

Better light a candle than curse the darkness

شکوہ ظلمت شب سے نو کہیں بہتر تھا اپنے حصے کی کوئی شمع جلاتے جاتے

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BE AWARE, ALWAYS, EVERYWHERE

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COVER STORY

How Britain Destroyed the Palestinian Homeland

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Suicide is the Gravest Sin

[Sahih Muslim: Book 3 'Kitab Al-Iman' Number 205]

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira (Radi Allah Anhu): We participated in the Battle of Hunain along with the Messenger of Allah (sal-allahu-alleihi-wasallam). He (the Holy Prophet) said about a man who claimed to be a Muslim that he was one of the denizens of the Fire (of Hell). When we were in the thick of the battle that man fought desperately and was wounded. It was said: Messenger of Allah, the person whom you at first called as the denizen of Fire fought desperately and died. Upon this the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) remarked: He was doomed to the Fire (of Hell). Some men were on the verge of doubt (about his fate) when it was said that he was not dead but fatally wounded. When it was night he could not stand the (pain of his) wound and killed himself. The Apostle (may peace be upon him) was informed of that. He (the Holy Prophet) observed: Allah is Great, I bear testimony to the fact that I am the servant of Allah and His messenger. He then commanded Bilal to announce to the people that none but a Muslim would enter Paradise. Verily Allah helps this faith even by a sinful person.

Our Lord! grant us good in this world and good in the hereafter, and save us from the chastisement of the fire.

History revisited:

How Tughlaq's currency change led to chaos in 14th century India



I By Shoab Daniyal I

The major gamble the Delhi sultan took with the currency in his kingdom led to the weakening of his sultanate.

Since November 8, a crowd in rural Madhya Pradesh has looted a ration shop, people in long lines at banks and Automated Teller Machines in Delhi and elsewhere have broken into fistcuffs, parents do not have enough money to feed their children, patients cannot pay for their treatment, and farmers are unable to buy inputs to sow the next crop. These are just a few examples of the fallout of last Tuesday's move by the Narendra Modi government to suddenly withdraw high-denomination notes. Several have referred to the decision as Tughlaqian in ambition.

The one decision for which Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the 14th century sultan of Delhi, is most remembered, is the disastrous shifting of his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad in the Deccan, in present-day Maharashtra. The hardship this sudden move caused to the people led to his name becoming an idiomatic expression in Hindi-Urdu denoting an unhinged dictator. But this wasn't the only one of Tughlaq's decisions that ended in disaster.

Like Modi, Tughlaq took a major gamble with the currency in his kingdom. Unfortunately for the ruler,

that move was a disaster, leading to a weakening of his sultanate.

Fragile monetary system

If anything, the chaos in India following the announcement of the demonetisation policy points to just how incredibly fragile the modern monetary system is. What was wealth at one moment, became, through the decision of a single man, worthless pieces of paper.

The move starkly shows that paper money in itself has no value. Modern paper or plastic currency, called fiat money, has worth only because a sovereign government says so. If this system seems odd, you would not be wrong to think so given how new it is.

Once humans moved beyond the barter system, people mostly used coins, usually made of precious metals like gold and silver, as currency. This system is known as commodity money.

Since the metal in the coin itself had value, it was a rather stable system. However, it was stymied by shortages of precious metals.

At some point in the seventh century, the Chinese invented modern-style paper money based on a system of conversion that allowed paper notes to be ex-

changed for gold, silver or silk. Called representative money, the system was so radical it took Europe another 1,000 years to use it.

However, Tughlaq was the one sovereign who managed to implement this Chinese idea before the West. As the Sultan of Delhi, he ruled over northern parts of the Indian subcontinent and the Deccan. After he moved his capital to Daulatabad, in 1329, Tughlaq introduced representative or token money. These were coins of copper and brass that could be exchanged for fixed amounts of gold and silver from the Delhi Sultanate.

Called a tanka – a name that would later give rise to the Bengali word for currency, taakaa – the new coins were aimed at financing the sultanate’s war operations, which stretched dangerously across the subcontinent.

Shoddy implementation

Today, the system of representative money has ended for much of the modern world. But till 1971, people could convert \$35 for one ounce (28 grams) of gold – this is how representative currency worked.

But when Tughlaq introduced representative money in his kingdom, it was a drastically unfamiliar idea. Only one sovereign outside of China had done it – the 13th century Persian king Gaykhatu. That experiment caused so much chaos that he had to withdraw it within eight days, and he was even assassinated soon after.

While Tughlaq’s move was good in theory, he failed in implementation. Representative currency is a sound idea but it has one weak spot: forgery. Since representative money is worth very little intrinsically and can actually be exchanged for valuable commodities like gold or silver, there is a lot of value in making forgeries. Tughlaq’s tanka, made of brass or copper, could be traded in for valuable gold or silver from the government – a lucrative deal for good forgers.

Forging chaos

Modern governments protect their paper currency against forgers by adding security features such as watermarks to make it difficult for people to counterfeit the notes. In fact, this was one of the reasons initially trotted out by the Union government to justify its demonetisation plan. However, as it turned out, due to poor planning by the government, there was



no time to add any new security features.

While this is unfortunate, the Modi government could take solace in the fact that this is not the first time that a government in the Indian subcontinent has badly planned new currency.

Tughlaq’s new tanka was not crafted carefully enough to prevent forgers from replicating it. As word got around, counterfeit tankas started to flood the market. A contemporary historian reported that every house “became a mint”. Soon, there were so many forgeries floating around that it led to hyperinflation, and the tankas became worthless.

To stem the economic chaos, the Tughlaq administration rolled back the tanka and promised to compensate genuine tanka holders with gold and silver. However, the number of fakes were so large that for a number of years, mounds of worthless copper tankas, rejected by the government, remained piled outside the Daulatabad fort.

As could be imagined, the economic chaos was not good for Mohammad Bin Tughlaq, and it was one of the reasons for the dismemberment of his kingdom. By the time Tughlaq died in 1351, key parts of his empire such as Bengal and the Deccan had liberated themselves, and the sultanate was confined to a small area around Delhi and the western parts of current day-Uttar Pradesh.

[<http://scroll.in/article/821406/demonetisation-lessons-how-tughlaqs-unplanned-currency-change-in-14th-century-india-led-to-chaos>]

Crises:

The Outlook and The Outcome

I By Nissar Nadiadwala I

One of the golden pages from the Islamic history, which builds our attitude in facing crises, reads: After the Prophet (pbuh) returned from the Battle of Khandaq, one of the hardest battles, that pitted the Muslims before a huge collection of the enemies, he removed his battle armor to rest, and Angel Jibraeel appeared and said, "O Prophet of Allah! I have not yet removed my armor and you removed it so early! We have to move towards Banu Quraiza."

Establishing Islam means attending one crisis after another, without getting exhausted. Crises can be a test. Hardships and crises in personal life and collective life make a believer firm and stronger. Among the best outcomes of crises, is that he emerges out with more taqwa and tawakkul, because he has experienced the help of Allah in solving it. Remember: The help of Allah is near and many a times it comes when you see no options yet cling to the only option that is Allah, with patience and preference.

Study the case of Moosa (a.s.), when he was chased by the mighty Pharaoh and his entire army, he stood at the bank of the river facing the fast flowing water and no boats to sail them across and no arms to fight back the enemies. At that time even his own people blamed him, "Moosa, we are trapped," as the Qur'an quotes them. What did Moosa (a.s) say? Read in Surah Qasas, Surah Ar'af, and Surah Taha.

The Noble Prophet (pbuh) did not say "Hey wait! I have this miraculous stick with me and I will whiz it on the water or at the enemy." Rather he replied, "Allah is with me." It was only after Allah said, "Moosa hit the water with your stick." Moosa (a.s.) looked at the option, till then it was only a stick. Today, for many of us, our bank balances, our influential contacts in the government offices and our relatives are our first options before we turn to Allah. Infact they are the weakest option if

approached without approaching Allah. The Sahih Hadith reminds us: "Turn to Allah's help even if the sole of your shoe is torn." Such small issues but refer to Allah! Why? Just to program our minds to refer to Allah regularly and not only during big emergencies. For many of us Allah is the last option, but if you refer to the above two cases Allah is the only option, without His command even the sources cannot cause a benefit to you.

Faith happens to be the first casualty of crises when faced by many Muslims. They rush everywhere, from graves of dead saints to taweez (Tameema) sellers, they lose patience and many even give up their regular prayers. If you study Surah Yusuf, when the brothers of Yusuf (a.s.) felt sorry about their acts, what did their father Yaqub say? Do not despair the mercy of Allah, indeed it is kufr to despair the mercy of Allah.

The most important outcome of crises is our attitude towards it. Even in wars, all the warriors may not be able to come out successful like James Bonds and Rambo just because we are in an age of movies TV serials; we have begun to wish that melodramas are always the best end of crises. Musaib bin Umair (r.a.) was among the best dressed young man of Makkah, but he had to leave all the luxury when he parted from his pagan mother. He died in Uhud and his shroud was too short to cover him completely.

Study the tragedy of Uthman (r.a). The man who once sponsored the entire Muslim army, had to face a rebellion, he did not get to drink water from the very same well he had donated for the welfare of the community. Will you call these two men as unsuccessful? NO. The outcome of crises can also be Jannah which is the best outcome, Radi Allahu anhum wa radhoo anho, Allah be pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah, Dhalikal fauzuool Azeem, that is the supreme success, Surah Maidah chapter 5, verse, 119.

... From "Beyond Education",

How Grand Should Our Weddings be?

I By Nissar Nadiadwala I

Ever since I have written a few notes on Youth, career and marriages, many readers often ask me how much should they spend on their wedding? Some even inquire if it is alright to bow to family pressure if they spend lavishly on the reception (hosted by the bride's father) and umpteen items on the menu of waleema. What if our parents can afford the lavish reception (again hosted by the bride's father)?

Well there is no upper limit in the hadith as far as the number of invitees in the waleema is concerned. One of the sons in law of the Prophet was Uthman bin Affan (r.a.) He married two daughters of the Prophet (pbuh) one after the death of another, and was one of the richest men among the sahaba. The man who sponsored huge expenditure of one third of the entire Islamic army in one of the battles yet he did not invite the same men in either of his waleema except a handful! Something worth to be noticed. Abdul Rahman bin Auf (r.a.) did not invite the Prophet (pbuh) in his wedding and the Prophet did not feel bad about it. Many of us may find this very strange because in our times being invited to a wedding has become a status and privilege.

Our marriages are becoming more complicated. Even a middle class person energetically thinks about the numbers of dishes to serve in his daughter or son's marriage. Preparations begin months ahead. Expenditure behind the preparation itself runs high. "So what? We can afford it" Comes a common reply. Right. We can afford it, but if we refer back to the hadith that states that no person will be allowed to move from his place on the day of Qiyamah till he gives the account of where did he spend his money as well. Even if it is your Halal earnings yet it would be required to justify his expenses..

Now use this hadith as a parameter. Go through

the list of the menu of the Reception. 1, 2, 3...6... 10....! Chinese, Italian.. Moghlai... count the variety of salads...Just have a look at the stock of ice cream.. I don't mean to say that having ice cream or distributing ice creams is haram but look at the way the Ice creams scream in our marriages.

Consider this- last week there were news about increase in the rates of milk in Mumbai. The house wives who objected increase in the rates of milk, the same house wives are fond of buying ice creams worth four times the rates of milk. In Mumbai, one litre of milk costs around a dollar ie. 48 INR, but one kg of branded ice cream costs around 200 /INR i.e. 4 Dollars!

The agro Ministry of India says that the ice cream industry is worth 15 billion Rupees in India, and 40 percent of that ice cream is consumed in the western India. From Ahmedabad to Mumbai Ice creams float like foams over sea. In our marriages ice creams have become a staple food. The rates of ice creams in wedding are quoted higher like the other items in the venue. How many weddings take place in Mumbai every year? There are no less than 500 wedding halls in Mumbai alone which cater to higher middle class. How many marriages take place in these halls every year? In Mumbai, Karachi, Lahore, keep counting how many guest push down ice creams into their throats after eating chicken tandooris, biryanis, noodles, seekh and shami kebabs. Just one example. Now assemble the rest of the expenditure you plan to have in your wedding and think how many days will it take you to give the accounts to Allah and justify it?

So how grand should your wedding be? Before you answer to your own self, know that there is no grandeur like simplicity.. See you in your wedding...Assalamualaikum..

... From "Beyond Education",

Bhopal Encounter:

Breach of Security and Justice

I By V.K. Tripathi I

Bhopal jail-break by 8 SIMI (Student Islamic Movement of India-a banned organization) accused on the night of Diwali (October 30-31, 2016), killing of a jail warder, and 8 hrs later gunning down of all the escapees by police near Acharpura (13 km from the Jail) cast a dark shadow on our security and justice system. The accused were in judicial custody. Security of their life was responsibility of the state. If they were alleged terrorists, how could the number of security personnel on duty be so awfully low? How were the locks of their cabins opened by needles of wood or tooth brush? How could they scale the 24 feet high wall of the jail? Most of them had spent seven years in jail (without conviction) which is the maximum sentence in crimes they were charged with. Attempt for a jail break in the final stages of their cases is also unclear. Media reports suggested that the accused at the time of encounter were unarmed.

On November 8, 2016 I reached Bhopal from Ujjain after attending International Conference on Physics and Plasma Science. I met few friends and decided to visit the site of the encounter. We passed by the side of the Bhopal Central Jail. Ten miles from there we reached Eentkhedi, pretty crowded part of Bhopal up to that point. Then we moved on a lonely road to Acarpura. This area, on both sides of the 3 km long road from Eentkhedi to Acharpura, is flat pathaar (platau) without any hut or tree or bush, highly unlike place for the escapees from jail to run away. Just prior to reaching Acharpura, road bifurcates. One road goes to the village while the other (the bigger one) turns right and then takes a curb to reach on top of a flat hill. The hill ends in a sharp precipitous (decent) of about 150 feet. Down the hill are farms of Acharpura. At the bifurcation point of the road is located an office. We talked to people about the site of the encounter. They explained us how to reach there. When I asked why the escapees run towards such an open area, they also expressed surprise. 300 meter prior to the hill end (where the encounter is said to have taken place) lies a Power substation. Its chowkidar is an innocent tribal. He



told us that on the next day after Diwali, at around 8 AM came police. They asked him where some unknown people had come there. He said that he had not seen any one. Then they went back. Two hours later police came again and went further up. After wards came sounds of firing for nearly half an hour but could not say who fired them and whether it was one sided firing or double sided.

On November 1, the MP Chief Minister, participating in the MP foundation day celebrations termed the accused killed as terrorists and announced prize for the police to gun them down. This is contrary to the ruling of the Supreme Court that no reward can be given to the police for an encounter, far less in a case like this where the other side did not retaliate. The MP government has constituted an enquiry into the jail break. But it must include the encounter and be carried out impartially under the supervision of the Supreme Court.

How Britain Destroyed the Palestinian Homeland



"The Zionists claimed Palestine and renamed it 'Israel'."

By Ramzy Baroud

Ninety-nine years since Balfour's "promise", Palestinians insist that their rights in Palestine cannot be dismissed.

When I was a child growing up in a Gaza refugee camp, I looked forward to November 2. On that day, every year, thousands of students and camp residents would descend upon the main square of the camp, carrying Palestinian flags and placards, to denounce the Balfour Declaration.

Truthfully, my giddiness then was motivated largely by the fact that schools would inevitably shut down and, following a brief but bloody confrontation with the Israeli army, I would go home early to the loving embrace of my mother, where I would eat a snack and watch cartoons.

At the time, I had no idea who Balfour actually was, and how his "declaration" all those years ago had altered the destiny of my family and, by extension, my

life and the lives of my children as well.

All I knew was that he was a bad person and, because of his terrible deed, we subsisted in a refugee camp, encircled by a violent army and by an ever-expanding graveyard filled with "martyrs".

Decades later, destiny would lead me to visit the Whittingehame Church, a small parish in which Arthur James Balfour is now buried.

While my parents and grandparents are buried in a refugee camp, an ever-shrinking space under a perpetual siege and immeasurable hardship, Balfour's resting place is an oasis of peace and calmness. The empty meadow all around the church is large enough to host all the refugees in my camp.

The British government remains unrepentant after all these years. It has yet to take any measure of moral responsibility, however symbolic, for what it has done to the Palestinians.

Finally, I became fully aware of why Balfour was a "bad person".

Once Britain's Prime Minister, then the Foreign Secretary from late 1916, Balfour had pledged my homeland to another people. That promise was made on November 2, 1917, on behalf of the British government in the form of a letter sent to the leader of the Jewish community in Britain, Walter Rothschild. At the time, Britain was not even in control of Palestine, which was still part of the Ottoman Empire. Either way, my homeland was never Balfour's to so casually transfer to anyone else. His letter read:

"His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

He concluded, "I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation."

Ironically, members of the British parliament have declared that the use of the term "Zionist" is both anti-Semitic and abusive.

The British government remains unrepentant after all these years. It has yet to take any measure of moral responsibility, however symbolic, for what it has done to the Palestinians. Worse, it is now busy attempting to control the very language used by Pales-

tinians to identify those who have deprived them of their land and freedom.

But the truth is, not only was Rothschild a Zionist, Balfour was, too. Zionism, then, before it deservedly became a swearword, was a political notion that Europeans prided themselves to be associated with. In fact, just before he became Prime Minister, David Cameron declared, before the Conservative Friends of Israel meeting, that he, too, was a Zionist. To some extent, being a Zionist remains a rite of passage for some Western leaders.



'Balfour had pledged my homeland to another people' [Getty Images]

Balfour was hardly acting on his own. True, the Declaration bears his name, yet, in reality, he was a loyal agent of an empire with massive geopolitical designs, not only concerning Palestine alone, but with Palestine as part of a larger Arab landscape.

Just a year earlier, another sinister document was in-

troduced, albeit secretly. It was endorsed by another top British diplomat, Mark Sykes and, on behalf of France, by François Georges-Picot. The Russians were informed of the agreement, as they too had received a piece of the Ottoman cake.

The document indicated that, once the Ottomans were soundly defeated, their territories, including Palestine, would be split among the prospective victorious parties.

Al-Nakba - Episode 1

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, also known as the Asia Minor Agreement, was signed in secret 100 years

ago, two years into World War I. It signified the brutal nature of colonial powers that rarely associated land and resources with people that lived upon the land and owned those resources.

The centrepiece of the agreement was a map that was marked with straight lines by a china graph pencil. The map largely determined the fate of the Arabs, dividing them in accordance with various haphazard assumptions of tribal and sectarian lines.

Once the war was over, the loot was to be divided into spheres of influence:

- France would receive areas marked (a), which in-

slightest attention to the possible repercussions of slicing up entire civilizations with a multifarious history of co-operation and conflict.

The agreement read, partly:

"... in the blue area France, and in the red area Great Britain, shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab state or confederation of Arab states."

The brown area, however, was designated as an international administration, the nature of which was



A rally in Beirut commemorating the Balfour declaration in 1919

cluded: the region of south-eastern Turkey, northern Iraq - including Mosul, most of Syria and Lebanon.

- British-controlled areas were marked with the letter (b), which included: Jordan, southern Iraq, Haifa and Acre in Palestine and a coastal strip between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan.

- Russia would be granted Istanbul, Armenia and the strategic Turkish Straits.

The improvised map consisted not only of lines but also colours, along with language that attested to the fact that the two countries viewed the Arab region purely on materialistic terms, without paying the

to be decided upon after further consultation among Britain, France and Russia. The Sykes-Picot negotiations finished in March 1916 and were official, although secretly signed on May 19, 1916. World War I concluded on November 11, 1918, after which the division of the Ottoman Empire began in earnest.

British and French mandates were extended over divided Arab entities, while Palestine was granted to the Zionist movement a year later, when Balfour conveyed the British government's promise, sealing the fate of Palestine to live in perpetual war and turmoil.

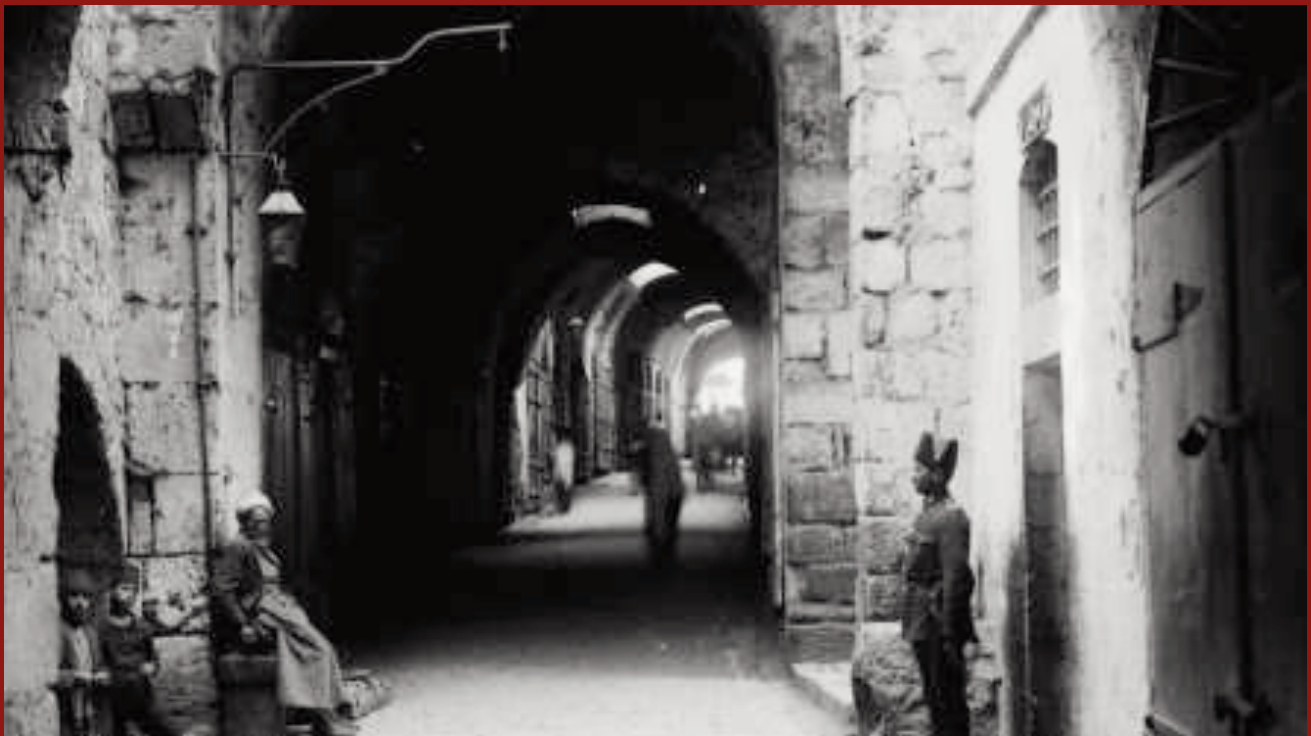
The idea of Western "peacemakers" and "honest-bro-

kers", who are very much a party in every Middle Eastern conflict, is not new. British betrayal of Arab aspirations goes back many decades. They used the Arabs as pawns in their Great Game against other colonial contenders, only to betray them later on, while still casting themselves as friends bearing gifts.

Nowhere else was this hypocrisy on full display as was in the case of Palestine. Starting with the first wave of Zionist Jewish migration to Palestine in 1882, European countries helped to facilitate the movement of illegal settlers and resources, where the establishment of many colonies, large and small, was

was to apply to Arab provinces that were ruled by the Ottomans. Arabs were told that they were to be respected as "a sacred trust of civilization", and their communities were to be recognised as "independent nations".

Palestinians wanted to believe that they were also included in that civilization sacredness, and were deserving of independence, too. Their conduct in support of the Pan-Arab Congress, as voting delegates in July 1919, which elected Faisal as a King of a state comprising Palestine, Lebanon, Transjordan and Syria, and their continued support of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, were all expressions of their desire



The Balfour Declaration had set the stage for the full-scale ethnic cleansing that followed, three decades later [Getty | ma

afoot.

So when Balfour sent his letter to Rothschild, the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine was very much plausible.

Still, many supercilious promises were being made to the Arabs during the Great War years, as self-imposed Arab leadership sided with the British in their war against the Ottoman Empire. Arabs were promised instant independence, including that of the Palestinians.

The understanding among Arab leaders was that Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations

for the long-coveted sovereignty.

When the intentions of the British and their rapport with the Zionists became too apparent, Palestinians rebelled, a rebellion that has never ceased, 99 years later, for the horrific consequences of British colonialism and the eventual complete Zionist takeover of Palestine are still felt after all these years.

Paltry attempts to pacify Palestinian anger were to no avail, especially after the League of Nations Council in July 1922 approved the terms of the British Mandate over Palestine - which was originally granted to Britain in April 1920 - without consulting the Palestinians at all, who would disappear

from the British and international radar, only to reappear as negligible rioters, troublemakers, and obstacles to the joint British-Zionist colonial concoctions.

Despite occasional assurances to the contrary, the British intention of ensuring the establishment of an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine was becoming clearer with time.

The Balfour Declaration was hardly an aberration, but had, indeed, set the stage for the full-scale ethnic cleansing that followed, three decades later.

The Balfour Declaration had set the stage for the full-scale ethnic cleansing that followed, three decades later [Getty Images]

In his book, *Before Their Diaspora*, Palestinian scholar Walid Khalidi captured the true collective understanding among Palestinians regarding what had befallen their homeland nearly a century ago:

"The Mandate, as a whole, was seen by the Palestinians as an Anglo-Zionist condominium and its terms as instrument for the implementation of the Zionist programme; it had been imposed on them by force, and they considered it to be both morally and legally invalid. The Palestinians constituted the vast majority of the population and owned the bulk of the land. Inevitably, the ensuing struggle centred on this status quo. The British and the Zionists were determined to subvert and revolutionise it, the Palestinians to defend and preserve it."

In fact, that history remains in constant replay: The Zionists claimed Palestine and renamed it "Israel"; the British continue to support them, although never ceasing to pay lip service to the Arabs; the Palestinian people remain a nation that is geographically fragmented between refugee camps, in the diaspora, militarily occupied, or treated as second-class citizens in a country upon which their ancestors dwelt since time immemorial.

While Balfour cannot be blamed for all the mis-

fortunes that have befallen Palestinians since he communicated his brief but infamous letter, the notion that his "promise" embodied - that of complete disregard of the aspirations of the Palestinian Arab people - is handed from one generation of British diplomats to the next, the same way that Palestinian resistance to colonialism is also spread across generations.

In his essay in the *Al-Ahram Weekly*, entitled "Truth and Reconciliation", the late Professor Edward Said wrote: "Neither the Balfour Declaration nor the Mandate ever specifically concede that Palestinians had political, as opposed to civil and religious, rights in Palestine.

The idea of inequality between Jews and Arabs was, therefore, built into British - and, subsequently, Israeli and US - policy from the start."

That inequality continues, thus the perpetuation of the conflict. What the British, the early Zionists, the Americans and subsequent Israeli governments failed to understand, and continue to ignore at their own peril, is that there can be no peace without justice and equality in Palestine; and that Palestinians will continue to resist, as long as the reasons that inspired their rebellion nearly a century ago, remain in place.

Ninety-nine years later, the British government is yet to possess the moral courage to take responsibility for what their government has done to the Palestinian people.

Ninety-nine years later, Palestinians insist that their rights in Palestine cannot be dismissed, neither by Balfour, nor by his modern peers in "Her Majesty's Government".

Ramzy Baroud is an internationally-syndicated columnist, a media consultant, an author.

Source: Al Jazeera News

[<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/11/britain-destroyed-palestinian-homeland-161102054348710.html>]

An Indian fairytale: from riches to rags

I By Saba Naqvi I

He (the King) cast magical spells through speeches that were broadcast live by many loyal soldiers of what was called the Ministry of Transmitting Magic.

Once upon a time in a not-so-far-away land there lived a great King and many, many subjects. The King was a great Wizard and a practitioner of magic designed to keep the people spell bound so that they could forget their many miseries and the failures of the state. He cast magical spells through speeches that were broadcast live by many loyal soldiers of what was called the Ministry of Transmitting Magic.

Like all large kingdoms this fairy tale land had some problems and the Wizard King kept wishing them away through magical speeches. He knew that if you fool most of the people most of the time, it would not matter what some of the people said some of the time. So the King said that he had ordered surgical strikes on the Enemy that lived to the West of the Kingdom and inflicted great damage and the people believed him although the Enemy kept saying nothing had happened.

The King also said that he had given gold coins to the people through magical outlets called banks and the people believed him although there were no coins in their banks (this was a special magic trick called Jan Dhan or People's Wealth and the beauty of it was that most of the people had no clue what a bank was but they liked the idea of gold coins).

You see, the People believed because this was a great and glorious time in the life of this Kingdom that was known as the Age of Good Days. It was so because the King said it was so and the Ministry of Transmitting Magic said it was so. The people loved the King because he opened up an imaginary world for them that did not exist but could exist if they believed him although there were some Traitors called Liberals who did not believe and were determined to mislead the People.

But no matter, there were armies of creatures called Trolls and Ogres who set off to defend the King every time a Liberal committed Treason. These trolls were special people with special powers that allowed them to abuse and become Tormenters of those who showed disloyalty to the Wizard King who also had a very broad chest.

There was also a council of wannabe wizards that was meant to advise the King but he knew better than all of them put together and rarely consulted them and they were trained to only speak if they could say Hail Great King at the beginning of each sentence.

And so it came to pass that one day the King got up in the morning and said Eureka. He said so because he had an idea that convinced him he was more brilliant and benevolent and brave than he already knew that he was (the King had a magic mirror that he would ask, mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the greatest of us all. Except for one day when the King stood in front of the mirror wearing a suit that had his name written all over it, the mirror always told him he was the greatest).

So, on the morning that he said Eureka the King decided to take out his wand and do a magic spell that would turn gold to dust and make the People's money disappear. He did so after he had sent secret messages to the Special People with some magical powers of their own who produced gold coins that were often delivered to the King's soldiers so that the Ministry could keep on transmitting the magical message. It was for the ordinary People that the King had a special plan. He knew that the people hated those who had stolen some gold coins so he said he was making the coins worthless in order to punish such people. But the few brass copper and silver coins of the ordinary folk also became hard to get, so the King made one of his magical speeches and promised them a brilliant future after just 50 sunsets and sunrise.

You see, the King believed that he understood the mind of the People:

- He thought that if they were subjected to constant punishment they would be happy with a little relief.
- He thought that most people have nothing much to lose anyway and if they got the little they had after a struggle they would then have a sense of achievement.
- He knew that the Trolls and Ogres would drum up support for him in case the people and the little leaders of far flung corners of the empire began to protest.
- In case some people faltered in the great exercise, the King believed he could build their faith again by saying their sacrifice was needed to defeat the plans of the Enemy on the West. It was all quite simple really and there was even a 91 year old fairy god-mother who gave kind blessings to the People when their suffering became too much. In the end the riches became rags and gold turned to dust and the people lived in queues ever after.

(This is a work of fiction and any resemblance to living people or characters is deliberate)

Taken from <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/sunday-special/columns/an-indian-fairytale-from-riches-to-rags/325518.html>

Arnab Goswami

Some people think Arnab Goswami was a great journalist.

I do not regard him as a journalist at all. A journalist must be objective, and report the truth irrespective of his own personal opinions. Arnab was anything but that. Consider the following:

1. On almost every issue he had a slant and a pre-determined mind, and would lash out, often rudely, against anyone opposing his viewpoint.
2. He would give a lot of time to the panelists supporting his viewpoint, but hardly allow those opposing it to speak, often intervening when they had hardly begun speaking. He was fond of his own voice, which is not expected of an anchor.



An anchor should be like a referee in a football

match, neither playing nor advising the players how to play, but only blowing his whistle when a foul was committed or the ball goes outside the ground. He must be absolutely neutral. Arnab was anything but that

3. He resorted to jingoism and whipping up a war like hysteria in his shows about Pakistan and Kashmir
4. He often twisted facts and suppressed the truth deliberately. Take for instance his statements on the Bhopal 'encounter'
<https://beta.thequint.com/.../arnab-goswami-journalist-times-...>

Arnab often reminded me of William Hearst (1863-1951) who published the Hearst group of newspapers and journals in America.

Hearst played a huge part in arousing the public's intention to go to war with Spain. This activity reached its zenith after several years of articles concerning the situation in Cuba, Hearst ran a series of articles blaming the Spanish for the sinking of the American ship MAINE with a mine. Hearst's powerful articles pushed many Americans towards war with Spain. Because of his leading role in inciting the war, Hearst was nicknamed the "Father of Yellow Journalism."

Never Give Up – Don't Let Satan Win

I By Shannon Abulnasr I

Most of the issues new Muslims face in Islam can be easily overcome if they remain patient, seek knowledge, and remain positive.

“I've had it! I'm done!

I've tried as much as I can, and nothing seems to ever work out the way it is supposed to. No matter what I do it never seems to be enough.

I will never be a good Muslim, and I will never hold up to everyone's expectations of me.”
Does this sound familiar to you?

You or someone you know have probably said this during some stage in life. It happens. Life happens. What was the outcome of that hopeless time period?

It passed right?

All things get resolved in time, we just have to be patient and remain positive. I'm sure there was a time in your life when you couldn't find a job and felt you never would, but eventually you found one. You probably had a conflict with a family member that you thought was going to be the end of the world, but somehow, things are back to normal.

If you look in hindsight to every struggle we have ever faced, you can usually say that you overcame all of them. The only time we face a hardship that is not overcome is typically when we fail to do something about it, fail to remain positive and hopeful.

I'm frequently contacted by new Muslims all around the world with various life struggles with various strenuous circumstances that have left them in a state of hopelessness and despair. Whether it is a marriage falling apart due to the strain of their ability to implement and practice Islam to the expectations of

their spouses, or inability to learn the prayers for whatever reason, or criticisms of the community they live in, or even putting so much pressure on themselves to be perfect and feeling that they will never reach that state, leaves them to start contemplating if they made the correct choice in accepting Islam.

New Muslims are always told that “Islam is easy”, which can be a bit misleading to a new Muslim depending on the mindset and way that they interpret a particular matter based on whatever struggles they are having.

When a new Muslim is told that “Islam is easy”, yet something about the religion for them seems extremely difficult (for whatever circumstances or reasons), it can cause them to think that they will never be a good Muslim, because if it is so easy, then why can't they feel that themselves? Then they start to doubt themselves, and Islam in general.

So, what is the problem? Why do some new Muslims give up?

What can new Muslims do to remain positive and not give up?

Remaining Positive Is the Key to Everything!

Most of the issues new Muslims face in Islam can be easily overcome if they remain patient, seek knowledge, and remain positive.

Reverts' Challenges

- Challenges of Hijab for New Reverts
- Traps of Satan for New Muslims!
- Reverts' Challenges at College & Work
- New Muslims Overcoming Isolation
- Reverts: Heroes or Social Misfits?

our worst enemy - wants to see new Muslims in a state of despair

Shaitan (Satan) – our worst enemy - wants to see new Muslims in a state of despair and will whisper to them things that will make them pity themselves and have doubts. This is his job, and he is the expert in it! He loves nothing more than making someone walk away from God. He is a pest. What do we do when pests enter our homes?

Do we sit in utter doom thinking that there is no solution? Do we feel sorry for ourselves and never let the light of hope enter? No! We don't, because we know that it may take some time, but we can get rid of them. We get bug spray and eliminate them.

Same rule applies here. Get your can of shaitan spray in hand and be on guard. Be ready to spray anytime you see him show his ugly face. Don't let shaitan ever feel that you are scared of him and what he can do, otherwise he will invade every part of your home and life. When he sees that you are strong and don't want to live with his ugliness, your ability to be positive will grow and grow. No one wants to live with pests, right? You will feel hopeful and positive that you will eliminate this pest when you have armed yourself with what he hates most! Pest spray (Faith and trust in God).

Let's discuss a few forms shaitan gets to people

There are many methods that shaitan attacks new Muslims to make them doubt their decisions. We can evaluate how their attitudes and outlook can change everything if they just remain positive and seek out solutions.

The Lonely Shaitan

Shaitan is lonely, and wants to be your friend, so don't become his best pal! I realize that loneliness is a horrible feeling, and I can't just snap my fingers and put friends and family in front of you, but that doesn't mean it is the end of the world as you know it. Just because he is there wanting your attention doesn't mean that he is the friend you need to have.

If you are a negative thinker, you will probably stay at home and pout, and the lonely shaitan will entertain you day and night. Get your pest spray out and get rid of that loneliness shaitan! Be positive, and get out and go do something! Anything! Meet new people. They don't have to be Muslims, but if there is a large Muslim community near you, do your best to make new friends with them. Frequent places where they gather, visit the masjid regularly, get involved in events and you will make new friends. It takes time, but it takes time to make a new friend regardless of where you meet them, or what their religion is, right?

The Marital Shaitan

Shaitan prides himself in keeping people unmarried, or divorced. Always remember that. Just because you may be single doesn't mean that you are the victim of shaitan, but don't let him be what prevents you from getting married. Watch out though....he may actually be the one to have you marry a particular person that is not good for you, because he loves to see people divorce.

New Muslims are pushed to marry quickly, and encouraged to marry someone that may not match them. Don't be one of these people that lets other people make their decisions for them. Shaitan thrives on people that can't think for themselves.

Know what you want, make it known, and don't accept anything less, even if it takes time. Look for a pious spouse, and make sure that you are a pious spouse worth being sought out for. Remaining hopeful and positive while being patient will pay off in the long run in this matter, because if you make a rushed decision, it can destroy you in a heartbeat through a divorce.

The Poor & Jobless Shaitan

When we are in misery, the shaitan is happy. When a person is struggling financially, the shaitan sees an

He is weak, and when he becomes desperate, he is easier to convince to go against Allah

opportunity to influence a believer. He is weak, and when he becomes desperate, he is easier to convince to go against Allah. The perfect example of this is the single mother that reverted to Islam and is the sole provider for her child. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and shaitan is usually successful. Shaitan can make a woman feel that she will never find a job wearing a hijab, and as she becomes desperate, she may consider removing her hijab just for the sake of getting a job.

{Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe", and that they will not be tested?} (29:2)

{Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.} (2:155)

Allah is our provider, and as long as we are trying to do our best to please Him, He will provide for us in ways unexpected. Stay positive and don't become weak, and He will open the doors of opportunity in places you were not expecting that are better for you than the jobs you were seeking. He may close a door, but He will open another if you put your trust in Him and remain patient and steadfast.

{And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine. And if any one puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him. For Allah will surely accomplish his purpose: verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion.} (65:3)

The Black Sheep Shaitan

Family is the core support for an individual. Parents have no ulterior motives for their children, and always look out for their best interest. New Muslims typically lack this after accepting Islam, leaving

them without this core support system. Shaitan preys on these individuals because of it! So be alert! This is a very prominent occurrence amongst new Muslims. They try to do everything prescribed in Islam from day one

Always be hopeful and ask Allah to guide your family to Islam, and to open their hearts and make it easy to have a loving relationship with them. Even if you don't have a great relationship with your family, be grateful that you have one. Think of the orphans all around the world that don't have family to have any sort of relationship with! Alhamdulillah

The Burn Out

This is a joyous event for the shaitan. If you try to do too much, too quickly, you will be overwhelmed, and won't be able to keep it up, and then have doubts about if you could ever be a good Muslim. Many new Muslims leave Islam for this reason alone. They feel doomed to the hellfire. Don't fall into this trap.

Conclusion:

Our troubles erase our sins, while patience with them raises us in status, and when Allah loves His creation, He tests him.

Think Positive!

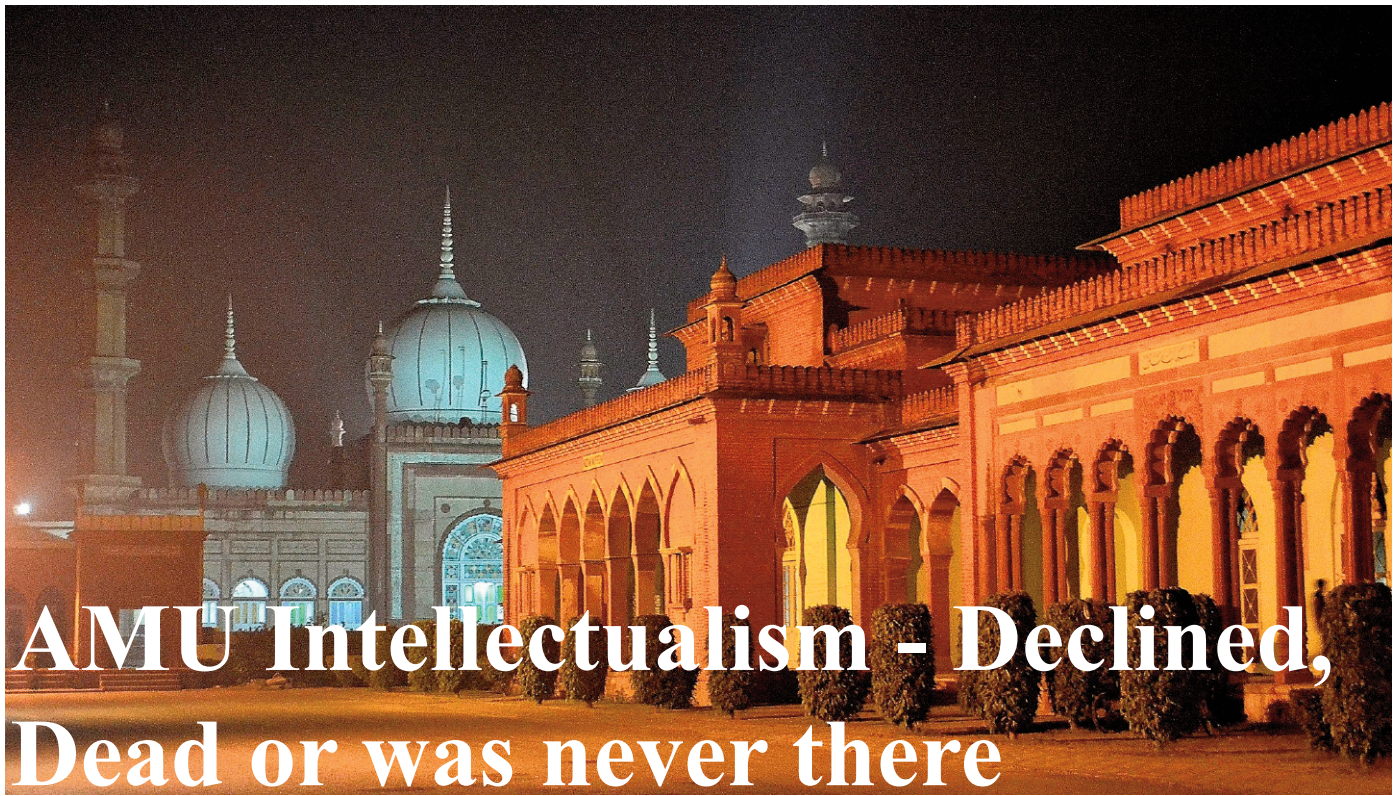
Think Positive of Allah and positive things will come.

Prophet Muhammad said:

“Allah says: ‘I am as My slave thinks I am, and I am with him when he calls on Me.’” (Al-Bukhari 7405 and Muslim 2675)

<http://www.onislam.net/english/reading-islam/living-islam/growing-in-faith/468809-never-give-up-dont->

This is a very prominent occurrence amongst new Muslims. They try to do everything prescribed in Islam from day one, and 99% of the time, find themselves exhausted, unable to keep up, and wanting to give up. They burn out.



AMU Intellectualism - Declined, Dead or was never there

I By Ghazi Ozair I

In my opinion, each discipline has its own yardstick to measure the success and/or productivity. Only educating and producing high number of graduates postgraduates every year should not be the criterion because the quality weighs more than the quantity.

Regarding Faculty of Theology:



Unfortunately, after Moulana Taqui Ameen saheb, I have not seen anyone pioneering in research work in the Faculty of Theology. Someone is awarded the highest degree of Ph.D. on the topic of "Istenja ka dhella" or similar topics. On the contrary, the real work of both Theology Depts. should have been to

find out the solution in the light of Qur'an Sunnah for social, economic religious problems/evils/practices/false beliefs, etc., prevailing amongst Muslims even in modern era, especially in the difficult scenario/regions where Muslims are in minority or dominated by other religious communities. But I am sorry to say that still the doors of Ijtehad are considered as tightly-closed since after first few centuries. Later on, there was no progress at all in this direction. Whatever our 4 Imams have said about 1200 years back or earlier is final like the words of Almighty Allah or His Prophet, mpbuh, and none has the courage to standup and vocally pronounce that the circumstances have changed now and the time demands us to rethink in this direction as well. It's worth noting that these Imams were also human beings not innocent, like the Prophet, mpbuh. So there are chances of inadvertent errors omissions from them, and the books of Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) are witness that these Imams frequently retreated from there verdicts (Fatwa), which indicates that their previous verdict was either incorrect or less closer to the Divine Guidance. But alas, Islam is controlled or rather ruled by closed-minded theocrats (Mullaiyat in Muslims, like Papaiyat in Christianity). I don't mean to overthrow the guidance of our predecessors, but we should strive to improve the things by time. The basic teachings of Islam cannot be amended or modernized, but since this religion is tailored absolutely practicable by Almighty Allah for the entire humanity until Doomsday, it should address with reasonable acceptable solution to every



issue/problem emerging through ages. This thing could not be expected from Darul Uloom Deoband or Bareilly school of thought or Nadwatul Ulema or like other seminaries, which are mostly lakeer ke faqeer, but should have been done by AMU. It was the ambition of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan also to revive the conservative centuries-old thoughts amongst Muslims lead the Muslim community in the light of the then circumstances demands of the time. I don't endorse some deviant thoughts of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in his Tafseer Ahmadi or some other books on religion, wherein he had rejected some miracles (like Meraj-e-Nabawi, etc.) suggested to give-up the established facts/basic beliefs of Islam, but by limiting ourselves within the boundaries of Quran Sunnah, we should research progress for the good of humanity, in general, and Muslims, in particular, without any compromises, whatsoever.

Regarding Faculty of Arts:

In my humble opinion, instead of focusing the research on the works of old poets adeeb, we should have concentrated on the poets adeeb of modern era. Thousands of literary work is already done on ancient men-of-arts--letters. But I am again sorry to say that in the Faculty of Arts also, like Faculty of Theology, makkhi par makkhi mari ja rahi hai and after Asloob Ahmad Ansari, AMU couldn't produce any person of his match.

Regarding Faculty of Law:

I remember once the Faculty of Law at AMU had very high prestige produced thousands of law graduates who were placed as Judges in the High Courts Supreme Court throughout India, but I don't know whether it still enjoys the same status after institutionalizing NALSAR. Once I had a personal experience when my father (may Allah rest his soul in Paradise, Amin) was arrested during Emergency (1975) without any valid reason by the then Government under MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act). I wanted to appeal for his bail in the High Court of Allahabad, but no advocate was ready to take-up the case. Then Prof. Dr. V.S. Rekhi agreed to study prepare the case-file. He had recommended one of his students to lodge the bail application in High Court. When I appeared on the day of case-hearing, the student of Rekhi saheb during his arguments with Public Prosecutor, said "This case cannot be rejected because it was prepared by VS Rekhi". The judge on hearing these words gave another date for hearing, but when the court was adjourned, he came to us and said "I am also a student of Rekhi Saheb for sure no one can ever dare to reject his solid arguments" and in the next hearing I got the bail. It was the first precedence of bail against Govt. during Emergency.

Ghazi Ozair was AMU Student from 1963-1979



A Look At the ‘Life and Times of a Nationalist Muslim’



Muslims hold pigeons during a march to celebrate India's Independence Day in Ahmedabad, India, August 15, 2016. Credit: Reuters/Amit Dave

I BY MOHAMMAD SAJJAD I

M. Hashim Kidwai's memoir recollects the student movements at Lucknow University, the role of Muslims in resisting Partition, and their participation in politics and academics after Independence.

Muslims hold pigeons during a march to celebrate India's Independence Day in Ahmedabad, India, August 15, 2016. Credit: Reuters/Amit Dave.

There is a remarkable similarity in the rise and ascension of religious reactionaries between the majority and minority communities in the decade before Independence. During the period of 1938-47, the Muslim League's communal separatism was in fierce contest with the majoritarian assertion of the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS, while at the same time it also benefitted from the extremism of the other party. The colonial state abetted such reactionary forces.

Other than the presence of the colonial state during that era, the Congress was the most powerful political force in the country, and was led by the likes of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad, even though the ideologies of many members of the provincial and district Congress leadership overlapped considerably with the Hindu Mahasabha.

Another reassuring difference is that today we do not have a Muslim political force comparable with Jin-

nah's Muslim League, even though we do have the likes of Asaduddin Owaisi, Azam Khan and the sympathisers of the illiberal, non-plural, exclusionary traditions among Muslims and Hindus. If one may add, at the global scale as well, such forces seem to be on the rise today.

Born in 1921, Muhammad Hashim Kidwai saw all of this from close proximity. In his diary, he recollects the days of the late colonial India while living in today's era. The title of the book itself is interesting. He describes himself as a 'nationalist Muslim'.

In the late colonial period, the likes of Maulana Azad and Rafi Kidwai were banking upon the nationalist Muslims against the onslaught of the Muslim nationalists (or the votaries of the separate nationhood), just as the likes of Gandhi and Nehru were fighting with the Hindu nationalists, the rabid majoritarian reactionaries.

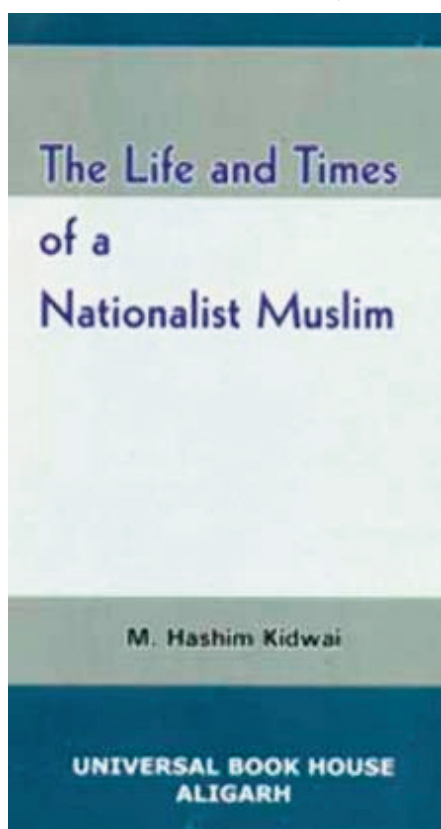
One should read the first volume of Kidwai's reminiscence in the backdrop of these events. His account is rich in details pertaining to politics up to the Nehru era. His presence in Lucknow as a student till his late 20s and then his role as a teacher of political science at the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) immediately after Independence and Partition enabled him to articulate significant narratives.

The fact that he was also an activist – both as a student and as a teacher – adds to the sharpness of his observations and insights. His long chapter on the student movement in Lucknow University provides vivid details of various little and big political organisations and fronts, literary associations and journalistic initiatives. The details captured in that chapter provide a valuable account of the political evolution of the Lucknow youth in the popular phase of the national movement.

In terms of academic explorations in India, we have an inadequate understanding of student movements as well the role of Muslims in resisting partition. This chapter invites us to make attempts towards filling the gap. The subsequent brief chapter on the consequences of Partition reflects on how Muslims adjusted thereafter.

Vice President Muhammad Hamid Ansari with Hashim Kidwai (C) at the launch of his book *Life and Times of a Nationalist Muslim*. Credit: Aligarh Movement

It also hints at the relatively greater communalisation of the regional politics of Uttar Pradesh, which pushed Rafi Kidwai out of UP politics and then led to Nehru accommodating him in national politics. There are a number of Urdu memoirs about the socio-political life on the huge AMU campus, but rather than offering informed criticism and reflections, most are essentially exaggerated eulogies. Kidwai's memoir is not very critical either, but it does stand out for being able to relate campus life to the world outside. To him, the AMU campus was



neither politically insulated nor did it suffer from an 'isolation syndrome.'

Being a quintessential Congressman, his narrative about the stealth placing of an idol in the Babri Masjid in December 1949 is focussed more against socialists like Ram Manohar Lohia and Acharya Narendra Dev, who according to him, remained silent to this injustice.

Kidwai, however, does show his reservations against G.B. Pant, the then chief minister of UP. He complains, "Both Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel urged Pandit Pant, the UP premier, to take strong action... But for reasons best known to him, Pantji did not take any action... Pantji's policy of leaving everything to the district authorities was very much condemned and resented by a large number of Congressmen."

Progressing strictly in chronological sequence and living up to its name as a diary, almost half of the memoir is devoted to AMU. Kidwai served there not only as a teacher but also as a writer of textbooks, a teacher activist and also contributed in academic governance.

In a huge residential university like AMU, which houses more than 30,000 students, "policing" students is a challenging task. Kidwai describes his roles as that of a provost of a residential hall as well as a proctor. While describing the role of the various vice chancellors, he, unfortunately, neglects their impact on establishing or encouraging academic rigour. Kidwai is almost solely concerned with the socio-political life on the campus and the narrative gives the impression that the Youth Congress dominated the campus. Other accounts of post-Independence AMU inform us that Left activism had gained a significant presence at the university in the 1960s. Kidwai's account ignores this and also does not dwell on the composition of the student body, that is, the regions the students came from or their socio-economic status.

The volume concludes with the death of Nehru in 1964.

A close reading of India's comparative history that draws few parallels between the elections of 1946 and of 2014, and the consequences thereof, is still awaited. One hopes that the sequel volume of Kidwai's memoir will delve deeper into such issues. By his own admission in the preface, Kidwai, as a parliamentarian, stood behind the clergy, jarringly conservative on gender issues. He was also one of those that ill-advisedly encouraged Rajiv Gandhi to legislate against the Supreme Court verdict on the Shah Bano issue. Therefore, this first volume really sets up expectations for the next and about how he will recollect the days of 1985-86, especially at a time when the same gender issues have once again acquired significant political saliency. Equally important will be to read his views on the decline of the Congress post-1980s.

This is an important book, one which will become a resource for scholars interested in the participation of Muslims in both politics and in academics after Independence.

MOHAMMAD SAJJAD IS Associate Prof. in Centre of Advanced Study (CAS) in History, AMU, Aligarh.

Books by MOHAMMAD SAJJAD:

1. Muslim Politics in Bihar: Changing Contours. Routledge (Taylor & Francis), London/Delhi, 2014.
2. Contesting Colonialism and Separatism: Muslims of Muzaffarpur since 1857. Primus (Ratnasagar),

Patriotism is action and deeds, not hollow words!

I By Khaled Almaeena I

The world has been transformed in the past two decades. Technological advancement by the West and certain countries like Korea and Japan has been a phenomenon that has affected our personal lives. I remember only 20 years ago when we led peaceful and sedentary lives without cell phones.

Then advancement in technology brought phones with cameras, which the Haia would seize and smash. Now all phones have cameras and hundreds of other applications!

So if authorities in any country want to block information, they have a real headache. However, this technology brought its own headache. Social media while having positive features has in the hands of some become a divisive and deadly tool. It is being used by those who wanted to create chaos and confusion. To spread their evil ideology, terrorists use it to attract gullible youth to enter their ranks. Purveyors of pornography use it to spread filth.

In other cases, it is used by some who only want to promote themselves. These egotistic people flood your cell phones with texts, photos and videos about their activities. It is as if we have nothing to do in life except to watch and read about them.

Others use WhatsApp to send you long instructions and warnings about what to do or what not to do. Certain individuals preach about activities that will lead you to Hell. Others about behavior that will lead you to Heaven.

Then there are those who use social media to attack and defame others. If you disagree with someone's point of view, you will be attacked left and right. And you will be attacked not only by that individual but by many of his friends as well. This is done in a very carefully studied and systematic way. Their main targets are women who tweet about the need to end the male guardianship

system and the right of women to drive and play a more comprehensive role in society.

Like the Israeli Hasbara, they are waiting and watching. They are vicious. But the ones who make me laugh are those who loudly praise any decisions taken by the authorities. They beat drums of approval. If for any reason the decision is rescinded, they will praise that decision again. Such people can be found in all segments of our society.

Then, of course, there are those who use the social media platform to advertise their unbounded loyalty and patriotism. They will be critical of any writer or person who criticizes any decision or brings to light any shortcomings in society. They will incessantly harp on the need for patriotism. Mind you, it's not all words and no action. I wish to remind them of the statement of the 18th century British literary critic and essayist Samuel Johnson who said: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."

We all can be patriots without making noise about it. John Milton the blind poet of England said: "They also serve who stand and wait," in reference to those who wait for an opportunity to do good.

And to those who are so loud on social media about the need for patriotism, let me ask them to join us in working to preserve our society.

Let them help in creating awareness about traffic safety, water and energy conservation, family values and cleanliness. Let them help to mentor young children in their own families and neighborhoods and teach them to become law-abiding and useful citizens. To me, the best exhibition of loyalty and patriotism is action and deeds and not hollow and empty words.

And do remember Samuel Johnson!

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Should Muslim politics be revived?

I By Asif Moazzam Jamai I

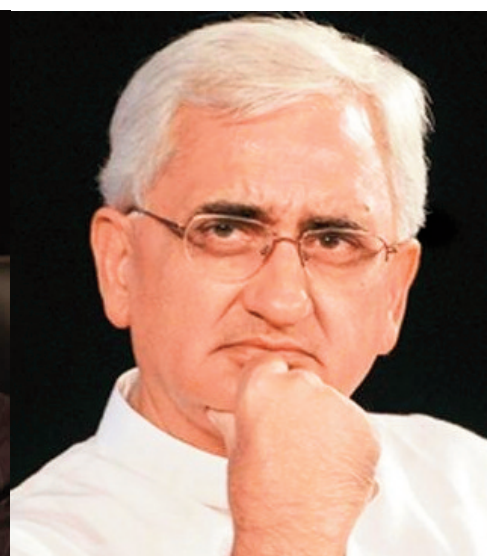
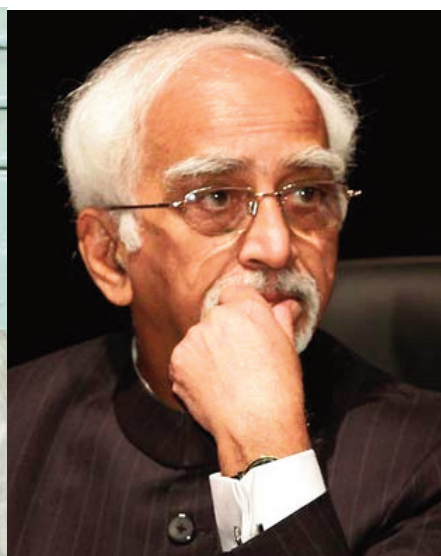
Assembly election in Uttar Pradesh is in the offing. All parties are eyeing on Muslim votes. Unlike Yadavs, scheduled castes, Kurmis, Paswans and others, Muslims have no leaders or parties to fall back on. To vote for so-called secular parties had been their choice and option. As soon as the election in UP is drawing closer, the so-called sympathizers of Muslims are surfacing with the best possible seasonal advice and promises. BSP chief Mayawati exhorted the minority community not to “waste” their votes on the Samajwadi Party (SP) or the Congress if they want to defeat the BJP. Azam Khan says, “Na to Musalman paani ka bulbula hai aur na hi thali ka baingan hai, jise kahin bhi ludhka diya jaye”. (Muslims are neither insignificant nor pushovers).

The Indian constitution was framed to evolve a mechanism to secure liberal, secular and egalitarian objectives based on liberty, equality, and social justice. The separate electorate had gone and Muslims were convinced that there could be no separate Muslim politics in independent India. They even didn't think of forming a separate political party and continued supporting Congress with faith and hope. Badruddin Tayabji and Rahmatullah Sayani were

among the founders of the Congress. The third session of Congress was held at Madras under the presidency of Tayabji. In his address, he said, ‘I am utterly at a loss to understand why Muslims should not work shoulder to shoulder with their fellow-countrymen of other races and creeds for the common benefit of all’. Hamid Ali from Lucknow said, ‘...there is absolutely no need for different platforms for Hindus and Muslims but one common platform where there is ample room for both.’

Ideals of Gandhism, democracy, socialism, and secularism are witnessed to be sinking in our orthodox and tradition-bound social structure and practices backed up by religious and cultural traditions and values. Caste in modern India is still playing a dominant role. Caste is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, that it is everywhere the unit of social action.

The influence of caste permeates every area and level of political and administrative life of the nation. It begins with the electoral politics. All parties including the so-called secular parties like the CPI and CPM select their candidates for elections with an eye on the Caste composition of the constituencies concerned. Every party tries to select candidates from the numerically dominant caste in the electoral



area. There is an electoral maxim in Haryana: Jat ki beti Jat Ko, Jat ki vote Jat ko (a Jat gives his daughter away in marriages to a Jat, so he gives his vote to a Jat).

The argument in favor of casteism is that it is playing a progressive role in modernizing Indian society. The primary function of caste politics has been to transfer authority from the higher to the lower and middle castes. Casteism has become a means of leveling the old order of inequality and uplifting the downtrodden sections of society. It has created in them a sense of self-respect and generated the consciousness that if they unite on caste basis they can challenge the dominance of the higher castes and better their economic lot and social standing.

Muslims in India have their own stories. They have been used in most of the situations as a vote bank by different political parties. Congress ruled India uninterruptedly for 30 years from 1947 to 1977. It eased out Muslims from all important economic sectors through informal or veiled or not so veiled practice of discrimination. Samajwadi party came to power with the promise of 18% reservation for Muslims. Mulayam had also vowed to release all Muslims framed in false terror cases in the country. There are around 64 Muslim MLAs elected from different parties, but none of them raised a question against hundreds of communal riots that took place in Akhilesh regime. Even a leader of the stature of Azam Khan, couldn't utter a word against his party, while Supreme Court of India held the Akhilesh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party prima facie guilty of negligence in preventing the violence. It was only peace party, which has 4 MLAs, protested in front of assembly with a large number of its workers over the Muzaffarnagar violence.

Muslims in India are passing through a difficult time. They have hardly shown any capacity to bargain. Their participation is taken for granted. The whole question of their political behavior centers on consideration of safety and security. On the social plane, Muslims have also failed to understand the dynamics of Indian politics. They are exploited emotionally and their leadership has miserably failed to lead the Muslim masses. It may also be pointed out that Muslims themselves have failed to carve out any strategy of political behavior and suffer from acute functionalism. Hence, the bargaining position of Muslims is not adequately projected or noticed by the political elite. As a result, Muslims are gradually

sliding down to a situation of not getting any support from the political system. Also, the system is steadily drawing itself away from already suffering Muslim community.

Muslim community was the one that had been politically the most active and effective since world war one. After partition, Muslim leadership decided to abandon the so-called 'Muslim politics'. It is argued by some social scientists, that Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind should have provided a dynamic and far-sighted leadership to the Indian Muslims. Their decision to keep Muslims away from active politics, dissolve their political identity and submerge in the congress was destined to hurt the Muslim interest incalculably.

In this caste based political system in India, each political party is supported primarily by a sizeable section of particular community and caste. RJD's strength comes from Yadavs in Bihar, Samajwadi's from Yadavs in UP, BSP's from scheduled castes and so on. Their caste votes bring them electoral strength and real political power with a capacity to rule and bargain.

Any community deprived of its leader is a pushover. Why shouldn't Muslims, as a marginalized community and not as a religious minority, have the custodian of their votes? Some argue this will lead to polarization, which is not true. Vote pattern in India is now deeply on caste line and not on religious line. Therefore, Muslims voting in unification for their leader and party will be seen simply a pattern followed by other communities of India. Muslims figure around 19% in UP. Their vote turns to be deciding factor in who is going to form the government. Each political party comes forward with lollipops for the community right before the election and tries to get whatever it can, and vanishes in the thick air right after the election. Following the own leader and the party headed by own leaders will reduce chances of being blackmailed. Such a party will definitely be part of alliance and governance as well. The mass following will strengthen the leader and place him in a position to bargain, which is a must for the community.

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The right to kill a terrorist



| By Faizan Mustafa |

Misuse of police powers by the State

In cold blood: Many encounters in the past have turned out to be fake.

IT is not the duty of the police officers to kill the accused merely because he is a dreaded criminal. Undoubtedly, the police have to arrest the accused and put them on trial. This court has repeatedly admonished trigger-happy police personnel, who liquidate criminals and project the incident as an encounter. Such killings must be deprecated. They are not recognised as legal by our criminal justice administration system. They amount to state terrorism,” said the Supreme Court in the Om Prakash case.

On July 16, 2016, Justice Madan B Lokur of the Supreme Court in his 85-page judgment on 1,528 encounter killings in Manipur observed: “Scrutiny by the courts in such cases leads to complaints by the State of its having to fight militants, insurgents and terrorists with one hand tied behind its back. This is not a valid criticism since and this is important, in such cases it is not the encounter or the operation that is under scrutiny but the smoking gun that is under scrutiny. There is a qualitative difference be-

tween use of force in an operation and use of such deadly force that is akin to using a sledgehammer to kill a fly; one is an act of self-defence while the other is an act of retaliation.” From the video clips which have gone viral, the Bhopal encounter does not look like an act of private defence by the MP police.

Encounters have indeed become a common phenomenon of our criminal justice system. These killings always take place with the prior consent of the highest authority, administrative or ministerial. In the audio records of the Bhopal encounter too we heard someone instructing the killings. What is the modus operandi? The police would take a suspected terrorist into custody without recording his arrest; if the suspected terrorist dies during interrogation where third-degree methods are routinely employed, security forces would deny ever taking the person into custody and instead claim that he was killed during an armed encounter. The police would place weapons on or near the body to suggest the police acted in self-defence and thus stage-manage the encounter. In other cases the police would secure production warrants under which the police are entitled to remove an inmate from the jail and then this terror suspect would be killed in an encounter outside the jail. A jail-break is the third type.

There is nothing new about the Bhopal encounter.

The same make and colour of the shoes of those killed in Bhopal and the police is not strange. This also answers why these stupid masterminds of terror continued to roam around together freely and were not fearful of them being identified. It is also wrong to blame the BJP for this kind of incident. Such encounters have been part and parcel of our Republic since at least the 1970s. Not only Muslims, but Hindus and Sikhs also have had a similar fate. It is also not new for the political leadership to take credit for such courageous acts and thus I am fully with Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Congress Chief Minister Vengal Rao of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh had famously boasted that “he has wiped out Naxals from his state”.

During the Punjab insurgency, a large number of suspected militants were eliminated through the encounter killings. KPS Gill contemptuously termed those who tried to get justice in encounter matters as “litigation guns.” The police tried their best to silence these guns of due process such as Jaswant Singh Khalra who had shown the courage to use government crematoria records of just one district to demonstrate that at least 6,000 people were secretly cremated by the police. After several years six policemen were convicted for killing Khalra. The Government of India itself admitted that as many as 2,097 people were secretly cremated in Amritsar alone. In 2000 for the massacre of 36 Sikhs in Chitisinghpura, five suspected militants were killed in an encounter. Subsequent forensic tests showed them to be innocent local villagers. In Kashmir about 8,000 people who were apparently in police custody have similarly been killed.

Legally, what to say of the police, even an ordinary person has the power to kill any person to save his or someone else’s life or property. But just like an ordinary person, the police too have to prove there was a real threat to life or property. Under Section 46 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, if a person resists arrest or attempts to evade arrest, the police may use “all means” to effect the “arrest”. This, the BJP says, gives the police the right to kill. Nothing in this section gives the police a right to cause the death of a person who is not an accused of an offence punishable with death or life imprisonment.

Many encounters in the past have turned out to be fake clearly indicating a misuse of police powers by the State. The NHRC statistics do show that of the almost 2,500 killings in 1993, half turned out to be



fake. The NHRC has said there were at least 440 cases of encounter between 2002 and 2008. From 2009 to 2013, another 550 cases in different states were documented. It is shocking that the 2009 judgment of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, where 1,800 encounter deaths were in question, which held that “all encounter deaths are prima facie culpable homicide” and must be investigated, was ex-parte stayed by the apex court. But in 2014 in PUCL v. State of Maharashtra, where 99 Mumbai encounters of 1997-1999 were an issue, the Supreme Court laid down as many as 16 guidelines in cases of encounter and declared them as the law of the land under Article 141. These include the recording in writing of a tip-off about the movement of criminals, mandatory registration of an FIR, a magisterial inquiry under Section 176 of the CrPC, video recording of the post-mortem by two doctors, no out-of-turn promotion or instant gallantry awards to the officials involved, suspension of officials if death occurred by the use of firearms and six monthly reports to be sent to the NHRC on deaths in police firing. The MP Government seems to be in violation of these guidelines/laws.

“The mood and temper of the public in regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilisation of any country,” said Winston Churchill. Let raising human rights concerns not be seen as “anti-national acts” as in all such cases it is the “constitutional values” which are at stake rather than values or ideologies of the “terrorists or militants”.

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<http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/the-right-to-kill-a-terrorist/320504.html>

Uncanny Likeness?

I By Shah Alam Khan I

At the outset please let me clarify that I am an Indian, I love my nation and I stand up straight and attentive every time the national anthem is played. Having said this, I have interest in history and love to read anything and everything that helps me decipher the past because in words of Churchill, the more backward we look, the more forward we can see!

In recent times I have developed keen interest in the history of Nazi Germany. Why? Well, for no particular reason! I hope this will not be a reason to label me seditious? No na? Phew...thanks what a relief! Anyway....

So I share a few facts.

Adolf Hitler had worked as a “causal laborer” in Munich in 1913, a fact, which was repeated off, and on, many times during his rule in Germany. A fact, which he believed, helped him in “connecting” to the masses of Germany (uncanny?). Please note that they never had tea vendors in Germany, otherwise.....

Once established, which most historians believed happened by end of his second year (uncanny?), Hitler’s party workers protested against music by Gustav Mahler and Felix Mendelssohn, who were subsequently banned from performing in Germany (and yes, Gustav was from the neighboring Austria and a Jew!).

The Nazi censorship slowly engulfed newspapers and the radio with the newspaper Straight Path and its editor Fritz Gerlich being the first to be banned. Fritz Gerlich had a doctorate and harbored a beard (Uncanny? ..Hmmm). It is even more uncanny to know that on December 5, 1930, Joseph Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister of Hitler had himself gone and disrupted the screening of the premier of the movie, All Quiet on the Western Front, a movie based on a novel which was very unpopular with the Nazis.

By 1935 Hitler had realized that to be fully controlling the German mind, it was essential to control the Universities. In this respect he suppressed universities with had significant communists in academic positions (uncanny?). The academicians and students at the Munich University particularly organized what was called The White Rose, a non-violent, intellectual

group of anti-Nazis. One student of this group was twenty one year old Sophie Scholl, who was convicted of sedition and later killed by the Nazis (surely uncanny na?).

After coming to power in 1933, Hitler used radio to widely broadcast his speeches. What is uncanny is the fact that the Ministry of Propaganda ran his speeches on a weekly basis on radios throughout Germany! I am not sure what these weekly programs were called but were surely the voice from the Fuehrers heart!

We are told that Hitler was a vegetarian although the reasons for him turning vegetarian remain obscure. In 1934 the Nazi government issued a decree banning kosher meat in Germany (uncanny if you live in Haryana?). And even more uncanny is the fact that Hitler stressed on cleanliness of the nation as one of the first few drives the Nazi regimen took over after coming to power in 1933. It was aimed at increasing tourism in the Third Reich! He believed that the tourists should praise the Nazi Germany for its cleanliness, orderliness and cultural vitality!

And finally how can we talk of Hitler, Nazis and the Third Reich without mentioning mob lynching. Yes, mob lynching, as we know! The Russelsheim massacre involved the lynching of six American airmen by the people of Russelsheim, a town in the Gross-Gerau district of Central Germany. What is worth mentioning is the fact that the people of Russelsheim killed the six airmen with sticks, stones, hammers and shovels (uncanny na?); no guns were used!

So even as my indulgence in Nazi history grows, I can only hope that I discover less and less of the uncanny resemblances, of lesser and novel atrocities, of lesser suppression of expression and of course less of fascism!

We surely don’t want to tread that path!

There was once a nanny-goat who said,
In my cradle someone sang to me:

“A strong man is coming.

He will set you free!”

The ox looked at her askance.

Then turning to the pig

He said,

“That will be the butcher.”

Bertolt Brecht

What is the Significance of the Qiblah?



The simple answer to this is that Muslims do not worship their qiblah, neither they do face it for any reason apart from being commanded to do so. But why are they commanded to do so? What is the wisdom of facing one direction in Prayer, is it just facing a direction or something more than that?

Let's explore some aspects of the wisdom of God in this bearing in mind that since the wisdom of God is unlimited and we are limited human beings, we will always remain short of comprehending it fully.

Facing the qiblah is first of all a test to our ability to obey the commands of God even when we fail short from understanding His wisdom. Muslims, as servants of God, are required to submit to Him.

One of the proofs of submission is to trust the fact that He has got wisdom in everything even if we cannot perceive this wisdom. When we face the qiblah with this intention of submitting ourselves to God, we hope that we have succeeded in the test.

Another aspect is the fact that the qiblah is a sign of the spiritual unity of Muslims. At the time of Prayer, Muslims all over the world are lined in circles big and small facing one direction and feeling belonging to this center and belonging to each other. This creates some kind of spiritual unity amongst all Muslims all over the world and leaves them with a sense of belonging to each other.

On the individual level, it is well known that Hajj is one of the main Islamic deeds and the fifth pillar of Islam. Muslims all over the world who are not in Hajj face Makkah five times a day to re-voice their wish and love to perform this great ritual of Islam.

It is as if they are repeatedly renewing their pledge that they will be doing it one day, sooner or later. Even if they cannot physically be there, they are spiritually there five times a day when they face the Kabah.

Another important point, which I think very important today, is the fact that everyone in this world has got a direction in his life, whether physical or spiri-

tual. Some people take their religious beliefs as their direction and try to express that in a certain way. Some people take their ideology as their direction in life and try to express that in one way or another.

Only when people lose the direction, they face loss and disruption. Since Islam is the religion of monotheism and since Muslims believe that Almighty Allah is beyond space and place, above time and perceptions, we cannot face the heavens in our Prayer because it is impossible and difficult, but we raise our hands seeking help from God.

When it comes to Prayer, we are commanded to face the place that received the first words of the Quran and witnessed the connection between the heavens and the earth, the place that witnessed the early days of Islam and the emergence of this great religion.

But why the Kabah? That is another important point to speak about here. Muslims do not face Madinah where lies the grave of the Prophet (peace be upon him) simply because we do not worship the Prophet. Muslims are not grave worshippers.

Muslims face the Kabah because it is the first holy house ever built for mankind, established by Adam and raised by Abraham. So they connect themselves with these great prophets (peace be upon them all) and renew this lineage that extends from Adam to Muhammad.

We confirm by this the fact that Islam is the true religion of God that has been revealed to all prophets and messengers everywhere and has been finalized by Muhammad. The start was with Adam at the Kabah and the end was with Muhammad also at the Kabah.

In between these two great prophets, there was another great prophet; that is Abraham, the father of the Abrahamic faiths who raised the building of the Kabah following the instruction of God.

Our facing the Kabah in prayer is another token of love to this great prophet and confirmation of our link with other Abrahamic faiths through our link to Abraham himself.

The fact that the Holy Mosque in Makkah is the first mosque ever built for mankind and the first place of worship is confirmed by the Quran as Almighty Allah says what means:



{Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for the nations.} (Aal `Imran 3:96)

Of course, the word 'Bakkah' here is another name of the Holy City of Makkah. The verses of the Quran also confirm the link with Abraham as it goes:

{In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim, and whoever enters it shall be secure, and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) every one who is able to undertake the journey to it; and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient, above any need of the worlds.} (Aal `Imran 3:97)

Honoring the Kabah is not something invented by Islam. It has been a very old tradition in Arabia where Arabs inherited from their forefathers who go back to Prophet Ishmael and his father prophet Abraham that love and respect for that holy place.

Muslims are reviving this great tradition as required by God to confirm this long chain of Prophets and this link between the heaven and the earth.

I hope this answers your question. Please keep in touch.

Salam.

<http://www.onislam.net/english/ask-about-islam/faith-and-worship/aspects-of-worship/167670-the-significance-of-the-qiblah.html>

Assam on the verge of Nellie-type Massacre

I By Dr. V.K. Tripathi I

The wild statement by Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. Kiran Rijiju, that the country has 20 million Bangladeshis, has emboldened the extremists in Assam and raised the specter of Nellie like massacre that killed 3000 poor Muslims in one day in 1983. As the ruling party has apathy to Muslim Bangladeshis only, Rijiju's statement, by default, has given credence to sectarian propaganda that the country has crores of Bangladeshi Muslims. It is a gross overstatement. Assam and West Bengal are the two states where most of the Bangla speaking Muslims of India live. The total Muslim population in these states, including Assamese speaking Muslims, is around 30 million (31% in 30 million population of Assam and 25% in 80 million population of West Bengal). In 1941 census, the Muslim population of Assam was 26% (5 percentage points below the 2011 census). West Bengal Muslim population in 1941 might also have been below 2011 census by similar percentage points.

The increase in percentage Muslim population in these states has been primarily due to the refugees (one crore Hindus and Muslims) during the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 who came to India due to heavy military repression. India played proactive role in the creation of Bangladesh. Afterwards many refugees returned but many stayed back in India. In 1985 the Government of India, Assam Government and All Assam Students Union (Assam Gana Parishad) signed an agreement according to which the people who migrated to India prior to March 25, 1971 were eligible to Indian citizenship.

In 1998, Election Commission of India had got the electoral rolls prepared for Assam. At that time 'D' was marked against the doubtful cases who could not produce all the requisite proofs of Indian citizenship. According to Government statistics (cf. Samir Kar Purkayastha in "Branding the Migrant", ed. Atig Ghosh, Frontpage, 2013), up to January 31, 2011, 2.22 lakh 'D' voters were referred to the tribunals and out of these 83 thousand cases were disposed off. Among these 5,577 cases (about 5.5%) were found to be foreigners.

As per statement submitted by the State Government in the Guwahati High Court on March 8, 2011, a total number of 4.06 lakh cases under the three categories ("D" voters, cases directly sent by the police and the cases transferred from IMDT) were registered with the tribunals between 1996 and December 31, 2010. Of all these cases even if one takes 10% figure for foreigners, it amounts to 40 thousand, i.e., 0.4% of Assam's Muslim population. The former Chief Minister of Assam Mr. Tarun Gogoi on November 17, 2016 has also said that the total number of Bangladeshis may be 1 or 2 lakh. Thus Rijiju's claim is way off the mark. It has created shock waves among the Bangla speaking Muslim Indian citizens, a majority of whom are underprivileged. Putting them under scrutiny is grossly discriminatory. As far as illegal Bangladeshis are concerned, most of them are landless wage workers. They are living on their own hard work.. They should be treated with dignity and deported in accordance with the rule of law. Discriminating them on the basis of religion is unconstitutional and inhuman.

Another serious issue of partisan bias is Kazi Ranga National Park expansion. The park was created in 1970s. Since then it has gone many expansions. Each time an expansion took place, compensation was paid to the people affected. This time 300 Muslim families and 9 Hindu families have been displaced, but no compensation has been paid. This has caused widespread apprehensions. The sectarian utterances of Assam Minister for Finance and Education Mr. Hemanta Biswa Sarma have further aggravated the fears. Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) raised this issue of Kazi Ranga Park but the government has arrested its leader Akhil Gogoihas. He has been in jail for the last two months.

An entire Muslim population of Dabrai Ghat village in the Kokrajhar district, that was displaced in 2012 Bodoland violence, is still waiting to return to their village. But there is no hope in sight. There may be other such cases as well.

These are serious issues the state and central governments must address with sense of urgency.
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Is There An 'Undeclared Emergency' Today?



I By Ram Puniyani I

During 1990s, the BJP did project itself as a 'Party with a Difference', and that, all said and done, is true. It is the only party whose agenda is guided by the Hindu nationalist RSS, which rejects democracy and secularism as Western imports, and wants to stick to the laws of Hindu Holy Scriptures. These scriptures are the same, one of which was burnt by Ambedkar as a mark of protest against its values of caste and gender hierarchy; the values of Brahminism. Debates can continue but politics to defend the Indian Constitution cannot wait.

The decision to put a one day ban on Hindi NDTV, since withheld, came as a big jolt to the country. A major channel was asked to stop the broadcast. The charge was that its broadcast on Pathankot revealed sensitive information regarding national security. On the same Pathankot issue, this Government had allowed the Pakistan authorities to come to the same airport. The channel (Hindi NDTV) pleaded that its program was very balanced

and nothing related to national security was relayed which was not in the public domain through other media. It is clear that NDTV Hindi in particular has been debating issues which are uncomfortable to this Government. Apparently, the pressure of all round protests forced the Government to hold its decision for the time being. The issue of "Bharat mata ki jai," nationalism, the issues related to JNU and Hyderabad Central University (HCU), Una in particular, were debated in ways critical of the ruling party.

Since this dispensation, Modi Sarkar, has come to power — there is a qualitative change in the political scenario. Right at the beginning, we witnessed many attacks on Churches. We saw the interference in the institutions of national importance like FTII, IITs, JNU and HCU among others. The incompetent persons with 'right wing' leaning were installed and have been brought in at most of these. The places of learning are a special target. JNU was targeted labeling it as the den of "anti nationals." A cooked up video was used to defame the student leaders of JNU. In HCU, Rohith Vemula was pushed to com-

mit suicide.

The growing intolerance led to returning of awards by luminaries of our society. The issue of beef was blown up to the sky; the emotive hysterical projections were propped up leading to the death of Mohammad Akhlaq, many other traders and later the dastardly attack on the dalits in Una in Gujarat. Many sections of media have been browbeating the liberals and secular elements while giving a free run to Hindu nationalists.

It is in this backdrop that the Bhopal encounter has taken place where eight Muslim youth alleged to be terrorists were killed in an extra judicial manner. The incident, as it has been presented, clearly shows that the version of the police has lots of holes in it. In JNU again, one student Najeeb, has been missing for last three weeks and his mother was manhandled by the police.

Is it mere emergency, where such blatant violations of human and democratic rights are taking place? Emergency was a condemnable authoritarian regime where from the top a dictatorship was imposed. press censorship was brought in. Surely the present times are different?

To begin with, the dominance of corporates and doing away of the rights of workers and farmers along with undermining the schemes like MNREGA, Right to Food, Right to Health and Right to Education show that the orientation of this Government is to ally with the big capital. The complementary part of this phenomenon is the promotion of Hindu nationalism. Right from the word go; the sentence, "I am nationalist and I am born in a Hindu family" by Modi set the tone of the shape of things to come. With this the targeting of minorities — on the issue of Uniform Civil Code and beef, for instance — is there. The ultra-nationalism is manifest in the handling of Kashmir and relations with Pakistan, in particular. The use of Uri and consequent surgical strike to bloat the chest of this political dispensation is very much in the air. The permission of thousands of NGOs working in the social sector has been stopped on frivolous grounds. The attack on Pakistani artists is another instance where the sectarian nationalism is having an unrepentant march. It is to be remembered that we have a bilateral trade to the tune of thousands of crores with Pakistan. With China, similar sentiments have been flashed by talking about the boycott of Chinese goods, despite the fact that the contract of the proposed Sardar Patel statue running

into thousands of crores has been given to China. The popular sentiments are being guided into negativity and hate towards neighboring countries, religious minorities and human rights activists.

The stifling of democratic freedoms, welfare of the poor, the intimidation of minorities and human rights defenders is running parallel to the creation of mass hysteria and mobilization of masses to uphold the agenda of the ruling party. Those questioning the state are being put in the dock. In a democracy, it the state which is answerable to the people. Now this formula is being reversed. In democracy, questioning the authorities is the bedrock of the Constitution. So something is seriously amiss; something which is more sinister than the Emergency. Something which has deeper portents for democracy is being legitimized and glorified by the ruling party and the parent organization of the ruling party.

So how does one characterize it is the matter not of mere academic concern. Recently CPM leader Prakash Karat had stated that the present dispensation is mere authoritarian and not fascist. The distinction between two has been a matter of historical debate. The main features of fascism has been centrality of state over people, overarching Leader, dominance of Corporate, doing away with the rights of poor, targeting of minorities, ultra nationalism and aggressive policies towards the neighbors. The crucial point for those wanting to preserve democracy and Indian Constitution is to build up social and political alliances, irrespective of some differences, to fight this raging politics of hate and the politics of sectarian nationalism.

During 1990s, the BJP did project itself as a 'Party with a Difference', and that, all said and done, is true. It is the only party whose agenda is guided by the Hindu nationalist RSS, which rejects democracy and secularism as Western imports, and wants to stick to the laws of Hindu Holy Scriptures. These scriptures are the same, one of which was burnt by Ambedkar as a mark of protest against its values of caste and gender hierarchy; the values of Brahminism. Debates can continue but politics to defend the Indian Constitution cannot wait.

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