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Thought for the Month

O mankind! We created
You from a single (pair)
Of a male and a female
Nations and tribes, that
Ye may know each other
(Not that ye may despise
(Each other). Verily
The most honoured of you
In the sight of Allah
Is (he who is) the most
Righteous of you
And Allah has full knowledge
And is well-acquainted
(With all things)
Hearts which are
In their breasts

Al-Quran- 49:13

EDITOR

Prof. Sanghasen Singh

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Syed Arshad Karim

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

162, Jogabai Extension
Jamia Nagar, New Delhi
PIN-110025
India

Phone 26981187, 26989253,
26987467

Fax : 91-11-26981104

E-mail: manzoor@ndf.vsnl.net.in

Website: www.iosworld.org

FOCUS

Secularism, as it is well known, has been historically designed to regulate relationships between people and groups who belong to different and rival religious persuasions. The principle, both in its conceptualization and application, seeks to ensure that these groups will be able to live together in society, and in the polity, in reasonable harmony. Towards this end, all religions are guaranteed equality of treatment; the state itself is not aligned to any religion, and everyone is granted the freedom of religious belief and practices. Correspondingly, no persons, no matter what religious denomination he or she may belong to, can be denied political, civil, social and economic rights. Similarly, the right to benefit from the distribution of goods, such as subsistence and reproduction, health, education, a fair wage, and protection of the law, cannot be withheld from any individual on the same grounds. The status of citizenship is simply detached from these considerations and the state is equally distanced from all religious groups in society.

If this is so, and if the basic aim of secularism is to ensure and institute equality among all religious groups, the concept, it follows, is derivative inasmuch as it is based on the principle of equality. Note that secularism acquires substance and meaning only when it is related to its referral – the antecedent, moral principle of equality, which rules that each person or group counts equally. Logically, therefore, a society that is committed to secularism must be committed beforehand to the principle of equality. In fact, a prior commitment to the wider principle of equality is in important ways a prerequisite for secularism. For unless a polity subscribes to this principle, there is no reason why it should consider itself bound by the precepts of secularism, in the sense of granting equality to all religious groups. There is nothing that compels it to do so—nothing unless equality has been accepted and codified as the organizing principle of the polity prior to secularism. Secularism acquires its *raison d'être*, we can further say, when it is not only derived from equality but when it is justified by referral to equality. And equality, I may add, is so palpably moral that it does not need further justification.

Armed in a purely metaphorical manner with this realization, we can proceed to couch our discussion on intergroup relationships purely in terms of secularism, remembering that the concept has already been validated through a process of moral justification. Put this way, the form that the Indian concept of secularism has acquired during the course of our history—*sarva dharma sambhava*—is both corroborated as well as justified. The concept of *sarva dharma sambhava*, by referring to equality as its justificatory principle, rules that all religions are equal, therefore, by implication they should be equally treated.

This, however, does not cover the contingency that minority religious groups may be decaying because of want of attention, or systematic neglect, or because they are subjected to majoritarianism. For formal equality, as the referral for the concept, is supremely nonchalant about the fact that some religious groups are in a majority, and others are in a minority. Now the question of majority and minority, as argued earlier, is not only a matter of numbers or the lack of them. Numerical minorities are more often than not groups that are extremely vulnerable to majoritarian pressures for a host of reasons. Therefore, the principle of secularism has to deal with a constituency in which some groups are far weaker than the others, inasmuch as they may not have the resources to secure their own survival and reproduction in wider society.

It is, of course, possible to contend at this point of the argument, that we are concerned only about equality between groups, not the survival of the group. If the group survives, we say, this testifies to the vibrancy of the group in question; if it does not, this simply means that the group is not viable enough. But this argument is strongly reminiscent of those apologetics that defend the market-place, which, as we know all too well, is supremely unconcerned with either the survival of the participants, or with their ability to participate from a plane of equality. It is not concerned with the fact that some people are simply not in a position to participate in the transactions that take place within this sphere, and thus it both intensifies as well as reproduces the inequality that originates strictly outside the market, in the realm of production.

(From "Beyond Secularism: The Rights of Religious Minorities" by Neera Chandhoke, pp. 93-94)

Activities of the IOS Headquarters

Discussion on Right to Education Bill

The Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi organized a discussion on April 15, 2010 at India Islamic Cultural Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi. The main presentation was made by Prof. Absaleh Shariff, Member of Tilingana Committee and Senior Fellow at NCAER. Formerly he was Member Secretary of the famous Sachar Committee. Prof. Shariff spoke on the combined theme of the Sachar Committee Report, the Justice Ranganath Mishra Report and the Right to Education Bill. He was critical of the bill on several counts. First, this bill has been passed by Parliament while education is state subject. It means the states would not be obliged to follow it unless they also give their concurrence. This bill is, in fact, silent on who will implement it. This bill is also silent about the education of the minorities. Dr. Saleh felt that the bill was not an important step in the right direction as it is being made out.

Mr. Abdul Khaliq, former IAS and General Secretary of Lokjan Shakti Party said that making laws was one thing and implementing the law was another matter. Practically the situation is that many existing laws are not being followed. He gave the example of the funds of the Ministry of Minority Affairs. The Ministry says that they have spent all the funds. Likewise the Central Government says that it has spent over 80000 crores on the welfare of the minority. Mr Khaliq wondered where that money has gone? We do not see any welfare measures actually happening anywhere and yet the Government claims that it has spent thousands of crores on minority welfare. He wondered if the money is being looted by the Babus.

Mr. Adeb, member of Rajya Sabha said that the Centre is right in saying that they spent over 80000 crores rupees on minority welfare. The fact is that they have transferred the money to the state governments without telling them how they would spend it. He said that in some districts the money is being

misused. He cited the example Bareilly where an RSS school operating in a Muslim-dominated area has been given five crores in the name of minority welfare. So, this is the way to help the minorities that their money is being spent on the majority.

Dr. Saleh said that even all the money of the Ministry of Minority Affairs has not been spent. He said that even the Ministry's data do not say if it has spent all the money.

Mr. E.T. Bashir Mohammad, Member of Parliament and Mr. Abdurrahman, also an MP from Tamil Nadu spoke about the educational problems of Muslims in their states. Mr. Bashir said that there are so many problems which can not be solved unless the Muslim M.Ps form a pressure group. Mr. Ahmad Saeed Malihabadi, Member of Rajya Sabha also spoke about the importance of pressure group. He also said the Ministry of Minority Affairs, which earlier had a cabinet minister, has now only a Minister of State, should have a Parliamentary Committee to monitor its activities.

Mr. Kamal Faruqi, Chairman, Delhi Minority Commission pointed out some flaws in the Right to Education Bill. He said it is very dangerous for Madaris. Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad Advocate, however, disagreed with him and said that the Bill was a welcome step in the right direction. He hoped the short comings may be removed at a later stage also. Prof. Wani of Indraprastha University also said that the Bill was important as it has made education the fundamental right of children.

Mr. Hatim Machala said that judiciary is creating problems through some interpretations of the articles dealing with fundamental rights. He said that the Supreme Court has already declared that some rights are not fundamental but only privileges. The thing is that the fundamental right can not be changed but a privilege can be withdrawn anytime. He said that the Muslim community needs to be alert on the legal front also.

Many other luminaries were present in the programme but could not speak due to paucity of time. Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, Chairman, IOS, therefore

announced that another programme will be organized to discuss the same issues in much more detail.

Lecture on Quranic Perspective on Global Civilization

Institute of Objective Studies, in collaboration with Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard, organized a lecture on "Quranic Perspective on Global Civilization" on 17.3.2010 in the Conference Room of Centre for Federal Studies, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi. Prof. Abdul Hameed Ahmad Abu Sulayman delivered the lecture which was presided over by Mr Sayyid Hamid, Chancellor, Jamia Hamdard, Prof. Ishtiyaque Danis compered the programme.

Prof. Sulayman said that the world we are living in has become lawless and only the writ of the powerful runs. The law of the jungle prevails today. He cited the example of American invasion of Kuwait in this regard and criticized the US for causing so much destruction in Iraq. The Americans have destroyed every thing there except the Ministry of Oil in whose protection alone they are interested. Till now the West was leader of the world. However, their leadership quality has suffered a great deal mainly on account of their unjust behaviour, he asserted. He also presented a thorough view of the Islamic world and lamented that it was not fulfilling its duty despite having the Holy Quran.

Prof. Abu Sulayman said that every civilization has a worldview which plays a vital role in its theoretical orientation. This worldview begins to take its shape by providing answers to such simple questions like "who am I", "where am I", "where from I have come" and "where I have to go". In other words the worldview of a people or nation is what is its concept of man, his place in the universe and what is his ultimate destiny? The Islamic worldview is based on three key concepts i.e. Tawhid, Istikhlaf and justice. That Islam urges people to believe in One God Who has appointed man to be His vicegerent on earth and the purpose of man's life is to establish justice in the world. This is a very positive and constructive worldview,

free of negative thinking, contradictions and disorder. This worldview promotes unity of thought and action and makes people work in the interest of mankind. This worldview also leads to developing proper, positive and constructive strategies so that its positive and constructive ideas are put in practice properly. Therefore, it is binding to understand the Islamic worldview properly and thoroughly. There ought to be clarity in our thoughts, actions and plans, because any discrepancies in any of these would bring about our decline. First, the Ummah would lose its vitality of thought, direction and ultimately fall, he said.

This worldview would tell the Ummah what its duties are both as individuals and as a group of people. This worldview would tell it what kind of relationship it should have with the others, or the larger world. Unfortunately the ummah either does not know its worldview or it does not have faith in itself. The Ummah's example is like that of Banu Israel who told Moses that you and your God may go and fight and "we" shall emerge there after your victory over the enemy. Our condition is more or less the same. Our Islamic lands like Afghanistan and Iraq have been occupied and devastated and the Ummah, instead of fighting against the invaders, rushes to the UN, the European Union and the US for help. It hardly ever does any concrete thing. He further said that for over two centuries the Ummah has followed the West blindly and has gained nothing, not even worldly development. On the contrary, Japan and China confronted the West, did not follow it blindly and tried to stand on their own feet. The result is that they are challenging the West today.

Prof. Abu Sulayman said that the Ummah is afflicted with acute intellectual crisis. Our Ulama do not do ijihad and just remember/memorise the sayings of the ancient scholars. Likewise our modern educated people read the Western scholars and thinkers. We do not follow the Quran and as a result have declined in every walk of life. If we really want to lead the world as torch-bearers of justice, we have to seek inspiration from the Holy Quran, said Prof. Abu Sulayman.

Silver Jubilee Celebrations

In pursuance of the decision taken in the Governing Council meeting held on October 10, 2009 for context with organising Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Institute of Objective Studies on the completion of 25 years of its existence, a meeting of the following was held on March 26, 2010 at 11:30 in the Committee Room of the Institute.

1. Prof. Z.M. Khan
2. Dr. Ausaf Ahmad
3. Mr. Zeyaul Haque
4. Dr. M. Qamar Ishaque
5. Mr. Iqbal Hussain
6. Mr. Mansoor Ahmad
7. Mr. Abdul Majeed
8. Mr. Tanweer Alam
9. Mr. Mohd. Aatur Rehman

A note in respect of Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Institute prepared by Prof. Syed Jamaluddin, who, due to his pre-occupations could not attend the meeting, was circulated for discussion along with a copy of the list of major activities and programmes proposed for the year 2010 as well as the minutes of the previous Governing Council/General Assembly meeting.

Prof. Z.M. Khan initiated the discussion by defining the nature of programmes to be organized in commemoration of the Silver Jubilee of the Institute.

The following points emerged out of the discussion.

- A reminder to members of GC/GA should be sent seeking their suggestion in respect of Silver Jubilee Celebrations.
- March/April 2011 to March/April 2012 will be the celebrations year in which one opening program will be organized in April 2011 followed by another program in the same month in April 2012. A special logo along with a slogan for 25th year of the IOS should be designed, which would be used in all programmes, reports, and publications during the celebration year.

The following would be brought out on the occasion.

25-Years Report, into English and Arabic

Selected articles appearing in JOS, RLR and Mutaleaat should be printed in book form (There will be two

volumes of Mutaleaat, one giving the selected articles on Indian Muslims and another one giving the selected articles on Islamic Economics)

Selected articles uploaded at IOS Website and Minaret should also be printed in book form

Preparation of a CD, covering the major activities and programmes during last 25 years

Preparation of Souvenir, necessary details of which are to be worked out and a committee should be formed to look into its contents.

Memento to be presented to dignitaries, its design would be similar to that prepared during inter-civilisational dialogue conference.

Launch of a website, especially for the occasion, either in present website or separately

An exhibition during the opening and closing function would be organised in which the journey of IOS would be portrayed through art, calligraphy and paintings. A committee comprising Mr. Raju Mansukhani would be set-up to work out the modalities of the exhibition.

The following observations were made on the note prepared by Prof. Jamal.

It was agreed that a calendar of events for the celebration year be prepared.

A meeting of the Delhi-based GA members and convenors of academic committees be called to discuss the details of programmes and seek their possible cooperations.

The matter should be put up as an agenda item in Governing Council meeting of the IOS scheduled on April 30 in order to get meaningful suggestion and cooperation from GC members.

The Chairman along with Secretary General and Finance Secretary should work out the modalities to raise funds for this purpose.

Formation of advisory committee, organising committee, managing committee, steering committee, reception committee and publicity committee with organising secretary and joint organising secretary should be

made with complete delegation of authority to smoothly carry out the related activities.

- Under programmes for youth, essay competition for college/university as well as Madarsa level should be organised on the given theme with substantial prize money for the best essays. A committee should be formed headed by Prof. Ishtiyaque Danish to work out the themes and other necessary details. The cooperation from different chapter should be sought in this regard.
- A certificate of merit should be awarded to selected Muslims across the country in recognition of his/her extraordinary services in different spheres of social, educational and welfare of Muslims and other underprivileged sections of Indian society.

At the end, Prof. Z.M. Khan made the following observations.

A special drive should be launched to make IOS participation on international forums to the maximum extent possible, utilise the Roster status given by the UN to the Institute in mobilizing ad for souvenir, Institute's active involvement in the present trend related to Muslim in India and abroad, study of nation-wide development for welfare schemes, scholarships for Muslims, Institute's possible role as a nodal agency for implementation of various government schemes etc.

He was also of the view that an administrative blue print with its budget should be worked out with sound mechanism of communication and responsibility to smoothly carry out the activities and programmes.

IOS Centre for Information

The IOS Data Bank has been redesignated as the IOS Centre for Information. The decision was taken in a meeting held on April 14, 2010. The meeting was attended by Dr. Ausaf Ahmad, Prof. Syed Jamaluddin, Prof. Haseena Hashia, Mr. Aatur Rahman, Dr. Qamar Ishaque and Mr. S.U. Khan. The meeting was presided over by Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, Chairman of the Institute. Mr. S.U. Khan has been co-opted as member secretary and Dr. Ausaf Ahmad was appointed convenor

of the Centre. The Centre would function under the overall guidance of Prof. Z.M. Khan, Prof. Haseena Hashia and Dr. Qamar Ishaque.

The immediate task of the Centre was decided to rearrange the acquired data and collect as well as store all the information about the various schemes launched under Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme. Information would also be collected and stored about various other schemes launched by various Ministries of Government of India.

The meeting also decided to search, collect and store information about international organizations/agencies working in such fields as education, economic and healthcare etc. Efforts would also be made to collect and store reports which appear in newspapers from time to time on human rights situations, child abuse and harassment of women in various ways etc. Special attention would be given to collecting and storing newspaper reports about Islam and Muslims which are mostly negative but sometimes these are positive also.

Activities of the IOS Headquarters

ALIGARH CHAPTER

Symposium on Women Education

The Institute of Objective Studies (Aligarh Chapter) organized a symposium on Women Education on March 8, 2010, the International Women Day. The programme was presided over by Prof. Naseem A. Zaidi, former chairman, Department of Economics, AMU, Aligarh. Some prominent women of the area including Dr. Zoya Zaidi, Dr. Zakia Arshad, Dr. Bazigha Kirmani, and Mrs. Rehana Mohsin etc. participated in the programme.

Dr. M. Muqim, coordinator of IOS (Aligarh Chapter) in his inaugural paper pointed to low literacy rate among women that leads to high fertility rate and problems associated with it. Illustrating different facts with the help of data Dr. Muqim highlighted gender bias against women, rural-urban differences, enrolment gap between boys and girls, higher dropout among girls as they are forced to take home responsibilities at an early age; he also

discussed gender gap at college and university levels and gender bias in curriculum etc.

Dr. Zoya Zaidi, in her presentation, pointed to the gender bias at every state and in different aspects of life. She lamented while citing data that only 13 percent of the girls enrolled at primary level complete their primary education. Educational attainment rate among women declines as one proceeds from lower to higher level of education. Dr. Zoya concluded by reciting a beautiful poem on Women's Day. Dr. Bazigha Kirmani regretted that female are exploited as a source of attraction and are used in modeling in a wrong way. She also pointed that in the modern curricula there is nothing that may solve problems relating to women.

Mr. Mohd. Ehsan pointed to hegemony of men in various aspects of life. He pointed that males are responsible for many problems of women. The presentation of papers was followed by a lively discussion on the topic. Many participants pointed how women may play active role in different fields.

Prof. Naseem A. Zaidi, summing up the deliberations refuted apprehensions of women against male hegemony. Citing data from NSSO (61st Round, 2004-05) he pointed out that in urban areas in some groups like Christians (SC and ST) gross enrolment ratio at graduation level among female was higher than those among male in these groups. For Muslims (All) for male in urban areas the ratio was 11.9 percent while for women it was 12.6 percent. In rural areas, of course, it was in favor of males in all the groups with the exception of Sikhs (non-SC) and Christians (ST) where enrolment of girls was higher. All depends upon a mindset and value system in all the groups, as male are thought predominantly as earning member and women as a housekeeper.

The programme came to an end with vote of thanks by Mr. Sirajuddin Khan.

Book Reviews

Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures: Volume 4: Economics, Education, Mobility and Space by

Suad Joseph, general editor, Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007, 587 pages.

An encyclopedia is popularly thought of as presenting the sum of all knowledge, whether it be universal or on a specific topic. A moment's reflection reveals, of course, that such an understanding does not quite get at the real concept, for there is no such thing as "all knowledge." The historical moment will always define the extent of the knowledge that is available. The structural terms within which that knowledge is constructed – its headings and subheadings – are historically bound as well. One of the features – both admirable and disconcerting – of the *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures* is how the work makes the reader aware of these factors: that this encyclopedia is, in fact, by its very act of being produced, defining a previously non-existent area of encyclopaedic knowledge and that the gaps in knowledge of the subject area, even after the production of the work, are substantial. Volume 4, "Economics, Education, Mobility and Space", illustrates this point vividly.

As can be seen by the volume's heading, the overall encyclopedia is organized at the top level in themes. Within each volume, though, entries are organized alphabetically. The main topics covered are "Cities," "Development," "Economics," "Education," "Environment," "Information Technologies," "Migration," "Poverty," "Slavery," "Space," and "Tourism." Since the ordering of the next level of headings is alphabetical as well, there is no particular organizational logic to the sequence of presentation. Under "Cities," for example, the subheadings are, in order: "Colonial Cities," "Homelessness," "Informal Settlement," "Islamic Cities," "Urban Built Environments," "Urban Identities," and "Urban movements." It is difficult to ascertain whether any theoretical structure has dictated these subheadings.

This absence of editorial control is even more telling when one considers the next level of headings. Under "Education: Premodern, Pre-Nineteenth Century," for example, there are only entries on Afghanistan, Central Asia, Morocco, and Sub-Saharan Africa. What this apparent spotty coverage

indicates, however, is not the editors' failure to design a cohesive work nor their lack of energy in finding contributors; rather, it is indicative of the state of current knowledge. The history of education has been a topic of investigation across the Muslim world, but the focus of those studies has rarely reflected gender difference, except to the extent that the male experience has been presumed to speak for the female experience also. This truly is an encyclopedia that is in the act of inventing a discipline. And without a doubt, it is a fascinating one to observe.

Another characteristic of the entries is their diversity. No overarching methodological stance has been taken, and no ideological commonality exists among the writers. The range of topics and the significant number of authors involved may well have made that impossible – there are 263 entries and almost 300 writers in this volume alone. There is definitely a social science approach in most articles, often anthropological or statistical, but textually based studies are certainly not absent. Especially impressive are the bibliographies in each essay, which gather material from a truly impressive range of disciplinary sources and, in some cases, languages.

Inevitably, too, the entries themselves vary in depth and perceptiveness. The single article that appears under the theme heading "Information Technologies" point out how difficult it is to understand the impact of IT on women in the Islamic world because the available data is not disaggregated for gender. Add to that the significant discrepancy between countries as regards Internet access (2000-02 data: Bahrain, 40% of the population uses the Internet; Egypt and Pakistan, 0.85%), and it is difficult for any researcher to say much beyond vast generalizations and impressionistic sketches. Articles such as "Education: Vocational: North America" tend to be more specific because of the data available, although even there the impact of being specifically a Muslim woman on one's ability to secure vocational training is (Early through Late) Modern: Great Britain" which starts off with: "Muslim women and girls are largely invisible in the vast research literature on schooling in Western Europe" [p. 297] (although the

article's bibliography does list a number of apparently relevant titles). None of this should be taken as a criticism of the encyclopedia or the authors of these entries: this is a brave undertaking, venturing into uncharted and unresearched territory.

In sum, this encyclopedia will prove to be a valuable resource for those looking for detailed summaries on the particular topics that are covered. Its significance for the future perhaps lies in the gaps, all those areas and topics where scholarly questions have not yet been framed in terms of gender. Each of those absent entries represents the potential for a new dissertation, article, or book.

Reviewed by Andrew Rippin

People Who Run the World Superclass David Rothkopf Pages 376+22 Price: \$ 26.00 Farrar, Straus and Giroux New York 10011

Here is a book that tries to have a look at the complex web of a global power network that is controlled by a small group of people.

It is interesting to learn that there are only 6,000 people (approximately) who decide the fate of the humanity. This rather arbitrary figure shows that there is one individual in every million who is a member of this "Superclass".

There is no single, formal club of the super powerful 6,000, nor is there anything put in black and white about the rules of membership. Older members move out of the circle, which allows new ones to move in comfortably as the numbers remain virtually the same.

David Rothkopf adds that there are quite a few who remain in the club for decades. One such person is former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who worked in the administration of President Richard Nixon.

This top bracket of the human species mostly knows each other. They know each other in their shared fields of specialisation as well as in allied fields. Most things in life are in any case interconnected. Thus it is quite natural for them to know counterparts from various fields. That works out to a huge number of people the individual from the Superclass knows as peers.

The Superclass comes from many fields: politics, industry, banking and financial services, armed forces, religion, cinema, writing and other arts. On one hand the hard power of the military and finance work to force the world to move as the Superclass wills, the soft power of cinema, writing and other arts facilitates this process. Religion, too, has the power to deeply influence human behaviour and chart a way of life for large sections of people.

There are writers whose books sell in their millions, thus potentially influencing so many people and helping shape their world view. Naturally, such writers are part of the global Superclass. Likewise, powerful politicians, military leaders, bankers and financiers have the same power. Among the Superclass coming from religion are the Pope, the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Rohullah Khomeini and the present Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khamnaei.

This Superclass is so powerful that there can be no war if it does not want one. Naturally, there would be no peace if this class does not want it. The world's biggest wars have been fought (and millions of lives lost) basically to protect the interests of these people. Countries make laws to suit the purposes of this powerful class although in democracies politicians are voted to power by common people.

The Superclass has wielded extraordinary powers over the decades and centuries. One example of absolute power has been the Rothschild family whose power has endured for quite a few centuries. Gutle Schnaper, wife of Mayer Amschel Rothschild, is said to have stated before her death in 1849, "If my sons did not want wars, there would be none". (This remark does not figure in the book).

To influence the policies of countries, this global Superclass utilises the media, national chambers of commerce of different countries, religious organisations, NGOs, economic and financial experts, military officials, and defence experts and specialised lobbies. Besides these, important bureaucrats, central bank and reserve bank officials as well as leaders of financial institutions and trade unions are deployed to attain the objectives of the Superclass. Quite often the top

echelons of these groups are themselves part of the Superclass.

The Superclass not only controls the levers of power within countries, but also manages international institutions and world affairs. The CEOs of many multinational companies are part of this global elite. Indian industrialists Ratan Tata and Mukesh Ambani have been described as members of this group. Tata is on the board of American companies, while Ambani, too, is part of this network of powerful individuals. Most of this class meets each other at for a like World Trade Organisation, World Economic Forum, G-2, G-7, G-8, G-20 and ASEAN to name a few. World leaders meet at these fora several times a year.

Rothkopf describes how CEOs of different US companies go on to become cabinet ministers in the US federal and state governments. They also come back to join as CEOs of such companies after their term as ministers (secretaries) is over. That further boosts their influence both in government and industry. This group functions in an environment where the laws are made by national parliaments and nations enjoy sovereign rights, but the sweep of this class transcends national boundaries and impinges on the sovereignty of nation states. That is an anomalous situation.

By its very nature this class is global and thrives in a globalising environment. However, international institutions like the UN, World Bank, IMF and others are losing credibility and clout. Thus they have a limited manoeuvre room, legally speaking. Then, there are a host of powerful political leaders like Castro, Chavez, Lulu, Ortega and Ahmedinejad who are opposed to globalisation, which they see as Western, neo-imperial agenda.

Rothkopf questions the ethics and legitimacy of such power (financial, political, diplomatic, religious and military) being confined to such a small elite. All said and done, one feels the web of power is more complex and its hidden agenda more sinister than is portrayed in this 376+22-page book. And yes, this book is fast-moving, riveting and unputdownable.

Reviewed by M. Zeyaul Haque

Activities of Ta'awun Trust

Relief Work by Ta'awun Trust

A devastating fire broke out in a slum area located between Shaheen Bagh and Madan Pur Khadar village. Over 200 slums were gutted down. People living in these slums are from the Gowal Para region of Assam. They are very poor, daily-wagers, riksha-pullers etc. They lost every thing of their little possession and their children were hungry when the Ta'awun Trust team reached the place. Immediately, food was arranged, some utensils and pulses were provided. Further relief is required to rehabilitate them.

Contd. from page-8

There are also many for whom honesty means lack of or no opportunity of corruption. But a great majority of the common people, without any doubt, is honestly busy with earning its bread and butter. They are hard-working, sincere and, by and large, honest. The only problem with them is that they wrongly tolerate bad things. Some have become even pessimist and have developed the wrong opinion that corruption can never be rooted out. The irony is also that the people fighting against corruption are few and far between. Many detest corruption and believe that tolerating corruption is a crime. An Urdu couplet has captured this public mood very well:

*Kuch Na Kahne Se Bhi Chin Jata Hai
Ejaz-e-Sukhan*

*Zulm Sahne Se Bhi Zalim Ki Madad
Hoti Hai*

When we refrain from speaking out.

The miracle (effectiveness) of speech is lost

And tolerating injustice (of any kind)

Amounts to helping the tyrant.

There is, therefore, a hope that if right kind of leadership emerges on the scene and wages a relentless fight

against corruption the silent majority of the common people would stand by them. There is no denying the fact that fighting against corruption is not easy; it is a dangerous path to tread. Only men of courage and conviction, therefore, need to dream of leading people against corruption. This is, however, a sort of Holy Jihad, a great cause, great enough to live for and great enough to fight for.

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Jihad Against Corruption by Ishtiyaque Danish

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

India has the dubious distinction of being among the top most corrupt nations of the world. There is corruption in every walk of life here. You look from top to bottom or the vice versa, corruption is visible everywhere. Often it displays itself shamelessly.

Corruption's most ugly and vulgar display is seen in the political class of the country. Hardly a year passes without a politician being caught with huge money amassed illegally: Citing one or two examples here would be an injustice to many a dozen politician, so we avoid it.

Bureaucracy is not far behind. It often rubs shoddier with the political class and competes in corruption with them. Bureaucracy is a privileged class in our country. Politicians, if not caught by CBI and other investigating agencies, are tried in people's court after every five year. People, when duly informed about their corrupt leaders muster courage, exhibit intelligence and reject them. But the bureaucracy has no such trial courts to face, so they go on indulging in corruption unless caught red-handed. It must be kept in mind here that the CBI and other investigating or vigilance agencies normally go after the big fishes; small fries are generally ignored.

It must also be noted here that CBI, the country's premier investigating agency is not without black sheeps. There is corruption in it as well. Moreover, CBI is often alleged to be functioning under political influence. Nevertheless CBI alone is reliably effective investigating agency and functions honestly as and when it is free of political pressure and biases.

The saddest aspect is that corruption has crept in judiciary as well. Lower judiciary has always been prone to bad influences. Now the higher judiciary itself has spoken of freeing itself of corruption which amounts to accepting the presence of bad elements in Supreme and High Courts. Corruption in upper judiciary often appears in the form of

twisting the law to favour one or another party. One wonders why judges are so reluctant to disclose their assets while they want all others to do it. The judiciary must clean its house as soon as possible for the temple of justice now remains the only source of hope for the common people.

The political class with legislative and executive powers is always powerful enough to indulge in corruption. They are also quite intelligent to find out new methods of corruption. Arm-twisting the industrialists, businessmen and film-makers is an out-moded method of corruption. The ingenious method is to pump black money in new kinds of business which are dubious and yet protected by law. The Indian Premier League (IPL) that organizes T-20 cricket is such a venture.

Until now cricket was a game with money for players and entertainment for public. Betting and match-fixing were never considered part of the game but these were always sought to be eliminated as bad practices. But the IPL has changed the rule of the game; it has changed the game also. The entertainment side of the game is, no doubt, still there. But just a look on one IPL game is enough to convince beyond doubt that it has become more a business and sleaze than a game of cricket.

The head of a union minister has already fallen and two are under cloud. This is not an ordinary situation and the government must capitalize on the opportunity that has come its way to clean the mess and reshape cricket just as a source of public entertainment. The detestable parties held to celebrate victory after every match involve a lot of sleaze, wine-drinking and other varieties of vulgarities and deserve to be banned with immediate effect.

A deeper, and perhaps a philosophical, question needs to be asked here: why India ranks among the top most corrupt countries of the world. Is it only because our political class, industrialists, businessmen, bureaucrats

and technocrats are corrupt and all others, especially the common people are honest? There is no denying the fact that there are corrupt and dishonest in the ranks of common people also.

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