say that these violent acts are definitely not taghayyur-e munkar or rectification of any wrong. Rectifying a wrong means changing an undesirable situation and bringing in a desirable situation in its place. In contrast, any action that proves counterproductive is definitely destruction, and in no way an Islamistically-desirable action. A negative reaction to an unwanted situation leads to violence and conflict. It is not taghayyur-e-munkar or rectifying a wrong.

Reforming a situation requires that one analyze it with an unbiased mind and then undertake efforts to reform it through constructive planning.

Enjoing the Good and Forbidding the Wrong

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

In various parts of the world today, some Muslims are engaged in acts of violence. If they are told to stop this [...] if they cite a hadith that orders the believers to rectify a wrong:

He who amongst you sees something wrong should try to rectify it with the help of his hand, and if he has not strength enough to do so, then he should do it with his tongue, and if he has not strength enough to do so, then he should abhor it in his heart, and that is the least of faith. (Sahih Muslim)

This hadith is cited by some people in order to claim sanction for violence, although actually the hadith does not mention violence.

This increased awareness of your thoughts leads to a more peaceful state called “mindfulness” in counseling. “Mindfulness” is “a mental state achieved by focusing one’s awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one’s feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.” So when you train yourself to be more “mindful” of your thoughts (so that you remember to say this dhikr), you will be more “mindful” in general and will have more control over your thoughts.

3. Ask God for a Happier Life! Please do the obvious thing that we often forget to do! Make dua to God for a happier life! Admit that only He can truly help you! The Muslim scholar Ibn Rajab (may Allah have mercy upon him) wrote: “...Allah likes His slaves to ask Him for His every need, even a lice for his shoe if it breaks. Some of the Salaf (the pious forefathers who were among the first three generations of Muslims) used to ask Allah in their prayers for everything, even salt for their dough and food for their sheep. In al-Isra‘i‘il-yiyaat [reports from Jewish sources] it is narrated that Moosa (pbuh) said: “O Lord, I have some worldly needs but I feel too shy to ask You.” He said: “Ask Me even for the salt for your dough and food for your donkey.” Whatever a person needs, if he asks Allah for it, then he has demonstrated his need of Him, and that is something that Allah loves. (From Ibn Rajab’s book, “Jaami’ al-Uloom wa’l-Hukam”)”

4. Smile “A smile is a charity.” Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), as recorded in Bukhari Not only will you be following the Sunnah, but smiling more will make you feel happier. Studies show that smiling improves your mood, strengthens your immune system, decreases stress, and makes those around you feel happier too.

5. Make Someone Happy with a Simple Kind Word or Gesture. Serve God and associate none with Him. Show kindness to parents, relatives, orphans, the needy, the neighboring kinsman and the neighbor who is not of your kind, the companion, the traveler in need, and to the slaves you own. (Quran 4:36) Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is reported to have said: “The little matters of courtesy that look easy to you and which you take lightly will be very important on the Day of Judgment. (at-Tirmidhi)

6. Love Yourself! Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is reported to have said: “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” (Bukhari) We often focus on the love for others mentioned in this blessed hadith, but this hadith is also saying that we should already love ourselves. If you truly love yourself, you want good for yourself. You make choices that support your happiness (within the boundaries of Islam, of course). Example: Does it support your happiness to become angry or upset about what others do to you? Or is it in your best interest to be calm and rational when facing difficult people or situations? When you truly love yourself, you start making choices that benefit you. You won’t react to problems so negatively because you realize that those negative reactions harm you. You won’t compare yourself to others because you honor your uniqueness.

Loving yourself also means that you forgive yourself for your mistakes and shortcomings. No person is perfect, so treat yourself with some compassion.

7. Every Night Before You Go to Bed, Think of 3 Things that You are Thankful For. Every night, think of at least 3 things that you are feeling grateful to Allah for. It could be things specific to that day or general things, but it should be genuine. One thing that I am always grateful for is the health of my children. Gratitude is an incredible way to feel connected with Allah because you know that He gave you those things. Remember, all help is from God. Every good thing you have is from God.

(Shema Salam Sumer is a trained counselor and author of How To Be a Happy Muslim Insha’Allah and The Basic Values of Islam: Alphabetically Listed with Islamic References. For more details, see her website www.howtobeahappyMuslim.com)
Illness as an Occasion for Spiritual Growth

We commonly think of illness as dreadful, something to complain about, but there’s a very different way of understanding it, as reflected in a saying attributed to Prophet Muhammad: “Nothing befalls a believer, a [prick of a] thorn or more than that, but God will raise him one degree in status thereby, or erase a bad deed.”

By A. Kasvari

With God’s grace, I’ve never fallen very seriously ill—maybe physically—in all my almost fifty years. Perhaps the most I’ve had to face was a spell of jaundice some thirty years ago, and then, recently, a rather severe attack of food poisoning. I’ve had my share of insect-bites, rashes, falls, wounds, allergies, stomach-pains, fever, headaches, coughs and colds and so on—routine sorts of ailments—but, thankfully, nothing was really very awful-sounding. And that’s a blessing that I really haven’t cared to think much about and appreciate, I have to admit. Brought up in an environment that had little or no room for God and religion, illness, when it did strike me, was almost entirely a this-worldly thing. That reflected the thoroughly materialistic ethos I was reared in. God and religion or spirituality played no role in the way I saw illness. If I fell ill and it was something that I thought I could handle myself, I’d pop in a couple of pills, trusting that they would do the trick and get me okay. If my ailment was more serious than that, I’d visit a clinic and do as the doctor suggested, putting my faith entirely in him or her. When I got well, it was assumed that this had happened because of the doctor’s expertise, plus the magic of the medicines I had taken. In my scheme of things, there was no role for God in all of this.

Complete Absence of God

So, that’s what I mean when I say that for me the process of falling ill and getting cured was an entirely this-worldly one. It had no reference whatsoever to God. I can’t ever remember my parents or friends suggesting that I pray to God to get well if I was sick. Nor did I give that same advice to anyone. That God did have a role in my condition and in its cure, that I could turn to Him for help when I was ill, and that could and should thank Him when I got well—these were things that I didn’t know or think about—such was the depth of the almost complete absence of God in my life. It was medicines and medical ‘experts’ that I turned to when I was sick, not our Creator.

By Prof. Malik F. Ingalgi

The New Hijri Year 1438 commenced with the sighting of crescent on the evening of October 3, 2016. The time difference between Sunset and Moonset on October 2, 2016. The time difference was 32 minutes. Hence the first day of Muharram fell on October 3, 2016. The time difference between Sunset and Moonset on the evening of October 3, 2016. The New Hijri Year 1438

The year 1438 AH will have 354 days 5 hours and 18 minutes. The New Hijri Year 1438

By Prof. Malik F. Ingalgi

The New Hijri Year 1438 commenced with the sighting of crescent on the evening of October 2, 2016. The difference between Sunset and Moonset on October 2 was 32 minutes. Hence the first day of Muharram fell on October 3, 2016. Based on the astronomical data available for the Bengaluru location regarding conjunction or what is known as Amavasya, the difference between Sunset and Moonset timings, we have prepared a concise pocket calendar for the Islamic Lunar Year 1438. Forecast is being made on the basis of Sunset happening prior to Moonset as per the astronomical data available with Observatories. The day, next to such an occurrence has been taken as the first day of the Islamic Hijri month. It is hoped that the prior knowledge of the precise dates on which the new crescent would appear, will enable the Muslims to schedule their religious rites, holy days and practices.

The 1438 AH will have 354 days 5 hours and 18 minutes. Coming year 1439 AH begins with 1st of Muharram falling on Friday, 22nd September 2017.

Prepared by Prof. Malik F. Ingalgi, (The author can be contacted at: 94487-85659) (Notes: Malik F. Ingalgi holds a Ph.D. in Astronomy from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics and retired as Principal of Govt College(s) and Physics Professor after 34 years of service).
SUNNI MUSLIM Parents seek alliance for their Daughter aged 23 yrs. B.Com., B.Ed, M.Ed. Groom should be well qualified & religion is from Bangalore based. Advertised 25-28 yrs. Contact: 9378852148, E-mail: ehsanrc@ymail.com

SUNNI MUSLIM Parents seek alliance for their Daughter (Khula obtained & no issues) is height 5’1”, 38 Years, fair, good looking. Interested parents with marriage alliance, contact: 9880847180 & 7259891438, E-mail: saif4999@gmail.com

SUNNI MUSLIM Parents invites Alliance for their son (Divorced) 37 years, 5’11”, Fair, B.Com, MBA, having settled business from Bangalore, bride should be Divorced, Annulled, Widowed, and Graduate from Educated Family Background. Contact: 9416456532, 9988688709

SMU E educate family seeking alliance for their daughter 31yrs, 5’3”, B.Com, PG, professional background. Girl is well versed with all Religious. Marriage on basis of mutual understanding. Contact: 8904858010, E-mail: mkhaleelulla@gmail.com

SM Parents seek alliance for their daughter 20 yrs, 5’5”, B.A., MBA, height 5’5”, Beautiful, fair, religious, observing girl. Girls family background seek alliance for very religious, beautiful, pious, 28 years, 5’4” tall, from Bangalore. Contact: 9756123456, E-mail: saqaf1499@gmail.com

SM Parents, Religious, Well Educated Familie seek alliance from Bangalor based GROOM’S FAMILY, for their Daughter B.E., SW Engineer working in MNC, 25 yrs, 5’5’, BEAUTIFUL, GOOD FEATURES, RELIGIOUS. GROOM SHOULD BE ENGINEER / PROFESSIONAL WORKING IN BANGALORE / ABROAD, WITHIN 30 YRS AGE, HANDSOME, RELIGIOUS, WITH CLEAN HABITS. CONTACT: Mob / WhatsApp - 9344233038 / 08041751538

SMU Parents invites Alliance for Very Fair, Beautiful, Daughter, 26yrs B.B.A, h t 6 ft.6 Looking for Groom Educated, Businessman or Employed, Young, Early Marriage Wanted. Mob: +91 7914756533-91 9988688709

SM Parents both Doctors, Educated family background seek alliance for their son (BE), MS, USA, working in USA with good salary, good position, 32 years (divorced) 5’1”, handsome, religious, only son. Girl should be educated, beautiful, 25 yrs, with good family values. Age 25-30 years with good and educated family background. Contact: 09886033038, What app no: 09035134096

Parents seek alliance for their daughter 26 yrs B.B.A, h.t 5’6”, Looking for a well settled, good family background. Seeking alliance for very religious, beautiful, pious, 28 years, 5’4” tall, from Bangalore. Contact: 9756123456, E-mail: saqaf1499@gmail.com

SMU Parents seek alliance for their daughter 30 yrs, 5.1” M.tech, PhD, now a research associate at IISc, Bangalore. Groom should be M.tech/PhD/M.BBS/M.B.A. well educated & family good from Karnataka/Gulf overseas. Early & simple marriage preferred 916441276, 0821-2450472, Mob no. 9176006218

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By Muhammad Shafeeqe

"Water is life" is not a figurative description. It is a proclamation of reality. God, having created the earth for human existence, has filled three-fourths with water. Commonly, the egotistic minds of humankind try to exploit this gift in a negative manner. It is a fact that a single drop of water gone astray cannot be regained. Now the world has received the shocking news that the next generation will face a shortage by 40 percent of water as compared to the present availability of water. This creates more apprehension as the usage of water will double in the next generation. Within this context, the teachings of Islam, a religion which works for the safeguarding of nature, have great relevancy in the present.

Use Water Carefully

The Qur'an recalls this principle in two verses. "Then tell me about the water that you drink". "Is it you who cause it from the rain clouds to come down, or we who are the cause of it to come down?" [Sura 56:68-9, Al-Waqi'ah]. There are certain commands between these verses. Allah orders us to use water carefully, not to make it a reason for arrogance as it is entirely a mercy from God and should be used in a sustainable manner that the next generation may flourish. Allah introduces water by giving it the name "blessed". Water is mentioned 63 times in Qur'an. There are many instances in the life of the Prophet (pbuh) that express the nobility of preserving water and elucidate how to safeguard it.

"My Well," "My Water," are Only Phrases

The Qur'an defines Allah as the giver of water. Humankind is really powerless in the process of creating water. Allah has allowed using it without any extravagance. Sometimes He may test us by granting much water without any exertion. It is the choice of Allah to grant water for someone and to decree drought for someone else. Allah will calculate how patiently a person faces drought and how he exploits water at the time of ease of use. Moreover, our life is a continuous affliction. The world is a hall for examinations and we are only students. Allah says "He may test you which of you is best in deed" [Sura 67:2, Al-Mulk]. Thus we must obey divine instruction. "My well," "my water," etc. are only phrases. Water is for all. No one can be barred from its usage.

The Prophet once corrected one of his Companions, Sa'ad, when he used too much water for ablutions.

The Prophet Forbade Extravagance

Do you ever think how much water is wasted while brushing your teeth from a tap? Also just think about the water employed uselessly while pouring it over your head. You need only a cup of water to wash your hands. We are losing too much water which cannot be regained. It's obvious that Islam takes a strong stand against extravagance. The Prophet forbade extravagance as it destroys human life and the greenery of the earth. The Prophet once corrected one of his Companions, Sa'ad, when he used too much water for ablutions. Here the religion acts to preserve water.

In addition to preserving water, Allah also instructed us to donate water for the use of the people. Finally, water is a boon from the Lord. Once when Sa'ad asked about a deed he may do for the betterment of his mother's life in the hereafter, the Prophet told him to dig a well.

(Muhammad Shafeeqe is enrolled in a programme in classical Islamic studies from Madeenathunnoor College of Islamic Science, Kozhikode, Kerala. (Extracted from an article hosted on http://www.islamicpluralism.org)
**Islamic Voice, November 2016**

### Pope Francis Praises Peace & Harmony in Azerbaijan

**Baku, Azerbaijan:** In a meeting with political leaders during his recent visit to Azerbaijan, Pope Francis, head of the Catholic Church, praised the peaceful relationship among Catholics, Muslims, Orthodox, and Jews in largely-Muslim Azerbaijan. In his Oct. 2 speech, he said that he has been particularly pleased to see the cordial relations enjoyed by the “armor.” Pope Francis met with the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev and his wife, as well as other authorities and members of the Diplomatic Corps. In his speech, the Pope emphasized how important it is, especially at the present time, to show the world how it is possible to express one’s own ideas and worldview without abusing the rights of those with differing perspectives. “I am confident that, with the help of God, and the good will of those involved, the Caucasus will be a place where, through dialogue and negotiation, disputes and differences will be resolved and overcome,” Pope Francis said, concluding his address.

### Love Can be Only Response to Evil: Pope

Vatican City: In the face of the devil’s assaults, we must respond as God would, promoting respect for others and extending love and forgiveness to those who have harmed us, Pope Francis said to an audience with survivors of the terror attack in Nice, France in July. “When the temptation to turn in on themselves, or to answer hatred with hatred and violence with violence is great, authentic conversion of heart is necessary,” the Pope said. “This is the message that the Gospel of Jesus addressed to all of us.”

Pope Francis received the nearly 1,000 survivors of the July 14 attack in Nice in the Pope Paul VI hall at the Vatican. After his speech he greeted them each one by one.

## Pope Francis Speaks to Authorities in Azerbaijan Oct. 2, 16.

### UN Human Rights Committee Orders Saudi Arabia to Stop Stoning Children

The United Nations has called on Saudi Arabia to repeal laws that allow stoning, amputation, flogging and execution of children. Children over 15 years are tried as adults and can be executed, “after trials falling short of guarantees of due process and a fair trial”, according to the report by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee’s 18 independent experts analysed the Kingdom’s compliance record with a UN treaty protecting the rights of citizens under the age of 18. Experts voiced concern that the Saudi government “still does not recognise girls as full subjects of rights and continues to severely discriminate (against) them in law and practice and to impose on them a system of male guardianship”. The Committee said violations of young girls’ right to equality should not be justified “using traditional, religious or cultural attitudes. According to the UN Committee, out of 47 people executed in 2017 for security offences, four were under 18.

Source: (independent.co.uk)

## New York City Campaigns Against Islamophobia

New York: New York City launched a social media advertising campaign to combat negative perceptions of Muslims and counteract increasing instances of threats and violence. Showing an array of photographs of Muslims men and women, the campaign reads “I am Muslim. I am NYC”, according to the New York City Commission on Human Rights. The campaign is aimed at addressing negative depictions and rhetoric, officials said. Anti-Muslim sentiment has been playing a major role as the U.S. presidential race has heated up. “Now more than ever, it is important for every New Yorker to stand united as one city and reject hate and violence,” Mayor Bill de Blasio said in a statement announcing the ad campaign. “In New York, everyone deserves to be treated with respect. Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, agnostic and atheist — it doesn’t matter,” he said. “We are all New Yorkers and we all deserve to live safely and free from hatred or discrimination.” Some 3.3 million Muslims live in the United States, and thousands live in New York City, according to the commission. The ads will be placed on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with the hashtag #IamMuslimNYC.

(Extracted from Huffington Post)

## US Muslims Express Solidarity with USA’s Indigenous People for Land Rights

Indigenous people from across America have issued a rallying cry in defense of the earth at the Sacred Stone Camp in North Dakota, USA, and many faith traditions are heeding their call. Members of nearly 300 different Native American tribes gathered at the Sacred Stone Camp to protest the Dakota Access oil pipeline. They claim the $3.8 billion project would smudge across lands they consider sacred and are burial sites, and could pose a threat to the water supply that serves the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, which lies just south of the pipeline’s proposed route. Federal agencies have agreed to temporarily stop construction on the pipeline on land that is particularly significant to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. However, the tribe’s court battle against the pipeline is ongoing.

Several different progressive Christian religious denominations, as well as the Jewish Voice for Peace, have demonstrated their solidarity with this movement, which at its core, is a prayerful and spiritual protest. In recent weeks, American Muslims have signaled that they are also entering the fray. A coalition of Muslim organizations is teaming up to spread awareness about the gathering in North Dakota—and inspiring the American Muslim community to get involved. Spearheaded by the activist groups Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative, and MPower Change, the coalition has raised over $12,000 online to support the Sacred Stone Camp. The funds will go towards supplying the camp with items like water, propane, food, and blankets, or towards the legal costs associated with protesting the pipeline in court.

(Extracted from http://www.huffingtonpost.in)

### UN Hails Iran’s Support for Foreign Refugees

**Tehran:** UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O’Brien hailed Iran for hosting over 3 million refugees which is praiseworthy," O’Brien made the remarks in a meeting with Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli in Tehran recently.

The Iranian interior minister said that three million Afghan refugees are living in Iran, adding that the assistance provided by the UN refugee agency does not cover even two percent of the costs Iran pays for hosting the foreign refugees. Iran has been a generous host for more than 2 million Afghan refugees for two decades, with little help from the international community.

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Syrian Kids Call For Peace

Syrian children drew pictures and wrote letters calling for peace last month, as part of an initiative from Catholic and Orthodox Christian leaders in the region. The images that have emerged from Syria’s five-year long civil war are heartbreaking. In an effort to spread hope in the midst of this despair, several organizations joined together last month, to pray for peace in Syria—and to make sure the international community hears these children’s voices. Both Muslim and Christian kids in over 2,000 schools in the country participated by drawing pictures, writing letters or writing messages to the global community on white balloons. Children in Aleppo, Damascus, Holms, and other Syrian cities and villages participated in the peace initiative on October 6 and 7. The Action Day for Peace was inspired by a joint declaration made by Pope Francis and the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill in February, which called on Catholic and Orthodox Christians to work together to highlight the plight of victims of violence in Iraq and Syria. A delegation of Catholic and Orthodox Christian religious leaders from Syria planned to deliver the children’s drawings and letters to high-ranking representatives at the European Union and the United Nations and to Pope Francis, head of the Catholic Church. UNICEF calls Syria one of the “most dangerous places to be in for a child.” The international organization reports that more than 80 percent of Syria’s child population (that’s 8.4 million children) has been affected by the conflict, either as refugees whose families have been forced to flee their homeland, or as residents of an active war zone. The war has disrupted kids’ access to routine vaccinations, their ability to attend school, and their mental health.

American Muslims Denounce Terrorism

Houston, USA: A group of Muslim Americans have put up a billboard in Missouri denouncing ISIS, saying that people should stop conflating the terrorist group with Islam. Tariq Malik, a Chesterfield resident who helped organise the effort behind the billboard, said that he and his peers want to halt a perception that Muslims aren’t speaking up against ISIS. “These acts are being done in the name of religion, which really has nothing to do with the religion,” Malik said, speaking of terrorism. “It just has to do with radical people taking on their own agenda and hijacking the name of Islam.”

Christian-Muslim Dialogue turns Strangers into Neighbors

St. Cloud, Minn., USA: In the aftermath of the mall stabbing of nine people by a Somali-Muslim on Sept. 17 in St. Cloud, Minnesota, Muslims called on their friends at the Greater St. Cloud Area Faith Leaders and others for support. Leaders from various faiths came together to pray and strategize a sensible reaction to the violence. “It has allowed us to build bridges in the past, and it seemed natural that we would have conversations and stand in solidarity when this happened,” said Kathy Langer, director of social concerns for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud and a member of the Greater St. Cloud Area Faith Leaders group. The St. Cloud Times has reported harassment of Somali businesses and a city on edge. The once-homogenous college town is still adjusting to the influx of Somali immigrants and refugees that started approximately 10 years ago. The Christian-Muslim dialogue is helping to ease the racial and cultural friction, and Catholics have taken a strong leadership role in the effort. Recently, almost 300 people filled the parish hall at St. Joseph’s Church in St. Joseph, Minnesota, a small town 10 miles outside of St. Cloud, for a Christian-Muslim dialogue that also welcomed nine Somali-Muslim families into the community. The event was organized locally by an ad hoc group with help from the Interfaith Christian-Muslim Dialogue Group, an organization that started 10 years ago in St. Cloud and has expanded regionally.

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By Inka Piegsa-Quischotte

“My name,” said the lady, clad from headscarf to sandals in shades of pink and purple, “is Bahia, which means ‘ocean of beauty and compassion’ in Arabic. Welcome to my town.”

Tea was poured, sweets were proffered and we sat down in the shade of more than 100-year-old olive trees in the backyard of her tiny Montessori school to talk about Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam. But we weren’t in a Muslim country – we were in the south of Catholic Spain.

Órgiva, located approximately 60km southeast of Granada and tucked away in the Alpujarra mountain region, is an extraordinary place. The small town’s population is just under 6,000 – but amazingly, this comprises 68 nationalities, as well as the Buddhist community.

But I’d come to this mountain wilderness to meet the largest of the cultural communities: 35 Sufi families who have converted from Catholicism and settled here. Despite Spain’s long history of tolerance towards many North African immigrants, Spaniards who convert to Islam – particularly the order of Sufism – are a rarity. I wanted to know what motivated them to convert, and why they’d chosen this remote part of Andalusia to live.

“Here in Órgiva, nobody looks at others,” explained Maria Jose Villa Cascos, who was born in Seville, about 320km west of Órgiva, later studying law and working in Madrid as a lawyer.

“My search for the right way of life actually started in the Catholic college I attended in Seville,” she said. “It took me years of studying, probing, doubting and experimenting until I finally came upon the philosophy and teachings of Sufism. Originally a way of life, teachings of tolerance, wide understanding, unconditional love of mankind and total rejection of violence made me convert. We concentrate on the simplicity of life, valuing the spiritual over the material. That’s also one of the reasons why I turned from being an attorney to teaching kids.”

She explained that Umar, who was appointed emir of the order in the 1970s, happened to live in Órgiva before he converted. Over the years, other converts flocked to the town, and in 1995, a small dargah (a meditation) opened, which is the faith I wanted to follow, so is familiar to me and I knew that this had come home. Everything was oceano life,” she said.

“Do you speak Arabic?” I asked.

“No,” Qasim explained. “We say our prayers in Arabic, but that’s the extent of my knowledge of the language.”

Despite being extremely busy, Qasim took me to their dargah (temple), where on Thursday nights the community celebrates dihk, the praise of Allah, and hadra, a meditation. On the holy day of Friday there are more prayers and a communal meal.

The dargah was a simple affair, hidden away among olive and orange trees. You needed to be friendly and accept a certain degree of comfort. There was a small prayer room, a kitchen, and three Spartan guest rooms reserved for visiting fellow Sufis. Kids ran around while women prepared a meal and tended to a group of visitors.

“These are people from Morocco and other Muslim countries who embark on what’s called Halal Tourism, visiting Muslim communities in other countries. It’s becoming quite popular,” Qasim explained. He agreed with Bahia about the need to spread the message of peace, love and understanding to the non-Muslim world.

“Apart from living what we believe in, we welcome others to our community, so you can tell the world about us,” he said. Before wishing me a safe journey home, he added, “Maybe one day we can all live in peace, inshallah.”

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Words Related with Collectives
(مجموعات /مجتمعات سے متعلق الفاظ)

Apiary: A place where colony or colonies of bees are kept for breeding and honey collection.

Apothecary: Druggist or Pharmacist.

Cemetery: Graveyard.

Confectionery: a place where sweets are kept or made.

Dairy: A place where milk is kept and products from milk like cheese and butter are made.

Estuary: That part of the mouth or lower course of a rive in which the river’s current meets the sea tide.

Granary: Place to store food grains.

Hatchery: A place for hatching eggs from hens and fish etc.

Nursery: A place where young plants are grown before transplanting.

Tannery: A place where skins are tanned to be turned into leather.

Rosary: A garden of roses. It also means prayer beads.

Glossary: A list of terms in a special subject, field or area of usage such as this column of Islamic Voice.

Seminary: A special school providing education theology, religious history etc.

Sanctuary: A sacred or a holy place like Masjid e Haram.

Topiary: A plant clipped or trimmed in a fantastic shape.

Fiduciary: A person to whom property or power is entrusted for the benefit of another.

Winery: An establishment for making wines.

Story of the Tiny Frogs

There was once a bunch of tiny frogs, who arranged a running competition. The goal was to reach the top of a very high tower. A big crowd gathered around the tower to see the race and cheer on the contestants. The race began. No one in the crowd really believed that the tiny frogs would reach the top of the tower. They shouted, “Oh, way too difficult!” “They will NEVER make it to the top!” and “Not a chance. The tower is too high”.

The tiny frogs began collapsing, one by one except for those who, in a fresh tempo, were climbing higher and higher. The crowd continued to yell, “It’s too difficult! No one will make it!” More tiny frogs got tired and gave up. But one continued higher and higher. This one wouldn’t give up! And he reached the top. Everyone wanted to know how this one frog managed such a great feat. His secret? This little frog was DEAF!

Moral
• Be Deaf when people tell you that it can’t be done
• Ignore the pessimism of others
• Stay Positive
• Put your trust in Allah and pray to Him to help you achieve your dreams
(storiesformuslimkids)
By Nigar Ataulla

It’s always a great pleasure to walk into Dr. Ali Khwaja’s office, the Banjara Academy, in Bangalore. Two great reasons for this. Firstly, that you don’t feel like you are walking into an office. Rather, it’s like walking into a friend’s home. Secondly, Ali Khwaja himself is so informal, modest, humble and down-to earth that he instantly makes you feel comfortable and accepts you as you are.

The other day, I landed at Banjara Academy along with a friend to meet Ali. The walls of Ali’s room are covered with little motivational notes about life and a pretty chart depicting caricatured cartoon expressions with the question: “How do you feel today?” On the shelf are headgear of different shapes—a cowboy hat, a Himachali cap and many others, which Ali probably sometimes wears when he is out on his mission to talk to people about life!

A Mind of Your own

Ali’s positivity is mind-blowing. He says that he is what he is today because of 2 years experience studying in a Montessori school in Mumbai. “There I learnt how important it is to have a mind of your own, rather than blindly following what people tell you to do or want you to become. I am the youngest, with three older siblings, a brother and 2 sisters. My father was in the civil services and my entire family, down through seven generations, served the government. But I turned out to be the baa-baa black sheep in the family!” he jokes.

When his father was posted in Osmanabad (Maharashtra), Ali, who was then around 9 years old, spent his time wandering around villages learning things about life. After completing his pre-university studies in Hyderabad, he enrolled at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Powai, training to become a metallurgical engineer. Ali confesses that he did not wish to become an engineer and that those 5 years of B. Tech, taught him why!

Being a Good Listener

Passing out of engineering college, Ali spent two years working with a friend who had set up a fertilizer factory in Hyderabad, after which he bought a printing press and began a paper in Hyderabad. “It was a 16-page tabloid. I really enjoyed writing stories about people, their lives and about the city!” But destiny had something else in store for Ali, who was destined to become one of India’s most popular counselors. “I was a good listener, when I was a teenager, with my sisters confiding their little secrets to me. Many of my sister’s friends would come to me with their worries or problems and I would listen to them. While this was a small beginning for me as a novice counselor at home for my sisters and their friends, the real professional ‘break’ as I call it, came when Dr. Lakshmi from Sneha Counselling Centre in Madras came to Hyderabad for a workshop to train volunteers. Though it was just a 3-day course, it gave me valuable skills in counseling,” Ali recalls. Shifting to Bangalore in 1990, Ali was fortunate to meet Alice Saldanha (who passed away 2 years ago), who had initiated ‘Helping Hand’ as a free counseling centre. It was an informal set up, with 12 people, mostly Alice’s friends, working as volunteers. As Alice was getting old, she handed over the baton of ‘Helping Hand’ to Ali who was then managing a construction company under the name of ‘Banjara’. After meeting many people who told him that they wanted to be equipped with counseling skills, Ali was founded Banjara Academy in 1994 (Banjara Academy, 418, 1st Main, 1st Block, RT Nagar, Bengaluru 560032 India Phones: 080-23553578, 23553566. Or, check outwww.banjaraacademy.org). Dr Ali Khwaja’s love and compassion for his fellow beings was the driving force behind the setting up of the Banjara Academy, which has helped transform the life of thousands of people, providing them valuable life-skills!

Love of the Unseen

The saint of Delhi, Hazrath Nizamuddin Auliya would often remark with a deep sigh: “That washerman’s son is more fortunate than me. Alas! I couldn’t reach even up to his level.”

Ali Khwaja himself is more fortunate than me. Alas! I couldn’t reach that level. Hazrath Nizamuddin Auliya would ask: “How does he think of the princess who wore a few garments belonging to the princess. Attractive and pricey as they were, the young man would think of the princess who wore them. He would separate them from the lot, take them into his custody, lavish all his attention on them, and press and fold them carefully to be carried to the palace. Gradually he fell in love with the princess even without having a sight of her. This continued for a long time. Given that he occupied the lower rung of the social ladder, there was not even a remote chance for an encounter with his love.

Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya would rue the fact that his prayers were bereft of the intense spirit of love that characterized the washerman’s son for the unseen princess.

But the washer couple began to feel that something was the matter. Having seen their son’s obsession with the princess’ garments, they could feel that things may go out of hand if he continued unrestrained. They whispered into each other’s ears: “If anything untoward happens, the heads of the entire family will be on the chopping block!”

The couple began to take the princess’ garments in their custody and asked their son to stay away from them. The young man was crestfallen at the turn of the events. The slender link with his beloved had been ruptured by the brutal hands of the parents. He fell sick. His condition grew serious, and soon he died in utter despondency.

It did not take much time for the princess to notice a change in her clothes. Her garments were no longer being washed with the attention that they received earlier. They were folded shoddily. The refined touch was missing. She called for the couple and inquired as to what had gone wrong with them. Initially hesitant, they reel out the entire saga even while craving for royal pardon. The story came as a bolt from the blue for the princess. Stunned, she ordered for a floral wreath and headed for the cemetery. Standing silent at the grave of the young man, she offered the wreath with tearful eyes. Historians record that it became a routine for the princess to place a floral wreath at the youth’s grave on his death anniversary year after year. Having recounts the sad saga, Hazrat Nizamuddin said: “How sad that my love for God is bereft of that intensity of spirit! The youth who had never seen the princess but serviced her garments with such intense care. How perfunctorily I dispose of my prayers to my invisible God!”

Hazrat Nizamuddin was all praise for the youth, who, he said was accepted by Allah. “But one does not know if our namaz and prayers would be accepted by Him, given the listlessness that characterizes our discharging of that duty”, he wondered.

(Author: Safdar Mahmood, translated from Urdu by Maqbool Noor Sirdi)