



# IOS NEWSLETTER

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## Thought for the Month

Ramadhan is the (month)  
 In which was sent down  
 The Qur-an, as a guide  
 To mankind, also clear (Signs)  
 For guidance and judgment  
 (Between right and wrong).  
 So every one of you  
 Who is present (at his home)  
 During that month  
 Should spent it in fasting,  
 But if any one is ill,  
 Or on a journey,  
 The prescribed period  
 (Should be made up)  
 By days later.

Al-Quran- 2:185

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## FOCUS

Ramadan, is the ninth month of the Arab and Islamic calendar. The word *Ramadan* meant originally "great heat", a description which originates in the pre-Islamic solar calendar. This month was holy in Arab tradition before Islam and was one of the months of truce. Fasting during the month is one of the Five Pillars of Islam (*sawm Ramadan*).

... the month of Ramadan, wherein the Koran was sent down to be a guidance  
 To the people, and as clear signs  
 Of the Guidance and the Salvation  
 So let those of you, who are present  
 At the month, fast it; and if any of you  
 Be sick, or if he be on a journey,  
 Then a number of other days; God desires  
 Ease for you, and desires not hardship  
 For you; and that you fulfil the number, and  
 Magnify God that He has guided you, and haply  
 You will be thankful (2:182)

The month of fasting begins with the physical sighting of the new moon. (A new moon cannot be seen with the naked eye until at least twenty hours after the astronomic new moon, or conjunction of moon and sun). If the new moon is not sighted on the twenty-eighth day of the previous month, this may be lengthened to twenty-nine or thirty days so that the beginning of fasting may correspond with the beginning of the month of Ramadan. Following Turkish custom, many countries signal the beginning of the month of Ramadan to the population by the repeated firing of cannon on the even of the first day. (In the Islamic calendar a day runs from sunset to sunset). Cannon are also used to signal the beginning and end of each fast day.

During Ramadan a Muslim does not eat or drink from daybreak, when a thread of light may be seen on the horizon, until the sun has set. After the evening prayer (*maghrib*), a breakfast is eaten somewhat later in the night a larger meal is taken. It is common to take a meal, sometimes called *suhur*, in the early morning before the fast beings. Musicians and criers walk through towns at night to wake the people to take this meal; the criers often do this as a pious act.

The daily fast is begun by formulating the intention to perform the fast as a rite. Children begin fasting gradually, first half a day, then several days, until they grow old enough to fast without inuring their health. No one is required to fast if his health is not up to it, and if a fast threatens health it should be stopped. Pregnant and nursing women are exempted from fasting. Menstruating women are also exempted but must make up the lost fast days afterwards during the course of the year.

Travellers are exempted from fasting (but not forbidden to fast), if the distance traveled is great, or if they are on a journey which continues for more than three days.

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## Activities of the IOS Headquarters

### Governing Council Meet

The six-monthly meeting of the Governing Council (G.C.) was held on 23.06.2012 (Saturday) at 10.00 a.m. in the Committee Room of the IOS, 162, Jogabai Main Road, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-25.

The following were present:

1. Dr. M. Manzoor Alam in the Chair
2. Prof. Manzoor Ahmad Vice-Chairman
3. Prof. Z.M. Khan Secretary General
4. Prof. I. Danish Finance Secretary
5. Dr. Ausaf Ahmad
6. Prof. A.R. Momin
7. Prof. Sanghasen Singh
8. Prof. M. Afzal Wani
9. Prof. Refaat Ali Khan
10. Prof. M. Muqim
11. Prof. Haseena Hashia
12. Prof. P. Koya
13. Prof. Nazir A. Nazir
14. Prof. Ali Mohd. Naqvi

Recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'an by Prof. M. Afzal Wani marked the beginning of the meeting.

Before taking up the agenda items and starting the business, Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, Chairman, IOS

welcomed the members and special invitees for attending the meeting and gave his impressions in regard to working of the Institute and its Chapters. Further, he emphasized the need for identification of young scholars to be associated with the IOS.

Condolence resolutions on the sad demise of Prof. F.R. Faridi, Prof. (Mrs) Abida Samiuddin, Mr. Ehsanul Haq and all others associated with the IOS, who passed away during the period, were adopted and *dua* for their *maghfirat* was made by the Governing Council.

Thereafter the agenda of the meeting was taken up.

The minutes of the Governing Council (G.C.) meeting dated 30<sup>th</sup>

September, 2011 were presented and confirmed.

The follow-up Report (Action taken Report) on the last G.C. meeting dated 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011 was presented before the Governing Council. The same was considered and after deliberations, got approved with the following observations/suggestions/decisions:

- In regard to work out the details of the two awards in the name of 'IOS Award for Minority Rights' and 'Mujaddid Alf Sani Award' a Committee consisting of the following persons is formed:

- i) Prof. Z.M. Khan Convenor
- ii) Prof. I. Danish Member



A view of the Governing Council Meeting of the IOS

- iii) Prof. M. Afzal Wani Member
- iv) Prof. Refaat A.Khan Member
- v) Dr. Ausaf Ahmad Member

The members of the Governing Council (G.C.) expressed their whole-hearted appreciation/commendation towards all the members of staff of IOS in general, and those who were actively involved in the Silver Jubilee programmes in particular, with a deep sense of gratitude for making the Celebrations a grand success.

In regard to the 'IOS Lifetime Achievement Award' it was decided that along with two other awards namely 'IOS Award for Minority Rights' and 'Mujaddid Alf Sani Award' the Committee already formed at Agenda

Item No. 2 will also work out the detailed procedure and frame rules etc for the awards.

Further, the said Committee will consider and recommend to the Governing Council (G.C.) whether all the above three awards as well as 'Shah Waliullah Award' (i.e. a total of four awards) should be given on yearly basis or on rotation basis.

The members of the Governing Council (G.C.) endorsed the following amendments in the constitution of the Board Administering the Shah Waliullah Award, adopted in its meeting held on 5.5.2012.

1. *"In a situation where there is no clear nomination for the award, or where the opinions of the proposers are divided, or where the person nominated by the Board for the Shah Waliullah Award declines the award, the Shah Waliullah Award Board will have the authority to nominate an eminent scholar for the award"*.

The above will be added in the Rules of the Board Administering the Shah Waliullah Award.

2. (a) The expression, *"in the opinion of the Selection Committee"* in Rule No. 13 be deleted.
- (b) The word, *"IOS"* in Rule Nos. 12 & 13 be replaced with *"the Board"* (the Board Administering the Shah Waliullah Award).

Rule Nos. 12 and 13 of the Board Administering the Shah Waliullah Award will now be read as under:

Rule No. 12 The decision of the Board on the selection of the awardee shall be final.

Rule No. 13 The Board may defer or withhold the granting of the Award, if nobody is found suitable for the Award.

Subject to the endorsement of the amendments referred to above "The Board Administering the Shah Waliullah Award unanimously decided to nominate Dr. M.K.A. Siddiqui for the Shah Waliullah Award-2011 (on the topic: *Sociology/ Social Anthropology in Islamic Perspective*) who has made highly significant and wide-ranging contributions to the anthropological study of Muslims in India".

The above recommendation was also endorsed by the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS).

In regard to "the 4<sup>th</sup> Maulana Qazi Mujahidul Islam Qasmi Memorial Lecture" the members of the G.C. and special invitees were informed that the 4<sup>th</sup> lecture will be delivered by Prof. Mohsin Usmani, Former Dean, School of East & African Studies at English & Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad on July 2, 2012 at Conference Room of the IOS at 4:30 p.m.

The topic of the lecture is "*Deen aur Siyasat ka Rishta*" (Relation Between Religion and Politics).

Further, it was decided that the Committee (constituted at Item No. 2 of the Agenda) will work out the procedure for the aforesaid memorial lecture and submit the same to the Governing Council (G.C.) of the IOS for consideration.

In regard to holding the International Conference on "**India and Islamic World in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**" on November 23-24, 2012 at New Delhi the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the IOS and special invitees were apprised of the progress made in this respect.

The G.C. unanimously endorsed the decisions with some minor changes in the topics such as "Role of Indian Muslims: Society, Polity, Thought and Culture" instead of "Role of Indian Muslims: Philosophy, Thought and Culture".

The members of the G.C. also proposed the addition of one topic i.e. "Islamic Cultural Heritage" to be included.

Further, it was decided that the name of Prof. Sanghasen Singh will be included in Advisory Committee of the aforesaid conference.

In regard to the mega project on "**14 Centuries of a Glorious Legacy: Biographical Sketches of 1400 outstanding Muslims who enriched Humanity**" the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees were informed that the 1400 (fourteen hundred) outstanding Muslims, spread over 14 centuries, will be categorized in different fields, which are given as follows:

- (1) Islamic Disciplines
  - (a) Quranic Studies (*Uloom al-Quran*)
  - (b) Hadith
  - (c) Biography of the Prophet
  - (d) Law and Jurisprudence (including Islamic International Law)
  - (e) Tasawwuf
- (2) Promotion of Knowledge and Education
- (4) Endowments
- (5) Intercultural Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence
- (6) Human Rights
- (7) Trade and Commerce
- (8) Agriculture and Horticulture
- (9) Conquests
- (10) Defence
- (11) Cities and Urbanisation
- (12) Explorations, Navigation and Travels
- (13) Material Culture (cuisine, dress, lifestyle)
- (14) Science (Mathematics, physics, biology, physiology, chemistry, pharmacology, surgery, ophthalmology, embryology, anaesthesiology, etc)
- (15) Medicine
- (16) Technology and Engineering
- (17) Inventions and Innovations
- (18) History
- (19) Geography
- (20) Philosophy, Ethics and Islamic Scholasticism (*Ilm al-kalam*)

- (21) Social Sciences
- (22) Psychology and Psychotherapy
- (23) Humanities
- (24) Architecture
- (25) Arts and Crafts

Note: Some other fields may also be added in the course of time.

The volume (comprising approximately 1400 pages of a large size book) will undoubtedly carry a detailed Introduction. In addition, each thematic section should have an introduction, which will provide an overview and context of the contributions of Islamic civilization to specific fields. This sectional introduction will be all the more useful and necessary in view of the possibility that in certain fields (such as cuisine, dress, trade and commerce, arts and crafts) it might be difficult if not impossible to find individual names.

It was decided to form a 5-member Core Committee for the project, which will consist of the following.

Dr. M. Manzoor Alam Chairman  
 Prof. A.R. Momin Member  
 Prof. Y. Mazhar Siddiqui Member  
 Ml. Saeedur Rahman Azmi Member  
 Prof. Mohsin Usmani Member  
 Khalid Hussain Nadwi Project Coordinator

The above Committee will be responsible for finalising names for inclusion in the volume, identifying scholars to write on the personalities and evaluate the articles received according to their expertise.

It was also decided to form an Advisory Committee, which will consist of the following persons:

Dr. M. Manzoor Alam Chairman  
 Prof. Ishtiyaque Danish Member Secretary  
 Prof. Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui Member  
 Ml. Saeedur Rahman Azmi Member  
 Prof. Mohsin Usmani Member  
 Prof. A.R. Momin Member  
 Prof. Z.M. Khan Member  
 Ml. Khalid Saifullah Rahmani Member  
 Ml. Ateeq Ahmad Bastavi Member  
 Ml. Taquiddin Nadwi Member  
 Prof. Saud Alam Qasmi Member  
 Prof. Rifaqat Ali Khan Member  
 Dr. Ahmad Abdul Hai Member  
 Prof. Mustafa Al Azmi Member  
 Dr. Zafrul Islam Islahi Member  
 Prof. M. Nejatullah Siddiqui Member  
 Mr. Khalid Hussain Project Coordinator

The Advisory Committee will be responsible for suggesting suitable names for inclusion in the volume as well as writing articles on personalities.

Further, it was agreed that a Separate Cell in the IOS Library should be developed and materials pertaining to the project should be procured.

To start with, a 4-volume series edited by John Esposito on 'Encyclopedia of Modern Muslim World' and 5-volume series on 'At Tareekh Al Tawasi Islami (Arabic) by Fawad Sezgil, Frankfurt, Germany should be purchased.

(a) Increasing the number of GA members

In regard to considering and increasing the number of G.A. members of the IOS for engaging them in activities other than annual meetings, the members of the G.C. and special invitees, after going through this matter in detail, authorized the office bearers of the IOS to select the like-minded people for this purpose keeping in mind to include preferably young persons (male & female).

Further, the Chairman desired that another eleven members from G.A., other than those who continue to attend the G.C. meetings, should be invited as Special Invitees in the meetings of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the IOS, as and when required. The members of the G.C. and special invitees appreciated this idea and authorized the Chairman to take initiative in this matter.

(b) In regard to creating an **Advisory Council** from amongst the awardees of the IOS Silver Jubilee Celebration Programmes (other than existing members of G.C./G.A.) the G.C. after going through the list of awardees (a total of 225 nos.) and deliberations over the matter, authorized the office bearers of the IOS to constitute the Advisory Council. The members of the Advisory Council shall be consulted on local, regional, national and international issues, UN and other UN-related bodies and other international agencies etc. according to their area of specialization and

expertise. They will also be requested to get themselves involved in the activities and programmes of the IOS in respective regions.

In regard to the IOS Silver Jubilee Celebration Programmes (14 in all) organized successfully (during April 2011 – April 2012) at New Delhi as well as the Chapters of IOS (i.e. Patna, Kolkata, Aligarh, Chennai and Calicut) and other important places of the country (i.e. Bangalore, Srinagar, Hyderabad, Pune and Cuttack) with due appreciation received from all sections of society, the members of the Governing Council expressed their full satisfaction with a deep sense of gratitude towards the Chairman, IOS, for making the programmes of IOS Silver Jubilee Celebrations a grand success.

All the resolutions adopted in the programmes of the IOS Silver Jubilee Celebrations were divided into various categories such as (a) General, (b) IOS Headquarters, (c) Regional Chapters, (d) Central/State governments, and (e) Other NGOs. All these categories (containing resolutions) were presented before the Governing Council members of the IOS and special invitees for discussion. The same was considered and after deliberations it was decided to form a Monitoring Committee for implementation of all the resolutions. The composition of the Committee will be as under:

1. Dr. M. Manzoor Alam Chairman
2. Dr. Ausaf Ahmad Member Secretary
3. Prof. Z.M. Khan Member
4. Prof. Nazir A. Nazir Member
5. Prof. Refaat Ali Khan Member
6. Prof. P. Koya Member
7. Prof. (Ms.) Haseena Hashia Member
8. Prof. Ishtiyaque Danish Member
9. Prof. M. Ishtiaq Member
10. Dr. M. Razia Parvin (Chennai) Member
11. Mr. Agha Sultan Member
12. Prof. Ali Mohammad Naqvi Member
13. Mr. Abdul Qayyum Akhtar Member
14. Mr. M Ataur Rehman Project Coordinator

Note: There will be no quorum for this Committee.

Further, the G.C. Members and Special Invitees were requested again to send their opinion on the notes sent by Dr. Ausaf Ahmad and Mr. Raju

Mansukhani regarding publication of volumes on IOS Silver Jubilee, which was also circulated in the meeting, **by July 31, 2012.**

In regard to the volumes covering all the programmes of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the IOS it was resolved that there will be a total of 11 (eleven) volumes (out of 14 programmes) covering all the aspects of the themes of the programmes, based on the topics discussed during different programmes.

The themes of these volumes will be as under:

- I. Towards Knowledge: Outlining Roadmap for the Future (covering the programmes organized at Delhi & Patna)
- II. Towards Development: Outlining Roadmap for the Future (covering the programmes organized at Delhi & Pune)
- III. Towards Peace: Outlining Roadmap for the Future (covering the programmes organized at Delhi & Aligarh)
- IV. Islamic Banking and Finance (covering the programmes organized at Delhi & Srinagar)
- V. Media in a Globalizing World (covering the programmes organized at Delhi & Bangalore)
- VI. Empowerment of Youth (covering the programmes organized at Chennai)
- VII. Empowerment of Women (covering the programmes organized at Calicut)
- VIII. Islamic Culture & Art (covering the programmes organized at Hyderabad)
- IX. Indo-ASEAN Trade (covering the programmes organized at Delhi)
- X. Governance and Judiciary (covering the programmes organized at Kolkata & Cuttack)
- XI. Minority Rights and Identities

Note: One section will be devoted on each theme for Islamic aspect.

It was also decided that all the proceedings will be published in book form as early as possible.

Further, it was resolved that the Chairman of the IOS is authorized to constitute the Editorial Board for each of the volumes mentioned above.

The members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the IOS and special invitees were informed about the IOS Calendar for the year 2013, which contains the following information:

1. World: Prevalence of HIV/AIDS 2011 Index
2. India: Achievements of PM's 15-Point Programme 2009-2010
3. World: Human Development Index 2011
4. Mosque through the Ages: *Baitul Moquddus*

It was also desired by the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the IOS and special invitees that IOS Diary should also be published.

Prof. (Ms.) Haseena Hashia has agreed to look into this matter.

- The Chairman apprised the members and special invitees that:
  - i) The programmes, organized during the IOS Silver Jubilee Celebrations successfully, created a good impression towards the IOS.
  - ii) A lot of Non-Muslims, who participated in the programmes, appreciated the work being done by the IOS.

Now, in view of Future Course of Action, it was required to concentrate on the following:

- i) Focus will be given on research
- ii) a) Research Methodology in general  
b) Research Methodology in Islamic perspective  
c) Quranic Methodology about the Islamic Studies
- iii) Workshops
- iv) Lecture Series
- v) Bibliography should be prepared in different subject(s)
- vi) Conference/Seminar should be organized at least once in a year. One conference should be organized in the name of Abdul Qasim Zehrawi in 2013 (which marks 1000 years of his demise) for his extraordinary contributions.
- vii) Training and Orientation Programmes should be conducted for young boys and girls
- viii) Teachers' Training should be conducted.

- ix) Creative and positive thinking should be inculcated specially among the youth.
- x) Welfare Programmes should be organized for youth.
- xi) Management Training/Orientation Programme for professionals in different fields including Islamic Banking, Finance and Insurance etc. should be conducted.

Mr. Shariq Nisar will be approached to develop a concept note on Islamic Banking, Finance and Insurance and help the Institute in organising these programmes.

- The Chairman informed that as per resolutions adopted during different IOS Silver Jubilee programmes various specialised centres shall be created in different parts of the country, such as 'IOS Centre for Media and Regional Studies' at Bangalore and Kolkata; 'IOS Centre for Women's Studies' at Calicut; 'IOS Global Council for Youth Development' at Chennai; and 'IOS Centre for Dialogue' at Aligarh etc.

Prof. M. Muqim agreed to work out the details related to establishment of 'IOS Centre for Dialogue' at Aligarh in consultation with Prof. Ali Mohammad Naqvi, Prof. Saud Alam Qasmi and Dr. Arshi Khan and send it to the headquarters soon.

- In regard to the establishment of 'Objective University' at Palwal (Haryana) the Chairman apprised the Governing Council members and special invitees with the progress made in this respect. It was decided that a special drive to collect donations from within and outside India for the project should be started to realize the objectives.

Further, it was decided that those donors donating Rs. 5 lakhs and above (from within India) shall have their name/(s) displayed and highlighted in the university.

The members of the G.C. shall be apprised with the progress on the project in the next meeting.

- The Chairman emphasized that in view of growing aspirations of people on completion of 25 years of

its services for the community, there should be more team-spirit on part of the office bearers, members of G.C., G.A., Academic Committees, sympathizers etc. as well as members of staff to contribute in more effective manner in years to come.

In the end Prof. Z.M. Khan, Secretary General of the IOS, acknowledging the full cooperation and active support by all the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) and special invitees thanked all of them.

### *Contd. from page-1*

Fast days which are lost for reasons of health or travel must be made up during the year. Exemption from the entire period of fasting is theoretically allowed if one feeds thirty poor people each day of the fast, as is partial exemption on the same terms, but it is, in fact, frowned upon and never resorted to by people of means. It is clear from experience that there is a great blessing in ritual fasting; Ramadan itself is a blessed month, a moment in the year when God's graces seem closer and more easily accessible.

During the daytime fast, not only must the believer not eat or drink, but he must also abstain from sexual enjoyment, listening to music, and as far as possible from all pleasures of the senses. During the night, pleasures of the senses are again licit, although extraordinary events of enjoyment, such as celebrations, should not be held during Ramadan.

The principle of fasting is related to that of limitation. Without limitation, knowledge is impossible, for it is when we come to the end or limit of a thing that its true nature becomes evident. Ramadan's marking the end to indulgence, or imposing a clear limit to it day after day for a month, offers an unmistakable spiritual lesson. It also constitutes a purification and a kind of sacrifice, which, like the pruning of trees, leads to renewal and fresh strength. On the moral plane it also brings a direct understanding of the suffering of the hungry.

Ramadan, which moves through the year because of the lunar calendar, sometimes takes place in the winter months, when it

is easier, and sometimes in the summer months, when the sacrifice is greater. Despite its solemn nature, it has a joyous atmosphere about it, even one of festival, although festivities during the month are forbidden.

The Koran was revealed in one of the last ten nights of Ramadan, the *Laylat al-Qadr*, the holiest night in the Islamic calendar. During the month of Ramadan supplementary prayers called *tarawih*, numbering twenty or thirty-two *raka'at* each, are performed during the small hours before the dawn prayer (*subh*), and also before the night prayer (*isha*). The month is the occasion for intensive reading of the Koran.

**From *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam* by (ed.) Cyril Glasse, 2010, pp. 377-378**

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But they are back on our streets and are often seen extending their begging hands to the visiting foreigners, showcasing the poor side of Delhi and India.

I have never applied my mind if begging is a sociological or economic problem or a combination of both. Those who subscribe to the sociological approach advance the argument that even those beggars beg who have a house to live in and a strong body to work and earn. They refuse to work even when provided a job and therefore begging in their case is a habit and trait which ought to be studied in sociology and not in economics. The economists, on the other hand, assert that poverty and joblessness basically drive people to beg which probably becomes a habit over a period of time. But begging ultimately reflects the poverty of the beggar and, therefore, it is very much a concern of the economists.

As I have said above, I have never tried to study begging academically. I have a strange behavior or approach towards beggars, not begging. Well, you have got it right. I make a difference between beggar and begging. Beggars generate a feeling of pity and consequent 'generosity' in me whereas begging provokes the academic in me. Let me admit frankly that 'generosity' here

means Rupees five, ten or twenty and fifty or hundred occasionally. There was a time when it was 'Chawanni' or 'Athanni', quarter or half of a Rupee respectively.

In fact, I cannot stand the sight of a beggar. I give him/her thinking it might solve his/her immediate problems. Many friends would say that these wretched 'Faqirs' are professional beggars and by giving them I am encouraging begging. May be, they are right. But how can I know that the man or woman extending his/her hands before me is a genuine or professional beggar. You see their class or category is not written on their faces which you or I can read. Instead, I always see 'Bechargi', a sort of helplessness, in their eyes which I cannot describe in words. This 'Bechargi' is indeed universal. Let me give two examples.

In 1986 I was in England. I was walking towards the School of Oriental and African Studies popularly known in London's academic circle as SOAS when a beautiful English rose with two kids on her back and stomach and shopping bags in hands, asked me to give her two Pounds. I saw the 'Bechargi' in her eyes I have mentioned above and instantly gave her the money she had asked for. Yes, my behavior was spontaneous, and I began walking away. I had walked a few steps when this thought crossed my mind why this well-dressed and apparently wealthy woman was begging. I turned to inquire about the matter. She was still standing there and looking towards me. Perhaps she was astonished as I had given her more than what she had asked for. I went to her and asked what the problem with her was. Her eyes became wet but she controlled her tears from rolling down her rosy cheeks. She told me that her husband had left her after the twins were born a few months back, and last week she also lost her job. She further said that she was out of money after buying some necessary things and needed the two Pounds she had asked for to reach her home by Metro. I instantly understood her problem, for being jobless in Western societies is a big problem as saving for the future is not a trait of youth there.

I have found the British very generous in saying 'thank you'. But the lady did not say it and just continued looking at me with the 'Bechargi' in her eyes I have spoken about above.

Let me narrate another incident. It was a hot and humid June afternoon in 2009. I was returning to my home in South Delhi after purchasing something from a locality shop when I saw a very old man walking before me. He was very weak and seemed to be collapsing any moment. I felt from within to help him but sadly I had no money in my pocket. I went to the shop keeper and borrowed Rs 10/- from him. I, then, rushed to the old man and gave him the money. He did not utter a word and kept on looking at me with the same 'Bechargi' in his eyes that I had seen in the eyes of the English woman.

A week later the face of this man suddenly appeared on the screen of my memory and a thought began teasing me that I should have given him Rs 100/- at least, for he probably needed it. This teasing thought often crosses my mind and I become restless. Once I was driving on Lodhi Road while going to Chanakya Puri. At every Red Light I saw some beggars and gave them Rupees ten, twenty or more thinking it might compensate for what I had not done to the poor man in June 2009. Once I woke my wife up at midnight to request her to give Rs 100/- to a poor man in Nanpara, Bahaich where she had gone to visit her parents. But all these have been to no avail as the teasing thought is still pursuing me.

Let me confess frankly. Often I get angry, and when I am angry, I feel like destroying the world. I also enjoy defying dictators, small or big and feel that I have enough strength to do so. But I am always and easily overpowered by the 'Bechargi' that I see in the eyes of poor people. I promise that I will continue to help such people even if it amounts to promoting begging.

We are passing through the holy month of Ramadan which is marked by extended worship and charity. Most wealthy Muslims distribute their *Zakat* during this month. Some organizations and NGOs organize and distribute *Zakat* in a collective manner. And yet tragic

incidents like the one I have narrated in the beginning of this article keep on happening. I wonder if something can be done to prevent such tragedies. In fact, something must be done to preserve the dignity of our mothers so that they are not compelled to beg for burying their dead babies. Unless and until such blots are removed from the face of our country, we deserve very much to be condemned as an insensitive society.

Another aspect of the topic under discussion deserves a mention here. It relates to our behavior with beggars which is both good and bad. The beggars sometimes indeed test the depth of our character. Let me recount my own failings here.

A *Burqa*-clad woman with a baby girl, very innocent and charming, would often be standing at the gate of the complex I am living in and begging loudly some financial favour from everyone who was about to drive to his office. For reasons I have never tried to ascertain, she always irritated me. I always failed to understand why she was begging? She and her small daughter never looked like a beggar and she spoke flawless Urdu. The small kid never spoke but always looked in my eyes with an 'innocent *Bechargi*'. I would often give the woman some Rupees though I never felt like giving her.

One day, when I was about to drive my car out of the complex, she appeared and started begging loudly. Being a student of Islamic Studies I must know and be conscious of the fact that beggars should not be treated badly. I have a right to give or not to give them. But it is indeed bad character to misbehave verbally with a beggar. I was this bad person on that particular day when I said in anger to the 'nameless' begging woman why she was always here at our office time. She stopped talking, her small kid stood silent and I gave her perhaps ten Rupees with displeasure writ large on my face. The begging woman has not been seen in front of our complex ever since. A feeling pains me that perhaps I hurt her too much. During this holy month of Ramadan I look for her every day when I go to my office because I want to compensate for my bad behavior by giving her more money.

But God has unique ways to punish us for our failings and He has chosen a missing beggar to punish me which I really deserve. I am deprived of the prayers that she used to shower on me and my family. Is it not a big punishment?

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**OPINION**

**We are Pretty Insensitive Society**  
*by Ishtiyaque Danish*

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

Recently I read a sad and pitiable news in a Urdu newspaper, either in Rashtriya Sahara Urdu or in *Jadeed* Mail. I do not remember the date or the day the news item was carried out. Again, I have forgotten the name of the woman whose plight I intend to narrate. But she is a Muslim woman and lives in some trans-Yamuna Muslim locality. To this extent, I admit, I deserve to be called insensitive. And it's better to criticize myself as it would not provoke angry reaction from any quarter.

But I am not fully dead; I am alive to the extent of remembering the content of the story. It was about the tragedy of a poor Muslim woman who was forced to live on footpath with her child. She begged on the streets to feed herself and her kid. One day, after making her baby sleep, she also heeded to the call of nature and slept. Sometime in the night the child woke up while her mother was fast asleep, and began wandering. He or she (I am again sorry for forgetting the baby's gender) fell in one of those deadly holes or ditches that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi has left open as death trap, probably to reduce our growing population.

The poor woman woke up in the morning only to find her child missing. Naturally she searched him/her here and there and found him/her dead in an open hole.

I have not met but heard about some professional beggars who are quite 'rich'. 'Rich' because the society thinks that the beggars should 'earn' only as much as required to make ends meet; they should not save as being beggars they need not think about their tomorrow.

Well, the nameless woman had no savings to afford a decent burial of her dead baby. She took her dead baby to the door of her husband and his family. They refused to help the woman they had abandoned.

I wonder why the people around did not notice the poor woman's plight. No one came to her rescue and she was left with no option but to beg on the streets. And the poor woman kept on begging with her dead baby in her arms till she 'earned' enough to give him/her a decent burial.

Beggars normally beg to fill their hungry stomachs. Have you ever seen a beggar buying clothes to put on? Or have you ever seen a beggar trying to 'earn' for giving a decent burial to her/his dead baby?

The poor woman whose story I have narrated was a mother. Let us assume that she had begged and 'earned' enough the previous day to feed her baby and herself in the evening. Like all human beings she must have been hungry the next morning. Of course, she would not have thought of her breakfast (a beggar's

morning meal if the usage of the term, breakfast appears awkward) when her child was missing. Being a mother that she was, she would not have eaten while she was begging to bury her dead baby. I fail to guess if she would have taken her evening meals even if she had money in her pockets. I do not know if a beggar-mother, hungry since 24 hours, can think of her evening meals, especially when she had begged the whole day to bury her dead baby and there were no relatives, friends or fellow beggars to console her.

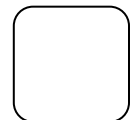
I do not know how you have felt about or reacted to the sad story I have narrated above. My eyes had become wet when I had read it first. Beyond that I did not do anything. I have not inquired about the whereabouts of the poor woman nor have tried to find her out to help her. I also do not know if anyone else has come to her rescue or she still continues begging on the streets to make ends meet. If all others have reacted the way I have done, I am right to condemn ourselves as an insensitive society.

The problem of begging--- there are people who call it menace and disgrace--- has not been addressed properly in our country. During the Commonwealth Games they were taken off the Delhi streets to showcase a 'wealthy, beggar-free' Indian capital to the world.

*Contd. on page-6*

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