



August 20th marked the first day of the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace (RFP), in partnership with the Foundation Peace Dialogue of the World Religions and Civil Society. Religions for Peace is the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition with "Inter-religious Councils" (IRCs) in nearly 100 countries, currently headquartered in New York. The RPF's 10th World Assembly is taking place in Lindau, Bavaria, Germany from August 20th-24th on the theme of "Caring for our Common Future Advancing Shared Well-being." Some 800 senior religious leaders, youth and women of faith from over 100 countries are joined by 100 representatives of governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society groups to forge multi-stakeholder partnerships for the common good.

The 10th Religions for Peace World Assembly was launched with calls for religious groups to take decisive action on the main geopolitical issues of the day, and ending with a "statement of commitment" aimed at fostering multireligious cooperation. Almost every religious leader who spoke at the opening ceremony called communities of faith to look beyond their own local issues. "Nothing can be accomplished if we work

separately," said Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople. Kosho Niwano, president-designate of the Japanese Buddhist movement Rissho Kosei-kai, praised interfaith cooperation of the past and said it should continue in the future. Cardinal John O n a i y e k a n , archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria, commented: "The future depends entirely on how we address our shared welfare".

Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah, president of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, told a parable involving a double-decker ship where the drinking water was stored on the top level. "The people on the bottom level needed water to drink and so they started to drill a hole in the side of the ship to get the water from the outside," Bin Bayyah said. "If those on the top level would share their water then everyone would survive. But if they don't, the ones on the bottom will drill the hole and soon the entire ship will sink and everyone will perish." He went



on: "It is the same for everyone here," Bin Bayyah said. "We must work together or we will all fail."

Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé, high representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, said meetings like the ones in Lindau were important to the process of raising the profile of religious groups as part of the solution for global challenges. "In the 21st century we can say that religion is relevant once again, and this is very important," he said. "There is a consensus in the world that we must all take steps to save the planet from climate change or conflict."

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, federal president from host Germany, was the only

nonreligious leader to address the assembly. He called for religious leaders in Lindau to eliminate the role of religion in sparking conflict. "We must be united in our shared belief that religion must never again be cited as a justification for hatred or violence," Steinmeier said. "No war must

ever again be waged in the name of religion."

The assembly featured discussions on an array of key global issues, such as climate change, terrorism, women's rights, warfare, poverty, sexual violence and migration.

Vinu Aram, co-moderator of Religions for Peace and director of the Shanti Ashram, led the main assembly of participants from more than 100 countries in a closing "statement of commitment." She encouraged them to keep the statement in mind while in Lindau as well as after their return home. "Guided by the principles of my own religious tradition, and respectful of religious differences, I commit myself to principled multi-religious

cooperation for peace," the statement reads. "I will work as a partner with sincere believers of other religions and men and women of goodwill on matters of deeply held and widely shared moral concerns."

In a historic assembly for RFP, Dr. Azza Karam was elected as their first female Secretary General. She serves as a Senior Advisor on Culture and Social Development at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). She represents UNFPA as Coordinator/Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Organizations for Development; and coordinates engagement with members of a Global Interfaith Network for Population and Development with over 500 faith-based organizations. She has served as the Senior Policy Advisor in the Regional Bureau for Arab States at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) where she coordinated the Arab Human Development Reports. With the support of the Ford Foundation, she founded the first Global Women of Faith Network during her tenure at Religions for Peace, while also advising on interfaith development work in Muslim-majority countries. During this time, she served also as President of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations.



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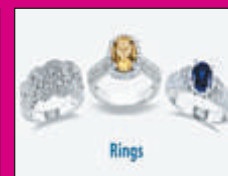
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## Brave Heart

How a Delhi software engineer helped 32 Kashmiri girls in Pune return home safely.



Harminder Singh Ahluwalia with some of the girls

One software engineer from Delhi went out of his way to ensure that 32 girls from Jammu and Kashmir who were stranded in Pune were able to get back home safely.

After the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, there have been restrictions imposed on communication and the movement of people in the state, which has been a source of worry for the state's residents living outside. But one software engineer from Delhi went out of his way to ensure that 32 girls from the state who wanted to get back home safely were able to do so.

On August 5, Harminder Singh Ahluwalia went live on Facebook to tell all Kashmiris outside the state who were feeling unsafe that they could either contact him or take shelter in the nearest gurdwaras. The post went viral and 32 girls from Kashmir, who were trying to get back home, got in touch with him.

"They were panicky," he told indianexpress.com over the telephone. "I got a call from a woman named Rukaya. She told me that there were 32 Kashmiri girls, all from underprivileged families, just waiting to get back home, because of the recent government moves in Kashmir."

The girls, who were between 17 and 22 years of age, were in Pune for a nursing training and placement programme as part of the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana. Ahluwalia said the girls told him that they just wanted to go back home as they couldn't get in

touch with the families due to all communication lines being disrupted.

The coordinator of the contingent contacted the state government and was assured assistance from the Army once they reached Srinagar. But they didn't have the funds to get there. Ahluwalia then sought donations to fund the girls' journey back home with another Facebook live August 8.

"A Sikh businessman was quick to contact me and sponsored the air tickets for the girls and four volunteers," Ahluwalia said.

On August 9, the group reached Srinagar, and with the assistance of the Army, all of them were escorted home and reunited with their families.

Ahluwalia's actions were widely praised on social media. Ahluwalia said he had decided to help because after the Pulwama terror attack, there were instances of Kashmiris outside the state being targeted and he didn't want the same thing to happen to the girls.

(Extracted from indianexpress.com)



## Erdogan Lays Stone for Turkey's First New Church



Turkish president Tayyip Erdogan, right, receives a present from Yusuf Cetin, Turkish Christian Religious Leader, in Istanbul.

**Ankara:** Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently laid the foundation stone for the first new church in Turkey since it became a modern republic in 1923.

The church in the Istanbul suburb of Yesilkoy will serve the 17,000-strong Syriac Christian community, which is also paying for the new building. "It is the Turkish republic's duty to meet the need for space to worship for the Syriac community, who are the ancient children of this geography," Erdogan said during the stone-laying ceremony.

Syriac Christians are part of the eastern Christian tradition and pray in Aramaic, which Jesus is believed to have spoken.

Erdogan said he hoped the construction of the Syriac Orthodox Mor Ephrem Church would be completed within two years. He had ordered the Istanbul metropolitan municipality to find space for the building in 2009 while he was

prime minister.

Christians make up around 0.2 percent of the total population in Turkey. In recent years, Turkey has restored and reopened churches, but the government has been criticized for trying to Islamicize the official secular country. But Erdogan sought to extend a hand to other communities in the country of 82 million, saying "don't forget, this country, this state belongs to everyone." "Anyone who has affection for, contributes to and is loyal to Turkey is a first-class citizen. There are no barriers to anyone in politics, trade or any other area."

Official statistics show 98 percent of the Turkish population is Muslim, but a poll by Konda group earlier this year showed the number of people identifying as atheist rose from 1 to 3 percent between 2008 and 2018.

(Extracted from arabnews.com)

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## Rejection of Secular Knowledge led to Muslims' Regression, says Malaysian PM

The academic dominance of the Muslim world has declined after its ancient scholars rejected the pursuit of secular knowledge, Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad has said in his opening speech to a higher education council in Ankara (Turkey). The rejection, Dr Mahathir said, came following a fatwa, or religious decree by those scholars, deeming secular knowledge such as mathematics and science as having no merit for the afterlife. In comparison, he said that European powers had instead acquired the knowledge previously pioneered by the Muslim world and subsequently took a leap over the latter. Dr.



Mahathir critiqued modern Muslims for simply parroting other scholars and taking their interpretations of Islam for granted. He also reiterated his message that religious terrorism

and jihadism go against true Islamic teachings. Dr Mahathir was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University following his speech.

## Malaysian Hajj Pilgrims Set Example on Cleanliness

Malaysian Muslim pilgrims set an example in Makkah after they celebrated the Cleanliness Day on July 31 by picking up the brooms, cleaning rags and garbage bags. The session was an extension of last year's successful cleanliness campaign, which had earned praise from the local authorities in Makkah and Madinah, informed Malaysian Hajj Delegation head, Datuk Seri Syed Saleh Syed Abdul Rahman. Malaysian Muslim pilgrims distributed among themselves tasks of cleaning up their rooms, bathrooms and dining areas, emptying rubbish bins and sweeping the corridors, as well as the staircase. Abdul Rahman explained that the campaign "creates stronger bonds among the pilgrims. Apart from fostering good ties among the pilgrims, a clean space will encourage peace, harmony and a healthier



**Malaysian Hajj delegation head Datuk Seri Syed Saleh Syed Abdul Rahman (centre) with Malaysian pilgrims at the launch of Maktab Cleanliness Campaign**

environment for everyone."

The Malaysian Hajj delegation head also added that "Islam places much importance on cleanliness, both in physical and spiritual terms, as it was considered to be part of the faith. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) once said: "Cleanliness is half the 'iman' (faith)"."

## Honors for Designer of Makkah Gate



**Jeddah:** Makkah Gate, a magnificent structure that spans the width of the Jeddah-Makkah highway, has been welcoming visitors of the holy city for 34 years. Many asked the question of who built it, and it was announced recently by the governor of Makkah, Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, that the names of all those who contributed to building the structure will be recognized, fulfilling the wish of the structure's designer, Dia Aziz Dia. Dia spoke to Arab News about the significance of the gate and why it was important to him that every individual who contributed to the project received the recognition they deserve. "Consider this as the gateway to the heart of all Muslims," said the artist. The large arched sculpture located 5 kms outside the city limits was initially proposed in 1979 by the Makkah municipality and a private contracting office. "The company planning the structure

didn't have an idea as to how they wanted the gate to look, all I was told was that they wanted the gate to be on top of the highway leading to the city," said Dia.

"After a lot of thinking of what makes the city of Makkah so important, a few ideas came to mind such as Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) and the Kaaba, but what sprang up to me most was the Qur'an. It all started with the descent of the Qur'an to Earth and my thoughts were searching for the appropriate way where people would recognize the idea of the descent through the design." Dia added in this artist's rendition a search light on top of the Makkah Gate to symbolize the structure as a beacon of peace and hope.

With over 40 years of contributions to the Saudi art scene, Dia considers his work designing the Makkah Gate the most important work in his career, his legacy.

"This is the most important accomplishment in my life, since the beginning of my career until the day I die. As far as I am concerned, there's nothing more important than that," he said. "

(Extracted from Arab News)

## Positive Reforms for Women

**Saudi Arabia will allow women to obtain passports and travel abroad without approval from a male "guardian", the government said on August 2.**

After a historic leap of relaxing the guardianship law that allows the women to travel abroad without permission, a few other momentous decisions regarding women have come about in Saudi Arabia. With regard to the Ministry of Labor and Social Development regulations, the authorities concerned have reportedly made a decision to treat the male and female workers at an equal level. Both the men and the women will now be considered as workers/people working for an employer and under his or her management and supervision in return for a wage, even if they are not within sight.

Apart from this, the retirement

age rule- 60 years for men and 55 years for women was also nullified. Contrary to the earlier regulation, the amendments also forbid the employers from terminating the services of the female employees or issuing them the notices of dismissal from the jobs because of pregnancy or delivery. The new amendments also forbids the employer of sacking the female worker due to illness related to pregnancy or delivery on a condition that it should be proved by an attested authentic medical report and the employee's absence from work should not be over a 180 days annually- whether continuous or intermittent.

Saudi Arabia has also announced it was effectively allowing women over the age of 21 to obtain passports and travel abroad without securing the permission of their "guardians" husband, father or other male relatives. The reform, which also covers civil rights such as allowing women to register childbirth, marriage or divorce, does not dismantle but diminishes the guardianship system that has long been a symbol of repression against women. The reform, which grants women greater autonomy and mobility, comes as the country reels from low oil prices and seeks to boost employment opportunities for women.

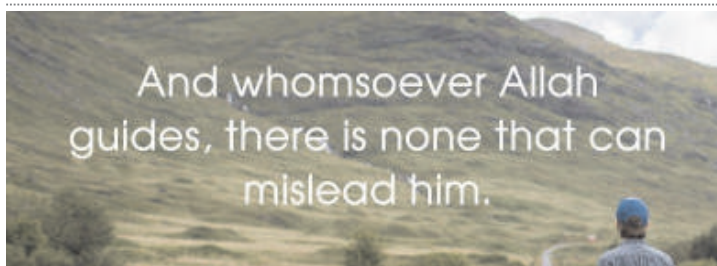
## In Pakistan's Sialkot Hindu Temple Re-Opens after 72 Years

A 1,000-year old Hindu temple located in Pakistan's Sialkot city, which was sealed for the last 72 years, has been re-opened for devotees. Shawala Teja Singh Temple built by Sardar Teja Singh was closed during the Partition. Hindus stopped visiting the temple after a mob damaged it in 1992, while protesting against the demolition of

Babri mosque in India. The Pakistan government said that the work to preserve and

restore the temple will start soon.

(Extracted from ndtv.com)





# Celebrating Diversity in the Muslim World

Inspired and encouraged by the Dalai Lama, the widely-respected Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader, the event highlighted important issues related to peaceful coexistence.



Some weeks ago, more than 350 people filled the auditorium at the India International Centre in New Delhi to attend a conference focussed on the theme, 'Celebrating Diversity in the Muslim World'. Inspired and encouraged by the Dalai Lama, the renowned and widely-respected Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader, the event was organized by the Muslims of Ladakh.

On arrival, the Dalai Lama was welcomed by Dr Abdul Qayoom

of the Anjuman Moin-ul-Islam and Ashraf Ali Barcha of the Anjuman Imamia Leh. In the auditorium he personally greeted the numerous Muslim clerics present, before taking his seat on the stage. In his preliminary remarks he mentioned that Ladakhi Muslims came to Lhasa during the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, who gave them a piece of land on which to construct a mosque. Subsequently, representatives of their community we always invited to Tibetan government functions.



"I felt that Indian Muslims should be more active in promoting religious harmony," the Dalai Lama explained. "I thought that a

meeting of Indian Muslims here in Delhi could be helpful and I really appreciate your having arranged it. I'm also happy to know that brothers and sisters from Iran are joining us here. We have to make clear to the eyes of the world how important it is to maintain religious harmony."

Page 6

لَبَّيْكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ لَبَّيْكَ ۚ إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ وَالنِّعْمَةَ لَكَ وَالْفَلَكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ

Labbayk Allaahumma (labbayk, labbayk laa shareeka laka labbayk, 'innal-hamda wan niyamata, laka walmulk, laa shareeka laka



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# Making a Difference

## NGO - School Collaboration in a Bangalore Slum

As you walk through the narrow lanes of Rajendranagara slum, in Koramangala, you may walk past this building and not even notice that it houses a school. The English-medium Greenland Public School was set up in a decade or so ago by an engineering graduate, Ms. Kowser Zehra. The school, which is from nursery till the 10<sup>th</sup> standard, supports about 250 children, mostly from economically very poor homes.

Over the years, the school's management has been struggling to provide quality education to the children since about half of the parents are in no position to pay fees. The school faces many other challenges, from limited infrastructure to need for more adequate staff and teacher training.

Headed by Venkatraman Iyer, the Bangalore based NGO Swabhimaan has been working in the Rajendranagara, LR Nagar, and Neelsandra neighbourhoods of Bangalore. It provides a range of services, including education, healthcare, microfinance, and food and clothes distribution. This year, Swabhimaan decided to adopt Greenland Public School to help it improve. Along with the school management, it drew up plans to work at various levels to transform the quality of education. In just a month, the school was provided with four additional classrooms. It facilitated the repair and refurbishing of walls. It helped identify and invest in a good number of trained and qualified teachers to augment the staff. An administrator was hired. Teachers were enrolled for training and were offered incentives based on performance. The school had no playground, because of which the children had never participated in any



sports. "We started football each morning, and also started a community computer centre to help these kids learn computers and bring science programs and value training to the school", says Venkatraman.

According to Venkatraman, there is suddenly a spurt in energy that is visible both among teachers and students. The children's parents are happy with the new excitement in their kids who now seem eager to come to school. "Just in three months, improvements are visible. The goal is to create a model school in the community that other schools can emulate," Venkatraman explains.

(For more details about Swabhimaan, see <https://swabhimaanweb.wordpress.com/>)

If you'd like to help in the work of Swabhimaan, you can contact Venkatraman Iyer on [venkatraman.iyer1958@gmail.com](mailto:venkatraman.iyer1958@gmail.com)



## PROFILE

# Karate Champ from Kolkata Slums to represent India in Thailand



Ayesha Noor, a 21-year-old Karate champion from the slums of Beniakupur in Kolkata, will be representing India in an upcoming international sports meet, which is to be held in Thailand. Her story is nothing but inspirational and heartening.

The 21-year-old's journey witnesses a lot of suffering; Ayesha was afflicted with epileptic seizures from the time of birth. She lost her father in 2010, and her mother Shakila Begum had to make ends meet by sewing clothes from home.

A ray of hope for young Ayesha

while she was living in the slums of Beniakupur in Kolkata, coach M. A. Ali saw potential and took her under his wing, grooming her to be a solid contender in Karate.

The young karate champion has won three gold medals for India, making her a fierce force to be reckoned with. Her first win was in 2010, followed by winning gold again in Bangkok in 2013 and 2015. Ayesha Noor was honoured by the United States of America as the 'Hero of Gender Equality' in 2017, at a function held at the American Center in New Delhi. She was also

awarded the 'Times Women Heroes Award' on 7th June, by the *Times of India*. At such a young age, Ayesha Noor has now become a great influence for many.

A documentary film has also been made which depicts her journey from the slums of Kolkata to winning gold in karate at the international level, despite her health condition and financial struggle. The story of this young karate champ is nothing but inspirational.

(Extracted from [mpositive.in](http://mpositive.in). Source: [femina.in](http://femina.in))

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## Page 4 Celebrating Diversity in the Muslim World

In his address the Dalai Lama noted that of seven billion human beings alive today, one billion have no interest in religion, leaving six billion who follow one of several different religious traditions. He noted that the Indian practice for cultivating a calmly abiding mind, shamatha, gave rise to the traditions of non-violence and compassion (*ahimsa and karuna*). "All our religious traditions convey a message of love. In Buddhist terms we talk about feeling that all sentient beings are as dear to us as our own mother. Muslims in Tibet were very peaceable." He mentioned that an imam told him that a Muslim should love every member of God's creation. "Theistic faiths suggest we are all creatures of a merciful God... We have to think about what unites us rather than what makes us different. All religions have the same potential to create a happy human being; they convey the same message of love. There are wonderful people belonging to all these traditions", he said. He explained, "If we have peace of mind within ourselves, peace in the world will come about. But religious harmony is essential."

"I feel that Indian Muslims should show the rest of the world,

**"If we have peace of mind within ourselves, peace in the world will come about... religious harmony is essential."**

especially people in other Muslim countries, that religious harmony is possible, which something else I'm committed to sharing with others."

The Dalai Lama expressed sympathy for the Rohingya refugees from Burma along with his conviction that the Buddha would have protected such people.

Maulana Syed Kalbe Jawad Naqvi, a Shia teacher from Lucknow, said real Muslims are expected to help others, to work to serve all human beings. A Muslim is one who helps other human beings, whatever faith they follow. Maulana Mahmud Madani, from Deoband, spoke of visiting Ladakh and Turtuk. There he met Shias and Sunnis and came across some who prayed together. He suggested that Muslims should work not only for Muslims but for everyone. He agreed with the Dalai Lama's observation that very often it is not religious issues that underlie conflict but political considerations. Too often religion is used as a weapon for short-term

political gain. He recalled that it was 'fakirs' who captured the hearts and minds of people and who could be called their rulers more than kings or emperors.

Dr Mohammed Husain Mokhtari (Chancellor of University of Islamic Denomination or Madhaheb University, Tehran, Iran) told the audience that it is a religious duty to respect each other. He commended accepting diversity among followers of religions and also noted that in

following religion they are united. He said we have to recognise diversity as a fact and that to do so is beneficial for everyone. Mutual respect is important. Acceptance and recognition of each other is the preliminary to dialogue, and if the goal is unity, there has to be dialogue. He encouraged the recognition of similarities as well as the acceptance of differences. Ignorance and negligence are significant obstacles to the spirit of diversity. We cannot achieve unity if we view some groups of people with fear. Nor is it helpful to criticize others as non-

believers.

Former Vice President of India Hamid Ansari spoke of diversity as such a desirable and simple concept. He asked what we find in nature no flowers, trees or human beings are exactly the same; there is diversity. He commended the efforts made to convene this conference, but wondered if it would have been necessary if we properly understood diversity.

(For a detailed report of the conference, see <https://www.dalailama.com/news/2019/celebrating-diversity-in-the-muslim-world/amp>)



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## Shafiqur Rahman Khan

Anti-bride trafficking crusader Shafiqur Rahman Khan to receive Grinnell Prize 2019



Shafiqur Rahman Khan has won the Grinnell prize for his outstanding work in seeking to eradicate the bride trafficking trade (the selling of women into often multiple forced marriages) and empowering the agency and leadership of survivors. The Grinnell College Innovator for Social Justice Prize (the Grinnell Prize) honours individuals who have demonstrated leadership in their fields and who show creativity, commitment, and extraordinary accomplishment in effecting positive social change. And for this year they have chosen a young dynamic social activist Shafiqur Rahman Khan, who is the first Indian who will be receiving the award in October 2019 at Iowa, United States of America.

Shafiq, 35 years, hails from Gaya, Bihar. His foray in the

field of activism was at the age of 15 when he joined the communist party with the hope of working for the well-being of the poor. But after working for almost 4 years with the party, he moved away because he was not satisfied. In 2004 he moved to Delhi, where he saw the same sight the sad plight of migrant workers and their sufferings. He met Swami Agnivesh, chairperson of the Bonded labour liberation front who was also working against sex-selective abortions. He became part of the back office team for 'Multipath march against Female Foeticide'. He began his bachelor's in social work (BSW) in 2006. It was during these days, when he was in a village to study about female foeticide, he saw a trafficked bride who wanted help, but his co-travellers advised him to avoid

getting into the matter out of fear. He was haunted by her story, and after a month, went back to that village to meet with her. He learnt that she had been sold to another man. It was a shock for him to learn about how men were buying and selling women in broad daylight. Upon his return to Delhi, his mentor, Kamla Bhasin, advised him to work for justice. She encouraged Shafiq to prepare a plan for the change he wanted to see. He did so and received a Fellowship to implement his plan and became the first male Fellow of Jagori, a prominent feminist organization in Delhi.

In 2006, he founded his organisation 'Empower People'. "I wanted to provide alternatives to women who were trafficked in the name of marriage. There was no organisation working with these women at that time," Shafiq says. 'Empower People' is based in New Delhi India and operates in many regions across North and East India, most notably in Haryana's Mewat district. It works to support law enforcement agencies and families of trafficked brides by locating and rescuing missing girls and women. Shafiq understood that being a male places him in a unique position to challenge patriarchy. Through the support of 'Empower People', several children of trafficked women are attending school.

(Extracted from [twocircles.net](http://twocircles.net))

## Dr. Fatima Al-Zahraa Al-Atraktchi

Woman Scientist's New Tool to Curb Infections

A Muslim nano technologist has developed a new tool that can 'listen to bacterial communication' in a way that could help curb antibiotic resistance and accurately diagnose a group of diseases in a matter of seconds. "The new technology used within my test is

able to pick up bacteria and make a diagnosis within 30 seconds. I hope it will allow doctors to prescribe specific drugs straight away, reducing the use of blanket treatments or guesswork," explained Dr.



Fatima Al-Zahraa Al-Atraktchi. The Muslim mother of two kids, born in Kuwait to Lebanese and Iraqi parents, earned her Ph.D. certificate in physics and nanotechnology at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) in January 2018. Al-Atraktchi

developed a sensor that can detect *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, a problematic bacterial infection for people with compromised immune systems, faster than traditional methods. Thanks to her scientific breakthrough, Al-Atraktchi received in November 2017 one of the Lundbeck Foundation's five research talent awards for scientists under 30 years old. Following this, she founded her own company 'PreDiagnose' to develop, expand, and commercialize her research.

## Carola Rackete

Woman Ship Captain Defies Odds to Help Refugees



Carola Rackete, the woman captain of a rescue ship carrying 40 refugees, was arrested for breaking an Italian naval blockade that was trying to stop her from docking the vessel in Lampedusa. For 17 days, she received no support at all by any authority. The only indication that she got was to disembark the people in Libya, a country at war and the very same country from where the people that she rescued were escaping.

The cramped rubber dinghy was drifting, directionless, with 53 migrants on board. The coast of Libya, from which the boat had set out, was 47 miles to the south and the nearest part of Europe was out of reach, about 140 miles north. The boat was spotted on 12 June by a French plane. The plane's crew of volunteers had been scouring the Mediterranean for people in distress, and they alerted another rescue team on board a nearby charity ship, the Sea-Watch 3. The crew of the Sea-Watch 3 made their way, towards the distressed dinghy and rescued those on board.

At that point, the crew could have handed the migrants over to Libyan coastguards, but the Sea-Watch 3's captain, a 31-year-old German named Carola Rackete, did not consider that an option. Libya has in recent years descended into a lawless, chaotic state policed by armed militias, and Sea-Watch, a German charity, had already vowed never to return migrants to its shores. "Forcibly taking rescued people back to a war-torn country, having them imprisoned and tortured, is a crime that we will never commit," the charity said in a statement recently.

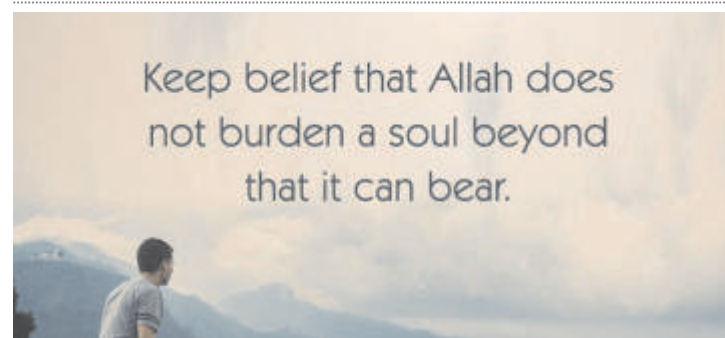
The next closest port to the Sea-Watch 3 was on the Italian island of Lampedusa, but the Italian government had banned rescue ships bearing migrants from docking at its ports. Rackete

spent two weeks in international waters, before deciding on 29 June that the health of those on board was at risk. Italy, where her human cargo was not welcome, was the only option.

The Italian government's position is that Libya's coastguard should take migrants back, and that rescue ships are acting as a taxi service that facilitate traffickers' work. On 11 June, Italy's cabinet passed an emergency decree ruling that any vessel that sailed into Italian waters without permission would face a fine of up to €50,000. It was the following day that Rackete received the distress call about the drifting migrant boat.

After more than two weeks in limbo, Rackete said conditions on board the Sea-Watch 3 were beginning to deteriorate. Rackete decided to guide the ship into port in the middle of the night on 29 June. Soon after Sea-Watch 3 arrived in Lampedusa, the migrants were taken off the ship, and Rackete was arrested and warned she could face 10 years in jail. In the end, the judge sided with Rackete and with her interpretation of maritime law: as the ship's captain, she had a duty to protect the lives of those on board. She was carrying out that duty, judge Alessandra Vella said. Rackete stated: "I have white skin, I was born in a rich country, I have the right passport, I was allowed to attend three universities, and I graduated at the age of 23, I feel a moral obligation to help those people who did not have the foundations that I did."

Keep belief that Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear.





## This Couple Have Helped Heal Lakhs of People



Dr. Ashish Satav, and his wife Dr. Kavita have dedicated their life to serving people in one of the most remote tribal areas of Melghat, Maharashtra. From a hut hospital to a 30-bed healthcare facility that provides curative and preventive medical facilities, their journey of transforming the region is nothing short of inspiring!

Dr. Ashish studied at the Government Medical College in Nagpur. As a student there, he had the opportunity to visit several remote parts of the country, some of which had a deplorable state of healthcare. Melghat was one such area. It didn't even have a basic health centre to start with. At that point during his MD training, he decided to move there and establish a proper healthcare centre there, he says. So, in 1998, he registered a voluntary organisation, MAHAN (Meditation, AIDS, Health, Addiction, Nutrition) under which a hospital was started in Dharni, Melghat, using Rs 1 lakh, that he saved while studying in the medical college. While the OPD was started in a small hut in Kolupur, the hospital comprising of 4 rooms (in an area measuring 1000 sq ft) was started in a rented house in Dharni.

Gradually, Ashish and his wife Kavita expanded their work. An eye surgeon, Dr. Kavita started an eye hospital in Dharni, in 2001. "The villagers here were too poor to afford eye surgeries. Many were also

sceptical about surgeries owing to superstitions. They chose to live their lives with cataract instead of undergoing treatment. But, we were determined and slowly began to save up more. With the help of the savings and a donation of Rs 10,000, Kavita operated on ten cataract patients successfully. Gradually more support came in from various health societies, and social organisations. With all that help, till now, Kavita has been able to bring back sight to almost 1200 patients, all free of cost," says Dr. Ashish. Throughout the journey, the duo had to face several unexpectedly enlightening circumstances that led them to think beyond medicine.

"We wondered if there was a point in treating people if they didn't know how to stay healthy. So, we started to conduct health education programmes through slideshows, group discussions, etc., in various villages. However, it brought us to another problem of lack of amenities to prevent malnutrition. With one problem leading to another, we began to mobilise the village youth to create awareness about sustainable organic farming, kitchen gardening, de-addiction, government schemes, etc." Thanks to this, they have established about 3000 organic gardens in 17 villages of Melghat.

(Extracted from thebetterindia.com)

## Aamir Qutub

### AMU Alumnus Wins Young Entrepreneur Award in Australia

**Melbourne (Australia):** Indian-Australian Entrepreneur and an alumnus of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Aamir Qutub, has won the Young Entrepreneur of the Year award category in the Business Excellence Awards (GBEA) in Australia. Established in 1986, and managed by the Geelong Chamber of Commerce, the Business Excellence Awards are the oldest continuously running business awards in Australia.

Justin Giddings, CEO of Avalon Airport won the Business Leader of the Year and Aamir Qutub (CEO, Enterprise Monkey) won the Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

Aamir Qutub is the Founder and CEO of Enterprise Monkey (a digital solutions agency), Tech Investor and Co-Founder in 6



startups. He is also a member of Ministerial Advisory Committee to the Minister for Planning in Australia. Aamir was appointed as the General Manager of ICT Geelong (local IT Industry Cluster) at the age of 25. He was the founding Secretary of Pivot Summit - Australia's largest regional tech conference.

Aamir was brought up in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. He did his Bachelor of Engineering

from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and immigrated to Australia at the age of 23 to complete MBA from Deakin University. "I had applied for around 150 office jobs, but couldn't get any due to lack of experience in Australia. I used to work as a cleaner at the Avalon Airport, and distribute newspapers at midnight to pay for my living and fees."

Aamir says. In 2012, Aamir got an internship opportunity with ICT Geelong. Impressed with his performance and passion for digital transformation, he was asked by the board to step up as the General Manager of ICT Geelong at the age of 25.

At AMU, Aamir was elected as Gen. Secretary of AMU Students' Union (AMUSU) in 2011. As AMUSU Secretary, Aamir organized the first-ever recruitment drive in AMU which resulted in the placement of 2000 students in 30 companies. His passion for technology contributed in the digitization of AMU campus by introduction of free WiFi and Smart Classrooms.

In 2014, Aamir founded Enterprise Monkey – a Web and App solutions company in his brother-in-law's garage. "I started with \$2000 in savings", says Aamir who led his company to establish in four countries with YoY revenue growth of 300% in the first 3 years.

(Extracted from ummid.com)

## Moina Shaik

### Countering Hate with a Cup of Coffee



When Moina Shaik, an American Muslim woman, started her "Meet a Muslim" events in 2016, she wanted to change wrong perceptions filled out by media. Three years on, she still has hope of making a change. "The research constantly says that some people have never met a Muslim," she explained. "I wanted to be that person. So I just took my laptop thinking that maybe a few people will show up. The first event drew over 100

people."

Hearing former US President Barack Obama suggested that Muslims should speak out to change wrong perceptions filled out by media in 2016, Shaik decided to start her own initiative. She placed an ad in her local paper: Come have coffee and conversation with a Muslim. Shaik was only a one woman facing down hatred, one cup of coffee at a time. "The basic misconception is that all Muslims are bad people," she said. "This is not what Islam is," she explained. "I started thinking, 'What can I do proactively so that these hate crimes don't happen?'" Three years since that first coffee, Shaik has led 200 more such get-togethers in several cities. "There are bad apples in every ethnicity, in every group you know ...but that does not mean that everybody is bad", she explains.

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# Role of Religion

**This life involves ups and downs, and religion provides consolation and relief to individuals who pass through these ups and downs.**

By Amin Valliani

Not too long ago, the events at Christchurch (New Zealand) mosques and Sri Lankan churches once again highlighted the crucial need for interfaith harmony. This means that followers of all religions, though they belong to different parts of the world, speak different languages, and profess different interpretations of their faiths, should live together peacefully as good neighbours.

The world is a family of religions. Like in a family, its members contribute and strengthen to make the family unit stronger. Similarly, all religions provide inspiration to build a better world. In order to create interfaith harmony at the global level, it is also necessary that the contribution of all religions to the development of a common humanity must be recognised, highlighted and be made part of the school curriculum internationally. All religions have made notable contributions in the areas of spiritual enlightenment, moral inspiration and social cohesion.

**All religions provide inspirations to build a better world.**

Religion has been with us since time immemorial and most people spontaneously adhere to the religion of their forefathers. Every religion has changed the course of history and uplifted societies. It has demonstrated its relevance and usefulness throughout history, and the modern age is no exception.

There are certain areas where the contribution of religion is above board. The first such area is that it has instilled faith in a Higher Power. Every individual is regarded as a manifestation of divine will. We are born for a purpose and achieving the same gives us a sense of fulfilment. Religion connects individuals and communities to their Creator, informing them about the purpose and meaning of life.

There are countless different faiths, religions and schools of thought; all of them provide an answer for how we got here, where we go when we die and why we are here. Islam, in particular, says that humans have been created with a mission of *ibadat* [worship]. Allah says "I created not the jinn and humans except they should



**“ Humans should not be living in a world of increasing material plenty by forgetting or forsaking the spiritual side of their existence. ”**

perform [*ibadat*] (51:56)". The word '*ibadat*' is literally translated in English as worship, but in Islamic parlance it means submission to the will of Allah. This implies acceptance of conditions in which humans are born.

**Transitory Nature of Physical Life**

The second area where religions' contribution is noteworthy is highlighting the transitory nature of physical life. The latter is limited in time but religion encourages human beings to become immortal by contributing to their societies. Some are lucky enough that they make contributions in uplifting their societies. In this way, they live in the hearts and minds of people even after their physical death. When a person dies, his actions come to an end. But religion gives him an opportunity to earn a reward even after death for the actions done during earthly life. Islam calls it '*sadaqah jariyah*', which means continuous reward for an action that someone does in his or her life.

Similarly, life and death are major topics of all religions. No human is born through his own volition or at his own behest but his life is gifted by the Divine to perform righteous actions. All religions encourage their adherents to do good deeds in this field of action for onward transmission to eternity; good actions are the only 'assets' to be

sent forth for eternal bliss. This helps change the course of peoples' lives by changing the shape of their character.

**Consolation and Relief**

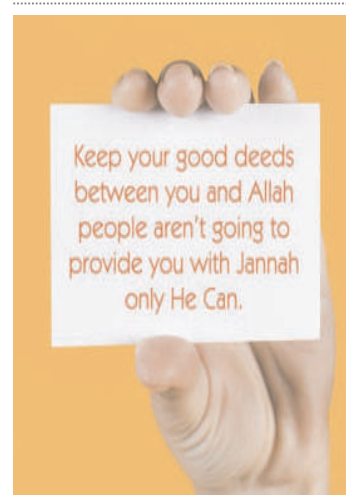
This life involves ups and downs, and religion provides consolation and relief to individuals who pass through these ups and downs. It encourages and inculcates values of patience, tolerance and striving for self-improvement.

Most religions reject self-aggrandisement and warn humanity against over-involvement in material pursuits. In other words, humans should not be living in a world of increasing material plenty by forgetting or forsaking the spiritual side of their existence. They have an obligation to uplift their spirit by devoting themselves more to the cause of spirituality.

Normally, all religions state that life on earth is noble; therefore, it should not be wasted in meaningless wrangling. Religion points out that there is an inflated personal ego everywhere in politics and art, in economics and business which needs to be subdued. Religion encourages people to strive for peace within and peace across the earth.

These are the basics inherent in the teachings of most religions. Diversity in all aspects of life is a natural phenomenon, therefore, it is incumbent upon all of us to be broadminded and open-hearted. Governments should accord equal status and protection to all people no matter what faith they belong to. In this way we would make our world a citadel of peace and tranquility.

**(The writer is an educationist with an interest in religion).**



Keep your good deeds between you and Allah people aren't going to provide you with Jannah only He Can.

## Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence

**States must do more to stop hate crimes and promote interfaith initiatives, say UN rights experts.**

**Geneva:** States have an important role to play in promoting religious tolerance and cultural diversity by promoting and protecting human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, say a group of UN independent experts\*. The experts urged States to step up their efforts to combat intolerance, discrimination and violence against people based on religion or belief, including against members of religious minorities and people who are not religious. Their comments come in a statement marking the first International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief on 22 August:

"We welcome the decision of the UN to designate 22 August as the international day to commemorate the victims of acts of violence based on religion or belief. This is a great opportunity to raise awareness about religious intolerance, and violence and discrimination against anyone based on their religion or belief.

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief which has the effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis would amount to religious intolerance and discrimination. This was made clear in the 1981 General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

We have observed violence in the name of religion around the world perpetrated by States and non-state groups leading to discrimination, persecution, arbitrary arrests or detention, enforced disappearances, sexual violence and killings of many people based on their religion or belief. Victims have included religious minorities, individuals who are not religious, LGBTI persons, children and women who face many forms of discrimination and gender-based violence. Such violence threatens the hard-fought progress in securing women's equality and the rights of LGBTI persons.

"We stress that religion or belief should never be used to justify discrimination. When faced with religious persecution or discrimination, victims are often also deprived of their right to participate fully in political, economic and cultural life, as well as their rights to education and to health. This can include the desecration and destruction of numerous cultural heritage sites of

rich historic and religious value, such as places of worship and cemeteries.

As populism has become a trend in the political and social arena, it has fostered many forms of hatred against those who are viewed as foreign or simply different. Often, States and religious institutions resort to the instrumentalisation of religions or beliefs in order to retain their influence or control and achieve other political agendas. Fundamentalism is on the rise across the world's major religious traditions, posing a threat to many human rights.

Moreover, critical views of religions or beliefs are sometimes mischaracterised as 'hate speech' or labelled an offence to the religious feelings of others both by governments and non-state groups. Too often this is used as a pretext to silence those with critical voices and punish others for not believing. The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief is misunderstood as protecting religions and beliefs instead of the people with the beliefs and those without.

It is incumbent on States to ensure that religions or beliefs are not used to violate human rights, and to combat religious extremism – which are a threat to many human rights, while adhering to international norms.

States have resorted to the securitisation of religion or belief, or viewing them through a lens of national security, in their fight against violent extremism. But an overly securitised approach has proven to be counterproductive and has led to xenophobia, increasing 'religious profiling' and discrimination, particularly towards religious minorities.

We emphasise the words of the UN General Assembly resolution of 3 June 2019 designating the international day that 'terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilisation or ethnic group'.

We urge States and all individuals and groups to work together to enhance the implementation of international human rights standards that protect individuals against discrimination and hate crimes, and to increase interreligious, interfaith and intercultural initiatives, and expand human rights education in an inclusive manner as a key catalyst for change."

(Source: <https://yubanet.com>)



## Hyderabad Public Duped by Ponzi Scheme

**Hyderabad:** Bushra Begum and her husband Sirajur Rahman, both teachers at the Islamic Universal Research Center at Malakpet, Hyderabad, duped several investors mostly women in the name of giving halal profits. The duo convinced the people saying that they had a gold business in Dubai where high returns were guaranteed. They offered to give people double the amount they invested and 3% monthly profit (interest).

For a few months she paid the investors regularly, but she stopped paying the monthly returns. She then informed her investors that she had deposited the money in Heera Gold, which is closed now with the founder CEO, Nowhera Sheikh in jail. Soon, word spread and the women started visiting her house to get back for their deposits. And unable to provide

convincing answers to the investors, the couple locked their house and fled. No one was able to contact them on their phones. Nearly 11 women have filed complaints with the police at Saidabad police station against Bushra Begum. Each woman is said to have invested more than 5 lakhs. Bushra Begum has duped more than 50 women amounting to nearly 9 crores. She and her husband ran an office where they had a few employees who have also not been paid their salaries.

The women have complained that Bushra Begum and her family were leading a luxurious life, with each person in the house owning a vehicle and she was allegedly distributing expensive items to her family members. All these things were bought from our money, claimed the women. And now Bushra Begum says she invested the

money in Heera Gold, how is it possible when Nowhera Sheikh is in jail?" ask the women. Bushra Begum started her business after the arrest of Nowhera Sheikh.

The police have registered the complaints and made 2 FIRs for cheating, and are investigating the matter and trying to trace the absconding couple who had earned a good reputation as Islamic teachers in the Universal Islamic Research Center. And this is precisely why the people believed in them because they were imparting high morals and values of Islam. 'How could they dupe, let alone lie?' asked a woman named Asiya in the press interview. The police have said they will also verify whether Bushra Begum had invested in the Heera Gold business.

(Extracted from [twocircles.net](http://twocircles.net))

## Lokhandwala Muslims Pray in Batches

**Mumbai:** In a move to douse the controversy over *Namaz* being offered on roads, Muslims in Lokhandwala area of Mumbai's Andheri are offering prayers in 2-3 batches if there are more people gathered for the purpose. "We are doing this since last 6-7 years. Whenever there are more people gathered for *Namaz*, especially during the month of Ramadan, we offer prayers in 2-3 batches instead of occupying roads for the purpose", Sohail Masood of Lokhandwala Masjid said. "Lokhandwala Masjid is located in a market area and offering *Namaz* on roads would cause inconvenience to the

people. So we have decided not to offer *Namaz* on roads", Sohail Masood, former employee of Air India who runs an NGO Dhai Akshar headed by his wife, said. The trust works for education and social upliftment of street children.

In yet another important decision taken by the mosque management, they do not use loudspeakers to relay Azaan. "Ever since the establishment of the mosque, we decided that loudspeakers will not be used to relay Azaan", he said. "Everybody knows the Salah time table. In fact, people gather much before the

scheduled time and offer *Namaz* in the mosque", Sohail Masood said. Sohail Masood shared this experience at a meeting organised by Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai. Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals gathered under the platform "Indian Muslims for Democracy," hoped the Lokhandwala Masjid experience is repeated in other parts if possible. Centre for Study of Society and Secularism was founded by Asghar Ali Engineer and is currently being managed by his son, Irfan Engineer.

## *Namaz* should not cause inconvenience to Others: AIMPLB

All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) member Khalid Rasheed Farangi Mahli has said prayers should not be offered by causing inconvenience to anyone. "*Namaz* is a prayer before Allah. It is not right to offer the prayer by causing inconvenience to anyone," Farangi Mahli explained. "In some mosques, when there is no space left for

people, they offer prayers on the road on Friday. But if anyone has any objection to it, then the

*Namaz* should make an extra effort to reach the mosque in time for it," he added.

### BHOOMI CONFERENCE 2019

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(For more details, see <https://bhoomicollege.org/bhoomi-conference-2019/themes-and-schedule>)

## Expo on Muslim Women Achievers



Anwari Begum in 1905 and she even presided over the annual conference of the Brahmo Samaj.

"I stumbled upon the book Anwari Begum in my mother's

library. Then I realised I have to do something to tell the story about Muslim women who came onto their own at a time when the stereotype was that of a conservative society with many problems," said Syeda Hameed of Muslim Women's Forum, the brain behind the exhibition. A small booklet with the profiles of the women was also launched on the occasion.

(Full story available on [thehindu.com](http://thehindu.com))

**Hyderabad, Telengana:** A travelling exhibition of pathbreaking Muslim women achievers of the 20th Century rolled into the city recently. Called 'Pathbreakers', the invitation for the event had the enigmatic photograph of Tyeba Khedive Jung who was born in 1873 in Hyderabad. Moving away from Hyderabad, she became the first woman from the city who received university education, graduating from the University of Madras in 1894. Tyeba Khedive Jung wrote

## 800th Anniversary of Francis-Sultan Encounter Commemorated

**Bengaluru:** Speakers from various religious traditions in Bengaluru jointly commemorated the 800th anniversary of an encounter between Saint Francis of Assisi and Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil of Egypt.

Although all religions aim at the same holy and spiritual aspects to lead a good life, unfortunately people do not follow even 10 percent of their tenets and teachings, regretted Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore at the interreligious meet held on July 27 St. Joseph's Boys' High School Auditorium, Bengaluru. Saint Francis, a Christian, went to meet the Muslim Sultan in the



days of the crusades. The Sultan was also a good man. Francis' resemblance of the poor and his approach towards all creatures attracted the Sultan, the archbishop said in his presidential address. The Archbishop urged those present to become ambassadors of peace and harmony. "Ultimately, whatever be one's religion, we all believe in one God," he said.

## The Inclusion Fellowship 2019

The Inclusion Fellowship 2019 is offered to individuals working in the inclusion space. The Inclusion Fellowship supports a cohort of upcoming entrepreneurs, artists, policy makers and anyone working in the disability space to promote and embrace inclusion. The year-long fellowship program will involve 1 week of deep immersion phase + quarterly review meetups in Bangalore, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad and other places. It will revolve around dialogues and meetings with social investors, social entrepreneurs, NGOs in the disability space, field visits and sessions by individuals from India and abroad.

For details, see <https://indiainclusionsummit.com/fellowship/>



## A Mosque in Flood-Ravaged Kerala

Offers Prayer Hall to be Used as Mortuary



A mosque in flood-ravaged Kerala has come to the help of local medical authorities by offering its prayer hall to be used as a mortuary. The Mujahid Mosque in Pothukallu area of Malappuram district has offered its premises so that doctors can carry out quick autopsy of bodies being recovered from the landslide in Kavalapara. More than 60 people are reportedly feared to have been buried alive

in this tragedy.

The nearest government hospital which is equipped to conduct an autopsy is over 40 km, Kavalapara. Due to the distance and heavy rains, it was becoming very difficult for medical officials to transport bodies to the hospital for autopsy. Doctors needed a large hall where they could conduct autopsies of the bodies that were recovered. Taking note of the

emergency and the extent of damage in the area, the local mosque offered help and allowed the medical teams to set up an autopsy room inside the prayer hall. This humble gesture came to light only after Parameshwaran, a staffer at the Manjeri Medical College, shared a video of the mosque's prayer hall being converted into an autopsy hall.

(Taken from [indiatoday.in](http://indiatoday.in))

## JMI Economics Students Shine

In an outstanding performance, 22 of the 32 Post Graduate students from the Department of Economics, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) have cleared UGC NET/JRF exam this year. Out of the 32 students, 19 have qualified for National Eligibility

Test (NET) for lectureship and 3 for Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) in the all India test conducted by University Grant Commission (UGC). This is for the first time that such a large number of students have qualified NET/JRF exam from

the Department. Prof. Halima Sadia Rizvi, Head, Department of Economics, JMI said the historic success of the students in NET exam can be attributed to the dedication, hard work and higher levels of motivation of the students.

## Tamil Nadu Party seeks Enumeration of Dalit Christians, Muslims

With pre-testing for Census 2021 currently underway, a political party in Tamil Nadu has called for the enumeration of Christians and Muslims of Dalit origin in the Scheduled Caste list. D. Ravikumar of Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi

(VCK, Liberation Panthers Party) has reiterated its demand that Dalit persons belonging to Christian or Muslim faiths be extended reservation in government institutions for education and employment. Not extending reservation to

Dalits of all faiths is tantamount to denying their Constitutional rights to practice a religion of their choice, the party said.

(Extracted from [mattersindia.com](http://mattersindia.com))

## Saudi Arabia Appoints

First Female Spokesperson for Public Education

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education has appointed Ibtissam al-Shehri as its first female spokesperson for public education. Al-Shehri, who has been a supervisor for schools in the country's eastern province, was announced as the ministry's spokesperson for public education. According to local media outlets, al-Shehri has been



الأستاذة إبتسام بنت حسن الشهري  
المندوبة الرسمية باسم التعليم العام

teaching English for the past 17 years and has studied in the United States.



## TCN – Seed Apprentice Programme

For young and aspiring journalists to join TCN's flagship journalism training and mentorship programme. The vision of the program is to provide training and capacity building for authentic voices from communities traditionally absent in mainstream Indian media.

The goal of the SEED apprenticeship program is to provide employment, tell news stories of marginalized communities and prepare a young person for a life that works towards the

empowerment of the marginalized in India. SEED stands for Support for Education & Economic Development and is a charitable organization with a vision of supporting the underprivileged in India.

For more details, see; [http://twocircles.net/2019aug14/432561.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+Twocirclesnet-IndianMuslim+%28TwoCircles.net+-+Indian+Muslim+News%29](http://twocircles.net/2019aug14/432561.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Twocirclesnet-IndianMuslim+%28TwoCircles.net+-+Indian+Muslim+News%29)

## NGOs, Mosques take up Flood Relief Work in Sangli & Kolhapur

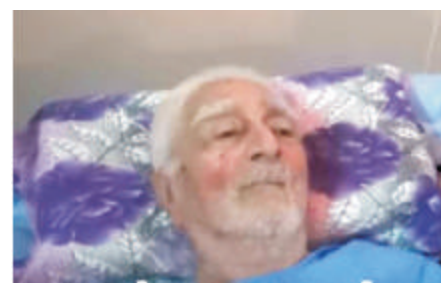
Many Muslim NGOs and mosques started relief work in flood-hit Kolhapur and Sangli districts in Maharashtra. In these tough times, the Muslim community of Kolhapur and other parts of the state have stood by the flood hit families, striving to help them at all

levels. The Solapur unit of SIO (Students Islamic Organization) raised funds for flood victims by standing outside an Eigah. Jamiyat-e-Ulema-e Hind of the same city appealed to donate clothes, utensils, food etc.A

(Extracted from [twocircles.net](http://twocircles.net))

## OBITUARY

### Hasanuddin Ahmed



Mr. Hasanuddin Ahmed, former IAS officer from Hyderabad, died on August 13, Tuesday. He was 96. He was an author, historian, philanthropist and administrator. His noted works included a translation of the Bhagavad Gita. He was known for land acquisition for the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam and resettlement of oustees while being the collector of a district. He was not keeping well for the last three years. His brother-in law also passed away a few hours earlier than him. Both were buried in Masjid-e Almas graveyard after funeral prayers at Aziz Jung Mosque.

Hasanuddin Ahmed was known

for over two dozen books he authored. He was also noted for being the epitome of traditions handed down by the Nizam era. He lived in Aziz Bagh near Darul Shifa in Noor Khan Bazar in the old quarters of Hyderabad. He inherited Aziz Bagh from his father Deenar Jung who was police commissioner of Hyderabad in the Nizam Government prior to Independence.

Mr. Ahmed authored nearly 25 books and was known for rare insights into the Quranic studies and Arabic language. He had done his Ph.D. in Urdu from Jamia Millia Islamia. He was conferred with Makhdoom Mohiuddin Award by the Andhra Pradesh Urdu Academy. His wife died five years ago. He is survived by two sons, Zaheeruddin and Shamsuddin.



# Two Dogs

**We really need to cultivate compassion for animals and take care of them.**

It happened just the other day. When I got back from the mosque having finished the fajr prayer, I thought would go out to dispose off some garbage that had collected. I went out with the garbage, bucket in hand.



Suddenly, two dogs began chasing me (or was it the bucket?). The animals were wagging their tails and were panting, with their tongues sticking out. I quickened my pace. I was afraid of the animals. As soon as I reached the spot where I wanted to leave the garbage, I inverted

the bucket and shook it. The dogs rushed in and started rummaging through the stuff with their paws and mouths. They were really famished, it seemed. They were in search for food but they found nothing special. They may have been hungry all night just because they were 'mere' animals, not human beings who pompously consider themselves as owners of the Earth.

Almost everything in the pile of garbage was stale. It was stinking. At that moment, I felt guilty, as if I were a burden on this planet. These poor animals were starving. There must be hundreds of thousands of dogs like this all over the world who lead such pathetic lives. Internally, I cried but I couldn't do anything because I didn't have anything to offer them.



Wha

t pain they must have undergone!

**We really need to cultivate compassion for animals and take care of them. This planet is home to millions of life-forms in addition to human beings, and every creature, being a creation of God, needs to be loved and respected.**

## Morocco's Jewish Legacy The Rabbi of Essaouira

**The presence of Jewish tradesmen helped shape the character of Essaouira in Morocco.**

**Traces of the port's Jewish heritage are evident to this very day. Every year Jews from all over the world make a pilgrimage to Essaouira, keeping memories of the city's Jewish character alive.**



**By Claudia Mende**

At the old Jewish cemetery, all is quiet. A tranquil melody wafts on the breeze. A small group of worshippers prays at the mausoleum in the centre of the burial ground, a man sings. An old lady dressed from head-to-toe in black explains that this is the grave of Rabbi Pinto. She says she comes here every year from Paris to pray at the mausoleum of the venerated Rabbi. And meets other Jews from all over the world.

The Jewish cemetery lies directly on the coast, outside the historic old town. Just a few minutes' walk from the Christian cemetery. There's a guard at the entrance, but no police. The gravestones are strewn at random, with weeds growing in between. The Hebrew inscriptions are severely eroded, because this final resting place is so often flooded by sea water.

A banner on the cemetery wall bids worshippers welcome to Hilloula, on the pilgrimage for Rabbi Haim Pinto, buried here in 1845. To this day, the Rabbi is revered as a just man who had the ear of God. Those who make the pilgrimage to his grave every year are for the most part Jews, originally from Morocco, who were forced to leave their childhood home following the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948.

Located on Morocco's Atlantic coast, Essaouira is keen to promote its Jewish legacy. The cemetery, pilgrimage and synagogues are mentioned in pamphlets at the tourist office. There are special tours focusing on aspects of Jewish life in the city. Traders in the souk encourage travellers to go and take a look at the synagogues.

"The only Arab city where most of the residents were once Jewish" In much of the Arab world, the idea of a Jewish pilgrimage

would be unusual, if not impossible. But not in Essaouira. Mogador, a thriving economic hub: looking to establish contact with European tradesmen, Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdullah invited Jewish traders to settle in Essaouira in the eighteenth century. He also engaged in some major construction works, building most of the Old Town and the port fortifications. By the nineteenth century, Jews made up around 40 percent of the city's population and the settlement had become North Africa's leading port

"The pilgrimage takes place every year," says Samir El Harrouf from the city's tourism office. "For us it's totally normal. The pilgrimage is part of our cultural heritage." Up to 2,000 worshippers attend the main pilgrimage days in September. Then he adds: "Essaouira is the only Arab city where most of the residents were once Jewish."

It's a claim that's difficult to verify. What's clear is that a great many Jews lived here in the 19th century – historians estimate around 40 percent of the total population. It was Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdullah who settled the Jewish traders here in the 18th century. He wanted them to help him establish contact with European tradesmen. The Sultan built most of the Old Town and the port fortifications.

The settlement, known at the time as Mogador, became the most important port in North Africa. Its role as a trading hub between Timbuktu and Europe brought it great wealth. The mellah, or Jewish quarter, was mainly populated by poorer Jews. The better-off families had their houses in Muslim neighbourhoods. At the time the city was said to have more synagogues than mosques.

## INSIGHTS

# What Sandra the Snake Taught Me!

**God is the Protector and helps all at the right time and right place**

**By Nigar**

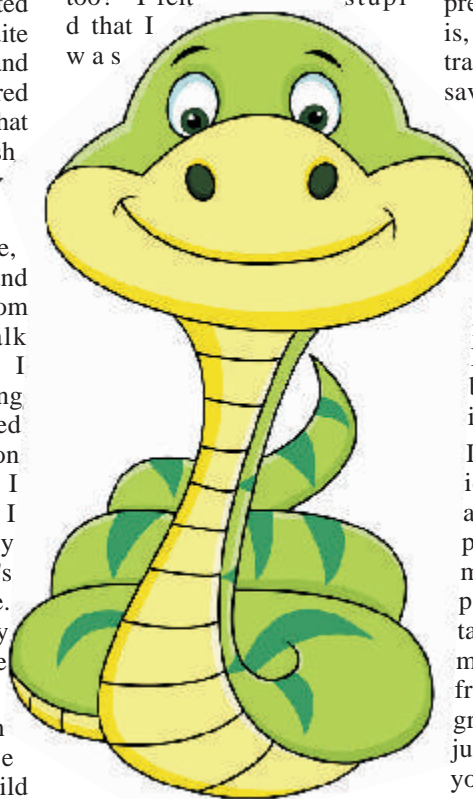
I love animals, birds and Nature in general. I like to be with them and around them. I had been staying in a lush green forested area for a few days. I was quite aware that snakes, scorpions and many other crawlies also shared the greenery. I also knew that you never know in which bush or patch of thick grass they might be relaxing!

It had rained a bit a day before, and the next day was warm and sunny. I stepped out of the room in the afternoon to walk towards the dining hall. I walked very carefully, looking down. Just then, I spotted something grayish-green on the ground. At first glance I thought it was a long stick. I stopped to look at it. To my horror, it wriggled. And that's when I realized it was a snake. I ran screaming towards my friend, who was just a little ahead of me.

While I had seen snakes in zoos, this very close encounter with one in the wild left me a wee bit scared. Yes, I did love animals, but snakes were really not on my wish-list of God's creatures that I wanted to meet.

I admit that my scare made me

feel a bit foolish. I thought, "So many people live in forests. Don't they come across snakes too?" I felt stupid that I was



so worried about my life, or the fear of dying after a snake bite. But I also realized that God had saved me from actually stepping on the snake.

Facing Sandra, as I named the snake, taught me some things. One is the need to be mindful at all times. One should be in the present moment wherever one is, be it in a forest or stuck in a traffic jam on a busy road. It saves one from things like stepping on a snake. A second lesson is that God is the Protector and helps all at the right time and right place. A third thing I learnt is that we need to accept the reality of one's feeling at the moment for instance, the fear I felt after spotting the snake but not to continue to live in it.

I certainly don't expect an idyllic scene in a forested area where only docile puppies and kitten hop onto to my lap or wink at me as they pass by, as they do in fairy tales. I need to accept that many more Sandras and his friends could be basking in the grass and anytime they could just pop out to ask "How do you do"! I am not eagerly waiting to bump into either Sandra or his cousins again in the greenery. But if I do, I know God is there and will make me mindful to simply walk out of their way!



Yusra Ali Saif Salem

## A Single Mother's Story

She needed support at first, now Yusra assists other struggling refugees in Malaysia.

Mention basketball and Yusra Ali Saif Salem's eyes light up. She hasn't played her favourite sport in more than 30 years, and says, "it's like holding a diamond in my hands," because it reminds her of her childhood in Yemen, where she was born. It is a bittersweet moment for Yusra: While fond memories flood back, they also remind her that women are subjugated in her homeland. She was, for instance, forbidden to play any games as a girl. Ironically, it is in her adopted country, Malaysia, where Yusra lives as a refugee, that she has found a sense of freedom.



The civil war in Yemen and personal circumstances had

forced Yusra to leave her family and friends in 2014. Alone with her then seven-year-old son, she used her savings to move to Kuala Lumpur, where an unknown future awaited her.

As refugees are unable to work legally in the Southeast Asian country, Yusra struggled to make ends meet. The devoted mother's main concerns revolve around her son, Abdul Rahman's education and wellbeing. She cleaned

homes to pay for basic necessities, but during lean times, relied on the kindness of others to survive.

Yusra never stops worrying about Abdul Rahman. She says, "I wish to be able to provide all the amenities for my child, for instance, going to a theme park." "I worry about raising my child and how we will make it through."

The tides turned when a benefactor discovered that she had trained as a hairdresser and make-up artist in Yemen (risking being ostracised by family members). Word of her talent spread within the refugee community. Despite having a limited supply of makeup and access to hairdressing equipment, Yusra established a clientele base. Realising the necessity of having employable skills, this thoughtful woman started conducting workshops for other refugee women.

Yusra believes that life is about sharing and encourages other refugees to contribute their time and services to help each other. She has worked tirelessly with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to facilitate their refugee programmes, enlisted the help of medical volunteers for infirmed refugees and made her home a refuge for all in need. Inspired by her late mum's generosity, Yusra hopes to continue helping the refugee community, embracing all who approach her. In turn, she wishes that her son would do the same.

The life of a refugee is tough, and for single mothers like Yusra, her fearlessness shines like a beacon in this sea of uncertainty.

## No Going Back To Repression, Afghan Businesswomen Say

Businesswomen in Afghanistan are adamant that there will be no going back to the days of repression under the Taliban, and that the progress women have made over the past 18 years must not be reversed. Women who have blazed a trail in business since the Taliban were ousted in 2001 say they have come too far to be robbed of their achievements.

"I don't think Afghan women will ever go back," Kamila Seddiqi, 41, said. An entrepreneur involved in businesses that include Afghanistan's first taxi app, Kaweyan Cabs, Seddiqi, who was 18 when the Taliban seized Kabul in 1996, knows all too well how ambition can be smothered. "It was a time when we all thought of studying and learning, and education was the most important thing for us, but our lives changed," she said. The Taliban banned women from education and work and only let them leave their homes in the company of a male relative.



Overnight, women disappeared behind the all-enveloping *burqa*, their activities restricted to their homes.

Seddiqi and her sisters started a small tailoring business. After the Taliban were ousted, she worked with international organizations before launching her own businesses.

Manizha Wafiq, vice president of Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the business group has 12,000 members, who are involved in areas from media and information technology to private schools, clinics and handicrafts. They had made investments of more than \$70 million and their exports earned up to \$800 million a year, she said.

## Ambreen Naeem

### New Zealand Muslim Widow Rebuilds Her Life

Christchurch widow Ambreen Naeem is learning to drive at the age of 45. It has been several months since a terrorist attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, killing 51, including Ambreen's husband and son, injuring 49, and leaving thousands in trauma. "I lost half my family. We were such a nice family," she told ABC News. For Ambreen, learning to drive is just one of the ways life is changing. Her husband and son used to do the driving for the family. She has also had to leave her job as a baker to care for her two younger sons and move house to be within walking distance of their school and university. For the first time, she is managing the family finances without incomes from the main breadwinners. "It was so lively and we went on trips together. Even at home, we would work together. It is very different now from what it was before."

Naeem Rashid died after tackling



the gunman to the ground so other people could run away. Ambreen said. Her son Talha died shortly before receiving his civil engineering degree, which was delivered personally to the mourning mother. "Their deaths had a purpose, they were loving people and in death, they brought the world together," Ambreen said. This show of love was making life possible with friends, neighbors, volunteer groups, and some total strangers offering their help to the family. "If this love wasn't there, I wouldn't be so strong," she said. "People who have love in their hearts, they are the winners and people who have hate in their hearts they are the losers."

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For details Contact: SYED ABDUL JAWAD: 9822609813  
Email: dysworkshop@gmail.com

#### DYS WORKSHOP IN HYDERABAD

DATES: 20, 21 & 22 SEPTEMBER 2019

TIMINGS: 8.30 AM TO 6.00 PM

For details Contact:

Imran Basheer: 9866009951

Khalid Hassan: 9291523184 | Mohd Majid: 8008227262

Mohd Ziauddin: 9618422020

Email: dysworkshop@gmail.com

#### DYS WORKSHOP IN KOLKATA

DATES: 4, 5 & 6 OCTOBER 2019

TIMINGS: 8.30 AM TO 6.00 PM

Organised by: The Sirri Saqti Foundation (TSSF)

Venue: Aliah University, Park Circus Campus,

# 17, Gorachand Road, (Behind Lady Brabourne College),  
Kolkata-700014

Contact for details:

Br. Abdul Rahim Cell: 8444057949, 8100051555

Email: saqtifoundation@gmail.com

#### DYS WORKSHOP IN MUMBAI

DATES: 1, 2, & 3 NOVEMBER 2019

Timings: 9.00 am to 6.00 pm

Tuition Fee: Rs 2000/- (Lunch & snacks included)

Venue: The Caliph Hotel, Powai, Mumbai

For details Contact:

Furqan: 9819922838 | Ashraf: 9870161983

Email: furqansari@gmail.com

<https://tinyurl.com/DYS-LDP-Dec-2019>

Email: dysworkshop@gmail.com

For more Info visit: [www.discoveryyourself.in](http://www.discoveryyourself.in)



# In Hate Crime Fight, a Voice Still Feeble

Taking the cue from the U.S., the Indian Parliament needs to recognise hate killings as an act of terror.

By Harsh Mander

At a time when India is reeling under hate lynching, it is sobering to remember that it took the United States Senate 100 years to approve a bill to make lynching a federal crime. Over 200 anti-lynching bills were introduced in the U.S. Congress since 1918, but all were voted down until the Justice for Victims of Lynching Act of 2018 introduced by three Senators of African-American descent including Kamala Harris was approved unanimously in the winter of 2018.

The U.S. bill describes lynching as “the ultimate expression of racism in the United States”. Senator Cory Booker said the bill recognised lynching for what it is: “a bias-motivated act of terror”. When will Parliament here recognise, similarly, that lynching is “a bias-motivated act of terror” and “the ultimate expression of communal hatred in India”?

## Tool of Fear

Some may dispute this description, citing the relatively small numbers of such mob crimes. They miss the point that hate lynching is designed as an act to terrorise an entire community. The number of lynch murders in the U.S. mentioned in the bill averages around 55 annually, but despite these small numbers, these performative acts of violence succeeded in instilling intense fear among all African-Americans for decades.

The same purpose is being served by lynching in India; again performative acts of hate violence, but now using modern technology, video-graphing of mob lynching, widely circulating these images through social media, and celebrating these as acts of nationalist valour. These have similarly instilled a pervasive sense of everyday normalised fear in the hearts of every Indian from the targeted minority community. It is this which indeed makes lynching an ultimate act of terror.

The Supreme Court of India recently asked the Union government and all the major States to explain what action has been taken to prevent these growing incidents of lynching, including passing a special law



to instil a sense of fear for law amongst vigilantes and mobsters. Kunwar Danish Ali, a first term Bahujan Samaj Party MP from Amroha, raised the same question in Parliament, describing mob lynching as “an assault on democracy”. His inquiry was met with noisy disruptions, but he got no answer.

## Significant Statutes

The Uttar Pradesh Law Commission (UPLC) earlier last month took the initiative, unprompted by the Uttar Pradesh government, to recommend a draft anti-lynching law. It commends a law which closely follows in almost every major detail the first law against lynching passed in this country, a remarkable ordinance introduced by the Manipur government late last year, indeed the most significant statute against religious hate crimes in the country.

A noteworthy observation in the text of the United States bill is that it records that at least 4,742 people were lynched in the U.S. between 1882 and 1968, but 99% of all perpetrators remain unpunished. It is significant to remember that the first anti-lynching legislation proposed as far back as in 1918 in the U.S. targeted state officials for failing to provide equal protection under the laws to anyone victimised by a mob. Impunity characterises lynching in India as well. Addressing this squarely, both the Manipur statute and the UPLC draft create a new crime of dereliction of duty by police officials, holding a police officer guilty of this crime if he or she “omits to exercise lawful authority vested in them under law, without reasonable cause, and thereby fails to prevent lynching”. Dereliction also includes the

failure to provide protection to a victim of lynching; failure to act upon apprehended lynching; and refusing to record any information relating to the commission of lynching. This crime carries the penalty of one to three years and a fine. The UPLC goes further to include also a new crime of dereliction of duty by District Magistrates.

The creation of this new crime was also the key recommendation of the Prevention of Communal & Targeted Violence (Access to Justice and Reparations) Bill, proposed by the National Advisory Council of the erstwhile United Progressive Alliance government (full disclosure: Farah Naqvi and I were co-convenors of the working group which drafted this proposed bill, which however was never even introduced in Parliament). We were convinced that it is only the creation of such a crime that will compel public officials to perform their duty with fairness, in conformity with their constitutional and legal duties, to ensure equal protection to all persons, regardless of their faith and caste.

## Some Recommendations

Both the Manipur law and UPLC recommendations also lay down elaborate duties of police officials in the event of lynching. These include taking all reasonable steps to prevent any act of lynching including its incitement and commission; to that end making all possible efforts to identify instances of dissemination of offensive material or any other means employed in order to incite or promote lynching of a particular person or group of persons; and making all possible efforts to prevent the creation of a hostile environment against a person or

group of persons.

Both sensitively and expansively lay down official duties to protect victims and witnesses. They state that a victim shall have the right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any court proceeding and shall be entitled to be heard at any proceeding in respect of bail, discharge, release, parole, conviction or sentence of an accused, and to file written submissions on conviction, acquittal or sentencing. They also explicitly require the Superintendent of Police to inform the victim in writing of the progress in the investigation. The victim shall have the right to receive a copy of any statement of the witness recorded during investigation or inquiry and a copy of all statements and documents.

**“I wonder how long survivors of lynching who lost their loved ones to merciless mob hate in India will have to wait for a government which will recognise their pain.”**

Where the UPLC goes further than the Manipur statute is in laying down the right to compensation. It places the duty squarely on the Chief Secretary to provide compensation to victims of lynching within 30 days of the incident. It states that while computing compensation, the State government must give due regard to bodily, psychological and material injuries and loss of earnings, including loss of opportunity of employment and education, expenses incurred on account of legal and medical assistance. It also lays down a floor of 25 lakh in case lynching causes death.

The Congress government of Madhya Pradesh has announced its resolve to pass legal provisions against lynching. It chooses curiously to not do this by an anti-lynching law, but instead by amendments to the Madhya Pradesh Cow Progeny Slaughter Prevention Act 2004 (which would effectively limit

its scope only to cow-related lynching, and not lynching triggered by other charges).

Its proposed amendments do not include any provisions to punish dereliction of duty, protect victim rights or secure compensation. All that it proposes is punishment for any act by a mob which indulges in violence in the name of cow vigilantism from six months to three years of imprisonment and a fine. It is unclear what deterrence such amendments would instil, since existing laws contain much greater punishments for murder and aggravated attacks. In its present form, it appears a weak, half-hearted and poorly thought-out measure. The Ashok Gehlot-led government in Rajasthan has also tabled an anti-lynching bill. This prescribes higher punishments, investigation by senior police officers, and mandatory compensation but not the critical elements of dereliction of duty or victim rights. Without these, they will make little difference on the ground.

Home Minister Amit Shah now heads a committee to propose action against lynching. The question remains: do we expect Mr. Shah, or indeed Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to propose a law against lynching which punishes public officials who fail in their duties, protects victims and witnesses, and ensures comprehensive reparation, as proposed by the UPLC and provided in the Manipur statute?

“Someone is finally recognising our pain,” said the great-granddaughter of Anthony Crawford, an African American, who was lynched in 1916. I wonder how long survivors of lynching who lost their loved ones to merciless mob hate in India will have to wait for a government which will recognise their pain.

**(Harsh Mander is a human rights worker, writer and teacher)**

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/in-hate-crime-fight-a-voice-still-feeble/article28775760.ece>

**(Source: [www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/in-hate-crime-fight-a-voice-stillfeeble/article28775760.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/in-hate-crime-fight-a-voice-stillfeeble/article28775760.ece))**



# Three brothers from Hyderabad have started 'Crapbin'



Nisar Ahmed (right) and Muquayyar Ahmed (left)

Want to earn from your household scrap while helping the environment? This startup not only offers a free pick-up service, it also uses a part of the profits to educate under privileged kids.

Three brothers from Hyderabad have started 'Crapbin'

'Crapbin', founded by three brothers from Hyderabad Nisar Ahmed, Muquayyar Ahmed and ZuberQuresh, was launched in November 2018. It offers doorstep waste-collection service to households, communities and industries. The startup allows you to book the services online for dry and recyclable waste like books, newspaper, paper, magazines, cardboard, glass bottles, soft plastic, plastic, steel, iron, aluminum, copper, tin, brass and electronic items.

All one has to do is either book a service on their website or give a

## New Startup Saves 45,000 Trees, Recycles 470 Tons in 8 Months

call on 7799996096 to book a slot on any day of the week. Once the free pick up request is accepted, the company will assign an executive to the customers based on the location. The staff will then visit the house, weigh the scrap using an electronic weighing machine and pay in cash based on the existing market rates. The prices per kilo are regularly updated on their website. The customer can also subscribe to a monthly arrangement, where the executive will schedule a particular day every month for the pick-up.

All the collected scrap is taken to the company's waste yard where the staff segregates it. The company has tied up with local waste management firms who visit the yard and take the junk for recycling purposes.

Just a couple of months before Crapbin was launched, Zuber's mother asked him to sell the household scrap to a local scrap dealer but he could not find one. Recalling that time, Zuber, a 26-year-old mechanical engineering graduate, says: "While one scrapdealer refused to take e-waste, another one dealt with only paper waste like



**The brothers had a hard time convincing their parents to trust the company's vision. For their parents, it was nothing more than just another scrap dealer organisation. In their words, it was their sons picking up people's waste.**

newspapers, books and magazines. It took me almost an entire week and several visits to dispose off all the junk."

This incident made Zuber look for a more feasible option and that is when the idea of an online scrap portal struck. He expressed his idea to his brothers Muquayyar (32) and Nisar (29)

and the startup came into existence.

For the trio, environment was another motivation for venturing into this field. People find it difficult to go to local kabadiwala to dispose off their scrap and ultimately it will end up in dump yards, rivers and landfills, so we wanted to give them last stage convenience for disposing off their dry waste easily. Crapbin started with a vision to reduce waste in landfills by creating a circular economy, says Muquayyar, an Electronic Engineer.

Nasir, a Civil Engineer, says, "With India's growing population, the country faces massive waste management challenges due to inefficient waste disposal infrastructure and an increasing rate of dry waste generation every year. We aim to provide some relief to this problem."

The brothers had a hard time convincing their parents to trust the company's vision. For their parents, it was nothing more than just another scrap dealer organisation. In their words, it was their sons picking up people's

waste. The brothers explained in detail about the recycling process and the kind of environmental impact it would create and yet a certain amount of scepticism remained, says Muquayyar.

Fortunately, the objection did not stop the brothers to walk on the unexplored path. The brothers used social media platforms and canopy tents to spread the word about their startup and within a period of nine months, Crapbin had a 1,700-strong customer base and has recycled 470 tonnes of dry waste. With the amount of paper the startup has recycled since its inception, the website claims to have saved 45,000 trees and 7,45,000 litres of water so far.

In terms of social impact, the company generated employment for 20 people who are Senior Secondary pass-outs and a part of Crapbin's profits is allocated to fund the education of underprivileged kids. The brothers now hope to scale up their operations by expanding to Pune next, followed by other cities. Currently they are doing research and conducting a few pilot projects to recycle wet waste.

(Extracted from the betterindia.com)

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## Simple and Straight

**Adil Salahi's translation attempts to put the meaning of the Quran in clear modern English so as to make it easier for the 21<sup>st</sup> century reader to understand the message of the scripture.**

**The Quran: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**By Adil Salahi**

Published by The Islamic Foundation, Leicestershire (UK)

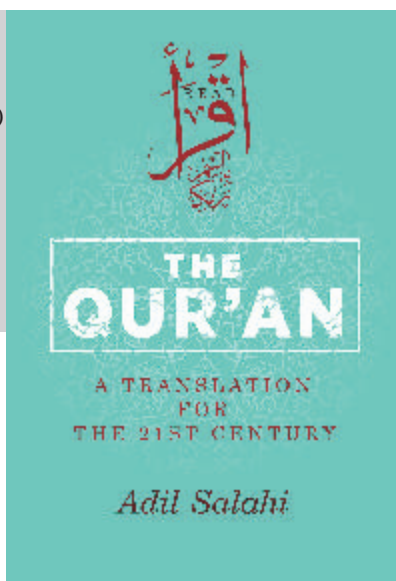
Email: publications@islamic-foundation.com

Distributed by: Kube Publishing Ltd.

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Year: 2019

Pages (including Index): 455



### By A Staff Writer

Many years ago, I had in my possession the English translation of the Quran by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, and another one by Muhammad Asad. Both gave a good account of each surah, its background and history. But being very voluminous and heavy, it wasn't easy to carry them, especially when travelling. *The Quran, A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Adil Salahi is a welcome addition to the growing number of English translations of the Quran. The version I have is a paperback, easy-to-carry edition.

There are of course numerous translations of the Quran in English. Quite a few were produced in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and some earlier than that. Many others were published after 1950. And the trend continues. And so, one might want to ask: "Why should anyone take the trouble of translating once again what has already been translated?" Perhaps the answer is to be found in the translator's urge to bring to the reader of a certain language other than Arabic more

of what a speaker of the language of the Quran feels when he or she recites the text.

Adil Salahi's translation attempts to put the meanings of the Quran in clear modern English so as to make it easier for the 21<sup>st</sup> century reader to gain a deeper understanding of message of the text without having to read numerous footnotes or resort to books of commentary. Salahi's translation benefits from his lifelong study of the Quran and writings on Islam-related themes.

"I have endeavoured to put the meanings of the Quranic verses and *surahs* in simple and straightforward form, so that the 21<sup>st</sup> century reader may find it easy to access," says Salahi in his Introduction. He explains that he has kept footnotes to the minimum so as to allow the text to deliver its own core message. In his short introductions to the *surahs* he points out the events to which they relate, so that readers who wish to delve further into these can easily find their references.

For readers seeking a translation

**At the start of each surah, the chapter's name is mentioned only in English. It would have been better if the original, Arabic name of the surahs could have also been mentioned**

of the Quran in contemporary English, this one, by a well-known Islamic scholar, is definitely a good choice. That said, I cannot but help offering just a critical comment, which could be taken into account if the book sees a second edition: at the start of each *surah*, the chapter's name is mentioned only in English. It would have been better if the original, Arabic name of the *surahs* could have also been mentioned.

## A Guide for Enriching One's Prayer Life!

**Prayers of the Pious**

**By Omar Suleiman**

Published by Kube

Publishing Ltd (UK), in

association with Yaqeen

Institute for Islamic

Research (USA)

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Year of Publication: 2019

Pages: 128



**P** *Prayers of the Pious*, an inspirational collection of prayers and reminders, is a wonderful companion for anyone who wishes to connect with the Divine. In this book, Shaykh Omar Suleiman provides us with thirty short prayers taken from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the early generations of Muslims, each with a short reminder to deepen the impact of the prayer in our lives. The Shaykh is the founder and president of the Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research and Professor of Islamic Studies at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, USA.

The book developed out of a series of lessons that the Shaykh recorded as part of the Yaqeen Institute during Ramzan in 2018. Each day, he took a prayer from one of the pious predecessors, mostly from the Companions of the Prophet, and explained about how to call upon our Creator in a way similar to how they called upon Him.

*Duas* must flow out of the heart, reflecting a deeply personal conversational relationship with God, we learn from this book. A personal *dua* is what in Arabic is called *munajat* (intimate conversation). God does not care if it rhymes or how it sounds or in what language we call out to Him. What's important is how sincere it is. And this book provides many such examples of very beautiful personal *duas*. It is an invitation to us to develop the same practice of making

*duas* from our heart, based also on our own particular situations and experiences.

Here is an illustration of someone making a deeply personal *dua* that the book recounts. Uways al Qarni was a man that the Prophet spoke about but never met. He told his companions that if they ever met this man, because of his closeness to God, they should ask him to ask God to seek forgiveness for them, and he gave a description of Uways. The Prophet (Pbuh) said that Uways had leprosy and he requested God to cure him from the leprosy, except for a piece the size of a coin, a dirham. Uways did that because it was a reminder of the pain that he had suffered and the need to always be grateful to God to have cured him. That's what Uways al Qarni gained from his hardship that deep relationship with Allah which he never wanted to forget, even as he wanted to be cured from his leprosy.

*Prayers of the Pious* provides spiritual gems that serve as valuable wisdom and practical advice for the soul. By reading this short work with an attentive heart, the reader can hopefully cultivate love for God and live life with gratitude and contentment. It is a very useful guide for deepening one's prayer life and one's level of God-awareness.

get 950 liras per month each as stipend. Their visa fee and the air fare are also being borne by the universities. These students had gone to Turkey last year also for a month to an International Turkish Summer School on scholarship. All three students, who belong to a very humble background, were elated to get

the scholarship to pursue their post-graduation.

It is also worth mentioning here that twelve students who just graduated in Turkish language from JMI have got placement in the online store Amazon while some others have secured jobs in other multinational firms.

### EDUCATION

## Three JMI Students get Scholarship to Study in Turkey

Three Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) students who just completed their graduation in Turkish language course have got fully funded scholarship for pursuing M.A. in Turkish Language & Literature in three different universities in Turkey. Mohd. Touheed Alam has secured admission in



Ondokuzmayis University, Zaffar Khan in Ataturk University and Zeeshan Ali in Gaziantep University. The

scholarship covers all expenses including tuition fee, hostel accommodation and mess charges. The students will also



# True Remembrance

Al-Naziat (The Setting Stars) / Chapter 79: Verses 40-41

Those who remember Allah are never obsessed by greed for more and more.

"But unto him who shall have stood in fear of his Lord's presence, and held back his inner self from base desires, paradise will truly be the goal."

How numerous the tongues that move with the name of Allah! But how meagre the benefit! And how rare the hearts that become genuinely humble at the mention of Allah! Yet how desperate the

need of the world for those rare hearts!

Undoubtedly, the ruin of religion comes about when it digresses into empty words and forms. And the mission of religion will not have been accomplished until the day it creates in all men living conscience, pure mind and hearts that aim in awe at countenancing the divine. That is what true dhikr is!

Accounted among the influences

of this kind of dhikr is that it curbs man's appetite for wealth. Thus, those who remember Allah are never obsessed by greed for more and more, and are certainly never demeaned by greedy or covetous constitutions. Rather, they earn their money honourably, and spend it on their legitimate needs without ever thinking to hoard or accumulate it.

(Source: "Remembrance And Prayer" - Muhammad Al-Ghazali, p. 159)

## HADITH ILLUMINATES THE PATH

### The Prophet's Mercy

Referring to the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), God says:

*And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds (Quran: Al-Anbiya' 107)*

The Prophet's mercy was not, in any way, restricted to Muslims. Rather, it encompassed all, Muslims and non-Muslims, humans and the Jinn, and even animals and non-living things. The Prophet showed mercy even to those who wronged him or attempted to kill him.

**Below are some prime examples of the mercy he showed to people of other faiths:**

#### Be Kind to Your Non-Muslim Relatives

Asma' bint Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with her) said:

"My mother came to me while she was still a polytheist, so I asked Messenger of Allah, 'My mother, has come to visit me and she is hoping for (my favor). Shall I maintain good relations with her?'

He (peace and blessings be upon him) replied, 'Yes, maintain good relations with your mother'" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

#### Exchange Gifts with People of Other Faiths

**Narrated Ibn `Umar:**

`Umar saw a silken cloak over a man for sale and requested the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) to buy it in order to wear it on Fridays and while meeting delegates. The Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) said, 'This is worn by the one who will have no share in the Hereafter.'

Later on, Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings upon him) got some silken cloaks similar to that one, and he sent one to `Umar.

`Umar said to the Prophet, 'How can I wear it, while you said about it what you said?'

The Prophet said, 'I have not

given it to you to wear, but to sell or to give to someone else.' So, `Umar sent it to his brother at Makkah before he embraced Islam" (Al-Bukhari). The Prophet did not blame him for his deed.

#### Protect Rights of People of Other Faiths

A number of Prophet's Companions narrated that the Messenger of Allah said:

'Beware, if anyone wrongs a *mu'ahid* [a non-Muslim enjoying the protection of Muslims], or diminishes his right, or forces him to work beyond his capacity, or takes from him anything without his consent, I shall be his adversary on the Day of Judgment' (Abu Dawud).

**Narrated `Abdullah ibn `Amr:**

The Prophet said, "Whoever killed a *mu'ahid* shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years (of travelling)." (Al-Bukhari).

#### Economic Dealings

The Prophet used to do business and enter into dealings with non-Muslims. It was narrated that

`A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Messenger of Allah bought some food on credit from a Jew, and he gave him a shield of his as collateral (*rahn*)" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

#### Respect for the Deceased of Other Faiths

Jabir said: "The Prophet and his Companions stood up for the funeral of a Jew until it disappeared" (Sunan An-Nasa'i).

#### A Final Word

The Prophet treated all people well, including people of other faiths. God enjoined fairness, kindness, good treatment and rendering back trusts for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The Qur'an says:

*Allah does not forbid you from dealing kindly and fairly with those who have neither fought nor driven you out of your homes. Surely Allah loves those who are fair. (Quran, 60:8)*

We understand from this verse that Muslims should be kind and nice to all peaceful people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.



## NATURE & ENVIRONMENT

### Play Your Part in Conserving Water

**We have to conserve water as an act of worship, we have to regard it as a sacred duty imposed on each one of us to continue to preserve life for future generations.**

**By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan**

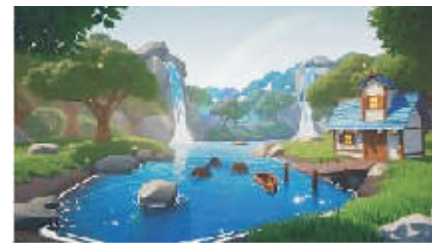
In his poetic masterpiece, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, English poet and theologian Samuel Taylor Coleridge, described the agony of a sailor who is surrounded by water but cannot drink it. Deeply distressed by the irony, he exclaims, "Water, water everywhere, Nor any drop to drink!"

This expression of Coleridge is an illustration of human limitations. Though water is vital for man's survival, he cannot create water to sustain himself; yet he mindlessly wastes this essential natural resource. There are vast reservoirs of fresh water in the polar ice-caps, but they are melting at an alarming rate and is draining off into the oceans. While increasing sea levels, this situation is also causing significant shortage of potable water. Experts predict that the shortage of water will become so acute that a Third World War might break out over this issue. Scientists across the world have repeatedly emphasised that global warming accelerated by human action is the greatest danger of our times.

The creation of water is a marvel: two distinct gases with special properties come together to take the liquid form of water. If nature had not been endowed with this potential, the creation of water would not have been possible.

Water is indispensable but global shortages are increasing at such an alarming rate, that it is making the wastage of water a grave cause of concern. While governments try to find ways of resolving the water issues of their nations, it is also pertinent that, as responsible citizens, each one of us should become involved in the initiative to conserve water.

According to United Nations reports, water scarcity already affects every continent in the world. If each individual were to awaken to the responsibility of mindfully using water resources, he could contribute greatly to addressing the issue of water shortage. Charity begins at home, so each one of us should resolve



**Charity begins at home, so each one of us should resolve to rise to the occasion and do our bit by finding out how we can do something to reduce our own water footprint.**

to rise to the occasion and do our bit by finding out how we can do something to reduce our own water footprint and help manage the need for water.

#### Spiritual Nourishment

Water is not just a source of physical existence: it is an equally important source from which to derive spiritual nourishment. It teaches us to be a giver and fulfill our responsibility towards others. The flow of water in a mountain stream, for instance, is repeatedly obstructed by stones in its path. But the spring does not attempt to remove the stones to continue on its journey. Instead, it moves ahead by flowing around and alongside the stones, as if telling us not to collide with obstacles, but to continue on our way regardless. Everything in this world continuously conveys the message that we should give, without taking anything in return, and discharge our duty in a selfless manner.

According to the Quran, water is a bountiful creation of the Creator. The Quran says, 'We have made every living thing out of water.' (21:30). We have to conserve water as an act of worship; we have to regard it as a sacred duty imposed on each one of us to continue to preserve life for future generations. We should adopt this culture, and live as givers, rather than as takers.

(Source: [timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com))



## Street Vendor Noushad Donates his Whole Stock for Flood Relief



An artist's tribute to Noushad has set an example for many (Photo | Facebook)

Noushad with his family

At a time when several flood relief collection units in Kerala are struggling to find enough materials, Noushad, an ordinary street vendor in Ernakulam's famous Broadway market, has set an example by donating his entire stock to those in relief camps in Nilambur and Wayanad. A resident of Malippuram near Vypeen in Kochi, Noushad had brought new clothes to sell for the festival sale, but contributed them to relief volunteers instead. He says there is no better way of celebrating the Eid al-Adha this year than this.

A video of Noushad impulsively filling several sacks with clothes went viral after it was posted on Facebook by actor Rajesh Sharma. Shot at Noushad's warehouse, Sharma explains that his team was taken there by Noushad after the latter had met

them on the road. Though he had locked the place by then, he reopened the room for Sharma's men and offered them everything. "We told him we can't accept anything that is old. In response he told us we can take all the new clothes from here," Sharma said in the video. The video shows Noushad filling more than five sacks with children's dress and unopened packs of pants and women's wear.

"We cannot take any of these along when we leave this place. God will repay me for whatever I give today. Monday is Eid al-Adha and this is how I am planning to celebrate it this year. This is a small thing that I can do to those people who are facing nature's fury," Noushad said. When a reporter pointed at his fast-emptying shelves and asked, but hasn't everything

gone, Noushad is seen saying "God will give more."

Noushad's act was appreciated by many people and the video was widely shared on various social media platforms. Many celebrities also shared the video and said Noushad has set an example by himself to the people by his rare act of humanity. "They say it is the invisible hands of big people that hold the sky from falling. Dear Noushad, I believe your hand is one among those..." Malayalam actor Siddique wrote on social media. The state Health Minister KKShailaja posted Noushad's photo along with his words on the importance of joining the relief activities on her official Facebook page to wish all Keralites a happy Bakrid.

(full story available on [newindianexpress.com](http://newindianexpress.com))

## Religious Duty of Sikhs to Protect Kashmiri Girls: Akal Takht Jathedar

By Kamaldeep Singh Brar

**Amritsar:** An Akal Takht Jathedar (clergy) urged to the Sikh community to come forward and make it their "religious duty" to defend and protect the honour of Kashmiri girls who were being humiliated by certain political leaders and others on the social media after special status for Jammu and Kashmir under Section 370 was scrapped.

Akal Takht is the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs. "God has given equal rights to all human beings and it is a crime to differentiate against anyone on the basis of gender, caste or religion. The kind of commands given by elected representatives on social media against the girls of Kashmir after the removal of special status under Section 370 are not only defamatory, but also unforgivable," Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh said in a statement.

Without naming anybody, the jethedar said, "The manner in which some people are posting pictures of Kashmiri daughters on social media has hurt India's image. Such comments objectify women. At the same time, these people have forgotten that a woman is also a mother, daughter, sister and a wife. It is women who has the power of creation".

Again desisting from naming any person or community, he said that the same "mob", which was now targeting the Kashmiri women, "had reacted in the same way and attacked the Sikh women during riots of 1984".

"Kashmiri women are part of our society. It is our religious duty to defend their honour. Sikhs should come forward to protect the honour of Kashmiri women. It is our duty and it is our history," he said.

(Extracted from [theindianexpress.com](http://theindianexpress.com))

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## The Rabbi of Essaouira

These days, Essaouira is known first and foremost as a paradise for kiteboarders and surfers. The windsurfing world cup took place on the beaches outside the town for the first time at the end of March this year. The completely walled-in Old Town was recognised as an UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 2001. Unlike Agadir, which is located further to the south, Essaouira has never become a mass tourism destination due to its strong winds. But with its white facades and narrow alleyways housing craftspeople's workshops, Essaouira is popular with independent travellers and downshifters. Ever since Jimmy Hendrix visited the place in the 1960s, it has attracted hippies and musicians. Less is known about its Jewish legacy.

### 50,000 Israeli tourists per annum

Morocco once had the largest Jewish community in the Arab world. The first Jews arrived in ancient times following the destruction of the Jewish Temple and settled amongst the local Berber population. Many Jews fled Spain after the Reconquista in the late 15th century and found refuge from persecution. Because of the many different waves of immigration, Morocco's Jewish population is particularly diverse.

Open to pilgrims and tourists alike: once just one of many synagogues in Essaouira serving the local Jewish population, the Rabbi Haim Pinto Synagogue now houses a comprehensive exhibition of historic photographs documenting Jewish life in the city pre-1948. Many Moroccan Jews left the country following the founding of Israel, some to support the fledgling state, most for fear of Arab reprisals.

When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, some 250,000 Jews lived in Morocco, but most left the country in the years that followed. Today, it's thought some 5,000 Jews still live in Morocco, the largest community with around 1,000 members being concentrated around Casablanca. This is also home to the only Jewish museum in the Arab world. Officially, Morocco does not maintain diplomatic ties with Israel, but some 50,000 Israeli tourists visit the country every year.

Most of the Jews in Essaouira left the city after 1948. The mellah, the old Jewish quarter, has fallen into disrepair, poor Moroccans have moved in and it's likely that looting also took place. Many of

the buildings are dilapidated, some so badly there's a risk they might collapse. Poor drainage and invasive seawater are eroding the foundations.

City authorities have taken the decision to do something about it, but not much has happened to date. Today, visitors can visit two synagogues in the direct vicinity. The Rabbi Pinto Synagogue has been accessible for some time already. It hosts a comprehensive exhibition of historic photographs documenting Jewish life in the city pre-1948. On the second floor are the rooms for women, who in Orthodox congregations pray separately from the men.

### Preserving a legacy for future generations

The second synagogue, Slat Lkahal, is situated in the immediate vicinity. A five-year restoration period funded by private donations from Jews from all over the world and supported by UNESCO finally culminated in its re-opening at the end of 2017. Rubble and debris were cleared away, masonry renewed.

Haim Bitton, an elderly man with the same forename as the famous rabbi, is chairman of the Slat Lkahal organisation and one of three Jews living permanently in the city again. He grew up here, left Morocco as a young man and now, in retirement age, he has returned. Bitton is a reserved man who doesn't like talking about himself. He doesn't want to answer general questions about Jews in Morocco. But it is largely due to him that Slat Lkahal was able to be restored and made accessible to visitors again. A plaque expresses gratitude to the most important donors.

Bitton is unhappy with the condition of many historic documents that couldn't be properly stored. He shows some stained old student lists from the old Jewish school, where his father was principal. With the restoration, Haim Bitton wants to remind people of the peaceful coexistence of Jewish and Muslim communities and pass it on as a mission for future generations.

The Muslim-Jewish coexistence was not free of tensions, says American historian Daniel Schroeter, an expert on Jewish life in North Africa. But Jews made an important contribution to Arab culture, co-influencing urban life, literature and above all music. This tradition has for the most part been discontinued. Essaouira serves as a reminder of the richness that has been lost.

(Extracted from [qantara.de](http://qantara.de))



By Sheima Salam Sumer

## Here are 26 Islamic affirmations:

**1. I call on God whenever I need His guidance.**

"And your Lord said, 'Call on Me, I will respond to you.'" (Holy Quran 40:60)

**2. I take responsibility for my life.**

"A human being can have nothing but what he strives for." (53:39)

**3. Whenever I feel overwhelmed, I keep it simple.**

"And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith); to establish regular prayer; and to practice regular charity; and that is the Religion, Right and Straight." (98:5)

**4. I remember that my life purpose is to worship God.**

"I created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me." (51:56)

**5. I hope in God's mercy.**

"My servants, you who have transgressed against yourselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Truly Allah forgives all wrong actions. He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful." (39:53)

**6. I turn to God first.**

"It is You we worship, and You we ask for help." (1:5)

**7. I love my Prophet (pbuh).**

"Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O you who believe! Send you blessings on him, and salute him with all respect." (33:56)

**8. I remember God as much as possible.**

"Remember your Lord morning and evening, deep in your heart with humility and with fear; and also in a low voice; do not be of those who are heedless." (7:205)

**9. When I want to change my life, I change myself first.**

"...Surely Allah does not change the conditions in which a people are in until they change that which is in themselves..." (13:11)

**10. Tests are a normal part of life. I am patient when they come.**

"You shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in your personal selves, and you shall certainly hear much that will grieve you from those who received the Book before you and from those who worship many gods. But if you persevere patiently and guard against evil then that will be a determining factor in all affairs." (3:186)

# Positive Islamic Affirmations

**A positive affirmation is a statement that increases your hope and inner strength. Positive self-talk improves your attitude and actions.**

**11. I am always thankful to God.**

"...Remember Me. I will remember you. Be grateful to Me and never show Me ingratitude." (2 : 1 5 2)

**12. God gives me more when I am thankful.**

"If you give thanks, I will give you more..." (14:7)

**13. I use my reason.**

"It is He Who has created you from dust; then from a sperm-drop; then from a leech-like clot; then does He get you out as a child; then lets you (grow and) reach your age of full strength; then lets you become old though of you there are some who die before and lets you reach a Term appointed; in order that you may use your reason." (40:67)

**14. Every night I think of three things I am thankful for.**

"...If you count the blessings of Allah, never will you be able to number them..." (14:34)

**15. I seek God's help with patience and prayer.**

"Nay, seek (Allah's) help with patience and prayer: and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones." (2:45)

**16. God emphasizes His Mercy more than any other attribute.**

Every chapter (except one) in the Quran begins with "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful."

The Prophet said, "When God decided (to create) a creation, He wrote a writing which is with Him upon His Throne, namely, 'Verily, My mercy has overtaken My wrath.'" (Bukhari, Muslim)

**17. I avoid quarrelling.**

"And obey Allah and His Messenger and do not quarrel, for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart, and be patient; surely Allah is with the patient." (8:46)

**18. My hardships are there to bring me closer to God.**

"Allah does not want difficulty for you, but He wants to purify you, and to complete His favour upon you, that you may be grateful." (end of verse 5:6)

**19. I prioritize the next world.**

"So as for he who transgressed, and preferred the life of this world, then indeed hellfire will be his refuge." (79: 37-39)

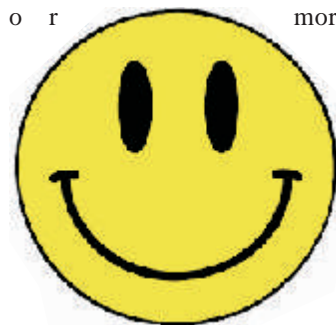
**20. Truly I am of the believers.**

"Who is better in speech than the one who summons people unto God, and performed a good deed

and says, 'Truly I am of the believers.'" (41:33)

**21. I remember God's grace.**

The Prophet said: "Whosoever intends to do a good deed but does not do it, Allah records it with Himself as a complete good deed; but if he intends it and does it, Allah records it with Himself as ten good deeds, up to seven hundred times, or more



than that. But if he intends to do an evil deed and does not do it, Allah records it with Himself as a complete good deed; but if he

intends it and does it, Allah records it down as one single evil deed." (Bukhari, Muslim)

**22. When I turn to God, He turns to me.**

The Prophet said: "God says: 'I am to my servant as he expects of Me. I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me in his heart, I remember him to Myself, and if he remembers Me in an assembly better than his, and if he draws nearer to Me a hand's span, I draw nearer to him an arm's length, and if he draws nearer to Me an arm's length, I draw nearer to him a fathom length, and if he comes to Me walking, I rush to him at (great) speed.'" (Bukhari and Muslim)

**23. Gratitude and patience are my predominant states of being.**

The Prophet said: "How excellent the affairs of the believer! His affair, all of it, is good for him, and this is not the case with anyone except the

believer. If prosperity comes to him, he is thankful, and if adversity falls on him, he perseveres patiently. So it is all good for him." (Muslim, Ahmad)

**24. I take my precautions and rely on God.**

A man said to the Prophet, "Should I tie up the legs of my camel and then rely upon God, or should I leave it free, and then rely upon God to take care of it?" The Prophet said, "Tie up its legs, and then rely upon God." (Tirmidhi)

**25. Whenever I feel dissatisfied, I look at those with less.**

The Prophet said: "When one of you sees another who is superior to him in point of wealth and creation, let him look to him who is below him. That is more proper that you hold not in contempt the favor of God towards you" (recorded in Bukhari and Muslim).

**26. I speak only good.**

The Prophet said: "Whoso believes in God and the Last Day, let him speak good, or keep silent." (Bukhari, Tirmidhi)

(This is a modified version of an article that originally appeared in

## BOOK TALK

# Self-Realisation Leads to the Truth

Written in an engaging Question-and-Answer format and using a conversational style, this book is a treasure-trove of wisdom.

**QUESTIONS You Must Answer Before You DIE!**

Author: AiR (Atman in Ravi)

Published by A.i.R. Institute of Realization, Bangalore

(www.air.ind.in)

Year: 2019

Pages: 149

**Reviewed by Roshan**

Earlier known as Ravi V. Melwani, AiR or Atman in Ravi was one of Bangalore's most 'successful' businessmen till he realised that making money wasn't the purpose of life. Today, he is a well-known inspirational speaker and spiritual writer.

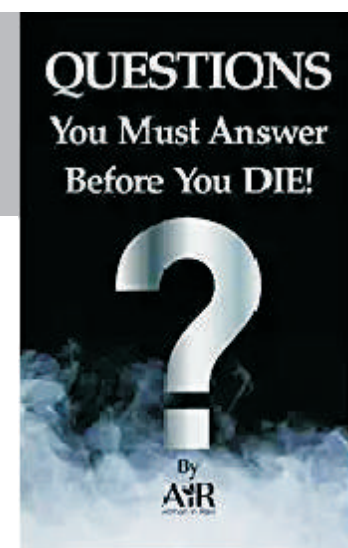
Written in an engaging Question-and-Answer format and using a conversational style, this book is a treasure-trove of wisdom. AiR reflects on some of the most basic existential issues, such as who created the universe, the purpose of life, what happens after we die, how we can be truly happy all the time, why bad things happen to good people, and who, what and where is God. Finding answers to such questions is essential for us to fulfil the purpose of our being on Earth.

One of the most fundamental questions we could ask ourselves

is: Who are we? AiR explains that we are not the body, nor are we the mind. True, we have a mind and a physical body, but we aren't them (although most people think contrarily and so suffer). We are actually the Soul/Spirit/Atman or Life Energy, that keeps a person alive. It arrives at birth and departs at death. It is invisible, intangible and beyond human comprehension and definition. No one can see it, but it manifests in every cell of the body. It is the energy that gives us life. It is in every living creature. We are this Soul, not the body-mind complex.

**The ultimate goal of human life is to realise the self.**

Self-realisation leads to the Truth. Most people don't realise the Truth before they die. We must go on a passionate quest to find out who we truly are. AiR



notes that many people think money is the only priority. "We have wrongly defined success as an achievement in financial terms. We pay attention to physical aspects, emotional conditions, and intellectual growth but do not pay attention to our spiritual growth", he says. True, we all need money. But, AiR explains, "True success is knowing who we are and why we are here".



## Learning From Lama-ji

**Lama-ji had a gentle, smiling face. One felt a sense of deep comfort simply being in his presence. He seemed to radiate positive energy even when he was silent. That's really how a religious person ought to be!**

By Valea

One of the greatest blessings I enjoy are the abundant opportunities I get to interact with people from diverse religious backgrounds who are seeking to live out the teachings of their religion. The ample goodness one can discern in many such people can be a valuable means for our own personal growth. One can often learn many good things from other religious traditions and their practitioners which one can adopt in one's own life. This is one of the greatest benefits of inter-religious interaction and friendships.

Just the other day, I was blessed with one such experience when, along with some friends, I visited a monk at a Tibetan Buddhist centre. We four friends, from three different religious backgrounds (Christian, Muslim and Sikh) spent almost two hours with a learned Buddhist monk in what turned out to be a wonderful occasion for interfaith learning.

Lama-ji, as I addressed the monk, warmly welcomed us into his modestly-sized, humbly-furnished apartment. Even before we had sat down Lama-ji busied himself making tea for us. He laid the tea out on a tray and placed it on an empty cardboard carton, which served as a table. He didn't



take any tea himself, though. He explained that Buddhist monks are not meant to eat anything after 12 noon. He didn't have even tea or coffee after that hour. What great spiritual discipline!

We asked Lama-ji many questions about his life, about his spiritual practices, about the work he did, and so on and he answered lovingly and patiently. His daily routine seemed a model of discipline and dedication. He woke up around 3 am, and after freshening up, spent about 2 hours in meditation. For much of the rest of the day he was in the school taking classes (on Buddhist psychology and other subjects) and so on. In the

evening, he made time to play badminton. Later, he watched the news on TV, spent half an hour or so in meditation and then turned in for the night, at around 8:30 pm.

Like many other Tibetan Buddhist monks, Lama-ji had a gentle, smiling face. Even when he wasn't talking, his face beamed with joy and peace. It reflected deep kindness and compassion. Lama-ji had a great sense of humour and broke into laughter every now and then. One was instinctively drawn to him. One felt a sense of deep comfort simply being in his presence. He seemed to radiate positive energy even when he was silent. That's really how a religious person ought to be!

## REFLECTIONS

## Learning From How Others Negotiate Life

**I think those who take no interest in learning about how others are handling their life, miss out a great deal.**

By Dolcy

As a child, I was an extreme introvert. Talking to people didn't come easy to me at all. Not surprisingly, I hardly had any friends at school. My best and perhaps only friends were my stamp-collection, the radio and our pet dog.

After I left home and went to college in a distant city, I became less inhibited. Being forced to do many things myself, circumstances now compelled me to be more outgoing. Being exposed to people from diverse class, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, I grew more

confident in relating with others. I still sometimes felt frightened, and even stuttered when speaking, and I still loved my own company. But, over the years, I became, I think, a rather good conversationalist.

These days, one of my pet passions is spending time with people from different walks of life, seeking to learn aspects of their life-story. What do they see as the purpose of life? Where do they think we have come into this world from? What keeps them going when things seem bleak? What are they passionate about? What gives them joy? How do they deal with various challenges that come their way? If they did something wrong, how, if at all, did they make amends for it? Who are their role models? Has anyone particularly inspired them? And so on... I love plying people with such questions and getting them to share bits of their life with me because I feel my own life can be enriched from their insights and experiences.

We can gain a great deal from the lessons both positive as well as negative that we can learn from other people's lives. Every person, no matter what his/her station in life 'rich' or 'poor', 'famous' or 'ordinary', is a fascinating story in himself/herself simply by the fact of being human and alive, a fact that unites all of humanity despite our various differences. And every such story is a valuable source of learning for our own self-improvement.

So, I've actually become quite a garrulous character now as I try not to miss any opportunity to ask people questions about life in general, and their life in particular. I've discovered that this is one of the most enriching ways to grow. And that's why I think those who take no interest in learning about how others are handling their life and one keeps meeting such people miss out a great deal.

It is truly amazing how much wisdom and inspiration one can draw from listening to people reflect on how they have negotiated their life. Try it out and see for yourself!



**“Every person, no matter what his/her station in life 'rich' or 'poor', 'famous' or 'ordinary', is a fascinating story in himself / herself simply by the fact of being human and alive, a fact that unites all of humanity despite our various differences.”**

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**MODERN WORLD**



# Memories of a Virtuous Mother

**My mother was, you could say, the leader of the family. She was a strong, silent and determined woman. I remember her as someone who made many sacrifices for her children.**

**By Sr. Sutisa**

I was born almost 50 years ago in what was then a remote village in north-eastern Thailand. Our family were farmers. We owned about an acre of land, where we cultivated things like rice and vegetables.

My mother was, you could say, the leader of the family. She was a strong, silent and determined woman. I remember her as someone who made many sacrifices for her children. She wasn't very jovial and outgoing like I am, but she was cheerful and kind.

Mummy had 14 children in all (including one miscarriage), seven of who later died. I am the youngest of all her children, born eight years after mummy's second last child. I was a 'surprise child', because mummy didn't expect me to happen. She was seven months pregnant when she realised she was expecting! She had thought that her extended belly was a result of putting on weight in middle-age till a doctor told her she was pregnant!

Mummy was 44 when I was born. She bled very badly and almost died. To make matters even more difficult, the same day I was born mummy's sister died. Imagine what a shock that must have been for her!

Mummy was a very hardworking woman. She'd get up very early and would leave the house at around 2 am, taking the early morning truck to a town located some 35 kilometres away. She would take along 2-3 baskets of vegetables from our farm and a couple of chickens to sell in the morning market there. When she got to the marketplace which was around 3 am she would spread a plastic sheet on the ground and arrange her wares. By 9 am, she would be back home and would then spend much of the rest of the day doing household chores and tending to people in our large extended family.

Mummy worked very hard for the family. When I was in secondary school, she would give me one baht so that I could buy myself lunch. But some days she wouldn't give me the money maybe she forgot, or perhaps she didn't have any money with her to spare. But I never grumbled or complained.

After I passed secondary school I decided that I wanted to enrol in the best high school in the area. But money was a problem because we were very poor. One

day, I received a letter from a sister in religious organisation encouraging me to carry on with my schooling. Accompanying the letter was what was then a big sum of money 700 bahts! This sister wanted me to use the money for my high school education.

That evening, mummy asked me about the letter I had received and requested if she could read it. I handed the letter to her. After she read it, there were tears in her eyes. I was amazed but didn't say a thing. She then told me, "The people who sent you this money don't know you at all, but still they want you to study! I know you did very well in school in the last three years but I didn't help you at all. Don't worry. You choose the school where you want to go. I

**My mummy was really angelic! She was very particular and strict about her religious beliefs and practices, but when I had to do something different, she didn't stop me! She really trusted me and had faith in me.**

will work hard for the money so that you can study."

That day the anger I had nursed against my mother vanished! I realised that, contrary to what I had thought, she cared for me deeply she just didn't express it, because she had so many other worries on her mind.

My mother died before I turned 19. I had been away from home, spending time with a religious organisation, but three months before she passed away, when she was very sick, I came back. On her last day, people told mummy not to worry about me. Maybe they thought mummy would fret about me because I was the youngest. But Mummy, whose head was then bent low, looked up and said, "Sutisa never gave me any trouble. I am never worried about her. Right from childhood, she has taken her own decisions. And I believe that in the future, she will be successful in whatever she does." Saying this, mummy breathed her last.

I can't remember any time that mummy shouted at me. There was just one time when she beat me. She had repeatedly told me not to play with my boy cousins who lived in the neighbourhood because being boys, they played roughly. But I didn't listen to her, and one day she gave me a beating. It was the only time she did that.

Another wonderful thing about

mummy is that I never once saw or heard her fighting with my father. It isn't that they didn't occasionally have differences, though. My sister tells me that if they had a quarrel, mummy would tell her to take me away so that I wouldn't witness the scene.

Mummy was very particular that we should all eat together and pray together. All of us papa, mummy and we seven siblings would have breakfast and dinner as a family, seated on the floor. And before going to bed, we would all gather and pray, taking turns to lead the prayer.

Mummy was very strongly rooted in the faith she had been brought up in. But she was also very open. When I was 17, our teacher announced that we were going to

spend four days at a monastery where we would live like nuns. Now, the monastery belonged to a religious tradition other than ours and I wondered how my parents would react. After I got home, I told mummy about the monastery visit. She was quiet for a while. And then, instead of saying "No, you can't go!", she asked me where I was going to get the white dress I needed to dress like a nun. "I don't know!", I replied.

And do you know what? The next day, when I came back from school, I saw a plastic bag placed on a bench with a white robe in it! Mummy had gone to a neighbouring village, where she had a friend who belonged to the same religious tradition as the monastery I was going to. She had explained the issue to her friend, who very kindly lent her the robe for me!

That is why I say my mummy was really angelic! She was very particular and strict about her religious beliefs and practices, but when I had to do something different, she didn't stop me! She really trusted me and had faith in me. That is why her last words were that she never fretted about me.

*(Based in Thailand, Sr. Sutisa, a member of a religious organization, works on a wide range of issues, including education for children from economically vulnerable families)*

## OPEN SPACE

# A 'Little' Initiative That Could Go A Long Way!



**By Valea**

In our closely interconnected world, where people from diverse communities are now heavily interdependent on each other, harmonious inter-community coexistence has become nothing less than an existential necessity for humankind. Across the world, a variety of initiatives to bring together people from diverse faith backgrounds to work for the common good are underway.

Given the influence that they enjoy within their communities, men and women who transmit and interpret their religious tradition to their co-religionists such as priests, nuns, clerics, monks and religious scholars have a central role to play in promoting interfaith understanding and harmony. If they take a leading role in this regard, they can inspire 'lay' people in their own communities

programme organised by the centre brought together speakers from four different religious traditions Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism, to speak on the theme of 'Transcending Violence'. The audience consisted mostly of the seminary's students and several dozen junior monks (perhaps trainees) from a local Buddhist monastic training centre.

Whatever the quality of their presentations may have been (sometimes such talks can be very superficial and preachy!), the very fact of speakers from different religious traditions addressing an audience consisting mostly of students from a Christian seminary and a Buddhist monastic training centre on the need for interfaith understanding and harmony was itself a great thing. So too was the fact of would-be priests and

**Bringing the interfaith harmony agenda into the institutions where such religious 'specialists' are trained, such as seminaries, monasteries and madrasas, is one way to encourage would-be interpreters of religion to become active proponents of interfaith understanding and harmony.**

to get involved in this work too. Bringing the interfaith harmony agenda into the institutions where such religious 'specialists' are trained, such as seminaries, monasteries and madrasas, is one way to encourage would-be interpreters of religion to become active proponents of interfaith understanding and harmony.

Recently, I had the good fortune of attending one such initiative, held at one of the country's largest Catholic seminaries. Although a major focus of the seminary is Catholic theology and philosophy, it also has a centre for the study of world religions, testifying to an openness to other faiths and their adherents. A

monks sitting together in the auditorium for four hours or so! That itself must have been a novel experience for many!

The seminary's initiative exhibited an openness to other faiths and a willingness to listen to and learn from their adherents that is truly appreciable. Who knows perhaps this 'little' initiative will go a long way and one day some of the seminary's students or some of the would-be monks will emerge as enthusiastic proponents of interfaith understanding and inter-community harmony, which today have become such a pressing necessity the world over!





## With Fr. Sebastian Athappilly

**Fr. Sebastian Athappilly is an Indian Catholic priest and theologian. He is a member of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), a Catholic religious congregation. Presently, he is hospital chaplain at the University Clinic, Graz, Austria. He is the author of several books and articles. Here he reflects on questions on the purpose of life.**

**Q: What do you see as the fundamental purpose of human life?**

A: It depends on the meaning of the term 'fundamental'. It ordinarily means basic, in the sense of being the basis or fundament. In this sense, the fundamental purpose of human life is the same as its final or ultimate purpose, namely, to reach God, to give glory and praise to Him. Just as the moon reflects the light ("glory") of the sun, the creatures reflect the glory of the Creator. While the sub-rational creatures reflect the glory of God automatically, the spiritual creatures can and ought to reflect the glory deliberately, with intellect and will, by knowing, loving, thanking and praising God.

**Q: All religions believe in the Hereafter and insist that life does not end with the death of the body because human beings are not their bodies. This is in contrast to all materialistic ideologies that, despite their differences, claim that everything ceases with the death of the body.**

**How do you think this basic distinction between religions, and all materialistic ideologies is reflected in how they see the purpose of life?**

A: For the religions in general the purpose of life is envisaged in terms of a blissful situation beyond the material level and hence beyond the limits of physical death. On the other hand, the materialistic ideologies see the purpose of life exclusively in terms of a happy life in this world. This includes justice, welfare, peace, wealth, health, job, power

and position, enjoyment and all kinds of pleasures. All this is, however, only for the time until death. After death, nothing is to be expected any more. Such a vision has nothing to offer to those who have only misery in this world and to those who die at a very young age.

Similarly, such materialistic ideologies have no provision for any kind of sanction, positive or negative, for deeds of selfless love and service or malice and cruelty, as the case might be. With death, saint and sinner, victim and oppressor, all become alike, without any difference at all because they are believed to remain no more. The only possible sanction would be that which can be meted out here on earth, by the state or the society. But this is realistically not guaranteed on this earth.

The materialistic ideologies do not also know forgiveness and reconciliation; their vocabulary is filled with violence, retaliation, revenge, punishment, bloody revolution, despair, disappointment and suicide. At the same time, since they envisage a 'paradise' on earth, they are under a big burden of stress and strain in attempting to realize this by human efforts alone.

**Q: Do you agree that the purpose of human life can only be understood by bringing in the reality of death and the concept of the Hereafter (which is something that all religions talk of, sometimes in different ways) and that only then can we understand the larger picture of what is life is for and about? As a believer in God and the Hereafter, what difference do you think faith in the Hereafter life after death might make in the way we think of the purpose of life?**

A: It is true that we can understand anything only from a larger picture of its setting and context. Similarly, the meaning and purpose of life can only be understood from a larger perspective. By limiting life within the confines of this material world the purely secular and immanent worldviews arbitrarily close all doors and windows to transcendence and thereby also close room for a better scope for understanding the purpose of life.

Faith in the Hereafter, on the other hand, provides a clearer vision of the ultimate purpose of life. It also promotes a noble view of every human person, to the extent that each human being is seen as called to higher vocation to attain God, and not merely as a mass of body

to be decomposed and dissolved upon death.

Belief in a life after death can also motivate one to do good things in life and to avoid evil deeds, precisely in view of the sanction to be expected from a Judge God who sees everything. Without this sanction, justice and morality lose all value.

**Q: While for many people the purpose of life may not be explicitly talked about at home, the school or the workplace, many of us are constantly faced with the implicit message that the purpose of life is to become materially rich. So, the purpose of life comes to be seen as getting a 'good' job, a big house or whatever. This is something that is pervasive in society in the education system and the media**

and even in our homes. Through this subtle but pervasive propaganda, people come to define the purpose of life in essentially materialistic terms. How do you see this?

A: It is true, as you have observed, that the prevalent view in the society in terms of the implicit lived message is that the purpose of life is securing a materially well-off situation in terms of wealth, health, job, position, power, etc. But although these are good values, they are not the ultimate values. We can help ourselves and others by reminding ourselves and them that all material things are perishable and that our own death will make an end to our possession of all these good things. We should not be then at the loser's side when death takes away all what we have amassed. To survive and overcome this loss at the hands of death we need something that transcends death itself. The assurance that God has prepared an indestructible state of affairs for those who live according to His will shall not make us desperate in the face of the sure death.

### Page 20

## Self-Realisation Leads to the Truth

**True success, he says is "spiritual achievement".**

A complicated creation like man must have a Creator, AiR believes. God, AiR says, is beyond human comprehension and definition. The entire creation is proof of the Creator. The laws governing the universe are an inferred proof of God. We cannot see God, but if we come to know who we really are, we can realise who God is, AiR opines.

Noting the confusion that exists about death, AiR says that while the physical body completes its journey with death, the mind doesn't it has to redeem its good or bad deeds. What happens to us after death depends on our state of self-awareness and self-realisation and so differs from person to person.

Eternal happiness is something that many people hope for. Is there a way to acquire this? AiR believes there is. We are unhappy, he says,

because we have desires and expectations, and when they fail, we become sad. It is possible to be happy always if we eliminate desire and remain in a state of contentment and fulfilment. We aren't able to do this as we naturally crave and desire due to our senses and our wandering mind so we become disappointed and unhappy. If we realise the cause of misery and overcome desire we can overcome disappointments and unhappiness. Those who realise the truth that we are not the ego, the body or the mind but are the Soul escape unhappiness and are in a state of eternal bliss, AiR explains. While their body may suffer, they distance themselves from their body and mind and remain in eternal happiness.

Among the other basic issues that AiR reflects on are the nature of the mind and how to control it, knowledge, wisdom and realization, prayer and meditation, relationships and non-attachment,

serving the poor and prayer to God, and the relationship and difference between religion and spirituality.

In the book's 'Afterword', AiR provides some interesting details of his own life. He reflects on some of the questions that he asked and the answers that transformed his life. For many years, he thought making money was the goal of life. "Like most of humanity I lived in this ignorance", he says. "[...] I was in this rat race because everybody is." But when he crossed 40, he shut down his business he realised that life wasn't just about making money. He found more happiness in making a difference doing humanitarian, inspirational and spiritual work, which gave him far more contentment and fulfilment.

This book, like many others he has authored, is a result of his inspiring spiritual search and his commitment to making a difference to the lives of others.

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## Muslim World League launches Interfaith Summit in Colombo

**Riyadh:** The Muslim World League (MWL) launched an interfaith summit in Colombo in the presence of Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena. Participants included Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu religious leaders, as well as more than 2,000 religious scholars, politicians, intellectuals and media professionals.

Mr. Sirisena delivered the opening speech. He thanked the MWL for holding the summit, and for donating \$5 million to a support fund for families of victims of terrorist acts and



injured people. "I believe that this summit will spread the message of peace, harmony and coexistence," he said. "We're pleased to present the highest honor in Sri Lanka to the secretary-general of the MWL for his role in promoting interreligious peace."

MWL Secretary-General Dr. Mohammed bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa also delivered a speech.

"This important summit on interfaith peace confirms the determination of followers of religions to clarify the truth of religions, which call for love, peace and harmony," he said.

The summit "has come to diagnose the current situation and find solutions to it, and to express the determination of the attendees to act effectively against the forces of terrorist evil, as well as to reveal the facts with transparency," Al-Issa said. "This conference affirms the stability and dominance of good."

## Christian Leaders meet Bangladesh Minister over Rohingya Crisis

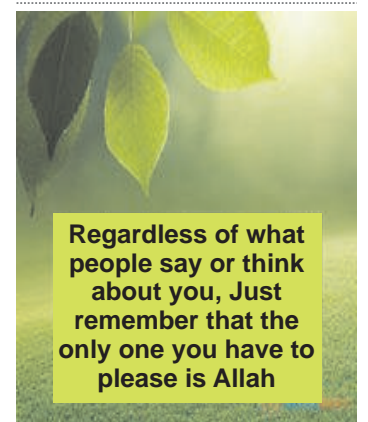


**Dhaka:** Senior Christian religious leaders in Bangladesh and Myanmar and Caritas Internationalis (a confederation of Catholic relief, development and social service organizations operating in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide) called on Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and wanted to know what they could do for the Rohingyas living in Cox's Bazar camps. Emerging from a closed-door meeting at the secretariat on July 30, the Christian leaders said it was a courtesy call and they met the minister following their visits in Rohingya camps in Ukhia of Cox's Bazar.

Asked about the visit and its outcome, minister Asaduzzaman said he urged the Christian delegations to mobilize global opinion to resolve the Rohingya crisis as was assured by Pope Francis during his visit in Dhaka in

December 2017. Dhaka Archbishop Cardinal Patrick D'Rozario, Cardinal Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle, the president of Caritas Internationalis, Yangon Archbishop Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, the president of Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, and Alvaro Izurieta Y Sea, the second secretary at the Vatican Embassy in Dhaka, met the minister.

(Extracted from mattersindia.com)



Regardless of what people say or think about you, Just remember that the only one you have to please is Allah

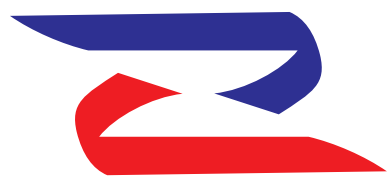
## UN Adopts Moroccan Resolution on Interfaith Dialogue

The UN General Assembly recently unanimously adopted a Morocco-proposed resolution on the promotion of interfaith and intercultural dialogue and the fight against hate speech. The resolution urges the international community to undertake initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue, tolerance, understanding and cooperation between religions and cultures.

When presenting the resolution

before the General Assembly, Morocco's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York, Omar Hilale, stressed that the objective of this text is to raise awareness within the international community about the dangers of hate speech. The Moroccan diplomat added that today's world is going through a turbulent period, characterized by the

exacerbation and multiplication of hate speech, which is contrary to the values of peace, tolerance, and coexistence. The adoption by consensus of this resolution and its co-sponsorship by 90 countries, from all regional groups and various cultural and religious sensitivities, reflect the role played by Morocco as a promoter of dialogue and moderation.



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**Pew Research Center**

## Religious Education could improve US' Foreign Relations

**Many Americans' knowledge of Islam is informed primarily through media coverage of extremist variations of political Islam and of warfare in the Middle East.**

### Pew Research Center



The Pew Research Center recently published the results of a survey looking at Americans' knowledge of various religions. When given 32 basic questions about a variety of religions, the average respondent answered fewer than half correctly.

The survey identified several factors that were correlated with higher knowledge of various religions. Americans with more education tended to score higher. An important factor was personal interaction with people of other faiths; the survey found that Americans who personally know people from several different religious backgrounds tended to know much more about a range of religions. One important finding is that greater knowledge of religions other than one's own has

a strong tendency to lead to more positive perceptions of other religions.

The Pew survey found that a majority of Americans know that Makkah is the holiest city for Muslims and that Ramadan is an Islamic holy month; however, many Americans' knowledge of Islam is informed primarily through media coverage of extremist variations of political Islam and of warfare in the Middle East.

Americans' knowledge and perceptions of different religions have implications for society and foreign policy. It has long been clear that religious views affect US foreign policy. Christian affinity for the "Holy Land" and Judaism is one of several reasons behind

traditional US support for Israel. Negative views of Islam, which existed prior to, but were strongly reinforced by the 9/11 attacks, have created challenges for US relations with many Muslim countries.

The Pew survey, combined with other studies on the connections between public religious views and foreign policy, suggest that education on world religions and programs designed to offer person-to-person interactions, such as interfaith programs, would improve Americans' understanding of a variety of religions. Such efforts could facilitate improved relations with other countries, both by producing a larger cadre of foreign policy professionals with knowledge of religions and a voting public with better informed and likely more positive views of other countries' religions.

## Muslim Saves Jewish Kosher Restaurant

Concerns about the future of the Long Island's East End's only kosher restaurant have evaporated, thanks to a Muslim restaurateur who bought the place and decided to keep it halal and kosher. "It's a dream come true," Muslim restaurateur Rashid Sulehri said of the Beach Bakery in Westhampton. "Sons of Abraham can sit under one roof and they get a chance to see how much in common they have

instead of staying away from each other and just thinking how different they are from each other." The concerns of the Jewish community started when a bakery-restaurant called Beach Bakery & Grand Café in Westhampton Beach went up for sale last year. The new owner, Sulehri, confirmed that he will



keep the meals kosher and halal, which follows the dietary standards of his faith, Islam, and dovetails with Jewish law.

Rabbi Marc Schneier, who leads The Hampton Synagogue in Westhampton Beach, praised Sulehri's pledge to keep the eatery kosher, "exemplifies interfaith cooperation and coexistence." "It took a devout member of the Muslim faith to come in and to maintain the kosher standards of the bakery for the Jewish community," Schneier said.

Since Sulehri took over Beach Bakery in late April, more and more Muslims are joining his longtime Jewish customers especially during 'Eid al-Fitr. In Judaism, Kosher foods are those that conform to the Jewish Kashrut dietary law and Halakha law. More specifically, Shechita is slaughtering of certain mammals and birds for food according to Kashrut.

## Bosnian Muslim Serves US City that Welcomed Her



**RukaNade founder Nermana Huskic came to St. Louis (USA) in the late 1990s, arriving with family members as refugees after the Bosnian war.**

For Nermana Huskic, the seeds of her future as a resource and service provider for homeless people were planted young. At the age of 5, Huski witnessed terror and violent intimidation by Serbian soldiers who barged into her home looking for her father and other male figures. It was 1992 and the start of the Bosnian war. The Bosnian Serbs set out to rid the country of its Muslim population and gain desired land. The war destroyed many families and killed more than 100,000 people. Luckily, Huski's family found a way out of their hometown of Zvornik to a nearby village. Though the village was supposed to be a safe zone for Bosnians, Huski says the Serbian soldiers would shoot at the Muslims from above the

village. "There were times when we didn't have anything," Huski said.

And after the war was over, Huskic, her mother and brother were approved to move to the USA. She remembers being excited to move to a diverse city like St. Louis, but the harsh realities of refugee life quickly settled in. With her father back home in Bosnia, her mother had to pick up three jobs to take care of her and her brother. Huski, now 32, credits the city of St. Louis for extending its resources to her family in the late 1990s, and she is returning the favor. In 2017, she founded RukaNade, a nonprofit that works with the city's homeless population, seniors, youth, and families and also with orphans in Bosnia.

## Muslims Rejoin Sri Lanka Cabinet after Easter Bombings

Sri Lanka's Muslim ministers who resigned en masse in the wake of the deadly Easter Sunday bombings have rejoined the government, officials said, after police cleared them of any involvement with Islamists. Nearly 100 people linked to a local jihadist group were arrested after the April 21 attacks on three churches and

three luxury hotels that killed 258 people. Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader Rauff Hakeem said his community had cooperated with security forces, but faced collective victimisation. In the wake of the bombings, anti-Muslim riots spread in towns north of the capital, killing one Muslim man and leaving hundreds of homes, shops and mosques vandalised.

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# Jews Expelled from Spain mark 527 Years in Turkey

Turkey has around 18,000 Jews according to the Turkish Jewish community and their population is concentrated in Istanbul.



A Jewish man lights a Hanukkah menorah in Istanbul's NeveSalom Synagogue.

It has been 527 years since the expulsion of Sephardic Jews from Spain. Prominent figures of the community say the Ottomans gave them the right to live in peace and their ancestors introduced the empire to new benefits.

On July 30, 1492, the Spanish monarch ordered the expulsion of Jews from the country, paving the way for a harrowing chapter in Jewish history. Sephardic Jews, as they are known, named after Sefara or Spain in Hebrew, found shelter at the other end of the continent: In Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. "Jews won their right to live under the Ottomans," Moris Levi, a prominent figure of Turkey's Jewish community said on the anniversary of the Spanish edict, which came exactly one century after waves of massacres targeting Jews and months after the conquest of Muslim-ruled Granada by Spain's Catholic monarchs.

Granada was host to a sizable Jewish population then and Levi says that Sephardic Jews brought their culture, traditions, Western views and economic values from Granada to the Ottoman Empire.

"The right to live was the most important gain for Jews. If they continued living in Spain in defiance of [the edict], they would be probably massacred. If they went to other parts of Christian world, in the medieval times, they would face numerous troubles as well," Levi, who represents religious minorities in Turkey's General Assembly of Foundations, told Anadolu

Agency (AA).

In turn, Jews brought benefits to the Ottoman Empire, which was at the dawn of its "rising" period, 39 years after the conquest of Constantinople. Levi says that most important thing Jews introduced to the Ottoman Empire was the printing press though he laments that it did not flourish. "People earning a living from calligraphy lobbied for a ban on the printing press. If it was introduced by the end of the 15th century, the Renaissance would not be born in Europe but in the Ottoman Empire," he says. He says Jews also brought another gain for the Ottomans and this was a Westernized point of view. "The Ottomans were a global empire, a strong state and needed to be open to every view," he noted.

Levi says the Jewish community has also been a valuable asset in terms of the crafts and occupations they had. "Jews served as important people in diplomacy and medicine," he points out. He says that Jews arrived in the Ottoman territories after escaping Spain because they believed that their lives, dignity and possessions would be protected. "They lived for centuries in [Granada] safely and Ottomans, like those in Granada, were Muslims. They knew they had a future there. Jews both earned for themselves and contributed to this country. In the end, the Ottoman Empire grew larger while Spain lagged behind other European countries," he said.

Turkey has around 18,000 Jews according to the Turkish

Jewish community and their population is concentrated in Istanbul. Levi says cultural diversity the community brought, was important for

society. The community had a higher population but numbers dwindled in the 20th century as most migrated to Israel after its establishment while an unfortunate pogrom in the 1950s led some to leave Istanbul.

He said that his community prays for Turkey and its leaders, including President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on their special days. "This is an ancient rule for community, to

abide by the rules and laws of the countries they live. Never in their history had Sephardic Jews who came to Ottoman Empire rebelled against the empire. They always observed the laws and were in harmony with those ruling, governing the country. This is because Jews have been a minority throughout history and that led them to be more diplomatic, to establish good relations with others," he says.



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# Discovering Yourself in Delhi

The Discover Yourself Workshop was held in Delhi on 2, 3 & 4 August 2019 at Afzal Hussain Auditorium, Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, Jamia Nagar.



## Some of the participants share their experiences about the Workshop.

- This workshop is the need of the hour, because we need to discover ourselves in this era of social media and other sources with 1000 opinions.
- I was not aware of the connection between heart and mind.
- It helped me to be a good human being and connect to Allah.
- This workshop must be organised all over the world as many people are very disturbed in their life.

**AISHA:** Earlier I knew the hadiths, and all about good behavior, but I got to know the real explanations here with all practical examples. I look forward to joining such workshops, it revives our faith, beliefs and humanity that we lack in our daily hustle of life.

**GHALIB:** Before the workshop, my life was disturbed, and I was always worried about the future. But now, I think of the present and feel comfortable. I learnt lot to things and realized the distinction between Huq and Batil. I have forgiven, forgotten the past and removed all the burdens.

**SABIHA:** It was worth attending. I came to know about myself and what goes on in my mind and what is creating problems. This realization would help me to change myself. People say have *sabr* (patience), but never teach how to have *sabr* and how to achieve the ability

of having *sabr*. This workshop taught me how to have *sabr* and how to deal with it and how to cope up with it.

**ALI:** Before the workshop, I was connected to the mind. But after the workshop, I have connected with the heart and I benefitted a lot by attending the workshop.

**ZEESHAN:** Before attending the workshop, I had some questions in my mind, they were disturbing me and was worried how to solve them. After attending the workshop, I found all the answers to my questions.

**SHEEBA:** I think it was good to attend this workshop, the topics and the method of explaining was good. The problem lies within our self and this is quite hard to believe, but understanding it, solves the problem. Connecting to the present is what is needed. Three days of discovering myself was quite wonderful.



# Quest for Inner Peace in Hyderabad

The Discover Yourself Workshop was held on 23, 24 & 25 August, 2019 at Hotel Dwarka Inn Conference Hall, Habsiguda, Hyderabad. It was organized by Vibrant Academy.



## Some of the participants share their experiences about the Workshop.

- The workshop cleared a lot of questions which I was stuck with for years.
- It was very good as the workshop was held from a Quranic perspective, taking us from the state of *Nafs e Ammarah* to the state of *Nafs e Muthmainna*.
- It is a practical personality development workshop.
- I was in the quest for inner peace and contentment. Alhamdulillah! I got it. A life-changing workshop.

Alhamdulillah! It made a huge difference. Got to know the reality.

**MUBEENA:** This workshop was amazing and very useful. This workshop changed my life in a positive manner. My life before the workshop was a little difficult and depressing as I was holding grudges in my heart, but now, Alhamdulillah, I am free and can live my life with an open mind and without fear. Yes, it was worth attending the workshop as it is very beneficial. It made a huge difference in my life. Now I can make my life more beautiful and meaningful.

**AMJAD:** A very informative, practical and helpful methodology to adapt and practice in life. Before I was nervous, irritated, blaming and complaining, but now, I am aware of the consequences for all my actions.

**SAFEENA:** It was an amazing workshop, it changed the way of thinking. Because of the workshop, many changes have come in my life. Before the workshop, I was angry with many people, but after the workshop, I realized how to accept the past and let go of the past and to live a happy life and make others happy. Now I see and treat others as human beings and I have stopped judging others.

**AAMINAH:** It is a very good workshop and very helpful for the Muslim community. I started to gain control over

my anger. I started to speak less and listen more. I gained confidence and started to understand people and their problems in a better way.

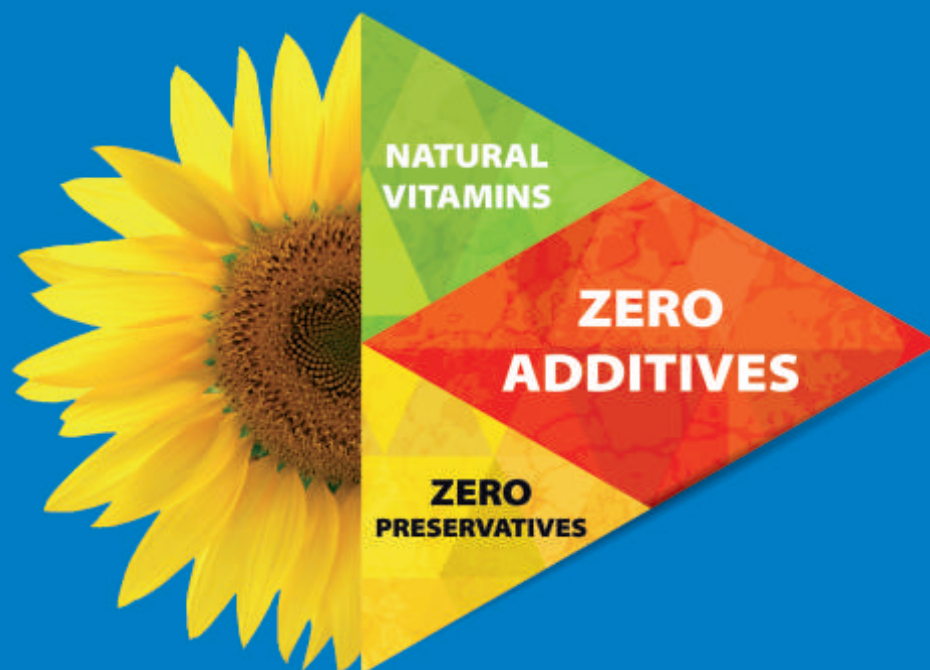
**NISHAT:** Before the workshop, life was in the denial state and now in reality. It was a good experience. It was well organized, wonderful and worth attending. Yes, It made a difference.

**MUHIBA:** I would have led my life in darkness, thanks to the workshop, as I came out from darkness to light. A transformation from the unknowing to the knowing world. It changed my way of viewing myself, life and others. I created happiness. Alhamdulillah, very helpful, exciting and a social way to gain peace.

**KHATIJA:** The workshop is very useful, now I can differentiate between my reality and absolute reality. I used to think that whatever was happening to me was my destiny and I used to blame my fate, but after attending this workshop, I understood that whatever is going on within me is my opinion and not the reality. Reality is something else which I was ignoring. Alhamdulillah, now I understood the difference and I will control my external world through my internal world. The workshop helped me to improve my relationships with my family and friends.







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# Forgotten Duties

**It was only when I started trying to study the Quran myself in translation that I began to realise and appreciate the broad understanding of duties that according to the Quran are binding on us.**

The Quran refers to several things that are duties binding on us. In fact, in Surah Al-Qasas: 85, the Quran indicates that the Quran itself is a duty on us. This therefore means that all of the Quran's commandments are a duty or *farz* for us. However, despite this, some of us mistakenly think that only some of the Quran's commandments, like regular prayer and *zakat*, are binding duties. Accordingly, we focus a lot on these duties but are not aware of many other binding duties that are also mentioned in the Quran. The major reason for this is our general distance from the Quran.

Many of such forgotten duties mentioned in the Quran relate to norms and rules regulating social behaviour. One such duty mentioned in the Quran is to always say what is best. The Quran (17:53) says: **"Tell My servants that they should always say what is best."** This is an absolute commandment and no exceptions are made for it. Interestingly, the Quran makes exceptions with regard to some other things for instance, one is permitted to eat forbidden food if it becomes necessary to survive and if the intention is not rebellion against God. But the Quran makes no exception for the commandment to 'always say what is best'. This means that we must always speak what is best, even to our opponents. Interestingly, the above Quranic commandment mentions that it is God's servants who should 'always say what is best'. In other words, this commandment actually in a way defines who is a servant of God on the basis of his or her always speaking what is best.

## Respect all Human Beings

There is another commandment that is binding on us according to the Quran but which many of us, owing perhaps to distance from the Quran, do not know about. The Quran (17:70) says: **"We have honoured the children of Adam"**. I take this to indicate that one should respect all human beings, irrespective of their religion, caste, and so on whether they be Hindus or Muslims, Jews or Christians, Syeds or Ansaris or whatever. Respecting others isn't just speaking politely with them. It also means respecting them as persons, as well as respecting their right to their views, their faith, their religion, and so on. If people practised this duty of respecting



By Mohammad Aslam Parvaiz

others this way, it would conduce greatly to social harmony.

**"Repel evil with what is better"**, the Quran (41:34) tells us. This is yet another duty that is binding on us. Responding to evil with counter-evil only magnifies the problem. It never solves it. The only way to overcome evil is through doing good. If people put this Quranic teaching and duty into practice, which they MUST as it is binding, you can imagine how much good it would do.

Consider here another Quranic commandment (6:108): **"Do not revile those [beings] whom they invoke instead of God, lest they, in their hostility, revile God out of ignorance."** Not reviling other people's deities is thus a duty binding on us, a duty that can also conduce to inter-community harmony.

## Practise Justice

Another binding duty for us according to the Quran is to practise justice. The Quran (16:90) says: **"God commands justice, kindness and giving their [due to] near relatives, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and anything contrary to reason, and transgression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed!"** This verse is often cited towards the end of the sermon during the Friday congregational prayers, and most of the people take it simply to indicate that it is time to stand up to pray! The first thing this verse mentions is the need to practice justice or *adl*. So, doing justice is as much an important duty (*farz*) for us as is regular worship. Included in the meaning of *adl* is *etidal*, which indicates modesty, walking on the middle path and moderation. If we abide by *adl* in all our relationships and in all our roles, taking it to be a binding duty, you can appreciate what a beneficial impact it would have on

our own personal lives as well as society at large.

Imagine the society that can come into being if its members realise that it is not only regular prayer and fasting etc. that are duties binding on them but also issues like always speaking what is good, respecting all human beings, responding to evil with good, helping neighbours, sharing our resources instead of hoarding them and practising justice! True Muslims are people who are conscious of these duties and put them into practice in their true spirit. They are people from whom only good emerges, people who give to others rather than take from them.

It was only when I started trying to study the Quran myself in translation that I began to realise and appreciate this broad understanding of duties that according to the Quran are binding on us. Prior to this, I hadn't heard about these things being duties from any preacher or pulpit. It was the Quran that taught me the importance of serving humanity, and I learnt this only after studying it.

All this indicates the importance of seeking to study and understand the Quran for oneself, with meaning. Without a true connect with the Quran and understanding it properly we cannot be Muslims in the true sense of the term, because it is from the Quran that we can learn what it means to be and live as a Muslim.

Today, the biggest challenge for Muslims is to be connected to the Quran, and through this, living according to Quranic teachings and being mindful also of the Quranic duties, that we have forgotten.

(M.A. Parvaiz is Vice-Chancellor of the Maulana Azad National

Urdu University, Hyderabad. He can be contacted on [maparvaiz@gmail.com](mailto:maparvaiz@gmail.com))

# The Muslims' Intellectual Decline

**As Muslims began to move away from the Quran, their understanding of knowledge and learning also began to change.**

By Mohammad Aslam Parvaiz

That Muslims were once leaders in many fields of knowledge is a fact that is readily acknowledged even by many non-Muslim scholars. The early Muslims' contributions to various sciences were truly impressive. This being the case, it is often asked why this process came to a halt several centuries ago.

How was it that a people that were in the forefront of the pursuit of science and learning are now among the least educated communities across the world? How does one explain what seems to be this very puzzling paradox?

There is a simple yet convincing explanation for this. And it is this: the decline of Muslims, including in the field of science and learning, happened because Muslims increasingly began to move away from the Quran and its teachings.

Now, how did this effect Muslims' attitude towards knowledge and learning?

The answer is that as Muslims began to move away from the Quran, their understanding of knowledge and learning also began to change.

The understanding of knowledge (*ilm*) in the Quran is a holistic one. Numerous verses of the Quran exhort people to reflect on various phenomenon of nature. For instance, the Quran (3:190) says: **"There are signs in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of**

**night and day for people of understanding'**. Verses such as this one, encourage us to develop knowledge of God's creation. This knowledge is a means to grow in our understanding of God. Inspired by this Quranic understanding of knowledge, many early Muslims made impressive contributions in various fields of knowledge, including what are called the 'Sciences' today.

God had given human beings the capacity to gain knowledge in all fields, some Muslims declared that only the former sort of knowledge was to be pursued while they forbade or frowned upon the latter.

In later centuries, however, as Muslims began to depart from the teachings of the Quran, this holistic understanding of knowledge was soon eclipsed. Knowledge came to be artificially divided into two distinct categories 'religious' (*dini*) and 'worldly' (*duniyavi*). There is no such distinction made in the Quran, though. Whereas God had given human beings the capacity to gain knowledge in all fields, some Muslims declared that only the former sort of knowledge was to be pursued while they forbade or frowned upon the latter. That is how the Muslims fell from their position of torchbearers of knowledge in various subjects.

(M.A. Parvaiz is Vice-Chancellor of the Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad. He can be contacted on [maparvaiz@gmail.com](mailto:maparvaiz@gmail.com))

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By Shahin Ashraf Ali

Young Shahab was very fond of drawing and coloring. One day, Ammi bought for him a beautiful set of crayons. Shahab was very happy. He just could not wait to use them! He pulled out his drawing pad, chose a green crayon and drew a lovely tree.

Then, he drew a bright yellow sunflower, a clear blue sky and a fiery orange sun. And as Shahab drew, he repeated a phrase that he had heard Dadi Jaan recite from the Holy Quran that day, "Fabi-ayyi aalaai rabbi kumma tukazzibaan?" Dadijaan had

## The Fable of the Talking Crayons

"I colour the trees," boasted the green crayon. "Can any of you do that?"

explained to him that its English translation is, 'which of your Lord's wonders would you deny?'

Shahab was happily drawing, coloring and singing this sentence to himself until bedtime. He drew one more picture before going to sleep. He colored the sky at night with his black crayon and drew a moon with the white one. Then, he put aside his crayons and went to sleep.

And do you know what happened then? When Shahab, Ammi, Abba and Dadi Jaan were fast asleep, the crayons got into a terrible argument!



Hearing them quarreling among themselves, the baby pink crayon announced, "All of us are useless unless someone uses us."

"I colour the trees," boasted the green crayon. "Can any of you

do that?"

"H u h ! " mocked the yellow crayon. "I am the colour of gold, and so I am very precious."

"Be quiet!" scolded the

blue crayon. "There would be no sky and water in any picture without me."

"And how would you colour the sun if it was not for me?" the orange crayon wanted to know.

"Do not make me angry!" the black crayon warned. "When I come on the scene, none of you can be seen."

"Oh yeah!" the white crayon exclaimed. "I bring in the moonlight with me and drive

away darkness!"

Hearing them quarreling among themselves, the baby pink crayon announced, "All of us are useless unless someone uses us. So, the child who draws and colors with us is the most important one to us all!"

At this, all the crayons fell silent. The argument was settled! They knew that what the pink crayon said was right.

The next day, when Shahab opened his box of crayons he felt as if the crayons were happy to see him. He shared his feelings with his mother. "And Ammi, I even felt the crayons were singing in praise of God!"

Ammi smiled and asked, "What do you think the crayons were crayons singing?"

"Fabi ayyi aalaai rabbikumma tukazzibaan? Which of your Lord's wonders would you deny?"

Ammi smiled and kissed her son.

### How did Earth get its name?

All of the planets, except for Earth, were named after Greek and Roman gods and goddesses. The name Earth is an English/German name which simply means the ground. It comes from the Old English words 'eor(th)e' and 'ertha'. In German it is 'erde'. The name Earth is at least 1000 years old.

### Why does Earth spin?

Earth spins because of the way it was formed. Our Solar System formed about 4.6 billion years ago when a huge cloud of gas and dust started to collapse under its own gravity. As the cloud collapsed, it started to spin. Some of the material within this cloud gathered into swirling eddies and eventually formed into planets. As the planets formed, they kept this spinning motion. This is similar to what you see when skaters pull in their arms and spin faster. As material gathered in more closely to form a planet, like Earth, the material spun faster. The Earth keeps on spinning because there are no forces acting to stop it.

### How much water does Earth have?

There are more than 326 million trillion gallons of water on Earth. Less than three percent of all this water is freshwater and of that amount, more than two-thirds is locked up in ice caps and glaciers.

What keeps our atmosphere

attached to Earth?

Our atmosphere is a mixture of gases that surround Earth. It is



kept in place by the pull of Earth's gravity. If Earth was a much smaller planet, like Mercury or Pluto, its gravity would be too weak to hold a large atmosphere.

### What is the atmosphere of Earth made of?

Earth's atmosphere is 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, 0.9% argon, and 0.03% carbon dioxide with very small percentages of other elements. Our atmosphere also contains water vapor. In addition, Earth's atmosphere contains traces of dust particles, pollen, plant

### DID YOU KNOW?

## Wonders of God's Earth

grains and other solid particles.

### What are the highest and lowest temperatures on Earth?

The highest temperature ever recorded on Earth was 136 Fahrenheit (58 Celsius) in the Libyan desert. The coldest temperature ever measured was -126 Fahrenheit (-88 Celsius) at Vostok Station in Antarctica.

### How much does Earth weigh and how is this measured?

Earth weighs about 13,170,000,000,000,000,000 pounds (or 5,974,000,000,000,000,000 kilograms). Since Earth is too big to be placed on a scale, scientists use mathematics and the laws of gravity to figure out Earth's weight.

### What is Earth made of?

The Earth is made out of many things. Deep inside Earth, near its center, lies Earth's core which is mostly made up of nickel and iron. Above the core is Earth's mantle, which is made up of rock containing silicon, iron, magnesium, aluminum, oxygen and other minerals. The rocky surface layer of Earth, called the crust, is made up of mostly oxygen, silicon, aluminum, iron, calcium, sodium, potassium and

magnesium. Earth's surface is mainly covered with liquid water and its atmosphere is mainly nitrogen and oxygen, with smaller amounts of carbon dioxide, water vapor and other gases.

### How large is Earth?

Earth's circumference (the distance all the way around the equator) is 24,901 miles (40,075 kilometers). Its diameter (the distance from one side to the other through Earth's center) is 7,926 miles (about 12,756 kilometers). Earth is slightly

smaller when measured between the North and South Poles which gives a diameter of 7,907 miles (12,725 kilometers).

### How old is Earth?

Earth is thought to be between 4.5 and 4.8 billion years old. The age of Earth is found by measuring the age of very old Earth rocks. This is done by measuring the rate at which elements of the radioactive metal uranium decay (break down) into lead. Scientists have also measured the age of meteorites which have fallen onto Earth's surface, and the age of moon rocks brought back by the Apollo astronauts. Both the meteorites and the moon formed around the same time as Earth, and they show similar ages.

## Laugh Out Loud!



A child told his father that he came second in the school race. Papa was very happy and gave his son a nice present. Later, Papa asked how many students took part in the race. The son said 'Two', and ran away from the scene!



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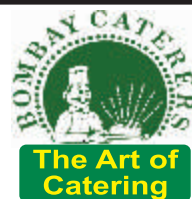
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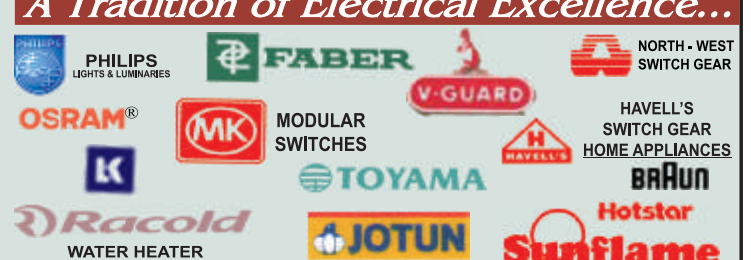
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