

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Friends,

It is a common practice that if anybody tries to say or do anything which is a bit unusual, everybody raises an eyebrow. Still, we have come to your city for convening a meeting without any formal platform or president or to support any movement ; nor we propose to pass any resolution. The introductory speech delivered here was also a bit different from the customary inaugural addresses. We do not claim to be doing anything of exceptional nature, worth and merit. Many within our own country and outside it have engaged themselves in the service of humanity, sometimes even anonymously without forming any association or society for the purpose. But nowadays one wonders, thanks to Europe, how any useful work can be done without any formal platform with all its concomitants like a president and secretary. But we have decided to come here and contact you relying solely on God.

Friends, the world is today on the verge of destruction : a place where a shattering explosion can take place any moment. You are listening me here because you do not fear any imminent catastrophe. We give ears to any talk whether it pertains to religion or wisdom or justice in normal conditions only. But if the conditions are abnormal ; there is thunder and rain, then you would hardly be able to pay attention to the most eloquent speaker spreading pearls of wisdom. This is human nature. Man can employ his powers of attention only when he is at peace, has no fear, not faced with any danger, not seriously ill or hungry. But if he is mentally agitated or perturbed by his circumstances, he would not yield to anyone whatever be the inducement.

I want to emphasize that we should have normal and peaceful conditions in India as well as in the world at large so that people may be able to devote themselves to their tasks whole-heartedly ; the teachers may be able to teach and students to study, penmen may enrich literature and poets may celebrate in poetry, artists may apply their skill to paintings and architecture and scholars may devote themselves to study and research. All the masterpieces of arts and literature we have today were produced under normal conditions. A man with severe pain in his abdomen would not be able to write anything or even express himself coherently. He would not be able to listen and appreciate even the most charming verses.

Friends, our country has been endowed with everything it needs but we cannot have our affairs settled in the normal course. One needs to grease the palms even for meeting one's legitimate needs. God has not left us wanting in anything ; He has made the world complete and blessed it with everything we require to lead a contented life with ease and comfort provided we have love for our neighbours, have peace of mind and are free from anxiety of being swindled by anybody. Science and technology have reached the stage where they can control the climate and eradicate the diseases. They have even conquered the space. But what all this means to us? We are still not free from want and fear !

Now, what is the reason for it? Machines and goods have been fashioned but not the man. Man was to operate those machines but he was left unattended. The world was perhaps happier when there were no machines. We had no public call system to magnify the voice, nor we had radios and televisions, but we had a receptive mind and heart. Now we can communicate our ideas to far distant places, but there is nobody to listen and accept them. Man is now after money, wants to get rich quickly and have honour and power. If man has not changed, what is the use of these inventions? He can rather use them to dupe others on a much larger scale.

What I want to say is that the guarantees for goodness to spread and sustain itself are the right atmosphere and

virtuous and God-fearing men who love all the human beings. Take the instance of universities. We have hundreds of them in India but a new dispute or problem crops up every day. The students do not want to learn anything and the teachers are not interested in teaching. One wants the degrees and diplomas and the other his emoluments. If you enquire the higher-ups they will come out with a lengthy story. They will tell you that the students do not want to study, they want only their degrees. They do not want even to attend their classes and desire to have their degrees without appearing at the examinations. Some are clamouring to scrap the system of examinations altogether.

Friends, goods and material means are nothing in comparison to the skill and spirit of man. If man is right-thinking and the conscience his judge, and he learns to make right use of the most slender resources available to him, he will be able to achieve what he intends. The prophets of God have accomplished great tasks with the least amount of goods and means available to them. But we are today unable to achieve anything with all these conveniences. The fact is that today we are dominated by the things created or produced by us to serve our needs. Man has now become slave of his own creations. He is now after them and wants to have them at any cost, even if he has to trample to death his fellow beings. He might not be crushing others literally but he is surely treading humanity underfoot and degrading it. I urge you to

inculcate human qualities and improve the moral atmosphere otherwise nobody will be safe and nobody will gain anything. In the confusion and muddle created by, say, an earthquake or war even parents forget their children. Keep peace and learn to respect and love your fellow beings.

One of the greatest weaknesses we suffer from these days is that everybody wants to have his way irrespective of what happens to others. This is one of the chief causes of present ills. Look, what is happening around you ; government offices are not working properly, letters are delayed in the post, telephones have become a mess and trains are not running on time. Nobody seems to have any sense of duty nor feels his responsibility to others. How long things will continue in this way ?

Man has become his own enemy today. I ask those who will kill another man without any feeling of compunction whether they have ever destroyed any scorpion or snake or a wolf ? I am sure they would never have dared it. Is man the easiest game for them ? Why they do not fear God ? Do they want to flourish their valour by killing human beings ? Is man of little worth than scorpions and snakes and wolves ? Why they do not kill the rats which cause so much damage to the crops ? Is it not a matter of shame for man ? Let such a man go and pluck a flower from any garden or break a pitcher of the potter. He will not go unpunished for it. But he is smashing the flowers made by

God. Man is the master-creation of God : His Taj Mahal. But even the Taj Mahal cannot be compared to man for it was built by a man created by God. If he cannot destroy any monument created by man, how he deems himself justified in demolishing its creator. Is man so worthless because he is the creation of God? Is everybody free to pull man down at his sweet will?

Let us be clear about it. This country will not prosper by these killings, illegal gratifications and dereliction of duty even if America or Russia were to back it. If we will destroy our own house, nobody will build it for us.

It is not that evil dispositions clash with each other. Units also collide when they are not grounded properly. The units not based on equality and brotherhood of mankind and divinity of God, not striking a proper balance between rights and duties and ignoring the inviolability of human life and property are extremely dangerous. A bead not threaded in a rosary is surely to go astray and clash with others. That is why the prophets of God always tried to thread the beads on a string while Satan endeavoured to disperse them. The prophets taught the lesson of humanism to man ; they told man that it was not for him to swim like the fishes, or fly like the birds, or roar like the lions, or prey like the wolves. He had to walk humbly on earth.

The destiny of every man is linked with that of the

other. We can easily imagine what will happen if every man became indifferent to the ills of the society or country or even remained unconcerned with the killings and disorders in other parts of the country. I have not come across of this state of affairs depicted more meaningfully in any piece of literature than the way it has been alluded to in a parable handed down from the Prophet of Islam.

“A boat has a number of passengers on board on its two decks, the upper and lower. (So far as I know seafaring had not developed by that time to a stage where the ships had several decks. In any case Arabia had no navigable river). Some passengers occupy the upper deck who can be called upper class passengers, while those on the lower deck are the poor and lowly. Drinking water is stored on the upper deck. The people on the lower deck go to fetch water from the upper one which sometimes spills causing inconvenience to the passengers on the upper deck. As this happens every now and then, the passengers on the upper deck lose their patience and forbid those on the lower deck to come there for fetching water. They ask the people on the lower deck to make their own arrangement of drinking water for themselves. The people on the lower deck think over the matter and decide that if they cannot get water from upper deck they should better make a hole in the bottom of the boat and thus

arrange to meet their needs. The holy Prophet then says: If the people on the upper deck have not lost their head, they will beg the people on the lower deck not to go ahead with their decision. They will ask them to come to the upper deck and have the water but desist from making a hole in the bottom of the boat. If the boat sinks, nobody will be safe, neither the people on the upper deck nor those on the lower deck”.

How many holes are being bored in the ship of our country today. Nobody seems to care what will be the repercussions of the limited, self-centered policies pursued by each individual. This is happening on a large scale in India, in fact, all over the world. Every class and caste and every section of Indian society is in competition with the other in nepotism and petty-mindedness. Prophets of God had, on the other hand, taught us the lesson of peace and unity of all races and nations. If you give a deeper thought to the matter you would find that whatever of humanism, love of fellow beings, human dignity and awe of God is still felt by us is the residue of their teachings. A sufi saint of Delhi Khwaja Nizamuddin is related to have said: “If somebody throws a thorn in your way and you too do the same, the entire path will bristle with them. But if you put a flower in place of the thorn, others will also place flowers there. Thorn is not the remedy for thorn, its remedy lies in flowers.” Another

time he said, "The principle followed, by others is to be crooked with a crooked. But my code says that one should be soft with both the gentle and the crooked" If you go through their biographies or those of their followers you would find them always preaching love and compassion and assuaging the feelings of the broken-hearted. They learnt it from their Prophet and disseminated it through their personal behaviour. This was the reason why they conquered the hearts—though conquer is not the correct word to convey the feelings of affection and attachment created by them in the hearts of others. The kings and victors conquered the enemy to subdue them by force but these saintly souls softened the hearts of their adversaries through their kindness and compassion.

Another story relating to Khwaja Fariduddin Shakar Ganj is related by his biographers. Once some one presented him with a pair of scissors. The man had brought it since the place he came from was known for the quality of scissors. When the Khwaja saw it he remarked, "It is not my business to separate or divide the people ; my task is to join and cement the severed hearts. A needle would have been more appropriate for me than the scissors."

Friends, history is a witness to the fact that moral degradation precedes the decline of a nation. The decline and fall of Greece, Roman Empire, Sassanids, ancient India and different Islamic kingdoms illustrate this point. Our political leaders, intellectuals and those who can mould

public opinion should assess the present situation in complete detachment in an objective manner. They should shudder at the erosion of moral values in the country. It is now clear as day that wealth, power and position, casteism and political manocuvring are the stark realities today while philosophies and religious discourses are simply veneers to camouflage them.

But a thing still more serious is that in this country extending from Raskumari to Srinagar there is none to ask the people to improve their morals, learn to be humanist and save the country. We hear people calling us to one party or the other or to accept the leadership of a certain individual. It only means that every one of them wants that whatever is to be done, right or wrong, should be done by his party and under his flag. Nobody points out the wrong itself. Today we do not have a single individual like Gandhiji who is above his party and community, who speaks only what is truth and points out where the weakness lies. All those who point out the mistakes and errors of others may be good and able advocates of their own parties and communities or else public prosecutors of others, but this is not the need of the hour, nay, dangerous for a country where all castes and communities have to live with complete freedom, peace and dignity.

Friends, you might have grown weary of my plain speaking. Now I will relate a story which has a lesson for you. Once a marriage procession was proceeding ahead in

a city with the usual pomp and show. A man watching the show asked, "Where is the bridegroom?" Those standing near him replied incisively, "What a foolish question? Can't you see the procession and enjoy it?" The man was, however, a realist and he again persisted, "The procession is magnificent, no doubt, but there is no bridegroom." His remark sent the people searching for the bridegroom who ultimately found out that the poor bridegroom riding a horse had been thrown into a pit by the charger but nobody noticed it in the din and bustle of the procession. I fear that the present procession of modernism extending from the West to the East, and which has captured our minds and hearts, may turn out to be a marriage procession without the bridegroom. Man is the bridegroom of this procession.

There is nobody to shed tears on this marriage procession sans bridegroom. How many persons are there in this city who are truly men, the bridegrooms of the procession of humanity? Where is that man who is impatient for betterment of humanity; who takes pleasure in giving rather than taking anything? Everybody is anxious today to fill his coffers, to give a lift to his party, or, at the most, to his community or country. Be it a group or nation, these are but households, big and small. The larger the country, the bigger is the household.

But, the real thing is humanity of which all nations are mere segments. How many individuals and parties

are striving today for the welfare of humanity, for saving it from the impending doom ?

Civilization and culture, politics and government, arts and literature and philosophy and science are all dependent on humanity. They can prosper if man remains in existence, but without him they will be nowhere. And you know what efforts are being made today to root out humanism. Every one is trying to outdo others in this unholy task.

Brothers, if you love humanity, if you have any regard for humanism, the conditions today should be an spur to move you to action. Those who have greater influence in the country should say good-by to their positions and offices and try to save the country. If the country goes down, they shall have neither the prominence, nor the positions, nor offices. We are human beings first and then we belong to any caste, community or country. This was the task to be attended to by those who enjoyed power and prestige, but none of them seems to pay any attention to it. We have therefore deemed it our duty to call you to humanism. It is not seldom in the history of nations that a weak and faint voice of reform and regeneration is raised by an individual which finds a place in every heart. We hope to awaken you, since an awareness of the danger is the best defence.

I am a man of religious convictions. My study of

history tells me that sins and wrongdoings invite the wrath of God in the form of natural calamities. God warns us through these disasters. He tells us that He has greater power to destroy us than we have. When I hear of any cruelty and oppression, I shudder at the thought of divine punishment visiting the people. I make no exception for anybody in this matter. Wherever acts of savagery and brutality occur, God is sure to visit upon the wrongdoers in a way unimaginable and unpredictable by the most learned astrologer. The problems relating to social and economic reconstruction get complicated, law and order situation deteriorates, administrative apparatus becomes loose and ineffective, intellectual and political leadership is rendered incapable of solving myriad issues facing the country which becomes weak internally and loses prestige in the international forums. These are the consequences of violence and injustice foreseen by those who have an insight into the history of nations and civilizations. They get crazy about sounding an alarm to those who would listen to them. That is why their tone becomes bitter at times and they have to say :

Excuse me, Ghalib, for the irritating talk,
My heart-ache today is a bit more severe.

Thanks God that our country is still not dead ; it has just fallen asleep. It can be awakened again. Humanity has been lulled to sleep many a time in its long history but whenever it has been alerted, it has moved heavens and

earth. I am confident that whenever my country will wake up, it will make amends for all the unintentional wrongs committed by it.

I consider all those people who indulge in rioting not as devils but as the people heavy with sleep. The man within them has become dormant and the brute without has been aroused. They just need to put the brute to bed and awaken the man within them.

Friends, I may remind you before concluding my speech that it has been the history as well as destiny of India that it will remain the home of people with different languages, cultures, religions and personal laws. Nobody can change its history, or the destiny. Its long history bears witness to its toleration, nay, the regard its inhabitants had for each other. The only guarantee for its safety and progress lies in peaceful co-existence and joint endeavour for the common, national good. A secular and democratic form of government which is completely impartial and just to all, can only be acceptable to such a country. It is necessary that all sections of the people including minorities should harbour no fear in regard to their culture and creed, language and customs and religion and family laws. This will enable them to go all lengths for the reconstruction and progress of the country and defend its integrity and solidarity instead of wasting their energies in the conservation of their cultural and religious identities.

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I thank all of you who have taken the trouble of coming here on my behalf as well as on behalf of my friends and colleagues who have organised this gathering.

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

