

The Moral Stories (Part 01)

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Preface

It is a recognized fact that relating of stories is one of the best venues of making think and reform their ideas. And those true stories of important events in the past afford opportunities to readers not only to reform their ways of thinking but also uplift their moral standards.

The Holy Qur'an tells us about the prophets who were asked to relate to their people stories of past events (ref: 7:176) so that they may think. Parables are also mentioned in the Holy Book so as to warn people against pitfalls in their ways of life as well as to provide examples of virtue and vice. The aim has been to bid people to do good and forbid them from doing bad.

I have endeavoured in this booklet to relate stories extracted from the past history, adding explanatory notes and relevant quotations from the Holy Qur'an and ahadith.

It is hoped that this will serve to acquaint readers to the true Islamic values as well as in uplifting moral standards where needed. It is also aimed at helping lecturers in schools and in public gatherings.

Readers are requested to accord due respect to this booklet in view of the Holy quotations contained therein. Also to help us in circulating it as to spread the benefit as widely as possible.

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The Khoja Who Discoverd the Truth

Over five hundred years ago, some people in India and Iran held a strange belief about God. They believed that God entered into everything in the Universe and that everything has the essence of God. The believers of this originally were Hindus as well as a sect of Muslims.

Among the leaders of this belief were Peer Sadruddeen, an ancestor of the Aga Khans in Iran as well as one Hindu known as Sahadeva Joshi.

With this belief, they made up a religion which they labelled as Sat Panth meaning Right Path. The followers of this new path came to be known as Khojas which is said to be a Sindhi word derived from the word "KHOJ" meaning to search.

Perhaps it meant that the Khojas are those people who originally made deep search to find a religious path. It is also said that the word KHOJ A is derived from the word Khwaja meaning a man of distinction a title awarded by the Peer to the newly converts to the Sat Panth.

The creed of this new religion is based on incarnation of God i.e. God entered into some human beings, as believed by Hindus. To nine incarnations of Hindu God Vishnu, they added Hazrat Ali (A.S.) as the tenth incarnation.

They believed in him as God as did Alawites - the Nusairies in Syria. They proclaimed themselves Shias as well, meaning the followers of Hazrat Ali (A.S.) and his family.

It is mentioned that a Persian mystic by name Ali Itahi had come to Kutch in India. He took with him some eager Khojas to Iran and introduced them to the ancestors of the Agha Khans.

It is thought that these firm believers in the new religion and the close followers of Peer Sadruddeen came to be known as Bawas. After the death of the Peer, they became the guardians of the religions of the Khojas. It is these Bawas who preached that the Agha Khans were incarnation of God and included this belief in the GINANS - the prayer book read usually in Jamat Khanas.

The Bawas had considerable influence over the Khojas as they also controlled the various ceremonies concerning marriage and death, etc. The Khoja faithful who took their lessons from the Bawas came to be known as Bhagats.

The Khojas were mainly a trading community resident in Bombay, Karachi as well as lesser numbers in towns and villages of Kutch and Kathiawar in India. Some of them migrated to Zanzibar and other East African towns during the years 1850 - 1900 to expand their business. The Khojas in those days were rather ignorant and simple people.

They became influenced by social traditions of the Hindus, some of these traditions are still to be seen in marriage ceremonies although many have disappeared with the times.

Despite being involved and surrounded by peculiar and unislamic beliefs and traditions,, historical records show us that the Khojas were deeply devoted towards Imam Husain (A.S.).

They would spend large sums to commemorate the martyrdom of the Imam. Those who could afford would regularly travel to Karbala and other Holy places to pay their homage at the shrines of the Imams.

Sometime during 1860 - 70 A.D., a Shiite Muslim from Madras, India, by name of Mulla Qader Husain is said to have gone to Karbala on pilgrimage as well as to stay there for the purpose of acquiring more knowledge in Shiism.

While there by chance he came into contact with some prominent Khoja Zuwwars - pilgrims from Zanzibar as well as Bombay. Among them were Nurmohamedbhai, Mukhi Hashambhai Dossa and Dewji Jamal. On their visit to him, Mulla Qader would teach them the recitation of Holy Qura'n as well as Islamic rules about cleanliness, prayers, etc.

Mulla Qader once described to them the merits of Hazrat Ali (A.S.). Suddenly Nurmohamedbhai said "We Khojas believe that Ali (A.S.) is God" On hearing this, the Mulla was greatly astonished. On further discussion, he learnt that "Khojas also believed that Ali was the tenth incarnation of God and the Aga Khan the forty-sixth incarnation of Aly or God."

Obviously this belief is in absolute contradiction to the basic principles of Islamic belief in Tawheed - the Oneness of God. Belief in any form of human relationship with God such as entering of God into human body is considered as SHIRK - polytheism. The pure belief in the absolute Unity of Allah is the foundation of Islam and one who contradicts it cannot be called a Muslim.

"Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and He forgives what is besides this to whom He pleases; and whoever associates anything with Allah, he indeed strays off into a remote error." (14:116)

Thus Mulla Qader became deeply concerned about the ignorance of the Khojas and did his best to correct their beliefs. He took them to the Mujtahid Sheikh Zainul Abedeen and reported their plight.

The Mulla was invited by Dewji Jamal to accompany him to Bombay and Zanzibar so as to impart the knowledge of true Islam to the Khojas but he was not willing to leave Kerbala. Finally at the insistence of the Mujtahid Sheikh Zainul Abedeen he agreed and left for Bombay where he first stayed with Dewjibhai.

In Bombay, Mulla Qader started a Madrassa in which he taught the rules and tenets of true Islam according to Shia Ithnasheri beliefs. Gradually he also led a congregational prayer which was first attended by 15/20 people later expanding to 50 and more persons.

This had to be done secretly inside a house in order to safeguard the lives of the faithful who had separated from the main stream of Agha Khani sect of Ismaili Khojas.

On separation thus of the Khoja community into two different sects of the Ismailis as followers of Agha Khan and Ithnasheris as followers of Twelve Imams, there were repeated incidents of trouble between the two sects. The Ithnasheris were boycotted in matters of business, social contacts, burial, etc.

So harsh was the friction between the two that at times criminals were hired to stab the converts and murders took place.

But so firm and staunch were those handful in their faith that they could not be drawn away from the path of truth they had discovered. Their courage is indeed worth appreciating and taking lesson from.

Today the Khoja Shia Ithnasheries numbering more than 100,000 are prosperously scattered throughout the world in India, Pakistan, East Africa, Madagascar as well as Europe, USA, Canada. They not only maintain their Islamic traditions but also contribute their time, energy and money for the propagation of truth.

Shaddad's Paradise On Earth

'Aad' was a descendent of Prophet Noah. Thousands of years ago, his people had lived in the deserts of "AL-AHQAF" around Oman and Hadhramut in South Arabia. They were strongly built and very tall. They believed in no God but worshipped idols.

Prophet 'HUD' was sent by Allah to preach and guide them on the right path. He advised them to worship one God as taught by Islam but they paid no heed. Allah punished them by stopping rain and drought over took them for years.

Then some people went to Prophet 'Hud' begging him to pray to Allah for the rains. The Prophet prayed and instructed them to return to their villages. Thereafter it rained and people prospered. But never did they amend their conduct nor abandon their faith in idol-worship. At last they were destroyed by punishment from Allah.

When 'Aad' died, he left behind two sons Shaddad and Shadeed. After some time Shadeed also died and Shaddad became the ruler of his kingdom. He had appointed several governors in the areas over which he ruled. He grew so arrogant that he even claimed to be God and compelled his people to worship him.

Allah sent Prophet 'Hud' to approach 'Shaddad' advising him to correct his wrong thinking and conduct. In response, he once asked the Prophet what reward he could expect if he were to put his faith in Allah and worship One God. He was told that he would have a place in paradise.

Shaddad inquired what sort of place it was. The Prophet described it as a blissful place where the righteous and true believers in Allah would after death enjoy the best of every thing. 'Shaddad' responded saying it was nothing since he could also build similar place or even a better one on earth.

He then resolved to build a huge and beautiful paradise of his own on earth. He sent someone to Zohak Tazi - who ruled Iran with request to purchase all available quantity of gold and silver.

He also sent people around to other places and acquired large quantities of valuable items including musk and amber etc. He then gathered all his experts and architects and gave them instructions to construct a magnificent 'paradise' on earth.

A place with good climate and scenery somewhere in south Arabia was selected. High palaces and towers with walls inlaid with gold and silver were constructed. Beautiful pearls and emeralds were spread on floors instead of sand.

Trees made of gold with branches hanging with musks and amber were put up in plush gardens. Everytime the wind blew, the sweet scent of their perfume would spread around. Pretty women were accommodated there to beautify the dream setting. All valuable metals and materials were supplied and it took some three hundred years to complete it.

In those very olden days, people used to live very long. Prophet Noah had lived for 900 years. Similarly Shaddad was informed that he would live about that long. So he was extremely anxious to enter and live in his lavish man made paradise before his death.

He gave orders to all people to proceed to the walls of dazzling city of high and magnificent pillars described in the holy Quran as IRAM ZATIL IMAD. Then he himself came out of his residence in Hadramont with his large army for opening ceremony. As he neared the paradise of his imagination, suddenly he saw a deer with trunk and legs of gold and silver.

He gave chase to capture it but in so doing he got separated from his army. Now alone, unexpectedly he was faced with a frightful horseman who in raised voice said: "Oh Shaddad! You imagined that you will be saved from death and live for ever after entering this man-made paradise on earth."

Shaddad on hearing this trembled and inquired who he was. "I am MALAKOL MAUT" - (the angel of death) came the reply.

"What do you want and why are you obstructing me?" asked Shaddad. "I have come to take away your soul", he replied.

Shaddad pleaded for sometime at least to be able to enter his paradise but the angel of death refused saying he had no permission from Allah to do so. He then fell from his horseback and his soul instantly departed from his body.

His army heard a deafening and frightening sound from the sky and they also perished on the spot. None of them could fulfil their ardent desire of entering the fictitious paradise. The whole decorated structure crumbled and got buried under the Arabian sands.

What a splendid example of the consequence of one who thought he could challenge the Might of Allah, who had become arrogant as a result of this enormous wealth. What a tragedy that he could not even step into his man-made paradise.

The Holy Quran has truly described such people in these words:

"Nay! man is most surely inordinate,

Because he sees himself free from want." (96: 6-7)

Ka'aba Against The Might of Elephants

During the sixth century around 570 A.D., before the advent of Islam, the part of Arabia known as Yemen was under the rule of the Abyssinian Christians who had driven away the Jewish Himyar rulers.

The Abyssinian viceroy in Yemen was Abraha Ashram. He was determined to build great church in San'aa, present capital of Yemen, so as to make it a leading centre of commerce and place of pilgrimage for the Christian world. He was convinced that this dream could only be realized if he could first destroy Mecca which was then a huge centre of commerce and pilgrimage.

Intoxicated with power and fired by religious fanaticism, Abraha finally made his vicious plans. Accompanied by a big herd of elephants and other animals, he led an expedition and marched to destroy the Holy Ka'aba in Mecca.

The Arabs in those days hardly had any opportunity to see an elephant in their lives. Hence the army of Abraha is described in history as 'ASHABUL FEEL' i.e. the army with elephants.

Abraha camped his army on the outskirts of Mecca preparing to attack and destroy the holy Ka'aba. During the course of preparation, his army stole some 700 camels belonging to Abdul Muttalib - the grandfather of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) The camels were grazing in the open fields outside the city.

Abraha sent a message to Abdul Muttalib who was the supreme chief of Mecca, informing him his intention of destroying the Holy Ka'aba. Abdul Muttalib replied that he would meet Abraha in person and talk to him. When he approached the invading army's camp, he was received respectfully and given an honourable seat near Abraha.

As the two men talked, Abdul Muttalib said that he had come to complain about Abraha's army stealing his camels. Abraha answered, "I have come to conquer Mecca, your place of worship, and you worry about your camels?" Abdul Muttalib replied, "I am the owner and responsible for the camels so I have come for them. The Ka'aba belongs to God and it is the concern of the owner of that house whether to save it or not." Abraha, amazed by the reply, returned Abdul.

Muttalib's camels to him but was determined to attack the city. Abdul Muttalib advised his people to move into the hills for safety.

As Abraha entered the city a huge flock of tiny birds, like a patch of cloud appeared in the sky. Each bird had a small pebble in its tiny beak and dropped it on the invading soldiers. The stones fell exactly on the men and they were instantly killed and fell prone on the ground.

Abraha was spared but one bird flew above him. The king asked him what kind of birds had acted so miraculously. Abraha raised his eyes to the sky and saw the bird and pointed out it to the king; the bird dropped the stone and Abraha was instantly killed. After the miraculous event, Abraha's army was found lying on the ground as bits of some withered and crunched grass rendered useless for any purpose.

Is this event not a clear miracle proving the sanctity of the Ka'aba and the people who were truly attached to it such as Abdul Muttalib and the people of his house?

Had he not shown his utmost confidence in Allah as the real protector of the Holy Shrine and guided his people to safety, they would have perhaps bowed down to the might and pomp of Abraha and made a truce with him. Consequently the history of Mecca and the holy shrine as well as the glory of Islam would have been different.

Another important lesson to draw from this event for men of all ages is that a man intoxicated with power can prepare armies and armaments against God's holy plan, but such a man's action will be his own downfall, he cannot prevail against God.

The Holy Qura'n has in eloquent words described this incident as follows:

"Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?

Did He not cause their war to end in confusion, And send down (to prey) upon them birds in flocks, Casting against them stones of baked clay, So He rendered them like straw eaten up" (105: 1-5)

Lessons From The Life of an Ant

Prophet Sulayman once was sitting on the bank of a lake deeply engrossed in the beauties of nature around and appreciating the various forms of Allah's creation on earth.

Suddenly the Prophet's attention was drawn towards an ant creeping forward with a grain of wheat in its mouth. As it reached near the water, a tortoise came out, opened its mouth and the ant crept into it. The tortoise closing its mouth disappeared under the water.

After a while, the tortoise again sprung out of the water and standing on the bank opened its mouth and the ant came out. But this time it had no grain of wheat in its mouth. The Prophet became anxious to know what had been happening under water.

On inquiring, the ant explained that at the bottom of the lake, there was a stone and underneath it there was another ant who was blind.

Allah had created it there and because of blindness, it could not move out. I have been appointed by Allah to provide its daily sustenance with the assistance of the tortoise. Hence I do perform this duty everyday.

Prophet Sulayman in response to his special prayer to Allah was granted kingdom and was given power over the forces of nature, over the Jinns and devils and the birds and other living creatures. He was also endowed with knowledge of their language hence his ability to speak to the ant.

Let us ponder over one thing. If a tiny creature like an ant living under a stone at the bottom of a sea is not denied its sustenance, why should man - the noblest of all creatures ever suspect loss of his sustenance from Almighty Allah.

Prophet Sulayman's subjects were of various types and they lived peacefully and co-operatively by his discipline, justice and good government. Jinns, men and the birds gathered in groups before him. On their long march out once they came to a lowly valley of ants.

This valley contained huge deposits of invaluable metals like gold, silver and precious stones. This precious place was guarded by Allah with extraordinary kinds and sizes of ants. On account of this, none could approach the place on foot nor mounted.

When the chief of the ants saw the pomp and the glory of the huge army of Sulayman approaching towards it in the air, it sounded the caution to all of its kind in the valley to get into their holes lest they get trampled down and crushed.

Prophet Sulayman smiled at the precaution taken by the ants and ordered his companions to wait until the ants went into their holes and to be careful not to cause any harm to the ants when passing through. He prayed to Allah to make him grateful for His favours and to do good deeds that please Him and to admit him among His righteous servants. Addressing the chief of the ants, the Prophet is reported to have said:

"How could my people hurt you and your like as they are floating in the air and don't you know that I am the apostle of Allah and would never act unfairly?"

The Chief of the ants replied:

"Oh apostle of Allah! My cautioning my flock was not for fear of hurt but to prevent them getting astray and forgetting the glory of Allah after seeing the glory of your army or your pomp and glamour and be tempted by them."

That even the humblest creatures of Allah like the ant is endowed with the necessary wisdom to live and protect its life is apparent from this. Besides one should not be overtaken by the glory of the worldly pomp of the rulers and kings as to forget the glory of the creator Allah that is what the ant teaches us.

On the other hand the prayer of Prophet Sulayman indicates his humility before Almighty Allah who had bestowed upon him control over the forces of nature.

That one should utilize God's bounties for righteousness and for good to others is also the lesson we derive. Despite all his possessions and glory as the king ruling over a vast empire and having control over various creatures, Prophet Sulayman used to fast the whole day, weave baskets and sell them. From the return of his own labour, he used to purchase loaves and eat them sitting along with the poor.

In one of his sermons in Nahjul Balagha, Imam Ali (A.S.) exhorts people to ponder over the power of Allah's creation and citing example of the creation of an ant he says:

"Had they pondered over the greatness of His power and the vastness of His bounty they would have returned to the right path and feared the punishment of the Fire; but hearts are sick and eyes are impure. Do they not see the small things He has created, how He strengthened their system and opened for them hearing and sight and made for them bones and skins? Look at the ant with its small body and delicate form.

It can hardly be seen in the corner of the eye, nor by the perception of the imagination - how it moves on the earth and leaps at its livelihood. It carries the grain to its hole and deposits it in its place of stay. It collects during the summer for its winter, and during strength for the period of its weakness.

Its livelihood is guaranteed, and it is fed according to fitness. Allah, the Kind, does not forget it and (Allah the Giver) does not deprive it, even though it may be in dry stone or fixed rocks.

If you have thought about its digestive tracts in its high and low parts, the carapace of its belly, and its eyes and its ears in its head you would be amazed at its creation and you would feel difficulty in describing it. Exalted is He who made it stand on its legs and erected it on its pillars (of limbs).

No other originator took part with Him in its origination and no one having power assisted Him in its creation. If you tread on the paths of your imagination and reach its extremity it will not lead you anywhere except that the Originator of the ant is the same as He who is the Originator of the date-palm, because everything has (the same) delicacy and detail, and every living being has little difference."

Ghulamhusein and The Game of Chance

Ghulamhusein was a popular social figure and a keen host of guests coming to him from distant lands. He lived in Moshi, a beautiful small town at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

He was generous and hospitable to one and all. One of his hobbies during leisure hours particularly on Saturdays and Sundays was to play the game of cards with his friends. For hours they used to get together where they enjoyed the game. It was not with the aim of gambling but rather just for pleasure and pass time.

Once in the midst of a lively game of cards, his servant came to inform him that a guest of his was seriously ill at the guest house and needed his immediate attention. He sent the servant back saying he would come soon.

But he was so much engrossed in the game of cards that he did not feel inclined to withdraw from it. So he continued to play with keen interest. After a while, his servant came again to report that the condition of the guest was deteriorating and needed his urgent attention as there was no one else to attend.

But Ghulamhusein was so deeply engrossed in the game that he did not want to be disturbed. As such, again he sent the servant back promising to come soon.

By the time he could be free from the very mind-captivating game of cards, the servant came for the third time. But this time he reported that the guest of his - a poor traveller from distant lands - had already died. This news gave a shock of his life to Ghulamhusein.

It convinced him of the evil and harmful effect of such an indoor game. There and there he vowed never to indulge himself in such a game.

Is this not an eye-opening example of an intoxicating and mentally distracting game of cards, commonly played today either as a pass-time or for gambling purposes? Perhaps it also explains the philosophy behind absolute Islamic forbiddance to play or watch such a game, even without the chance of gaining or losing money. It is meant to be a prevention rather than cure lest man is one day tempted to use the game for gambling purposes.

But why do people become interested in such games of chance, be it cards, billiard ball or chess at casinos and gambling dens? A number of reasons could be put forward for this.

A mentally active young man happens to look for a time-pass, away from his usual home or office environment, and, he is misled to believe that a casino or a billiard club is the best place for this. Or it is possible that he is tempted by a friend for his company to play a game.

But more than that, it is the greed and temptation of an easy and quick chance of making money by gambling. Again he is misled to believe that he is lagging behind whilst his friend and relatives mint millions of easy money in the gambling dens.

A gambler often spends hours at the gambling dens at the expense of his valuable time for his other moral and religious duties towards his God and family. Should he lose in one game of chance, he is tempted to play again and again till he recovers his loss. Should he win and make some money,

he is again tempted to play in order to double and treble his day's easy earning from the game of chance.

Thus, the mind of a gambler becomes corrupt and his aim of life revolves round money. His goal of life ultimately is to mint money, more and more. His mind is so much distracted that he is no more able to concentrate in his normal job or studies. In the temptation of making more or easy money, his heart is all the time drawn and attached to the gambling table.

And when the tide turns against him and he incurs losses after losses in the gambling business, the time comes when he is obliged to dispose off his personal belongings to pay off the debts. The family life at home becomes disrupted as a result and he is then detested and looked down upon by the society and his own family members.

Islam which has come as a total code of life for man, has condemned and forbidden every game of chance. The following ayats of the holy Qura'n are a good guidance.

"They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: In both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit. And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare. Thus does Allah make clear to you the communications, that you may ponder" (2:219)

Ithm as used in the Qura'n is interpreted as that sinful condition in the human intellect and soul whereby he is distracted and kept away from reaching acts of goodness and perfection. Therefore, what it means is that drinks and gambling - two of the major sins in Islam - as the source of great harm to human body and soul.

"The Shaitan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist?" (5:91) It is quite evident from the above verses of Holy Qura'n that the enmity and hatred in addition to distraction from the remembrance of Allah and prayers results from gambling and drinking.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and his progeny have strongly condemned the games of chance.

Imam Radha (a.s.) has said:

"Allah has described gambling as a filthy and impure act of Satan and has warned people to keep away from it"

Can a wise man and a true Muslim ever think of going near to Satanic games of chance and take the risk of ruining his life? Certainly not!!

Where Music Leads To

Alamgheer was one of the past Moghul kings in India. It is said he was a devout muslim and staunch upholder of Islamic tenets. He banned all luxury items in his kingdom including the listening to music. No one dared do so even privately in his home.

Those engaged in musical provision for their earnings, got together to discuss what to do. They decided to take out a procession on the streets of Delhi in protest.

So one day they staged a grand procession taking out a big JANAZA (coffin) and marched on the streets of the capital. They passed in front of the king's palace. They raised their voice as well as the JANAZA to make their amusing protest march conspicuous before the king who was then sitting on the front terrace.

The king became curious and wanted to know which eminent personality had died as to be given such a grand funeral. Some leaders from the procession approached the king and in a lamenting and wailing tone told him that the coffin was in fact that of 'Music'. Since it was strictly banned in the country, they were suffering loss of daily income. On hearing this, the king smiled and said:

"Very good! Dig the grave so deep as to ensure that the dead MUSIC does not rise again for hundreds of years to come."

Let us ponder over the reasons why Islam has forbidden the playing, hearing and even the handling of musical instruments.

The Islamic philosophy of life dictates that this worldly life is transitory and a quick passing one, whereas the life hereafter is eternal and more important. Therefore Islam has forbidden those things which distract our attention from this fact and which lead us towards loose character and overlooking of the moral duties of our life.

A number of these forbidden things in Islam are not only morally but physically and mentally harmful as proved by a number of modern scientists. Professor Horst Hecheck of Vienna reports:

"The disharmonies of modern music frequently cause severe psychological and physical damage to musicians. Doctors and music experts say complaints range from nervousness, depression and headaches to ulcers and impotence"

The toxic effect of the musical sound cannot be denied. Some years before, it was reported in a local newspaper in Daressalaam that a pregnant Hindu woman was much mentally engrossed in listening to a moving musical program in a cinema that she delivered a baby on the spot without realizing what was happening. The newspaper in criticizing the incident, remarked whether the place was a cinema hall or maternity home!

A professor of Columbia University in America, Dr. Adler, writes that a best melodious record of music can badly harm a human body nerves and the warmer the weather, more the harm. He also proved that music does upset the human nerves unnaturally causing considerable fatigue. The shaking effect of music also causes unnatural perspiration.

This research of Dr. Adler on music had such a widespread effect on the American people that many were led to stop listening to music.

The belief that music was harmful for progressive nation reached a stage when a resolution to ban it by law was presented with relevant proofs and arguments in the American senate. But in a nation where luxury and lust is widespread how many could be expected to vote for such a ban?

It may be claimed that music has a soothing-effect and as such it is a good entertainment, but taking into consideration that it causes more harm than good, it becomes undesirable and one should abstain from it. Islam, as such, has forbidden music as we can see from the following Quranic Ayat and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.)

"But avoid the uncleanness of the idols and avoid vain (false) words" (22:30) According to the interpretations of all the major sects of Islam the above mentioned vain (false) words include false utterance and music.

It is worth noting that the divine instruction to avoid vain words (music) is in conjunction with the instruction to avoid the uncleanness (pollution) of idol. Thus the condemnation of music is along with that of idol-worship.

The Prophet of Islam had said:

"Two kinds of voices are resented by Allah: the wailing at the time of a calamity and musical rhythm at the time of rejoicing." (Nafahat Risaliyya)

Do Stars Influence Our Destiny?

Once Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (A.S.) was leaving Kufa - (the then capital of his caliphate in Arabia) - to go to a place called Nahrawan in order to quash the rebellion of the Kharijites. One of his companions by the name Aleef told him not to undertake the journey just then.

Why? Because according to the findings of astrology, it was not an auspicious moment, and this journey would not end into victory. Ali bin Abi Talib (A.S.) replied in these words:

(Nahjul Balagah sermon 79)

"Do you think you can tell the hour when a man goes out and no evil befall him or can warn of the time at which if one goes out harm will accrue? Whoever testifies to this falsifies the Qur'an and becomes unmindful of Allah in achieving his desired objective and in warding off the undesirable.

You cherish saying this so that he who acts on what you say should praise you rather than Allah because according to your misconception you have guided him about the hour in which he would secure benefit and avoid harm."

After replying to Aleef, Ali bin Abi Talib (A.S.) turned towards those who had gathered there and said:

"O' People! Beware of learning the science of stars except that with which guidance is sought on land or sea, because it leads to divining and an astrologer is a diviner, while the diviner is like the sorcerer, the sorcerer is like the unbeliever and the unbeliever would be in Hell. Get forward in the name of Allah."

Contrary to the astrologer's advice, Ali bin Abi Talib proceeded at the same moment to Nahrawan and returned victorious from that war.

Millions of people in the world have the tendency of consulting horoscopes in order to seek information about the future trends of their lives which they believe to be under the influence of the movement of stars and planets.

In our African Society, we have a section of people who frequently consult the so called MWALIMUS or WITCHDOCTORS to seek the secrets of their sufferings and to find out the future outcome of their ills.

These people suffer from superstitions, psychological fears or imaginary sicknesses. The MWALIMUS OR WITCHDOCTORS who consider themselves to be the experts on prediction based on the movement of stars, have some set imaginary answers and cures to offer and in so doing they go on minting money from the ignorant people.

How strange it is to suppose that our business, adventures, our health, our life and death are predetermined by the position of the stars and planets and are under the influence of their movement? What is overlooked is the fundamental fact that both man and the heavenly bodies - the stars - the sun - the moon etc., are under the indisputable authority of the Creator Allah. Man's destiny present and future well-being is all controlled by Him and Him alone.

It is one of those human weakness of enslaved mentality which tend to bow down to a body created like himself rather than recognize and have faith in the full and supreme authority of the Creator Allah.

But why is it that so many people, including the educated and intelligent, are willing to place their faith on what the astrologers have to say?

The answer is, that day by day, tremendous vacuum is occurring in the lives of many who previously truly believed in God. Worldly pleasure and occupations have so much overtaken their minds that they can hardly pause to think and recognize the true aim of life and the Supreme Powers of the LIFE - GIVER.

As such, they become desperate and in order to find some sort of peace for the disturbed mind, they doing to anything that may possibly give them some sort of consolation. Human beings, by nature, must have something in which to believe, and in the absence of a meaningful faith in God, reliance is place on superstition, occultation, magic, witchcraft, etc

Astrology does not demand its followers to go to church or mosque nor perform rituals nor adhere to any moral commandments. All one has to do is to buy newspapers or books and follow up what is published about the horoscopes. Or at times, approach an astrologer or a Mwalimu, pay his fees of a few shillings and seek information about the future.

During the times of Imam Jaffer Al Sadiq (A.S.), discussion and debates on various sciences in the world (and particularly in Arabia) were at their peak.

People of different beliefs and religions used to attend discourses by the Imam. One of those sciences dwelt upon was astrology and the Imam expressly asked the people not to believe in it.

Abdul Malik bin Aayun was counted among one of the great traditionalists as well as scholars in Islam. He was also an expert in astrology; and had strong faith in the effect of the positions and movements of the stars on daily lives of human beings. He had accumulated a number of books on this subject and was always referring to them. Before taking any decision or starting any work, he would make astrological calculations to find out what guidance and trend he could get from the position of the stars.

Gradually it became his habit; and not even a small piece of work could be done without prior astrological calculations. Day by day he became more and more mentally engrossed in basing all his actions on the good or bad omen of the stars. He became jealous of the people who accomplished their daily work by having confidence in God and who never worried about the positions of stars.

Once he explained his trouble to Imam Jaffer Al Sadiq (A.S.) who expressed his surprise that Abdul Malik had this undesirable habit and told him: "I command you to go and set fire to all those books"

He went and did as he was told. Thus he released himself from the burden of mythical and imaginary influence of stars, and then he felt at ease and quite relaxed in doing all his works by relying on God.

Hasheena state that he approached Imam Jaffer Al Sadiq (A.S.) and said to him that there lived a man on their Island, who could reveal to them

unknown matters, for example where and with whom stolen goods are lying. The Imam responded by saying:

"The Holy Prophet (S.A. W.) has said that one who goes to ask about anything from magician, soothsayer or a liar and believes in what he says certainly becomes an infidel (unbeliever) and denier of all the heavenly scriptures revealed by Allah"

The fact is that an astrologer, soothsayer magician or any type of fortune - teller poses as a divine person, who thinks that he can forecast one's benefit or harm through the art of astrology thus, instead of praying to Almighty Allah for warding off calamities and misfortunes, or offering thanks to Allah for bounties HE has bestowed, he becomes indifferent and self confident in every matter.

Should he by chance prove successful in some of his forecasts, he would expect to be praised and be depended upon by more and more people. This leads to atheism and is against the spirit of the teachings of the Holy Qura'n in which the Almighty Allah says:

"Say: No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen but Allah; and they do not know when they shall be raised." (27:65)

Thus to approach fortune-tellers, palmists, astrologers and such others who claim to have power to peep into future and to know of hidden matters is to display lack of true faith in the Will of Allah, It is against the teachings of Islam and leads to infidelity.

The Tragic End of an Oppressive King

Nadir Shah was King of Persia, a famous conqueror around early eighteenth century. He conquered India and with little resistance reached Delhi during 1739. Irritated and angered by some commotion by the inhabitants, he caused general massacre and set fire to houses in Delhi. Thousands of people were killed.

During the last night of his life, Nadir Shah was seeing terrible nightmares and had lost mental peace and sleep. He would get out of his bed now and again, returning to it to get some comfort and sleep but to no avail.

It was terrible torture for the Shah but no one dared to approach him to find the reason. Only one person could dare to do so and he was Husainali Muinul Mulk, a trusted friend of the Shah. He approached him and asked the reasons for his restlessness and lack of sleep.

The Shah said that it was a deep personal secret which he would reveal to him on condition that he did not tell anyone otherwise the punishment would be by death.

Nadir Shah then related his secret saying that before he came on the throne of Iran, he had seen a sensational dream. He had seen two prominent and glittering personalities come to him and with much honour, they took him to a place. There ten more glittering personalities were seated with much dignity and awe.

The Shah was then ushered before one of them and a dazzling sword was respectfully tied around his waist. Thereafter one high personage said to him, "You are being designated for the upliftment and welfare of Iran provided people are treated well."

Since then, the Shah added he had made progress in every sphere in his life. Not only had he succeeded in sitting on the throne of Iran but he also extended domains. Having attacked at the cost of thousands killed, India also fell and came under his rule.

Revealing his secret further to Husainali, Nadir Shah went on to say that night he saw a very frightening dream when he went to sleep. He saw the same two prominent and glittering personalities again but this time it appeared as if they were not in good mood as in the previous dream.

He saw he was being dragged and made to appear before the same high personages in whose presence he was previously honoured with the gift of a dazzling sword and good news about his future. This time in harsh tone he was asked if such was the way of treating the Muslim masses? The Shah added that "I was asked to surrender the sword which was removed from my waist.

Then with my hands tied around my neck, I was dragged from one place to another. This dream has terribly upset me and I am unable to sleep tonight,"he concluded. Alas the kingly life of Nadir Shah was destined to meet its tragic end as a result of his massacres and crimes.

He passed that night restlessly and as the morning set in, he was killed by his enemies. He departed from this world neither with head over his body nor with the kingly crown over his head.

The fact is that Nadir Shah had misused the good omen he first received in a dream. He thought he had become high and mighty and could do

whatever he liked. He had misunderstood, as many of us today do, that the blessings of kingdom, wealth, power or high status in life are signs of divine favour. Wordly blessings to man are but temporary means of testing the strength of faith and action in obedience or disobedience of God's commands.

Among the sins and crimes which attract severe punishment in this life as well as in the next is oppression of people.

and they who act unjustly shall know to what final place of turning they shall turn back. (26:227)

In Willing Submission To The Will of Allah

Abu Talha was one of the respected companions of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) His wife Umme Salim was a woman of strong faith in Allah. They had a young son who was very dear to them. In particular the father was deeply attached to him. His name was Salim.

Once young Salim became so seriously ill that his mother lost hope of his survival. One day she sensed the end was imminent. Lest the dear father became too much upset on seeing the son die, she requested Abu Talha to go to the Prophet.

After he had left the house, Salim breathed his last. Umme Salim immediately shrouded the dead body in a piece of cloth and placed it inside a room.

Thereafter she went and cooked food for her husband. She adorned herself with perfume and sat waiting for him to return. When Abu Talha returned he inquired about the health of his dear son.

Umme Salim replied that he was asleep and it was better not to disturb him. Both sat down and ate their meal. And then lied down for a short rest. After "a while, Umme Salim woke up saying she wanted to ask him a question:

"Supposing someone entrusted us with a thing for some time and after comes and takes it back from us. Would you be unhappy with him?" "Certainly not" replied Abu Talha. "A thing on trust to us must be returned to the owner."

Then Umme Salim decided to reveal what had happened to their son. She said, "Salim who was on trust to us has departed from this world. Allah the All Merciful, has decided to take him back from us." So moved was Abu Talha to hear this said in this way that he exclaimed, "By Allah you are the mother of the son and as such more deserving to be consoled for this patience than I." Abu Talha then rose up for ablution and recited two raka't prayers for the departed soul.

Thereafter he went to the Prophet and related the unusual patience displayed by his wife over the death of their dear son. The Prophet was very glad and thanked Allah saying that his Ummat - his people were like those of Bani Israei. That is there were such people of forbearance and staunch faith as were to be found among the people of Bani Israel.

The fact is that the death of a dear son should have caused the mother Umme Salim much grief. Instead she exercised a lot of self-control and patience so as to console her husband. It shows how deeply faithful and resigned to the will of Allah she was. What a splendid example of the power of faith which the Prophet of Islam had described in these words:

"A person of Iman (faith) in his religion is stronger than a mighty mountain. That is so because a mountain can be carved out whereas one cannot cut back any part of the faith of a believer since he holds it firmly with deep attachment."

The Chosen Five Dignitaries of Islam

A MIRACULOUS DISCOVERY OF SIXTY YEARS AGO.

It was in the year 1916 when the First World War was raging. A British Military patrol party was passing near a village named Ontra, a few miles from Jerusalem in Palestine. Suddenly the military party observed a strange light in the darkness of the night.

It was coming from a very old small hillock. The officer-in-charge ordered digging it. After digging twelve feet deep, they came across a silverplate about two feet long and one and half feet wide. When the plate was taken out, its light disappeared. The party took the plate to their Commander Major A.N. Grandell who scrutinised the plate in torch light and was wonderstruck.

The border of the plate was inset with precious stones and in the centre of the plate, something was written in gold in some unknown language. Major Grandell sent the plate to the Commander of the Armies Lieutt. General D.O.

Gladstone. He in turn sent it to the British Archeological Department. At the end of the war in 1919, research began into this unique plate. A committee of experts of ancient languages consisting of British, French, American and others was appointed.

After many months of strenuous research, it was found that the inscriptions on the plate were in old Hebrew language used in the Old Testament (of the Bible.) On 31st January, 1920 the following translation was submitted:

In Hebrew Language.

Yah Ahmad Maqza

Yah Eli Ansatah

Yah Bahtool Akashi

Yah Hasan Azofata

Yah Hasin ba Rafo

Eli, Eli, Eli,

English Translation.

Reach O' Ahmad

O' Ali, help me

O' Batool, keep an eye

O' Hasan, Be Kind

O' Husain, grant us happiness

Ali - Ali - Ali

After the translation by experts, it was decided that the silver plate should be kept in the archives of British Imperial Museum for display. But when the Lord Bishop of England came to know of it, he sent a directive on 1st March, 1923, that the keeping of this plate in the museum or any other public place would work against Christianity. The plate therefore must be kept in Secret Church Chambers. Thus it was kept and it is still there in the same place.

The above mentioned discovery has been, quoted from "The Wonderful Stories of Islam" by Col. P. C. Implay, London, page 249, by the Ahmed Hussein Shah, Advocate, in his book 'The Straight Path'.

The Holy Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W) had said that the first thing to be created by God before any creation was his LIGHT (NOOR). And that LIGHT then split to create AHLUL-BAIT, the household members of the Prophet.

They are known as the Holy PANJETAN, the household members of the Prophet. They are the chosen and top most five dignitaries of Islam. They are:

1. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) (also called Ahmad)
2. Imam Ali (A.S.) (also called Haider) the soul of the Prophet and his son-in-law.
3. Bibi Fatima (A.S.) (also called Batool) the only beloved daughter of The Prophet.
4. Imam Hasan (A.S.) (also known as Shabbar) the son of Ali and Fatima.
5. Imam Husain (A.S.) (also known as Shabbir) the son of Ali and Fatima.

Their greatness lies not only in being closely related to the Prophet, being part and parcel of the FIRST CREATED LIGHT of the Prophet, but also in their supreme sacrifices for the cause of Islam.

God Almighty had chosen them as the of supreme personalities of Islam and informed all the previous Prophets in advance of their eminently high position and their sacrifices in the cause of Islam. The previous Prophets always felt awed, by the names of PANJETAN.

Whenever they became surrounded by any misfortune, they prayed for God's deliverance with the help of the holy names of these five dignitaries.

The silver plate inscribed with the holy names of PANJETAN - the holy five dignitaries of Islam as related above, might have originated from one of the past Prophets and used for invoking Allah's mercy and blessing.

These five personalities are those whom Allah has exclusively kept away from all spiritual and physical impurity for ever. They are those who have been infallible and sinless from birth to death Ali, Fatima,

Hassan and Husain (A.S.) are those whom the Prophet of Islam had identified exclusively as members of his House and that they are with the Qur'an and the Qur'an with them. They and the Qur'an are the supreme authority in Islam after the Prophet.

Whosoever adheres to both the Qur'an and the People of the House will be saved from going astray from the straight and true path of Islam. Ibn Abbas relates the apostle of Allah Said:

"Ali and Fatima and Hassan and Husain are my household members till the doomsday (qiyamat)"

When asked 'which are the two luminaries?' the Prophet said:

"Hassan and Husain and their father (Ali) is the light of the world and their mother (Fatima) is the full moon for dark nights"

Abu Huraira said: that the Apostle of Allah looked at Ali and Fatima and Hassan and Husain and said:

"I am at war with him who wages war with you and am at peace with him who is at peace with you."

Allah is The Guide For Every Creature

Hamid had an inquisitive mind and was fond of learning all about wild life, how they lived and behaved. He used to obtain different books on animals and keenly study them. This hobby induced him to go out to the woods in order to observe animals in their natural surroundings.

One day he accompanied his friend Abdul, Professor of Zoology and expert on animal life, to a nearby lake. They strolled on the shore and came over to see storks, with their long legs, calmly standing in the water to snap up passing fish with their long beaks. Storks thrive on fish. One of them forlornely stood aside, looking rather sick and unable to fly.

Both Hamid and Abdul became curious to know what was wrong with that bird. As they went nearer, the bird tried to flee, but could not do so. It had a broken leg. Lovingly they caught hold of the bird and examined its leg. They were amazed to see that its injured leg had a plaster of dry mud over it.

On removing it they found the leg rather swollen. The bone was either fractured or broken.

Hamid was amazed to see this phenomenon and wanted to know more about it. Surely, someone had shown mercy to the bird and had tried to help. "Is there a doctor around here who attends to sick or injured animals?" he asked.

"No" replied Abdul. He added, "Before doctors could discover the benefit of plaster, this bird was already aware of it. It knew instinctively how to make use of mud to hold fractured or broken bone in place." The treatment of broken and fractured bones with lime plaster is well known in medical circles as Plaster of Paris.

Professor Henry Mondoer - a wellknown Zoologist Writes in one of his books on animal life that animals have amazing ways of curing their sicknesses. It is from observing such animals that medical experts have made discoveries about curing certain maladies.

It is mentioned that when a cat catches cold or suffers from headache, it immediately tries to find a particular herb which when eaten promptly cures this sickness. If it is not available the cat lies down in one corner to take complete rest. Alternatively it finds a warm place to lie down and thus feels better and is then able to move about normally.

No wonder if it is from this experience that doctors today advise patients suffering from cold to rest at home for some days.

One of the animals in the forest is a fox. it is cunning and has many enemies. It has to contend with snakes in the forest. When bitten by a snake, the fox immediately looks for a particular herb which it applies to the bitten part of its body. That herb makes ineffective the poison from the snake-bite.

A deer in the forest normally lives in the area where water is easily available.

This animal by nature swings and runs from place to place. In so doing, it sometimes develops excessive acidity which causes it to suffer from rheumatic pain.

When this happens, the deer is seen to go and stand for quite a time in a particular furrow of mineral water. Today Sulphur bath or mineral water is considered a natural cure for rheumatic pains even among human beings.

Now let us ask ourselves:

Who inspires a stork to use mud plaster for its fractured leg? Who guides a cat to find a particular herb to cure its cold? Who shows a fox how to remove poison from snakebite?

On deep reflection, we shall have to admit that it is no one else but the creator Allah who inspires them how to remedy their ills. It is HE who inspires the ways of acquiring sustenance and meet the challenges of survival in this world. On this the holy Quran says:-

"He said: Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal)." (20:50)

However, it must be remembered that it is not good to hurt animals deliberately. Islam teaches universal charity even towards animals.

The Value of Sincerity of Purpose

A story is told of a man who approached three workers who were doing the same job. "What are you doing?" he asked each one of them separately and got different answers.

"I am cutting the stones" replied the first.

"I am earning my livelihood" replied the second.

"I am building a mosque" replied the third.

Each of the three workers saw himself linked to a different purpose each, one was to that extent, different from others, although all worked alike and were engaged in the same task.

Our two hands with which we work are in no sense different from the hands of any other person. The value of what we do depends upon the quality of the inner purpose in our heart with which we do our work. A true Muslim works to earn God's pleasure.

In the words of Imam Khomeini (ra), the ultimate criterion in evaluating men's deeds is the intent and the purpose of the doer rather than the external shape of people's acts. Sincerity of purpose and God-fearing motivation behind a Muslim's deeds were the principle feature which distinguished his deeds from those of non-believers.

Islamic history provides glaring examples of how Muslims in minority ultimately triumphed over their enemies in much greater number and better equipped because of their faith and sincerity of their purpose.....

Islam has emphasized the purity of intent before every act of virtue. Hence of the conditions provided for IBADAT (acts of worship) the most important and the primary one is IKHLAS (sincerity of purpose). Not only one draws farther from Allah but he is discarded from divine blessings in acts where purity of intent is lacking. The following ayats in the Holy Quran provide a good guidance on the subject:

"Say: I am commanded that I should serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience." (39:11)

"And call on Him being sincere to Him in obedience". (7:29) What do we really mean by IKHLAS - the purity of purpose?

When one embarks upon worship of Allah or does any act of virtue, he is required to discard all worldly thoughts from his mind and cast his full concentration towards Allah.

He is expected to feel dependent on none but Allah for all his worldly needs and put his trust in Him as the primary source of all blessings and reward. He is desired to throw his full weight in praying for all his lawful needs from Him. His sole aim for every act of virtue should be to seek not worldly gains but the pleasure of Allah.

What is the effect and outcome of IKHLAS - the purity of purpose? Numerous instances can be quoted of the lasting effect and fruitful outcome of actions and work done with absolute purity of purpose - for the pleasure of Allah and Him alone. The following story should serve a good example.

It is related that when Prophet Adam landed on this earth from Heaven, all kinds of creatures came forward to pay their respects and welcome him on earth. To each one of them, Adam gave his blessings according to its qualification.

When a flock of gazelles came forward to pay their respects, he gave his blessings and patted them by passing his holy hand over their backs. The lasting effect of this was the growth of navel-bag of musk (a black substance well known for producing a good perfume).

When they returned home, another flock of gazelle on seeing the gift of musk asked them where they had got it from. They explained that Prophet Adam had patted them and passed his holy hand over their backs, in appreciation of their visit to him. The result was the growth of the navel-bag of musk.

This second flock of gazelle thought they too should get the gift. With this aim, they went and offered their salams and respects before Adam. The Prophet acknowledged and passed his hand over their backs also. But this time it showed no effect of producing the navel-bag of musk. They were naturally disappointed.

On their return home, they inquired the reason for this and were told that it was because of lack of purity of intent and purpose. Their visit to Prophet Adam was for specific aim of reward of the navel-bag of musk whereas the first flock had paid the visit solely for the pleasure of Allah without any thought for reward.

Today the musk producing creatures are the progeny of that very first flock of gazelles.

LOVE FOR ALLAH AND FOR HIS SAKE ONLY.

Muslims should begin giving Islamic education to their children from their very tender age.

Ali (A.S.) delighted in company of his children. Once he was sitting in his house with his two young children, Abbas, his son, and Zainab, his daughter.

Ali (A.S.) said to Abbas, "Say 'WAHED'" (meaning 'ONE' in-Arabic). The boy uttered "WAHED". Ali (A.S.) then asked him to say "ISNAIN" (Two). Abbas replied, "I feel ashamed to utter 'two' from the same tongue which just said 'ONE'." Ali (A.S.) hugged his son, pleased at such a charming expression.

Such a reply from Abbas indicated how deeply devoted he was in his belief in Tawheed - Oneness of God. That true and staunch believer in one God never likes to even imagine any association with One God.

Zainab then asked, "Dear father, do you love me?", he said, "Yes, of course, my children are like part of my heart". On hearing this, she said, "You also love God.

How can two loves be accommodated in one heart of a true believer, the love of Allah and that of children?" Ali (A.S.) smiled and replied, "Love God and for the sake of His love, you love His creatures - children and fellow beings too. I love you for the sake of Allah."

Such deep thinking and words of true Tawheed on Zainab's part, pleased her father and he gave her much praise and affection.

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) once saw a young boy. He was gazing at the Prophet in such a way as his eyes and face indicated deep love and reverence. This attracted the Prophet who went and stood near him. He asked him, "My son, tell me, do you love me?"

The boy replied, "Yes, Oh the messenger of Allah, by Allah I do love you indeed"

Prophet: "Do you love me to the extent of your two eyes?"

Boy: "I do so more than my two eyes"

Prophet: "Do you love your father more than myself?"

Boy: "Oh Prophet, my love for you is more than that for my father."

Prophet: "Do you love me to the extent you do your mother?"

Boy: "I love you more than even my mother"

Prophet: "Let me see, do you love me to the extent of your own life?"

Boy: "Oh Prophet! Allah witness that I love you, even more than my own life"

The Prophet was deeply moved at this reply and expressed his affection for him. Then he asked:

"Tell me, do you love me to the extent you do Allah?"

At this juncture, the boy smiled and said "ALLAH - ALLAH - ALLAH". That Allah is loved more than anybody else. Neither you Prophet nor anybody can be loved more than Allah. Even if the Prophet is loved more than others; It is FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH.

So moving were the words of the boy that everyone hearing this was much impressed. The Prophet turned to his companions and said, "You must

be like this boy. Love Allah for all his blessings bestowed upon you. And love me for HIS sake and obey me."

The Holy Qura'n describing those in love of Allah says:

"And those who believe are stronger in love for Allah ". (2:165)

CONSEQUENCES OF INGRATITUDE TOWARDS ALLAH'S BOUNTIES.

Allah is Rahman, the compassionate and looks after the welfare of all the creatures in the world. People should all the time thank Him for His kindness. In the past there existed a thriving town at some place in the Middle East on the bank of a river known as Baliyan.

These people were blessed with Allah's bounties and were extremely wealthy. It was the time of ignorance and people lived according to their whims. Ignorance is a disease and coupled with wealth, it may corrupt the mind and morals.

Drunk with affluence these people had lost their common sense and resorted to very lowly and filthy habits. Food was so abundant that they lost all respect for it and they used bread as sponge to clean things.

Almighty Allah, sent to them Prophet Daniel in order to preach and guide them on the right path. But so deeply arrogant and intoxicated they had become with their wealth, and so busy they were in extravagant enjoyment of their riches that they would not listen to him.

Prophet Daniel explained and warned them not to treat God's bounties with ingratitude lest they be punished with His wrath and suffer shortages of food and absence of rains. In response they jeered at him and argued that they had enormous surplus grains and foods which often was left to rot in the fields.

So gross was their negligence and ingratitude towards God's bounties that even a poor man had no respect for a loaf of bread. Once when a beggar came to Prophet Daniel to beg for food he gave him a piece of bread. He threw it away in total disrespect saying that it was useless as their king used to clean the lowly parts of the body with it.

Prophet Daniel became extremely frustrated and angry. He prayed to Allah for His wrath and punishment to overtake these people. Consequently divine wrath descended on them. Rains stopped and not a drop of water fell for seven years. All their rivers and springs dried up.

so extremely short of food and water they became that they started eating the very unclean and stinking pieces of loaves they had thrown away. They would scramble over a dead animal, they had lost all the pleasure and peace of mind. Such were the harsh consequences of their misdeeds and ingratitude.

Shortage of food had become so acute that once two women went to Prophet Daniel to resolve their mutual dispute. They mentioned that they had earlier decided that each would slaughter her child in turn and they would eat its flesh. One of them had already done so but the other woman was now trying to find an excuse to back out from her pledge and refused to slaughter her child.

On hearing this story, Prophet Daniel wept at the turn of events and the pathetic situation of those people. Prophet Daniel deeply moved by this pathetic situation raised his hands in the supplication to Allah and prayed for the resumption of rains and His blessings so that those people may be freed from want and hunger. The wayward people had got chastisement.

The lessons we derive from the above story are:

1. When people of a place are blessed with extreme wealth and prosperity they tend to feel independent of Allah and turn their back in rebellion against His commands. They display ingratitude against His blessings by misusing them and indulge in extravagant spending in unlawful enjoyments.

2. As a result of the people's ungrateful and rebellious attitude, they attract divine punishment in the form of wrath such as lack of rain, oppression by unjust rulers, natural calamity and disaster, and absence of mental peace and security.

The holy Quran has drawn our attention on the subject in the following ayat:

"And Allah sets forth a parable: (Consider) a town safe and secure to which its means of subsistence come in abundance from every quarter; but it became ungrateful to Allah's favors, therefore Allah made it to taste the utmost degree of hunger and fear because of what they wrought." (16:112)

A Unique Example of Islamic Brotherhood

Uhud is a wellknown place a few miles outside Medina. One of the hardest battles of Islam was fought at this place. It was in defence of Islam against the enemies - the non-believers who had come from far away places.

In this battle the Muslim fighters had set noble examples of self-sacrifice. Many of them were martyred having fought bravely against the enemies.

Among them seven were fatally wounded and were breathing their last. All of them were also suffering from the pangs of thirst.

Someone came to them with a cup of water hardly sufficient to quench the thirst of one man. On offering the water to one of them, the water-bearer was directed towards another injured fighter lying besides him.

This second fighter sent him to the third one near him, this third directed him to the fourth, and so it went on till he reached the seventh warrior. When the seventh fighter was approached, he told him that since the first fighter was very thirsty, he should be given the water first.

The water-bearer then returned to the first injured fighter and found him already dead. He then went to the second thence to the third, finding each already dead.

This happened also with the remaining fighters, all having died by the time he reached. All of them departed from this world thirsty leaving behind in history a golden example of Islamic brotherhood and self-sacrifice for others.

Islam has laid much stress on the importance of mutual help, co-operation and sacrifice among Muslims. The Holy Quran dictates:

"The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah that mercy may be had on you." (49:10) The Holy Prophet had said:

"One who starts his day without care for the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim And Hazrat Ali (A.S) had said:

"Helping fellow Muslim brothers increases one's sustenance".

A non-believer had just embraced Islam at the hands of the Holy Prophet. He complained of hunger and the Prophet sent someone to bring food from his house. But unfortunately none was then available. The Prophet then asked his companions, "Who can host this newly converted Muslim brother tonight?"

Hazrat Ali (A.S.) came forward and offered to do so. Holding the new convert's hand, he took him to his house. He asked Hazrat Fatima if any food was available. She replied: "Only a little provision, enough for the children".

Hazrat Ali (A.S.) in response said "The guest must come first before ourselves and the children"

Hazrat Fatima (A.S.) persuaded the children to sleep hungry that night. And Hazrat Ali (A.S.) reduced the light of the lantern. He then invited the guest to the meal in the semi-darkened room. He sat with him pretending as if he was also eating but in fact he did not eat lest the guest went hungry.

Hazrat Ali - Fatima and their children fed the guest for the pleasure of Allah while remaining hungry themselves. This self-sacrifice was so much

appreciated by Allah that the following ayat in the Holy Quran was revealed in their praise:

"And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them love those who have fled to them, and do not find in their hearts a need of what they are given, and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones." (59:9)

A Splendid Example of Staunch Faith

Abu Baseer was one of the faithful companions of Imam Jaffer Sadiq (A.S.) he relates that once sitting with the Imam, a woman came in to ask a question :

"I am suffering from a disease. Doctors in Iraq have prescribed alcohol as the remedy. Do you, Oh Imam, permit me to drink alcohol?" The Imam in reply asked her:

"According to what you say, doctors have prescribed alcohol as medicine for your sickness, why then don't you drink?" The woman responded by saying:

"I am your follower, if you permit me to take alcohol, I shall do so. If not, I shall not. Because if tomorrow on Day of Judgement I am asked by Allah, I shall say I did so with the permission of my Imam." Imam Jaffer Sadiq'(A.S.) on hearing this turned to Abu Baseer and said:

"Do you hear what this woman has to say?"

In other words, do you not wonder and appreciate the staunch faith of this woman? Despite her illness, she does not follow the doctor's order to take alcohol but seeks our permission first.

Thereafter the Imam said:

"By the name of Allah, I do not permit you to drink even a drop of that because it is Haram. And should you drink, you will repent at that moment when your soul reaches here." So saying, the Imam pointed to his throat. And three times he asked: "Do you understand what I say?" And the woman said "Yes".

Despite the fact that alcohol was prescribed as a treatment of her illness the woman refused to touch it lest she broke the Shariat of Islam and sought the permission of the Imam - the rightful representative of Allah on earth.

Alcohol drinking ultimately brings regret at time of death. One used to drinking suffers extreme agony at time of death. The soul does not depart easily from the body. True faith with good action is the primary requisite of a Muslim. Faith is the seed and good deeds the offshoot.

"One who consumes intoxicants will meet the Lord at death like a worshipper of idols."

A Valiant Woman of Faith

Zubeir was one of the close companions of the Prophet and Asma, the daughter of Abu-Bakr, was his wife.

After the tragedy of Kerbala, Abdallah the son of Zubeir was in Mecca. He made an uprising against the Ommayyad Caliph Abdul Malik bin Marwan and appointed his brother Musa'b as governor of Basrah.

Abdul Malik replied by launching an attack on Basrah and killed Musa'b. Thereafter he sent a large army under the command of Hujjaj Ibn Yusuf to fight against Abdallah bin Zubair.

Hujjaj surrounded Mecca and Abdalla with all the manpower at his disposal came out in defence against the Omayyad attack from a raised stand. Hujjaj and his people attacked with stone-throwing on the city of Mecca, causing extensive damage.

When the situation became very grim, Hujjaj sent a message to Abdulla saying that he would soon be defeated hence it would be better if he surrendered to save further bloodshed of Muslims, and also to save further damage to the holy city of Mecca.

He would guarantee that no harm would come to him but that the caliph will decide his ultimate fate. Abdulla responded by saying that he would think over that night and convey his reply to him the following day.

Thereafter he went to his colleagues and friends for consultation. All of them said that it was better to go out of Mecca and surrender to the Caliph. From there he went to his mother and reported the whole matter. His mother 'ASMA' was a woman of great courage and staunch faith. She asked:

"Oh son! Was your uprising against Bani Ummayya for the sake of worldly gains, or for the sake of Islam?"

Abdallah replied: "By GOD, it is for Islam and the proof of it is that I have not set my eyes over any worldly wealth nor have I accumulated any money."

Asma then told her son: "Therefore continue with the Jihad and show forbearance against any affliction. Exercise patience and display bravery like Hussein bin Ali, the leader of free and valiant people of the world."

Abdallah in reply said, "Oh my dear mother! I have also been thinking the same but wished to sound your opinion. Now I know that martyrdom is acceptable for me. But my only worry is that they will chop me into pieces after my death."

"Don't worry son! Like a sheep when slaughtered, flesh is cut into pieces but it does not cause it any pain", the mother said unflinchingly.

Abdullah kissed his mother's hands, went inside his room and spent that night in prayers and recitation of Quran. When morning set in, he made GHUSL (ablution) said his morning prayer and wearing his helmet, he went first to his mother to bid her farewell. The mother without any emotion told him, "Son, fight these corrupt and wicked steadfastly so that you qualify to enter heaven" Abdulla came out and he saw that his army had all deserted him and run away except a few of his own kith and kin. He called them, "Oh free people!

Let us proceed to the front and fight". Thus Abdulla with his few colleagues launched an attack against the enemy like a lion roaring in the jungle.

It was the only battle of its kind in the history of Arabia. After killing a number of his enemies, he was hit by a stone on the forehead and another one crushed his chest. Unable therefore to continue the fight, he fell down to be surrounded by his enemies who chopped off his head instantly. His companions also were killed after a short fight.

When Hujjaj entered Mecca, he gave instructions that his body be hanged at the city gate and the severed head be sent to the caliph in Syria. It is said that when the news of the killing of her son reached his mother, she did not cry nor shed any tears but only uttered these words:

"If my son were not to display such bravery he would not have been the son of Zubair!!!!"

Sometime had passed after this episode when Hujjaj once asked what the mother of Abdulla was doing? He was informed of her above words and extreme forbearance over the killing of her son. Hujjaj was astonished and decided to shake her spirits and patience.

He prepared some women to persuade her to pay a visit to a place where the body of her son was hanging. When she arrived at that place and saw the state of her son's hanging body, she displayed no emotion whatsoever and with the same calmness said:

"Has not the time come for this mounted person to come down the saddle?".

So saying she went away. When these words were conveyed to Hujjaj, he gave instructions to remove the body of Abdullah so that it could be buried.

Greedy Even in Old Age

Haroon-AI-Rashid was one of the famous kings of Bani Abbas. He ruled from 170 to 193 A.H. He was the one who had poisoned and killed Imam Musa Kazim(A.S.).

Once addressing his courtiers, he said that he was anxious to meet a person who had personally seen the Prophet of Islam. He wanted to know from him the personal qualities of the last Prophet.

One courtier said that he knew an old person who lived in Yemen and who claimed to have seen the Prophet personally. Haroon ordered that every effort be made to bring that old man to his court. A special litter was sent to Yemen.

There the old man who was already weak and reduced to a skeleton was comfortably placed on it. Slowly he was carried on a long journey from his home till he safely arrived in Baghdad, the capital of the king.

On entering his court, Haroon warmly welcomed and seated him besides his throne. He then asked him whether he had seen the Prophet personally. The old man in his weak and lowly voice replied:

"Yes! I used to sit near the pulpit of the Prophet and hear his ahadith (sayings)" Haroon asked him to describe the main features and appearance of the Prophet. He said:

"The Prophet looked handsome and of sound physique. He had black and curly hair. His face was luminescent. He was fond of perfume and made use of it liberally, so much so that the fragrance would remain behind for quite sometime wherever he passed."

Haroon then asked whether he remembered any saying of the Prophet. The old man replied that he could still remember one in which the Prophet had said:

"Man grows old but two qualities in him still remain young: one is "greed" and the second great expectation"

Haroon was quite happy to meet the old man and hear what he had to say about the Prophet. He then ordered that a handsome gift of money be presented to him. He also instructed that he should be returned home as comfortably as possible.

Thus the old man comfortably placed on his stretcher was then on his way back to his home in Yemen. Hardly had the litter reached a small distance from Baghdad when he suddenly raised his weak voice. He asked to be sent back to Baghdad as he had an important matter to discuss with the king. When he was brought back to the court, Haroon was rather surprised and asked him if he had forgotten something. The old man replied:

"Oh King! Tell me whether the gift of money you gave me was only the first and the last or whether I could come every year to receive a similar gift from you?"

On hearing this Haroon laughed and said to him:

"You had rightly quoted the Prophet as saying that the two qualities of greed and long expectation remain young and active even in old age." Haroon then promised the old man that he could expect repeated gifts yearly as long as he lived. But alas! the greedy old man was not destined to enjoy even the first gift from the king. Back on his litter as he was comfortably

being carried, before he could reach his hometown in Yemen, he died of greed but without enjoying his cherished gift of money from Haroon.

The fact is that man by nature is born with greed in his character. The Holy Quran says:

"Verily man is created avaricious (Greedy)." (70:19)

Why is this instinct created in Man? The purpose is to make him work hard to raise his standard of living. He should temper his instinct with virtue by being considerate and generous and strive to attain the ultimate pleasure of Allah and high status in the life hereafter.

The instinct of profit and possession is not meant to make one selfish, to devote oneself to hoarding wealth, and to satisfy one's desire for worldly gains. Therefore this instinct needs to be controlled and channelled into the right direction- by being generous and charitable.

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) was once asked who the wealthiest of all men was. In reply he said: "The wealthiest of all men is the one who is not enslaved with greed". And Hazrat Ali (A.S.) had said:

"The greedy is in the shackles of disgrace." and the fourth Imam Zainul Abedeen (A..S.) in one of his prayers said: "Oh Allah! I seek shelter from THEE from overriding desire and greed for worldly things".

ISLAMIC EQUALITY AND FAIRPLAY IN PRACTICE

It was during the times when Hazrat Ali (A.S.) was the caliph of the Muslim Ummah. One day accompanied by his slave Qamber, he went to the cloth bazaar in Kufa. They stopped at one shop, and Ali (A.S.) requested to see some clothes. The shopkeeper recognized him and said "Oh Ameer-al-Mu'mineen! (Master of the faithful) I have and can offer you what you want." On noticing that he had already been recognized, Hazrat Ali (A.S.) withdrew from that shop without any deal.

Both then proceeded and stopped at another shop run by a young man. From him Hazrat Ali (A.S.) purchased two clothes, one costing three dirham and the other two. He gave the more expensive one of three dirhams to Qamber and retained the cheaper one of lower quality for himself. On seeing this, Qamber objected saying that the better quality cloth would befit him better since Ali (A.S.) was going on the pulpit to deliver Khutbas (sermons).

To this Ali (A.S.) argued that the better grade cloth should be worn by Qamber who was younger and was more desirous of attractions. Besides, Ali (A.S.) added, that he had heard the Prophet recommending to them to clothe and feed their slaves the same way as they did for themselves.

From this story, three things are noteworthy:

1. That those in high posts in government should be careful not to take advantage of their positions in matters of personal interests. At if Hazrat Ali (A.S.) by withdrawing from that first shopkeeper wanted to convey to him that the one who desired to purchase cloth was not the Caliph of the country but Ali bin Abi Talib in his personal capacity. The shopkeeper addressed him as Amir-al-Mu'mineen hence he went away without making a deal.

2. The Islamic Shariah has prescribed special and equitable rights for slaves who must receive consideration as human beings. Hence Hazrat Ali (A.S.) was putting this teaching into practice and setting an invaluable example.

3. That Islam has given consideration within limits to the natural desire of younger people to make themselves attractive. In giving better cloth to Qambar, Hazrat Ali (A.S.) wanted to make him feel happy.

Were men of high positions in public institutions today to serve the interests of the people only without misusing their positions for personal gains, people would enjoy better prosperity and peace in the world.

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