The Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, has in various ways pointed out the real spirit of fasting and has explained that to go hungry and thirsty while ignoring the spirit carries no value in the sight of God.

Abstention From Falsehood

Once, he said:
If one does not give up speaking falsehood and acting by it, God does not require him to give up eating and drinking (Bukhari).

On another occasion, he said:
Many are the people who fast but who gain nothing from their fast except hunger and thirst; and many are those who stand praying all night but gain nothing except sleeplessness (Darimi).

The lessons are clear and unequivocal: merely being hungry and thirsty is not by itself worship, but a means for performing real worship. Real worship means desisting from violating the law of God out of this fear and this love of god, pursuing activities that please Him, and refraining from the indiscriminate satisfaction of physical desires. If you fast while ignoring this essence of the Fasting, you are simply causing unnecessary inconvenience to your stomachs.

Faith and Self-scrutiny

The Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, draws attention to another aim of fasting thus:

Whoever observes the Fast, believing and counting, has all his past sins and forgiven (Bukhari, Muslim).

Believing means that faith in God should remain alive in the consciousness of a Muslim. Counting means that you should seek only Allah’s pleasure, constantly watching over your thoughts and actions to make sure you are doing nothing contrary to His pleasure, and trusting and expecting the rewards promised by Allah and the Messenger. Observing these two principles brings the rich reward of all your past sins being forgiven. The reason is obvious: even if you were once disobedient, you will have now turned, fully repentant, to your Master – and ‘a penitent is like one who has, as it were, never committed a sin at all’, as said the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him (Ibn Majah).

Shield Against Sins

On another occasion, the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, said:
The Fast is like a shield [for protection from Satan’s attack]. Therefore when one observes the Fast he should [use this shield and] abstain from quarrelling. If anybody abuses him or quarrels with him, he should simply say: Brother, I am fasting [do not expect me to indulge in similar conduct] (Bukhari, Muslim)
With the installation of BJP government at the Centre, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, under Smt. Smriti Irani, is all set to unveil a plan that is causing concern among the leaders of the community. HRD Minister has drawn up a list of 10 priorities that point to the shape of things to come. The Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) took the initiative to elicit views of academics at a discussion on “Changing Context of Education in India: A Review” at the conference Hall of the Institute on June 4, 2014.

Initiating the discussion, the Chairman of the IOS, Dr. Mohd. Manzoor Alam referred to the plan of the new HRD Minister to increase total spending on education to 6 percent of the GDP and ensure that each state had an IIT and the Yale-IIT network. These points include traditional Vedic education as part of the curriculum, incorporation of Gujarat model on teachers’ training, reforms in legal education and taking up of the Foreign Education Providers Bill, among others. He sought to know what implication the plan for saffronisation of education would have on the future system of education in India.

Prof. Refaqat Ali Khan, Vice-Chairman of the IOS and a prominent scholar of history, in his brief talk described Dinanath Batra’s campaign against selected history books as an attempt to propagate RSS ideology. He said that a chain of DAV schools in the country were used as an instrument to inculcate Hindu ethos on the students. He believed that a group in the Congress, represented by Rajendra Prasad, Morarji Desai, K M Munshi, etc., had leanings towards Hindutva. He noted that Batra was not only present in education, but in every field of activity.

He said that there were a number of institutions and organisations to espouse the cause of RSS. He opined that Narendra Modi was part and parcel of the RSS, who grew with the organisation and had come of age. He described Modi as Chanakya of the RSS. Indira Gandhi, too, was autocratic but she was never part of an ideology as Modi was, he concluded.

Prof. Faizan Mustafa, Vice-Chancellor of NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, remarked that there was nothing substantial in the 10-point agenda of the HRD Minister. Commenting on the new BJP government’s plan to privatise education, he said that it offered us an opportunity to take advantage of that plan. Out of 2,500 model schools, we could corner at least 10 percent by investing in them. He pleaded that, instead of demanding reservation for Muslims, we should ensure that 33 percent Muslim girls be enrolled in schools and colleges. Referring to the attendance of girls in secondary schools, he said that while the attendance of non-Muslim girls accounted for 87 percent, the attendance of Muslim girls stood abysmally at 16 percent.

Calling for taking advantage of the Right to Education (RTE), he favoured skipping the mid-day meal. He informed that the government had agreed to do something for female education and opined that education was not a contentious issue. He said that at least 25 percent Kasturba Gandhi Vidyalayas be earmarked for the minorities. Prof. P K Abdul Azis, former Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University held that the government could not make sweeping changes in the allocation of funds for the minorities. He said that we should seek funds and optimally utilise whatever was available.

He felt that a great responsibility devolved on community leaders to ensure that the programmes and schemes meant for the Muslims were implemented. Voicing concern over the failure of nearly 33 percent Muslim children to get enrolled in schools, he said that there were no takers for private universities. He allayed fears of Muslims about BJP’s ascendance to power, saying the legal remedies were available to challenge any wrong-doing by government.

However, he called for eternal vigilance against wrongdoing. He said that there was nothing to worry about the number of the institutions run and managed by Muslims that ran into thousands. There was no threat to them, he said. Referring to the 7th point in HRD Minister’s agenda regarding incorporation of Gujarat model on teachers training, he said we should not be apprehensive of it and adopt a positive outlook.
Prof. Mohsin Usmani, former Dean, English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, exuded confidence by quoting the Holy Quran in which Allah commands the believers not to be fearful. He admitted that the situation obtaining today was very serious, yet we should do what we did in the past to surmount the tempest that was originating from Nagpur. He especially recalled of the horror of partition and said that we survived it. Those were trying times when educated Muslims migrated to Pakistan, leaving behind a vast population to fend for itself. He suggested setting up of a cell by the IOS to keep track of developments in the country.

After Prof. Usmani, Prof M. Afzal Wani cited a verse of the Quran 3:139 - Eng. Tr. So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: for ye must gain mastery if ye are true in Faith. Prof. Wani asserted that challenges, if any, should be first objectively sorted out and then only strategically met. He talked of two components of education - technological and ideological. The technological components is common to all people, the differences can be only in the other. This only needs to be balanced. In his understanding the Constitution of India can withstand that. He stressed for strategies to ensure more admissions of Muslim students in government institutions which may include efforts by all of us even at local levels through informal teaching and coaching.

Dr. Fakhruddin Mohammad, Secretary, MESCO (Muslim Educational Social and Cultural Organisation), Hyderabad, welcomed the proposal to enhance investment in education. He expressed satisfaction that his organisation had done a lot for educational empowerment of Muslims in Andhra Pradesh and beyond. He viewed the proposal for imparting moral education as very important. He also listed some of the points in HRD Minister’s agenda.

Prof. Manzoor Ahmad, Vice-Chancellor of Subharti University, Meerut, pleaded for setting up of a centre to guide on various issues. He said that Narendra Modi knew full well that only the use of technology could ensure development. Modi’s emphasis on education was based on the premise that through education only could he realise his dream of India’s development. In this connection, he especially referred to Dr. Ambedkar whose constitutional guarantee of reservation to the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes. He cautioned against the danger of polarisation against Muslims.

Mr. P A Inamdar, a well-known educationist from Pune, advised Muslims not to panic. He said that Muslims’ attitude to various issues underwent a change in the wake of Babri Masjid demolition. He opined that Muslims always fared well when faced with difficulties. He said that the number of Muslim institutions in Gujarat had gone up to 1,000 from a bare of 187 during Modi’s rule. He said that the 12th five-year plan was in place and the government was bound to promote schemes accordingly. It was not easy to change the allocation for schemes under various departments. Every law passed by the legislation would be within the framework of the Constitution. He pointed out that the Right to Information Act was in place as a bulwark against any draconian provision in the law to be enacted by the new government.

He favoured ignoring the 10-point agenda. He said that we should concentrate on technology-based education. Calling for formulating a 5-year strategy for technology-based education, he said that the shift from pencil to modern technology was needed. He pleaded for value added education to girl students. He asked the leaders of the community to demand scholarship for Muslim students on the pattern of scholarship admissible to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students.

Prof. M Afzal Wani, Professor of Law, Gurugobind Singh Indraprasth University, New Delhi called for following Qur’anic commands when faced with ideological onslaughts. While calling for an objective approach to the problem, he quoted the Quran’s assurance “you will be superior, if you are a Momin”. He asked the community to have good intentions.

Senior journalist and policy analyst, Mr. M. Zeyaul Haque, called for strictly adhering to the agenda. He emphasised the need for confining the discussion to the subject only. No extraneous subject should be introduced and no sermon be delivered, he said.

The Secretary General of the IOS, Prof. Z M Khan said that the minutes of the discussions would be circulated among all the participants and the Muslim intelligentsia. He
said that the IOS had been studying the RSS ideology and M S Golwalkar’s vision of India. RSS was biding time to come out with the scheme beyond the 10-point agenda. While terming the situation as dangerous, he said that we should be ready to face any eventuality. He remarked that there were so many things, including the Constitution, values and traditions that were favourably disposed towards us. He pleaded for making a common cause with Dalits, Christians and other disadvantaged people. He cited the example of the demand for enforcement of the common civil code by saying that Hindus opposed it more than Muslims.

In his closing remarks, the Chairman, IOS, Dr. Mohd. Manzoor Alam drew attention towards a situation that might emerge following the present government’s move to make a repeat of Atal Behari Vajpayee’s government to review the Constitution. He expressed the apprehension that the saffronisation that had started in Madhya Pradesh with the Suryanamaskar would not stop there. The process of saffronisation of school textbooks had begun. He expressed concern over attack against innocent Muslims in Pune and elsewhere. He said that an environment was being sought to be created in which it would be difficult to work freely. He opined that demand for more and more public institutions be made.

The discussion ended with a dua by Prof. Mohsin Usmani. Those who attended the function included Dr. Anjum Zahoor, a journalist and researcher, Dr. Shaukat Ali, former Controller of Examinations, Maulana Mazharul Haq Arabic and Persian University, Patna, Prof. Shamim A Ansari, Director, Centre for Promotion of Education and Cultural Advancement of Muslims of India (CEPECAMI), Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, several academicians, social activists and prominent citizens.

**Seventh Lecture under Series on Indian Constitution on International Human Rights, Norms for the Protection of Minorities and the Indian Constitution**

Delivering the Seventh Lecture under the series on the Indian Constitution on ‘International Human Rights, Norms for the Protection of Minorities and the Indian Constitution’, organised by the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) here on June 7, 2014, the Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, Jamia Millia Islamia, Dr. Eqbal Hussain observed that the human rights were the articulation of the need for justice, tolerance, mutual respect and human dignity in all of our activities. He said that the traditional first generation rights were incorporated as fundamental rights in part-III and the second generation human rights were included as directive principles of state policy in part-IV of the Indian Constitution.

Commenting on the new Union Minister for Minority Affairs, Mrs. Najma Heptullah’s statement soon after assuming office that Muslims could not be treated as minorities as they were the second largest majority in India, Dr. Hussain said that the word minority was alien to the dictionary of the RSS. He argued that the issues relating to the minorities rights were extensively discussed in the Constituent Assembly, particularly by Dr. B R Ambedkar, Dr. S Radhakrishnan and D E Smith, and the term ‘minority’ and secular state were interpreted.

He buttressed his point by saying that Articles 25 to 30 were incorporated in the Indian Constitution to confer the rights of the freedom of religion and cultural and educational right on the minorities. He maintained that the concern of international community about the treatment of minorities was based on the premise that the international protection of the rights of the minorities was an essential aspect of the international protection of human rights. In this connection, he referred to the UN Declaration on Minorities in 1992. In order to implement it, documents like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992), Recommendations for UN Declaration on Minorities and Implementing UN Declaration on Minorities, were prepared.

Dr. Hussain pointed out that the question of fundamental human rights had been relevant ever since the rudimentary structure of human society came to be established. Tracing the modern concept of human rights, he said that the Second World War (1939-1945), in which both human and natural rights of the people of the world had been trampled in no uncertain manner, caused the world community to think of establishing a collective mechanism by which such cataclysms could be prevented in future.
This resulted in one of the most momentous events of world history with the formation of the United Nations in 1945 and the publication of the United Nations Charter. This was also a turning point in the human rights vis-a-vis international law, he remarked. He held that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, on December 10, 1948, partly in response to the atrocities committed during the Second World War. As a follow-up, two international covenants – (i) Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and (ii) Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), were signed in 1966 to give effect to the UDHR, he concluded.

Senior advocate of the Supreme Court, Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad, who conducted the proceedings, opined that human rights were essential for human existence. He advised the minorities, particularly the Muslims, not to over-react to the utterances of others. He said that legal recourse was always available to aggrieved persons to approach the lower court in the first instance against the violation of human rights guaranteed under the Constitution. One could also knock at the door of the apex court in such cases.

The Chairman of IOS, Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, said that the Supreme Court had ruled as far back as 1997 that the basic structure of the Constitution could not be changed. Since the rights of religious and linguistic minorities formed part of the fundamental structure of the Constitution, they were also inviolable. He noted that 50 percent vacancies of judges in various high courts and the Supreme Court were likely to come along in the near future, and if these vacancies were filled with people who had a tilt towards a particular ideology, the principles of equality, justice and liberty enshrined in the Constitution could become a casualty.

Complaining that the rights of the minorities had been systematically violated, he sought to know if an Indian citizen could directly approach the International Court of Justice at the Hague as an aggrieved party. Painting the prevailing situation as fluid, he recalled Justice Rajinder Sachar’s recent statement in which he stated that “those who opposed freedom struggle are ruling the country today.” It was a moot question if the voices being raised on various issues concerning Muslims in different corners were aimed at provoking them. He pointed out that the choice was between provocation and an agenda for development.

Assistant Secretary-General of the IOS and the professor of Law at the Gurugobind Singh Indraprastha University, Prof. M Afzal Wani, opined that legally the basic structure of the Constitution could not be changed. He quoted several constitutional experts like Nani Palkhiwala, Soli Sorabjee, etc., in this connection. He suggested that the IOS should collect reports on human rights and work on them.

Secretary General of the IOS, Prof. Z M Khan, in his presidential remarks said that it hardly needed to be explained that Muslims were being selectively targeted. Indiscriminate violation of their rights had created a fear psychosis in them.

Muslim boys feared to freely talk to their fellows. He said that though the country was secular, it was being communalised. If this trend was allowed to continue, Muslims would be isolated. He was all praise for the letter and spirit of the Constitution, but lamented that its execution was hardly up to mark. He advised that the power of vote should be consciously used to have a say in governance. He regretted that we had made a cosy corner for ourselves to live in. Unless we reached an arrangement with the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, OBCs and other marginalised sections in the electoral politics, we could not sustain them.

The lecture was attended by Prof. Refaqat Ali Khan, Vice-Chairman of the IOS Mr. E M Abdul Rahman from Kochi (Kerala), Syed Mustafa Rifai Nadvi and Syed Baqar Arshad Qasim from Bangalore, Mr. Shaikh Nizamuddin from Sholapur, Mirza Zaki Beg, Mr. Muzaaffar Husain Ghazali, Mr. Raju Mansukhani, Mr. Arun Dayal, several academics social activists and prominent citizens.

Prof. Z.M. Khan’s Lecture on “Islamic Worldview: A Reflection”

Former professor of Political Science and Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Jamia Millia Islamia and Secretary-General of the Institute of Objective Studies, Prof. Z.M. Khan has said the Islamic worldview is comprehensive and presents a well-knit scheme to provide knowledge and explanation about the seen and unseen as explained in the Qur’an. It gives ways and methods to achieve
values, establish basic ethical precepts and create a balance in everything, he said, adding that nobody was allowed to exceed the limits prescribed.

Delivering the lecture on the “Islamic Worldview: A Reflection”, organised by the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) in the Conference Hall of the Institute on June 21, 2014, Prof. Khan pointed out that the Islamic worldview was short, straight and simple. He held that basically, there were two components - faith and positive action. Arguing that all human faculties should be directed to complete one’s role in this world, he noted that faith was very well defined.

While positive action signified any action committed to bring about an improvement, the quality of action solely depended on the intensity and purity of intention behind the action, he said. He maintained that this aim was to be achieved by the application of all faculties of humans, including intellect, sentiments, feelings, etc. Islam presented the whole scheme with the provision of adjustment with time and place, he remarked. Holding that it was difficult to define the present day situation except that violence and injustice were rampant, he said that there was a growing belief in influential circles that the prevailing situation represented an end of ideology, religion and history.

He continued that human behaviour was shaped by economic and social conditions and these were not in one’s control. Consequently, he said, the situation was beyond control and things could not be put in order. For some people, the solution lay in the application of violence and oppression. Exploitation of the weak was the order of the day and humanity was in search of effective solutions, he observed. He insisted that Islam claimed and presented precedence to offer solution to the problems facing the world today. He regretted that this was not happening today. He called for an effort to define the text in line with the context of the time. He said that the Almighty had sent the message to apply and implement, and finally this was addressing the humanity for all people and time. He wanted to know if it did not make a call for developing faith based on context-friendly paradigm to look at things to make the message relevant to our times. He believed that this might safely be achieved by defining the Islamic worldview. Explaining that worldview was a translation of German word “weltanschauung”, he said that al-Attas had defined it as “a vision of reality as it appeared before one’s mind’s eye revealing what existence was all about.”

Prof. Khan opined that the present situation testified that the Islamic tradition had worked very hard to keep the faith part high, but the Islamic world had suffered as it did not develop thought and new ideas to cope with the changing times. He laid stress on the urgent need for addressing this question and working on developing new thought. But, this created the need to define the Islamic worldview which was a balanced combination of faith and positive action. He reminded the audience not to forget that God had created this universe and humans with a purpose and responsibility. He concluded by saying that though we possessed the herb, yet we could not dispense it to the patient lying on the deathbed.

Prof. Afzal Wani, Professor of Law at the Gurugobind Singh Indraprastha University and Asstt. Secretary-General of the IOS, called for world peace. He said that Islam always stood for respect to human rights, equality, brotherhood and peace. He noted that Islam touched upon almost every aspect of human life. Senior journalist and policy analyst, Mr. Mohmmad Ziyaul Haque, praised Prof. Z.M. Khan for his erudition and vision on issues related to Islam and Muslims. He described the Qur’an as the only Book that went into minuest details of universe and its creations. So many scientific concepts had their origin in the Qur’an which spoke of its infinite depths as often pointed out by the Nobel-winning physicist Abdus Salam. This, Mr. Haque pointed out was one dimension of Islamic worldview.

The Chairman of the IOS, Dr. Mohd. Manzoor Alam, who presided over the function, described Prof. Z.M. Khan’s lecture as a “discourse with his students”. He said that the lecture was especially beneficial for the second generation. He held that process, debate and discussion were supplementary to each other. He informed that a panel discussion on the Qur’an and the current situation would be organised by the IOS in the near future in which prominent ulama and scholars would be invited.

He especially referred to a book titled “History of the Science of
Qur’an” published by the International Islamic University, Malaysia which deals with many scientific issues on the subject. He observed that the Qur'an spoke of perfection of good deeds. He opined that truth was not what one accepted but the one that was spread through the message far and wide. He sought suggestions from the participants for the topic of the discussion to be held in the near future on “challenges before the Muslim youth in the present world context”

Earlier, the function got off to a start with the recitation of a Qur’anic verse by Hafiz Athar Husain of the IOS Prof. Ishteyaque Danish, Professor of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, and Finance Secretary of the IOS, who conducted the proceedings, proposed a vote of thanks. The function was attended by the Vice-Chairman of the IOS, Prof. Refaat Ali Khan, Mr. Mohd. Tanzeem Alam of Falahi Tanzeem, Prof. S.M. Yahya, Mr. Mohd. Khalil, ex-scientist, CSIR, Mr. Shakeelur Rehman Baghaunwi, President, Social Dais and Mr. A.U. Asif, Associate Editor, Chauthi Duniya, besides several university teachers, Islamic scholars, social activists and prominent citizens.

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Hunger for Goodness

The Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, once directed that a man, while fasting, ought to do more good works than usual and ardently desire to perform acts of kindness. Compassion and sympathy for his brothers should intensify in his heart because, being himself in the throes of hunger and thirst, he will all the more be able to realize the misery of other servants of God who are destitute.

In Ramadan, whoever provides food to a person who is fasting to break that Fast will earn forgiveness for his sins, deliverance from the Fire and as much reward as the one who is fasting, without any reduction in the recompense of the latter (Baihaqi).

Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas tells that the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, used to become unusually kind and generous during Ramadan. No beggar in that period went empty-handed from his door, and as many slaves as possible were set free (Baihaqi).

From Let Us Be Muslim by Sayyid Abul A’la Mawdudi, pp. 192-194.

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We are a democracy but most of our universities are functional autocracies. Institutions like boards of studies, faculty committees, boards of research, academic councils, executive committees and such other bodies were created in universities to ensure that they function democratically. But the vice chancellors either enjoy or arrogate to themselves the power which even the Prime Minister probably does not have. Autocracy is the younger sister of dictatorship which is a deadly poison for academic campuses. Universities must be allowed to act as debating centres and vice chancellors should not have the power to gag differing voices, and if they do, they must be disciplined. It must be realized that only a democratically administered university can ensure the free flow of ideas which is so essential for its health and development.
Privatization of Education
by Ishtiyaque Danish

The views expressed in the article do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of the Newsletter (editor)

Education is a long-term investment in building national future. Quality education, therefore, is essential for all round national development. And it is government’s responsibility to provide sufficient, if not excellent, infrastructure all across the country so that the citizens get equal opportunity for obtaining quality education at affordable price. In view of wide spread disparities in people’s income the private sector that works on the premise of ‘greater the investment greater the return’ can not be given a free hand in the field of education to further widen the existing gulf between the have and the have-nots. The government, therefore, must regulate, not strangulate, higher education whether public or private.

There are all kinds of educational institutions in the private sector. Some are indeed good but they cater for the needs of the super rich or of the middle class that has the capacity to borrow from the bank. The super rich and the capable middle class pay high fees including development charges to get their wards admitted in apparently excellent private colleges and universities. With pocketful of money they get admission without qualifying entrance examinations; in fact in some universities they walk with drafts and ‘buy’ the admission they want. There is a need to critically examine if this money-oriented educational behaviour is good for and helpful in building a great nation that we aspire to be.

There is a wide network of private institutions, colleges and universities, which charge high fees from students but pay their teachers and other employees poorly. Many call them educational shops but little do they realize that these institutions are practicing the worst kind of exploitation. They make their staff sign against the hefty amount of salary that in reality they are not getting. This exploitation is worse than corruption, for it involves the great responsibility of building our future generations and therefore government’s sincere and fair intervention is necessary.

Yes ‘sincere and fair intervention’ not the ideologically motivated ones, because the purpose is to improve the working of private institutions for larger benefit of the nation and not to promote some coloured vision. There have to be in place some autonomous institutions with biting teeth that not only regularly check the quality of education being imparted in private institutions but also ensure that the personnel employed in them are getting their due, salaries, perks, promotion and other related things provided in Indian labour law.

A great majority of private institutions hardly creates or provides amenities for higher research which are so essential for faculty development. What people do not realize is the fact that skill development is a continuous process. It does not end with the acquisition of Masters and Ph.Ds. Those opting the noble profession of teaching must know that continuously improving their skills through reading and research is the requirement of their job and the institutions employing them must feel duty-bound to create and provide research facilities for them. In modern time a university can excel only when it has better infrastructure both for its students and teachers and especially sees to it that its faculty gets the amenities and environment necessary for improving their qualification.

One last thing and it is probably the most important in view of the situations prevailing in our campuses.

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