

Paigaam

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The halal food industry is very lucrative. Research suggests the industry is worth over £3.5 billion.

It has been argued that the importance for food manufacturers to tap into the Islamic market is commercially astute. Interestingly, recent reports suggest the Halal food market, has a bigger industry in the UK than the whole of China.

Therefore, pre-packaged halal chicken, lamb chops or mincemeat are staples in most leading supermarkets such as Tesco, Asda along with M&S Food stocking their own range of halal ready meals.

It is indeed big business, but what does that really mean for consumers? “halal and tayyab”. The Qur’an is clear.

However, it seems that we spend a lot of time discussing the former, but rarely the latter. Perhaps we feel that if the food we eat is declared halal, it will inevitably be wholesome.

At Paigaam, we believe a Muslim lifestyle requires us to ask some tough questions. Can we industrialise our food chain and still eat wholesomely? Is halal KFC fried chicken an oxymoron? If ‘we are what we eat’, then are we a community of overweight, fear-ridden individuals?

Muslim cuisine once the envy of the world, produced in the homes of the believers with love and the remembrance of the Almighty’s blessings are being replaced with food bereft of barakah. Due to the explosion of junk food, traditional

diets are being replaced by “halal” KFC, Subway and many other protagonists.

However, if one begins to look at the ingredients and the production chain behind some of the global brands, whilst the animals’ throats may have been slit, the blood drained, and prayers recited, it is difficult to see how they are wholesome. If we feed our bodies food that is built from and upon deceit, waste and impurities, how do we expect our hearts to be free of sin and dirt?

How do we not equate the bad energy accumulated through layers of darkness, sinning, oppression, and anxiety to not somehow find its way into our bones, muscles, veins, and cells?

Is our meat wholesome and lawful?

Halal Gems Founder Zohra Khaku believes we often discuss the importance of eating Halal meat, yet stress upon the word more than the actual implications that surround its importance. We do so without truly delving into the psychological, spiritual, and physical implications of living a 'tayyib' life.

“The impact of overindulging is spiritual in some sense, as we devalue the life of the animal we have killed,” said Khaku.

“It’s emotional in some sense since overindulging means we’ve lost respect for the fact that this was a living being. It also leaves us in denial about where our food comes from; if we are so disconnected from our food chain that we just eat end products without realising the impact our actions have on the environment, our souls, and our health, then something is very wrong.”

However, one fundamental part of the whole 'Halal' preparation, is that the meat should be prepared in a way that adheres to Islamic laws, i.e. ethically. Those who are slaughtering the animal must rear it in a “welfare friendly and environmentally sustainable manner” and treat it extremely well during its lifetime in a farm.

The animal must not see the slaughter knife that may cause anxiety or fear, the one slaughtering the animal should whisper, “In the name of God – God is the Greatest which has been recorded previously to have helped the animal to

calm immediately before its death. The one slaughtering must kill the animal instantly, by cutting the jugular to prevent suffering. Halal products and non-Halal products must be separated.

The key ingredient is the treatment of animals during rearing and death, essentially their whole life. Both the life and death of an animal is shrouded in integrity, respect, and mercy.

Islam also tells us what is prohibited. Daniel Weary, an animal biologist has worked with his colleagues for years to improve the lives of dairy cattle, one of his extraordinary but unsurprising findings was that “dairy cows possess surprising intelligence and emotional sensitivity.”

Abrupt early weanings of the calves from its mother, triggers further isolation causing distress in both of them. Unfortunately, all calves are taken away from mothers within minutes of their birth. This causes huge distress to both baby and mother which should be together for years.

Most are immediately shot dead and disposed of. Estimates in the UK suggest this may be around 100,000 just in the UK each year.

Research also found that calves housed individually, typical for most dairy farms, “resulted in anxiety and cognitive deficits. Research also suggests stress in animals translates to the livestock, leading to change in colour, tenderness, and perishability. Where Stress alters

protein composition, vitamin content, and minerals. The animals that yield prime meat quality are the ones that have not been subjected to stress.

So Halal in its truest form, is ensuring the animal is treated well and with respect in life and death, with this, its anxieties will not be passed to us, and or diseases.

Furthermore, our obsession and indulgence in fast food is an increasing problem within Muslim majority countries. Saudi Arabia, and Qatar are the top Muslim majority countries with the highest percentage of obesity rates.

As consumers in the US become more health-conscious fast-food sales are plateauing, in the likes of Saudi Arabia, they’re only going up.

Should we become fortunate enough to be given an opportunity to go on Umrah or Hajj, we see floors and floors of food outlets, that potentially impact our ability to wake up for fajr with vigour and pray with concentration.

We go through this spiritual cleansing process, yet almost instantly we fill ourselves up with food that is not fit for physical nourishment let alone spiritual.

Paigaam contacted HMC, HFA and Yorkshire Halal Meat for comment. However, at the time of going to press, our questions have not yet been answered.

Paigaam asserts that the meat we eat must be wholesome and lawful.



PAIGAAM EDITORIAL

Looking forward to a Covid free world

As we look forward to our lives without having to wear masks, adhere to social distancing rules and miss out on meeting our family and friends - British Muslims have expressed their joy and relief after all Covid-19 restrictions were finally lifted by the government.

Let's take a look back at the dreadful time we have gone through. Going back to 2020 amid the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic. What a bleak period it was. We experienced our first ever national lockdown. We certainly didn't know what to expect.

All places of worship were closed since the Prime Minister announced the lockdown on Monday, March 23, 2020, and it has been a very difficult period for Muslims, especially with the month of Ramadan and then the subsequent celebration of Eid virtually having to be discarded.

The Masjids were closed so we couldn't go for Namaaz. We also had to spend Ramadhan at home and had to pray Tarawee at home. The Madressas were closed so many of them were teaching

virtually, hence it was a new experience for both the teachers and the children.

Places of worship opened for private worship from Monday, June the 15th whilst the green light for congregational prayers to commence once again was given for the 4th of July.

A second national lockdown came into force in England on the 5th of November 2020 as restrictions eventually in the UK eased on March 29, 2021, two weeks before the start of Ramadan.

Therefore, Masjids across Batley, Dewsbury and across the UK opened their doors to congregational prayers for the first time since the coronavirus lockdown.

Worshippers welcomed the move by partaking in praying to the Almighty and thanking him for opening the doors of the Masjids once again.

Ramadan 2021 was very different to Ramadan 2020. Several vaccines against the virus had been developed in record time and more than ten million people were said to have been inoculated in the UK at the time, thus

providing some protection and reassurance to society's most vulnerable.

We were able to worship as a community during Ramadan and this returned a partial sense of normality to the holy month. It caused a surge in optimism and people felt less isolated and lonely because they are able to pray together and break their fasts, albeit briefly, with each other in the Masjid as only dates and bottled water were provided for iftari time.

Striking images of the Grand Masjid in Saudi Arabia, bereft of pilgrims and worshippers during Ramadan 2020 sent shockwaves through Muslim communities across the world.

We never imagined that would happen during our lifetime or ever for that matter. It was quite upsetting. We took life and simple things like going to the Masjid for granted.

And although all Covid19 restrictions have been lifted, we hope Ramadan 2022 is much more befitting of a truly resplendent and spiritual month, full of fasting, prayer, reflection and the company of family and friends throughout the month.

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Paigaam

Palestinians also have the right to defend themselves



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Indian extremists Impose Hijab ban in Karnataka



The ban on hijab in colleges in the southern Indian state of Karnataka has triggered a major row amid growing concerns that the attacks on Muslim symbols and practices are part of the larger Hindu far-right agenda of imposing majoritarian values on minorities.

The country's 200 million Muslim minority community fear the ban on hijab violates their religious freedom guaranteed under India's constitution.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which runs governments in Karnataka as well as at the centre, has backed the discriminatory ban.

Hijab-wearing Muslim girl students were barred from entering schools and colleges across the state.

The visuals of Muslim girls and Muslim teachers stopped by the Police as if this was a criminal matter being made to remove their hijab outside their schools created

a furore, with social media users saying it reminded them of "the French police terrorising Muslim women in burkinis in 2016. What is surprising is the Hindu religious books also call for a form of head covering for girls. In UK and USA there are no restrictions on head wear.

However, the Chief Executive of the Read Foundation, an organisation whose mission is to end poverty through education by using education as a powerful tool to narrow the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged communities believes a Hijab ban would stigmatise and marginalise women and girls.

Aamer Naeem alludes to the fact that his organisation has educated thousands of girls in South Asia and without the appropriate help, many girls, especially those who wear the Hijab would remain within impoverished communities: "Guided by Islamic principles and upholding our values of respect, trust, empowerment, equality and transparency, we have provided access to education for over 52,151 girls," said Aamer.

"From our point of view, a government should not be able to determine the permissibility of religious clothing as the Hijab ban violates religious freedom whilst also stigmatizing and marginalising women and girls.

"Education is a powerful tool to narrow the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged communities. We envision a fair world where each precious child has access to their basic needs. However, this cannot be accomplished when the Hijab is banned in colleges and universities.

"The government there should be looking at the potential of all the women who wear the Hijab and look to support them, in the classroom, in work and in life.

"This will provide deserving children a safe, stimulating environment which can have positive impacts on all areas of learning as evidence attests to a relationship between the quality of a positive environment and learning outcomes."

The situation in Karnataka escalated when a group of hijab-wearing Muslim girls camped outside a college in the state's Udipi district after the authorities shut gates on them. As soon as the video of their protests surfaced on the internet, there was a wave of solidarity from across the country with activists asking for a repeal of the ban. But the college and the government did not heed the demands and it instead had a ripple effect, with several other colleges in the district also deciding to impose a ban on the hijab.



Islamophobic Prevent must be scrapped

A recent report centred around Prevent, the government's controversial counter-extremism programme has found that the programme has allegedly religiously profiled a staggering 73 percent of British Muslims.

The People's Review of Prevent used data showcasing where government backed prevent funding has been distributed, case studies and testimonies of individuals, including children who make up half of all Prevent referrals and detailed how they have been impacted by Prevent.

The authors of the report Prof John Holmwood and Dr Layla Aitlhadj, Co-Chairs of the People's Review of Prevent believe Prevent is Islamophobic in nature and serves to undermine free expression whilst targeting legal actions and behaviours without adequate justification.

They also accused Prevent of undermining "genuine safeguarding", by placing national security above the best interests of children and the right to family life.

In a joint statement they said: "Our report shows that among Prevent's damaging messages is that Muslims need to assimilate 'British values', which do not value Islamic belief. This narrow conception of 'British values' is not only unrealistic, but it alienates Muslims and fuels Islamophobia and discrimination."

The report reads: "It takes the signs among young people of ordinary identity development and explorations in belonging as indications of riskiness. We call on the government to withdraw its Prevent strategy on the grounds that it is ineffective, disproportionate and discriminatory. In this report we show: Prevent is Islamophobic; there is no problem of integration of British Muslim

communities and no basis for regarding them and their families with suspicion."

Other conclusions from the report include: Prevent takes signs of "ordinary identity development and explorations in belonging" as indications of "risk" and "extremism," while activism amongst Muslims is sanctioned. There is no evidence to suggest the British Muslim community has problems with integration

Prevent is responsible for the creation in England and Wales of a national curriculum in 'fundamental British values that are determined by national security interests.

Tellingly, the report also reads: "Prevent is necessarily discriminatory. It represents a system of surveillance and pre-emptive intervention – a comprehensive system of stop and search, albeit with no actual offence as its object, as we have seen – that depends on profiling."

The People's Review of Prevent is in response to the Government's Shawcross-led review.

The controversial appointment of Shawcross, who has been criticised by Muslim groups for making controversial comments about Islam, has led to many boycotting the official review, leading to fears that the final report will not include views of those critical of Prevent. The group said it evaluated documents and academic research on Prevent undertaken over the last decade and that its report has been reviewed by a panel of experts - in the report's forward, the UN Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights says its an "important and timely initiative."

"Prevent undermines free expression by defining as 'extremist' views and actions which are a normal part of a healthy and functioning democracy," the report reads.

"It has no justification in the light of national security requirements, which can all be satisfied through other measures within the counter-terrorism strategy and the UK's extensive legislative toolkit," it adds.

The report also states Prevent is "overwhelmingly directed at children and young people" and represents an "abuse of their rights."

It undermines proper safeguarding obligations of social workers, teachers and health professionals by "bringing children and young people under an extraordinarily extensive net of surveillance. There is no national security justification for its policies and practices in education or in other services provided for them," it adds.

The launch of the report comes amid new revelations in relation to the "Trojan Horse" affair, which shaped the government's counter-extremism policy and led to an extension of Prevent into schools.

The group says information gathered under Prevent does not involve criminal offences, but the data can still be held and shared, including the data of children. The report concluded:

"Prevent is an abuse of fundamental human rights and protected equalities, especially those preventing discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity, and religion."

“Prevent is an abuse of fundamental human rights and protected equalities”
The People's Review of Prevent



Afghanistan plunged into a humanitarian crisis

After years of conflict, the state of affairs in Afghanistan is dire as the country plunges further into a humanitarian crisis.

After the fall of the Afghan Government, the Taliban took over the country in August 2021. The country's economy is on the brink of collapse and international humanitarian aid has been put on hold whilst the effects are deeply felt by families who cannot buy basic goods such as food.

Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan last year, the country has seen the value of its currency collapse even though hard notes are in short supply, while prices for basic goods have soared due to shortages, with the UN warning that food could run dangerously low soon.

The international community has frozen Afghanistan's assets and halted funding as they are unwilling to work with the Taliban government. Prior to the takeover by the Taliban, 75 percent of state spending was very much dependant on international aid from organisations.

The economic collapse, and the lack of international aid, has ensured hospitals in the country have run out medical

essentials in order to treat people. The desperation of millions of Afghan men, women and children is clear as they face crippling hunger, with some 3.2 million children under 5 years old facing acute malnutrition, according to the United Nations.

In addition, the impact of Covid-19, the effects of climate change and now the current political turmoil, has snowballed Afghanistan into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises as many people are on the verge of starvation with many children already dying of hunger.

Tragically, desperate families have resorted to selling anything they have left, and most tragically, young children are either being forced to work for more than twelve hours a day to help feed their families or faced a nightmare situation in which they have had to sell their children.

The Taliban government has in response, lambasted the US and its European allies for inflicting collective punishment on an entire country in the misguided belief that this is somehow upholding western values.

Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen insists having lost the war, Washington is now losing the peace. He said: "It is not the result of our activities. It is the result

of the sanctions imposed on Afghanistan. So it turns to those who have imposed the sanctions, which have resulted in a humanitarian crisis.

"During the last six months we have done what we have in our capacity to do for the people of Afghanistan, in order to alleviate the suffering, the problems of the people of Afghanistan.

"But it needs the international community to cooperate with us, not to punish the people of Afghanistan by imposing unjustified sanctions on the country."

Some humanitarian funding is arriving in Afghanistan through UN agencies and some of the leading development charities, but it is a fraction of the aid that was flowing in to keep schools open and pay the salaries of public sector workers before the Taliban takeover.

Precise estimates of the scale of short-term help being provided are difficult because conditions are so chaotic, it is hard to say whether the cash being airlifted in is actually arriving where it is needed.

But it is probably around 10% of the \$8.5bn (£6.2bn) a year that was coming in before the Taliban took power.

Muslim entrepreneur launches new mental health platform

Fast forward almost 10 years and Adnan has sold Car Throttle for a rumoured amount of £30 million and has launched a new mental health platform that hopes to make looking after mental health “as normal as going to the gym.”

MindLabs uses live and on-demand content to help people overcome stress, anxiety and low mood and to help improve their sleep patterns. The “video-first mental wellness platform” is backed by neuroscience and utilises expert knowledge from mindfulness practitioners, ranging from clinical psychologist Dr Erica McInnis and neuroscientist Anne-Sophie Fluri.

MindLabs claims to be the only platform in the mental wellness industry to prioritise live and on-demand video-led content over other forms of media, giving users access to hundreds of engaging classes on their mobile phones. Classes are specifically designed to help users rewire their brains to sleep better, stress less, be more energised and feel happier.

Adnan said: “Fundamentally, we want to create a world where looking after your mind is as normal as going to the gym. For far too long, we’ve neglected taking care of our minds in the same way we take care of our physical selves.

“We’ve been ashamed to speak openly about this mislabelling mental vulnerability as weakness and approaching practices such as mindfulness with caution, worried about its scientific vigour. We’re excited to be the new face of change.

“Our team of neuroscience and mindfulness experts lead classes based on research, making techniques that previously previously felt out of reach, practicable and understandable.”

A regular visitor to Dewsbury, Adnan Ebrahim’s mother grew up in the town and he is the nephew of former councillor Abdul Patel. He founded the famous Car Throttle website in his bedroom in 2011, whilst studying an economics degree at University College in London. He speaks to Paigaam about his latest venture, MindLabs, a mental health platform

Adnan believes it is time for people to reclaim mental wellness and bring tools such as breathwork into the mainstream with a science-first approach and empower everyone with the tools to take better care of their minds.

“Just as you might lift weights in the gym or have a specific physical exercise regime, MindLabs is a daily tool to strengthen neural pathways that lead to better concentration, improved presence and self-awareness and more positive thinking patterns.

“We found mindfulness practices helped us to better understand our minds. But we realized that there wasn’t a product for millennials like us; something that was mobile-first, video-led. Also, something that allows you to track your progress over time, in the same way you might measure weight loss in the gym.

“Having started to see the effects of the pandemic, we realised that it was the perfect time to help solve the world’s growing mental health crisis with a digital-first product.”

And although he may still be in his thirties, he believes his parents have taught him the value of hard work that has ensured he has been able to look after his own mental health.

“My dad came to the UK from Zambia and he worked his way up to run his own dental practice and my mum owns her own jewellery boutique, they have been an amazing influence on me, more than I can thank them for. They simply do not believe in failure, and being from Gujarati origin, this has certainly helped as culturally it helps one to understand other perspectives and views and this has helped me get ahead. Being from a minority background allows me to be different and stand out, so I use it as an advantage rather than looking at it negatively.”



Huddersfield Town sign Muslim athlete pledge



Huddersfield Town have signed the Muslim Athlete Pledge to demonstrate the club's commitment to equality and diversity for all.

Created by Nujum Sports, the pledge is a commitment to further recognise Muslim needs in the sport, as well as the Club, in

order to help address them. Nujum Sports were set up in 2020 with the aim of promoting a culture of educational excellence for Muslim athletes, from within a caring and secure Islamic environment enriched with the values of discipline, mutual care and respect which extends beyond and in to the wider community.

By signing this pledge, the club has

taken the first step towards being fully accredited with the Nujum Sports Muslim Athlete Charter and a Nujum Gold Star organisation.

The Club have worked with Nujum Sports previously, when they paid a visit to Canalside to hand deliver their Ramadan packages to some Academy players in 2021.

On signing the pledge, CEO and Founder of Nujum Sports, Ebadur Rahman, said: "Having signed the pledge, Huddersfield Town have joined a positive movement of solidarity, equality, and recognition of the contribution Muslims make in their respective clubs and teams. Nujum is here to support professional clubs and their players and contribute positively to their equality and diversity agenda."

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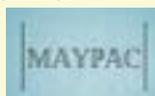
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How to save money on your gas and electricity bills



The cost of living is rising and for many people the news of yet more expensive bills is causing a great deal of anxiety. However, experts believe there are ways to ensure consumers can save money on their bills.

1. What's the most energy-efficient way of cooking?

Senior appliance researchers Jane Darling and Aaron West believe that electric ovens, whether part of a cooker or a built-in oven, are “more energy efficient than their gas counterparts” insisting that “electric induction hobs are the most efficient as they supply heat only to the pan and not out into the kitchen.”

The experts continued: “Electric ceramic hobs are second best, while gas trails in third.

However, it's worth noting that, because gas is cheaper than electricity, your energy bills will be lower if you cook on gas.”

2. What's the most energy-efficient way to heat a room if I don't want to put the central heating on?

The experts believe that central heating is “generally the most cost-effective way to heat your home.”

However, you will want to make sure that it's working efficiently such as using timers, room thermostats and thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) to control when each room is heated. They recommend

setting your thermostat to the lowest comfortable temperature and turning it down by just 1C. This small adjustment alone can save you between £80 to £85 a year.

3. Are there any cheap ways to insulate our home?

While some home tweaks and upgrades need a professional to install them, there are ways you can do it yourself if you're up for a bit of DIY. The expert's top five recommendations are: insulate the loft, install draught proofing, insulate hot water pipes and tanks, fit secondary glazing and add cosy furnishings

4. Electrical appliances that use the most electricity:

Refrigerators are essential items in any property. And they know it! That is why they have no qualms about using up to 30.6% of the electricity in your home.

The most efficient refrigerators are those with a class A+++ rating, which consume up to 80% less than class D refrigerators. Over its normal service life, these savings prevent the emission of around a tonne and a half of CO₂ into the atmosphere (not a minor detail) and wasteful spending of around 1,000 euros. What do you think? Not bad eh?

In a close battle for second place, washing machines use 11.8% of our electric appliances' energy. To save energy with this electrical appliance, you should only use short programmes and set the temperature to a cold wash whenever

possible. Furthermore, if your washing machine is not equipped with an adjustable load system, you should only use it when it is full and at a low or moderate temperature, since heating the water accounts for most of the energy used.

A television typically uses 12% of your household's total electric appliances' consumption. The most important way to save energy with this device is not to leave it on standby. You should always turn the television off completely because on standby it can use the same amount of energy as a computer in full use. You should also remember that televisions with LED technology use 25% less energy than LCD televisions and up to 40% less than plasma screen TVs. If you are an avid cook, you should take careful note of the following point. Since the oven uses 8.3% of your electric appliances' total consumption.

Do not open the oven door while it is in use, as each time you open the door the oven loses 20% of its accumulated energy. Likewise, as with everything in life, hygiene is very important. You should keep your oven grease-free. You can also switch your oven off before the end of the cooking time to make use of the appliance's residual heat.

It may be hard to believe, but computers account for 7.7% of your electric appliances' bill. Some of the best energy saving tips for this essential electrical appliance include reducing the screen brightness, removing the screensaver and switching off additional devices such as the printer, scanner and speakers.

Labour stops legal action against Jewish woman for alleged anti-Semitism

The Labour Party has decided against proceeding with legal action against an 82-year-old Jewish woman for alleged antisemitism after she threatened to instruct her solicitors to sue Kier Starmer's party for unlawfully discriminating against her based on her belief in anti-Zionism.

Diana Neslen, 82, a devout Jew regularly attends her local synagogue is said to be one of 46 Jewish members of the Jewish Voice for Labour group who have faced or are facing disciplinary actions after being accused of anti-Semitism.

She was being investigated by Labour for the third time in less than three years after posting a number of tweets about Israel and Zionism. However, critics have described the action against Neslen and her fellow Jews as a witch-hunt of party members critical of Israel.

In a letter to the Labour Party, Neslen's lawyers, Bindmans, said that the investigation was unjustified and disproportionate. The letter also stated that if Labour did not back down, Neslen would bring a lawsuit for discrimination and harassment, claiming anti-Zionism is a protected philosophical belief under the Equality Act.

Labour did not initially respond to Neslen's lawyers. However, they have since announced that the investigation has been discontinued.

"It is a big victory," said Neslen following Labour's decision not to go ahead with legal action. "I'm pleased that they dropped it because it exposes the fact that they shouldn't have done anything in the first place."

Neslen said that although she had previously described herself as a "committed Zionist" a visit to Israel led her to reevaluate her views. She said: "I want the conversation to continue, I want Jewish people to be able to be as free talking about anti-Zionism as they are about Zionism."

Neslen's brush with the Labour hierarchy began in 2018, following the party's adoption of the IHRA, despite warnings from critics about the ramifications in relation to free speech. In the four years since, a consensus has emerged amongst leading human rights groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch who have described Israel as an apartheid state.

Under the IHRA definition, Labour members who share the views of Amnesty or the many reports by rights groups exposing Israel's apartheid policies on social media, could fall foul of party rules.

Therefore, Labour has not commented on Amnesty's report, nor has it explained how it will treat its members that lambast Israel. However, Neslen believes she would have liked to have highlighted the issues of her protected belief to have been addressed in court.

She said: "I'm pleased that they dropped it because it exposes the fact that they shouldn't have done anything in the first place. But I also feel that I would have liked the issue of protected belief to have been addressed because I believe there are a lot of people who also, like me, are anti-Zionist, believe that it's a perfectly legitimate belief, and they have no recourse."

In February last year Neslen was given a formal warning, again relating to

comments on social media. Bindmans said all but one of the tweets cited in the latest investigation were excluded under party rules either because they dated to before she re-joined the party in 2015 or had been considered in the previous investigation.

Neslen said Labour has yet to apologise, despite her request for a sincere apology, whilst she claims she had been told her she was not entitled to talk publicly about it.

However, she said people should not be silenced simply for staying true to their principles and beliefs: "You shouldn't silence people who you disagree with, and although Zionism is for many Jews a sense of identity, (it is) not for all and we all have a right to our views."

She also called on Labour to withdraw complaints against other Jewish Voice for Labour party members under who have faced or are facing disciplinary charges relating to allegations of antisemitism.

"To say that we are insulting Jews is wrong," said Neslen. "We are acting in accord with what we regard as Jewish values and Jewish ethics, and I'm not going to change that."

Labour did not respond to a request for comment.



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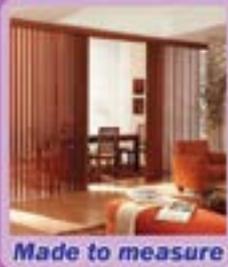
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Watching Boris Johnson admit and apologise for attending a Downing Street party three days before Eid, has deeply upset the Muslim community.

Fresh claims emerged that the Prime Minister's principal private secretary Martin Reynolds invited 100 staff members to a social gathering on 20 May 2020.

May 2020 was also a thoroughly challenging time as the nation was two months into a frightening pandemic and national lockdown. For Muslims, this also meant spending Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr (which fell on 23 May that year) under restrictions and away from family and friends.

Masjids were abruptly closed, and we were all told to meet just one person from another household outdoors at a social distance.

The Government was particularly keen on reminding us to stay at home. We were also urged to maintain caution and respect the lockdown rules

“The fact that they virtually cancelled Eid the night before was bad enough.”

Mohammed Patel

Got a story?

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Why Boris Johnson will not Receive an invite to an Iftar

in the run-up to Eid Ulha which took place in August 2020 despite the fact that everyone was forced to severely limit their plans after the Government imposed restrictions in the region the night before.

The Muslim Council of Britain also released guidance that included tips for celebrating Eid. MCB's Secretary-General, Zara Mohammed said: “British Muslims have shown great resolve and patience throughout this pandemic, especially during Ramadan for the last two years.

“It is important we continue to take the utmost care when protecting our loved ones and observing public health guidance, whilst looking forward with hope, determination and faith.

From May 17, 2021, Britons were permitted to meet indoors with up to six people or two households whilst restaurants were told they could serve customers indoors and social contact, like hugs, were permitted.

However, Eid al Fitr took

place over Wednesday, May 12 and Thursday, May 13 before the restrictions lifted, meaning those of us who celebrated faced limitations.

Tellingly, Prime Minister Boris Johnson also sent his best wishes to those celebrating Eid during the pandemic. He tweeted: “#EidMubarak to those celebrating in the UK and around the world. Muslims make an extraordinary contribution to this country, and while this year's celebrations are not as we would want, if we all do our bit and get vaccinated, we can look forward to a much happier future.”

Therefore, the Muslim community feels aggrieved that along with the Jewish, Hindu and Sikh communities the “save Christmas at all costs” rhetoric came at the expense of other religious communities who sacrificed their festivities for a second time with Eid Ul Adha in 2020 virtually cancelled after the Government imposed restrictions the night before.

“The fact that they virtually cancelled Eid the night before

was bad enough,” said local resident Mohammed Patel.

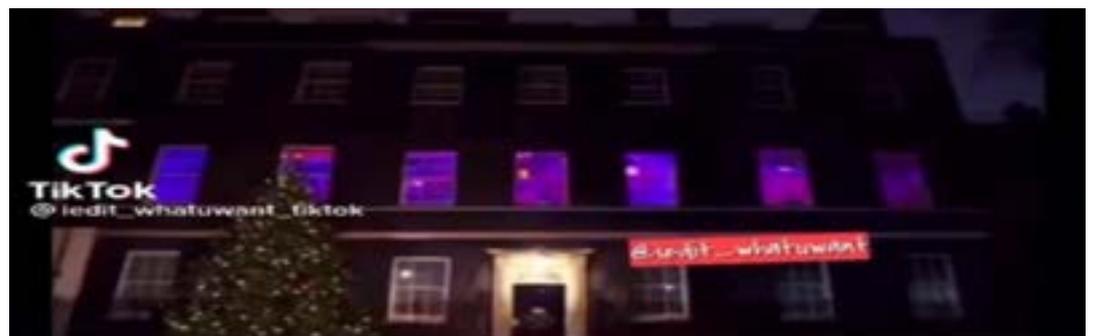
“However, the fact that they expected us to observe the rules whilst they flouted the rules and had parties shows just arrogant those people are. The Muslim community along with those of other faiths have been treated disgracefully and people are rightly very angry.”

“Eid was a muted affair because of the pandemic,” said businessman Zahida Khan.

“The Government imposed restrictions the night before. This left Muslims feeling singled out and frustrated – and with good reason.

“Looking back, it felt like saving Christmas came at the expense of other religious communities sacrificing their festivities for a second time.

“The Government would have gained a great deal of respect if they tried to make Eid work in a similar way to how Christmas did, instead of just telling us to just respect the guidance and make do with it or face prosecution. It really feels like the government has been laughing at us.”





Ethnic minorities less likely to get equal pay and mental health support across the NHS

A report by the NHS Race and Health Observatory has found stark inequalities in how ethnic minorities are less likely to be given Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and equal pay.

The report, evaluating the service of ethnic minorities by the NHS, finds that there are clear inequalities across a plethora of branches within healthcare, from mental health the relationship between the NHS and minority healthcare workers.

Dr Habib Naqvi, Director at the NHS Race and Health Observatory, said: “By drawing together the evidence, and plugging the gaps where we find them, we intend to make clear the overwhelming case for radical action on race inequity in our health service. Put another way, we exist to remove excuses.”

“It is clear that existing evidence on the stark health inequalities faced by ethnic minority communities has not led to significant change.

“This is why the Observatory has been established: to synthesise what already exists, translate it into actionable policy recommendations, and to challenge leaders to act.”

The report said the impact of racism within the NHS workforce included

evidence of a pay gap affecting “black, Asian, mixed and other groups”, and that during the pandemic Covid-19 infections were higher in ethnic minority staff.

Some of the most significant inequalities were recorded in mental healthcare. It found GPs were less likely to refer ethnic minority patients to the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme compared to white patients.

Black children were 10 times more likely to be referred to mental health services via social services than a GP compared to white children.

The review of maternal healthcare found evidence of negative interactions, stereotyping, disrespect, discrimination and cultural insensitivity, leading to some ethnic minority women feeling ‘othered’, unwelcome, and poorly cared-for.

Lead investigator Dr Dharmi Kapadia from the University of Manchester said “the time for critical action” was now.

She said: “For too many years, the health of ethnic minority people has been negatively impacted by a lack of high-quality ethnic monitoring data recorded in NHS systems.

“Lack of appropriate interpreting services for people who do not speak English confidently and delays in, or avoidance of, seeking help for health

problems due to fear of racist treatment from NHS healthcare professionals.

“Our review confirmed that all of these issues are still to be tackled by the NHS. The evidence on the poor healthcare outcomes for many ethnic minority groups across a range of services is overwhelming, and convincing.”

The research was conducted by the University of Manchester in conjunction with the University of Sheffield and the University of Sussex.

Over 13,000 research papers were screened, and 178 studies were included in the final review. But one problem encountered by the researchers was a lack of research into ethnic experiences in several specific areas.

An NHS spokesperson said: “The pandemic has shone a stark light on health inequalities across the country and the NHS is already taking action to improve the experiences of patients and access to services.

“The NHS has set out what local health services should be focusing on over the next year so they can make these improvements in their local communities and is already working closely with the Race and Health Observatory to drive forward the recommendations set out in this report.”

How we will learn to live with

COVID-19

Boris Johnson has unveiled his “plan for living with Covid” in the Commons, as the Prime Minister confirmed that mandatory self-isolation has been axed.

After repealing the legal requirement to self-isolate and emergency powers for councils to respond to outbreaks he hailed the perseverance of the British public as he said it was now for ordinary Brits - not ministers - to decide how people live their lives after two years of lockdowns, isolation and endless testing.

He told MPs: “It is time that we got our confidence back. We don’t need laws to compel people to be considerate to others. So let us learn to live with is protecting ourselves and others without restricting our freedoms.”

The government will still advise sick people to stay at home “just as we encourage people who may have flu to be considerate to others.

”From April 1, “when Winter is over and the virus will spread less easily”, Brits will no longer be eligible for free tests. Some free swabs will remain for the elderly and most vulnerable if they have symptoms, but most people will have to pay for kits.

The decision to scrap universal testing puts the PM on a collision course with Labour who warns it will damage public health.

I’ve got Covid symptoms - what do I do?

You should still isolate and get a test if you can - but there is no law to do so. People will still be guided to stay home but no longer face a £1000 fine if they don’t. From Thursday contacts of Covid cases won’t be told to isolate or take daily tests.

Who can still get a free test?

People over 80 and people going into hospital will still be able to get tested. And those working in NHS and social care settings will also be able to access regular lateral flows.

If I have to pay, where do I get a test from and how much do they cost?

It’s expected that lateral flows will be no more than a few pounds per test, and PCR tests around £80. You’ll probably be able to get them from pharmacies or order them online.

Can my employer provide them?

If you work in the NHS or social care it’s

likely they will be provided for you. Some big firms may provide lateral flow tests free of charge to employees.

Can I ditch the face masks altogether?

It will still be recommended to wear a mask in healthcare settings like hospitals, but this is not law. Individual shops or businesses may ask that you wear a mask, but you can’t be legally forced to.

What are the rules on foreign travel now?

Johnson’s announcement hasn’t changed anything around foreign travel. Passenger locator forms are still needed for anyone coming into the country, but these are expected to be ripped up in future.

You will still be able to use your NHS app to show you’ve been vaccinated in order to travel to certain countries.

Got a story?

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Bahrain and Israel agree peace deal

Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the Prime Minister, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa have agreed a peace agreement with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett who became the first Israeli leader to make an official visit to the Gulf nation.

As part of the "Abraham Accords" brokered by the United States, Bahrain normalised ties with Israel in late 2020 and both countries exchanged ambassadors and have since then signed multiple trades and defence agreements.

The Israeli Prime Minister was

welcomed into the palace of Crown Prince and Prime Minister by an honour guard where "Hatikvah," Israel's national anthem, was played by a military band.

Both Israel and Bahrain agreed to build a bilateral plan that was dubbed as "Warm Peace Strategy," whilst prioritising cooperation in sectors such as food security, water, sustainable energy, trade and investment.

King Hamad, Crown Prince Salman and Bennett also held talks and discussed strengthening security and strategic relations whilst addressing nuclear threats, religious extremism, social issues and poverty. King Hamad Ibn Isa

al-Khalifa said: "This is a historic day, to host the Prime Minister of Israel here in Bahrain. Because of his determination and leadership, this has been a fruitful and successful visit in the mutual efforts for the benefit of the two peoples. I thank you for coming here."

Bennett said the peace agreement would serve to ensure the Middle East would transform into a stronger region. He said: "I see Israel and Bahrain as close partners in all areas. The cooperation between us is natural. and most importantly, I aspire for the two peoples to get to know each other better, through delegation visits, joint cultural activities. We want a very warm peace with Bahrain."

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Sahaba word search



Abbas, Ali, Ammar, Ayesha, Bilal, Hamza, Khadija, Sumayya, Umar, Uthman, Zaid, Zainab

What was the first thing the prophet (pbuh) did when he woke up?

What will be the first question, to be asked on the day of judgment?

In which hand will the pious people receive their book of deeds on the day of Qiyaamah?

When does the Islamic calendar begin?

What are the four sacred months in Islam?

Gregorian calendar months are "Solar months".
What are Islamic calendar months?

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Brain Teasers

Riddle 1: I have branches, but no fruit, trunk or leaves. What am I?

Riddle 2: What can't talk but will reply when spoken to?

Riddle 3: The more of this there is, the less you see. What is it?

Riddle 4: David's parents have three sons: Snap, Crackle, and what's the name of the third son?

Riddle 5: I follow you all the time and copy your every move, but you can't touch me or catch me. What am I?

Riddle 6: What has many keys but can't open a single lock?

Riddle 7: What can you hold in your left hand but not in your right?



Answers

1. Answer: A bank
2. Answer: An echo
3. Answer: Darkness
4. Answer: David
5. Answer: Your shadow
6. Answer: A piano
7. Answer: Your right elbow



Legal Column

Tax evaders rarely understand the potential consequences of their wrongdoing. That was certainly so in the case of two cab drivers who underdeclared their earnings to the tax authorities and, in doing so, came very close at losing their employment rights.

The drivers launched Employment Tribunal (ET) proceedings against a private hire company, complaining that they had not received holiday pay or work breaks. The company stated, amongst other things, that their claims should be dismissed because they were founded on the illegal performance of their contracts. That argument was considered at a preliminary hearing.

There was no dispute that the drivers had underdeclared their earnings from the company. The company stated that it was an express term of their contracts that they would comply with their tax obligations. It was crucial to the

company's business model that drivers were honest in conducting their tax affairs. Permitting them to proceed with their claims would offend against public policy and undermine the integrity of the legal system.

For their part, the drivers stated that there was no illegality in the performance of their contracts. Their work for the company was legal and they were properly and lawfully paid for their work. Their failure to accurately declare their earnings had nothing to do with the overall purpose of their contracts.

They had been fined by HM Revenue and Customs and it would be disproportionate to disqualify them from enforcing their employment rights.

Ruling on the matter, the ET expressed no sympathy for the drivers, who had underdeclared their income in a deplorable manner. Given the purpose of their relationship with the company, however, their claims were not founded on

illegal acts. The rights to holiday pay and rest breaks were health and safety matters that pertained to the wellbeing of workers generally.

Rejecting the company's illegality defence, the ET found that ensuring the health and safety of workers is an overriding consideration, even if they may be involved in tax evasion.

To rule otherwise would be to suggest that all workers must submit their tax returns for scrutiny before being permitted to enforce their employment rights. That, the ET noted, would amount to overkill.

The ET stated that permitting the drivers to proceed with their claims was not an endorsement of their conduct. The ruling opened the way for a full hearing of their cases, in which the central issue would be whether they enjoyed the protected status of 'workers' under the Working Time Directions 1998 and Section 233(b) of the Employment Rights Act 1996.



Low-cost blood tests can prevent heart attack deaths



A speedy and inexpensive blood test can save lives of thousands of patients who have suffered heart attacks, a new study has found.

The study, which was funded by the British Heart Foundation, said the test can help doctors determine those who are at high risk of suffering a suspected heart attack.

According to researchers measuring levels of high sensitivity C-reactive protein (CRP) – an inflammation in the blood of people after heart attack can point to the risk level.

The British Heart Foundation insist the blood tests are already being done to diagnose other health conditions and may be used to monitor those at highest risk by giving intensive treatment.

Therefore, when doctors think a person has suffered heart attack, they conduct a test for troponin, a protein released into the bloodstream when the heart is damaged.

However, as per this study measuring CRP levels can also give a detailed picture of the condition.

The study was published in the journal Plos Medicine, researchers used data from more than 250,000 patients, who

were admitted in hospitals with suspected heart attacks.

The study was carried out by experts from Imperial College London and the National Institute for Health Research Health Informatics Collaborative.

“Testing for this biological ‘red flag’ at the same time as other hospital tests identifies those more vulnerable patients who should be receiving closer medical attention.

“Importantly, we hope with more research, we can be successful in developing new therapies that specifically combat inflammation to improve outcomes in heart disease,” Dr Ramzi Khamis, the Clinical Director for Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust was quoted as saying.

Dr Amit Kaura, British Heart Foundation Clinical Research Fellow and researcher at Imperial College London said: “This study shows that analysing large sets of real-world clinical data can cast light on patterns of disease and identify those at high risk of dying. We hope to use this knowledge to guide our clinical decision making in treating patients with suspected heart attacks.”

Professor James Leiper, our Associate Medical Director, said: “Every 5 minutes, someone is admitted to a UK hospital with a heart attack, and it is estimated that there are 1.4 million people in the UK

who have survived a heart attack. This test presents a valuable new tool in doctors’ arsenal to direct quick and effective care for the millions of heart attack patients.

“By better identifying which people are most at risk, this simple blood test could help to direct anti-inflammatory treatments to those who most need it.”

This discovery also opens the door to more targeted treatment for heart attack patients who have life-threatening inflammation as indicated by a slightly raised CRP reading. Doctors could consider giving these people more intensive therapies.

Some anti-inflammatory drugs such as colchicine, have already been found to be effective against atherosclerosis – the build-up of fatty deposits in the arteries that increases your chance of a heart attack.

Tellingly, Dr Ramzi Khamis now hopes to test colchicine specifically in patients with increased CRP levels to determine whether it could be an effective treatment to increase the survival after a heart attack.

To find out more about the IMWS Health Committee, please contact Mohammed Laher on: 07702962740

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Kim Leadbeater MP column

One of the most fascinating – and challenging – parts of my job representing the people of Batley and Spen is the wide range of issues I am called on to get involved in. In any one day I could be dealing with local issues like pothole repairs, national policy on children's mental health and the cost of living crisis, and the international situation in Ukraine, the Middle East or further afield.

Sometimes these different levels of activity overlap. This month, for example, marks the 20th anniversary of the Gujarat riots in which well over a thousand people were killed, most of them Muslims. A local family here in Batley and Spen asked me if I could help mark the event at a national level. I was keen to show my support and organised a debate in Parliament so that other MPs and government Ministers could hear first-hand the family's concerns that even after all this time justice has not been done.

I was delighted that Imran Dawood along with members of his family and his supporters could attend the debate in person. Imran was travelling back from a visit to the Taj Mahal with his uncles, Sakil and Saeed, and a friend, Mohammed Aswat, when they were stopped at a roadblock and surrounded by a mob demanding to know their religion.

They replied that they were British Muslim tourists. In the violence that followed, Sakil, Saeed and Mohammed were all killed. Imran was left for dead but miraculously survived. I'm sure many local people remember these events.

I backed the family's demand that if possible the mortal remains of the three victims be returned to the UK, and I was pleased that a Foreign Office minister, Amanda Milling MP, agreed that the government would support this request to the Indian authorities. I have written to the Indian High Commissioner on this point and I am also looking into whether a coroner's inquest into their deaths could be held in this country.

It was a positive and dignified debate in which I made clear that every family's grief must be respected, regardless of religion, faith or politics. And there was agreement across the parties that everything that can be done to prevent such an atrocity happening again must be done.

I get a lot of letters and emails from constituents concerned about the continuing communal violence in different parts of India. Following the Gujarat debate, the Chair and Vice-Chair of Rabetah Al Ulama Al Islamiyyah wrote to me about reports of harassment and assaults suffered by female students in Karnataka who chose to adopt the Muslim dress code. Concern has also been raised about reports of persecution against other minority religions, including Christians and Sikhs.

When Parliament returns after the recess I will be raising this, as well as taking part in a debate on the recognition of the State of Palestine, which I have supported consistently.

There will be important parliamentary debates, too, on the crisis in Ukraine, the easing of Covid restrictions, and the important issue of child sexual exploitation. I am also looking for an opportunity to present my petition on road safety in Batley and Spen in the House of Commons. So once again a mixture of international, national and local concerns. At all levels, it never ceases to amaze me how powerful communities can be when they come together and work towards a common goal for the benefit of all.

At a local level, we have so many voluntary groups and charitable organisations working to make lives better. I recently visited Gamechangerz in Birstall, who were my charity of the month in December.

They run some terrific events to keep local children active and engaged. The Hamm-Damm Foundation in Batley works to strengthen communities, improve the environment we live in and promote

mutual understanding and peace and they were my January charity of the month, so I'm looking forward to presenting them with a cheque shortly.

Sometimes one family's situation touches the hearts of the whole community. Shirley Hepworth from Roberttown is the mother of 5 year old Beau, a beautiful little girl who's been through so much since being diagnosed in December 2020 with a rare form of childhood cancer called Stage 4 High Risk Neuroblastoma. Beau was given a 50/50 chance of survival but after some strong chemotherapy and a lot of excellent care from the NHS she's doing well. She now needs a vaccine treatment that is only available on a trial in New York, to try to prevent the cancer coming back.

There have been all kinds of events to help Shirley raise the money she needs, with more to come including a midnight walk and a motorcycle ride. I'm delighted that the fundraising target has been reached and all the extra funds will now go towards helping other children get the treatment they need through the charity Solving Kids Cancer. As Shirley says, the campaign is not just about her own little girl, but is for all the children who could benefit from the trial in the future.

I also want to pay special tribute to Councillor Mahmood Akhtar, who is retiring after almost twenty years representing Batley East. He was Deputy Mayor of Kirklees and has contributed a huge amount to the local community in that time and been a passionate campaigner for race equality.

Kim

P.S. I want to be as accessible to all my constituents as I can. My website address is www.kim4batleyandspen.com and that's where you can find more details on everything I've been doing locally, nationally and internationally, sign up to my newsletter and meet the team that are working with me and for you.

ચાલો આજે કંઈક સાઈં જાણીએ

-રફીક અહમદ કબાસ

આ ધરતી ઉપર એવો કોઈ માણસ નથી જેના પાસે કોઈ સમસ્યા નથી અને આ ધરતી પર એવી કોઈ સમસ્યા નથી જેનું સમાધાન નથી.

આ કહાણી એક ભિખારીની છે. જે ગામડામાં રોજ ભીખ માંગતો હતો અને સાંજે એણે ગામના બહાર બનાવેલ ઝૂંપડીમાં પોતાનું ખાવાનું બનાવી ખાતો હતો. ખાવાનું બનાવવા જંગલમાં જઈ લાકડા વીણી લાવતો હતો. આજ પ્રમાણે એનો રોજનો નિયમ હતો. રોજની જેમ એ જંગલમાં લાકડા વીણવા ગયો હતો ત્યારે તેની નજર એક જાનવર ઉપર પડી જેણે એને ચોંકાવી દીધો. જંગલમાં એક લોમડી હતી જેને પગ ન હતા. પરંતુ તે તંદુરસ્ત અને હસ્ટપુસ્ત હતી. એ જોઈને ભીખારી ચોંકી ગયો. એને લાગ્યું આશું છે? એનો શિકાર નથી થયો, એના પગ નથી, એ હરીફરી શકતી નથી, છતાં તંદુરસ્ત છે. એને કેવી રીતે ખોરાક મળી રહ્યો છે? કે જે હરી ફરી શકતી નથી.

ભિખારી આમ વિચારી રહ્યો હતો કે તેને એક અવાજ સંભળાયો, જે સિંહની ગર્જના હતી. જંગલનો રાજા સિંહ આવી રહ્યો હતો. ભિખારી પણ ડરીને જાન બચાવવા ઝાડ ઉપર ચઢી ગયો અને ત્યાંથી જોવા લાગ્યો કે શું થઈ રહ્યું છે? સિંહ લોમડીની તરફ આવી રહ્યો હતો. સિંહે પહેલાથી જ શિકાર કર્યો હતો તેના મોઢામાં નાનું હરણ દબાવી રાખેલું હતું. ભિખારી વિચારવા લાગ્યો સિંહે હરણને મારી નાંખ્યું છે હવે આ લોમડીને પણ મારી નાંખશે.

સિંહ લોમડીના નજીક આવી હરણ જે મોઢામાં દબાવીને લાવ્યો હતો તેમાંથી માંસનો ટૂકડો લોમડી તરફ નાંખ્યો અને પોતાનો શિકાર આરામથી ખાવા લાગ્યો. ભિખારી ચોંકી ગયો. એના માટે સૌથી મોટો ચમત્કાર એ હતો કે, સિંહે લોમડીને નુકસાન પહોંચાડ્યું નહીં. તેનો શિકાર કર્યો નહીં, બલકે તેને ખાવાનું ખવડાવ્યું. મનમાં જ ભિખારી કહેવા લાગ્યો. ઉપરવાળાએ કમાલ કરી દીધી. તે બધાની સંભાળ રાખી રહ્યો છે, દરેકને ખાવાનું પહોંચાડી રહ્યો છે. આવી જ અનેક વાતો ભિખારીના મનમાં ચાલી રહી હતી.

તેને લાગ્યું આ રોજ આવી રીતે બની રહ્યું છે કે ફક્ત આજે જ એક સંયોગ છે. જેથી ફરીથી જોવા તે બીજા દિવસે સાંજે જંગલમાં તેજ જગ્યાએ પહોંચી ગયો. કેટલાક સમય બાદ સિંહ તેનો શિકાર લઈ લોમડી પાસે આવ્યો. લોમડીને પોતાના શિકારમાંથી માંસનો ટૂકડો આપ્યો અને બીજો પોતે ખાવા લાગી ગયો. ભિખારીને ખાતરી થઈ ગઈ કે ઉપરવાળો છે અને તે આપણાં બધાનું પાલન પોષણ કરી રહ્યો છે. બીજે દિવસથી ભિખારીએ ભીખ માંગવાનું બંધ કરી

દીધું અને ઝૂંપડીમાં જ રહેવા લાગ્યો, એ વિચારથી કે કોઈ આવશે અને તેને પણ ખાવાનું આપી જશે. મને ભીખ માંગવાની શું જરૂર છે? ઘરે ઘરે ફરવાની શું જરૂરિયાત છે? આમને આમ કેટલાયે દિવસો પસાર થયા પરંતુ તેને કોઈ ખોરાક આપવા આવ્યું નહીં. જીદ પકડી લીધી હતી કે ઉપરવાળો તેને પણ સંભાળી લેશે. વધુ દિવસો પસાર થયા. ખોરાક ન મળવાને કારણે તે કમજોર થઈ ગયો હતો. તેની તબીયત વધુ લથડી રહી હતી. તેને ચાલવાની પણ મુશ્કેલી પડી રહી હતી.

તે ઘરની બહાર બેઠો હતો ત્યારે ત્યાંથી એક મહાત્મા પસાર થઈ રહ્યા હતા. તેણે અવાજ દઈને તેમને પોતાની પાસે બોલાવ્યા અને કહેવા લાગ્યો કે, ઉપરવાળાની શું માયા છે કે, ત્યાં જંગલમાં પગ વગરની એક લોમડીને સિંહ આવીને રોજ માંસ ખવડાવે છે અને એક હું છું કે તેજ ઉપરવાળાના ભરોસે ઝૂંપડીમાં બેઠો છું. મને કોઈ પૂંછનાર નથી. ગામમાંથી એક પણ માણસ ન આવ્યો કે જે મને ખાવાનું આપે.

મહાત્માએ જે કહ્યું તે સાંભળવા લાયક છે. તેમણે કહ્યું તમે મૂર્ખ છો. તમે એ શું કામ વિચારો છે કે, ઉપરવાળો તમને લોમડીની જેમ જોવા માંગે છે, એમ કેમ નથી વિચારતા કે તમને સિંહના માફક બનાવવા માંગે છે. તે સિંહ કે જે પોતાનો શિકાર પણ કરે અને બીજાને મદદ પણ કરે. પરંતુ તમે પોતાને લોમડી માનીને બેસી ગયા. તમે એ ભૂલી ગયા કે ઉપરવાળો તમને સિંહ બનાવવા માંગે છે.

જિંદગીમાં આપણાં સાથે પણ કંઈક આવું જ બને છે કે, આપણે કેટલીક વાર ઉલ્ટું સમજી લઈએ છે કે, આપણું તો કંઈજ થતું નથી. પરંતુ ઉપરવાળો તમને સિંહની જેમ જોવા માંગે છે. જેથી કહેવાય છે કે કંઈક એવું કરી બતાવો કે દુનિયા પણ તમારા જેવું કરવા માંગે.

ગઝલ

આજે અહીં જૂઓ છો જે પથ્થર નવા નવા,
કાલે બની જવાના એ ઈશ્વર નવા નવા.
તારા વિશે નો પ્રશ્ન અનાદિથી એક છે,
કિન્તુ મળે છે હર યુગે ઉત્તર નવા નવા.
તો પણ જાણે કેમ સતત ખાલી હાથ છે?
અલ્લાહ રોજ દે છે મુકદ્દર નવા નવા.
તારા મિલનની શક્યતા જીવંત રાખવા,
પેદા કરું છું રોજ હું અવસર નવા નવા.
મૃત્યુને 'રાઝ' અંત જીવનનો નહીં ગણું,
બદલે છે એ તો જીવ કલેવર નવાં નવાં.

-રાઝ નવસારવી, નવસારી.

“રાજ” નવસારવીનું દુઃખ અવસાન:

-યુસુફ સીદાત, લેસ્ટર

મારા વિશે તું એવી રીતે બેખબર મળે
શોધે તું મારું ઘર અને મારી કબર મળે

મૂળ નવસારીના વતની અને રાજ નવસારવીના તખલ્લુસથી લખતા લોકપ્રિય ગઝલકરનો નવસારી ઈન્ડિયા ખાતે ઈન્તેકાલ થયો છે. તેમનું મૂળ નામ સગીર અહમદ અલીજાન સૈયદ હતું. તેમનો જન્મ ૯ ડીસેમ્બર ૧૯૩૫માં થયો હતો. એમના પિતા અલીજાન સૈયદ મૂળ યુપીના આજમગઢના સાદાત ખાનદાનના નવસારીની મસ્જિદના ઈમામ તરીકે સેવા આપતાં હતાં. તેમના દાદા અલ્લાહબક્ષ સૈયદ પ્રસિદ્ધ શાયર મીનાઈના શાગિર્દ હતા. આમ એમને ગઝલ સર્જન વારસામાં મળ્યું હતું.

સૈયદ રાઝે એમ.એ.બી.એડ. સુધીનો અભ્યાસ કર્યો હતો. વ્યવસાયે આજીવન શિક્ષક તરીકે સેવાઓ આપી. પ્રારંભમાં પાનોલી હાઈસ્કૂલ પછી કે એન્ડ બી સાર્વજનિક હાઈસ્કૂલ આલીપોરમાં શિક્ષક અને ઉપાચાર્ય તરીકે જોડાયેલા રહ્યા. બનાતવાલા હાઈસ્કૂલ નવસારીમાં શિક્ષક તરીકે જોડાયા ત્યાંથી જ નિવૃત્ત થયા. વિદ્યાર્થીઓમાં ખૂબજ આદરપાત્ર, આદર્શ શિક્ષક સૈયદ સાહેબ તરીકે જાણીતા અને પ્રિય રહ્યા. આજે પણ દેશ વિદેશમાં અને શહેરોમાં તેમના વિદ્યાર્થીઓ એમને યાદ કરે છે.

સૈયદ સાહેબ ખામોશ, વિવેકી, શરમાળ, વિનમ્ર કવિ અને ગઝલકાર તરીકે જાણીતા હતા. એમને ચીથરે બાંધેલું રતન ગણવામાં આવતા. એઓ મૂખ્યત્વે ગુજરાતી અને ઉર્દુમાં ગઝલ, શાયરી, મુક્તકો અને તઝમીન લખતા રહ્યા. એ સાહિત્ય સર્જન યાત્રાના પરિપાક રૂપે આજ પર્યંત ઊર્મિના શિલ્પ, ઊર્મિના મોતી, અને ઊર્મિની ઈમારત નામે ત્રણ સંગ્રહો પ્રગટ થઈ ચૂક્યા છે. મઝહબી લેખો પણ લખ્યા છે. એમની ગઝલો ગુજરાતના અનેક સામયિકો, બાટલીના પયગામ માસિક અને વ્હોરા સમાચારમાં પ્રસિદ્ધ થતી રહી છે. ૬૦વર્ષથી વધુ સમય સુધી સતત ગઝલ સર્જન કર્યું પરંતુ પ્રસિદ્ધિથી હંમેશાં દૂર રહેતા હતા. નવસારીના એક ખૂણામાં બેસી રાજ તખલ્લુસને સાર્થક કરતા હોય તેમજ જીવ્યા અને લખ્યું. એઓ ઓગસ્ટ ૧૯૯૭માં ગુજરાતી રાઈટર્સ સર્કલ, બાટલીના આમંત્રણથી સંસ્થાના ઉપક્રમે યોજાયેલા ભારતીય સ્વાતંત્ર્ય સુવર્ણ જયંતી મહોત્સવમાં મહેમાન કવિ તરીકે ધ્રિટનની મુલાકાતે પધાર્યા હતા.

ગુજરાતભરમાં લોકપ્રિય ગઝલકાર વિખ્યાત અમૃત ધાયલ એવોર્ડ તેમને આપવામાં આવ્યો હતો. વલસાડ જિલ્લા શિક્ષક સંઘ, ચર્ચાપત્રી મંડળ નવસારી, વલસાડ જિલ્લા માધ્યમિક શિક્ષક સંઘ ગુજરાતી રાઈટર્સ સર્કલ, બાટલી, ગુજરાતી લીટરરી ગૃપ લેસ્ટર, નવસારી નગરપાલિકા, યુગ શક્તિ નવસારી એજ્યુકેશન વેલ્ફેર સોસાયટી, નવસારી રત્ન બિરુદ શેરિયતે ગાલિબ ઉજવણી પ્રસંગે વિવિધ સન્માનથી વિભૂષિત થયા હતા. અનેક સાહિત્યકારો, લેખકોએ તેમના સાહિત્ય સર્જનને બિરદાવતા સુંદર અભિપ્રાય વ્યક્ત કર્યા છે. આકાશવાણી અમદાવાદ વડોદરા પરથી સ્વરચિત ગઝલ અને તેમના કાર્યક્રમો રજૂ થતાં હતા. એમના અવસાનથી ગુજરાતી સાહિત્ય જગતને ભારે ખોટ પડી છે. પરવરદિગાર તેમને જન્મતુલ ફીરદૌશમાં આલા જગા અતા ફરમાવે આમીન.

ભારતના કર્ણાટકમાં હિજાબ પ્રતિબંધ ઉપર વિવાદ

ભારતમાં રોજબરોજ નવી નવી યુક્તિઓ અપનાવી મુસલમાનોને હેરાન કરવાના અને તેમનામાં ભયની લાગણી પેદા કરવાના પ્રયાસોમાં વધારો થઈ રહ્યો છે. જેમાં બીજેપી અને હિન્દુ કટ્ટરવાદી સંસ્થાઓનો મુખ્ય હાથ હોય છે. સરકાર તરફથી પણ તેમાં સીધી કે આડકતરી રીતે સાથ મળતો હોય છે. ગયા માસમાં કર્ણાટક રાજ્યમાં જ્યાં બીજેપીની સરકાર છે ત્યાં સ્કૂલ અને કોલેજોમાં બુરખા અને હિજાબ પહેરવા માટે મનાઈ ફરમાવવામાં આવી હતી અને તે અંતર્ગત કાયદો બનાવવામાં આવ્યો હતો. આમ તો અગાઉ પણ આવા છમકલાં થતાં રહ્યા હતા પરંતુ આ વખતે હિજાબ બાનના કારણે પરિસ્થિતિ વધુ વણસી છે.

ઉડુપી જિલ્લાના કુંડાપુર ખાતેની સરકારી કોલેજના સત્તાવાળાઓએ પ્રથમ હિજાબ ઉપર પ્રતિબંધ મૂક્યો હતો. હિજાબ પહેરવાનું ચાલુ રાખનાર કેટલીક છોકરીઓને તેમના વર્ગોમાં જવાની મંજૂરી આપવામાં આવી ન હતી. ભગવાધારી જુથો ધ્વારા તેનું રાજકરણ કરવામાં આવ્યું હતું. મુસ્લિમ ખાન નામની હિજાબ પહેરેલી વિદ્યાર્થીની માંડ્યા ખાતે પીઈએસ કોલેજમાં પોતાનું એસાઈમેન્ટ આપવા જઈ રહી હતી ત્યારે કોલેજની બહાર ભગવા બેસ ધારણ કરેલ યુવાનોના ટોળાએ જય શ્રી રામના નારા લગાવી તેને કોલેજમાં પ્રવેશતા અટકાવવાના પ્રયત્નો કર્યા હતા. બી.કોમ.ના બીજા વર્ષમાં અભ્યાસ કરતી આ મુસ્લિમ હિમ્મતથી તેમનો સામનો કરી ‘અલ્લાહ અકબર’ નો નારો લગાવી ભીડનો સામનો કરી કોલેજમાં પ્રવેશ કર્યો હતો. તેણે એકલા હાથે પોતાની જાનની પરવા કરવા વગર મક્કમ પણે વિરોધીઓનો સામનો કર્યો હતો.

આ ઘટનાની નોંધ દેશ પરદંશના સમાચારપત્રો, ટીવી ચેનલો અને સોશયલ મીડિયામાં ખૂબજ વાયરલ થયા હતા. મુસ્લિમને બહાદુરી માટે અભિનંદનનો વરસાદ વરસી રહ્યો હતો તો કેટલાયે ટીવી ચેનલ અને ન્યુઝપેપરોએ તેના ઈન્ટરવ્યુ પણ લીધા હતા. આમ મુસ્લિમ આખા દેશમાં છવાઈ ગઈ હતી. બુરખાના આ પ્રતિબંધ વિરૂદ્ધ હાઈકોર્ટ અને સુપ્રિમ કોર્ટમાં કેસો પણ દાખલ થયા છે. ભારતનું બંધારણ દરેક ધર્મના લોકોને પોતાના પસંદગીના પહેરવેશનો હક્ક આપે છે. મુસ્લિમ મહિલાઓને હિજાબ પહેરવાનો ઈસ્લામ ધર્મનો આદેશ છે અને તેનું મુસ્લિમ મહિલાઓ પાલન કરે છે. ભારત અને વિશ્વના અનેક દેશોમાં સ્કૂલો, કોલેજોમાં હિજાબ પહેરી અભ્યાસ કરતી છોકરીઓ અને અનેક સંસ્થાઓની ઓફિસોમાં પણ હિજાબ પહેરી નોકરી કરતી મહિલાઓને પોતાના પહેરવેશથી કોઈ અવરોધ ઊભો થતો નથી. પરંતુ ભારતમાં જ આવા કટ્ટરવાદી હિન્દુ સંગઠનો નવા નવા પેંતરા ઊભા કરી વાતાવરણ બગાડવાનો પ્રયત્નો કરે છે.

મધ્ય પ્રદેશની કેટલીક કોલેજોમાં પણ આ બનાવ પછી બુરખા ઉપર પ્રતિબંધ લાદવામાં આવ્યો છે અને બીજા શહેરોમાં પણ આની અસર પહોંચી રહી છે. હાલમાં ભારત ખાતે યુપી સહીત પાંચ રાજ્યોમાં વિધાનસભાની ચૂંટણી થઈ રહી છે. યુપી માં હાલ બીજેપીની સરકાર છે અને આ વખતે તેમણે કદાચ હારનો સામનો પણ કરવો પડે, જેથી વોટોનું ધુવીકરણ કરવા જાતિવાદ, હિન્દુ મુસ્લિમ કાંડને મહત્વ અપાઈ રહ્યું છે.

સમાચારોની ઝલક



ઈન્ડિયન મુસ્લિમ વેલ્ફેર સોસાયટી અફઘાનિસ્તાનના મઝલુમોની વહારે:

છેલ્લા કેટલાક દાયકાઓથી અફઘાનિસ્તાનમાં અમેરિકા, રશિયા વગેરે દેશોએ તેના સૈન્યો મારફત કબજો જમાવી રાખ્યો હતો. પરંતુ ત્યાંની ભૌગોલિક સ્થિતિ અને અફઘાની લોકોની તાકાત, ખુદારી સામે લખલૂટ પૈસો ખર્ચવા છતાં તેઓ કામચાબ થયા ન હતા. આખરે ગયા વર્ષે અમેરિકાએ તેમના તમામ સૈન્યોને પાછા ખેંચી લઈ તેને આઝાદ કર્યું. અફઘાનિસ્તાનની આર્થિક હાલત ખૂબજ નબળી છે. વળી અમેરિકા અને રશિયાના નિયંત્રણમાં ત્યાં કોઈ પણ જાતનો વિકાસ થયો નથી અને દેશ ગરીબી અને કંગાલીમાં ધકેલાઈ ગયો છે. પરિણામે બેકારી, મોંઘવારી, ગરીબી, અને ખાવાપીવાની તંગીના કારણે અનેક ફેમિલીઓ ભૂખમરના સંક્રાંતિમાં જકડાઈ ગયા છે. આપણે સોશયલ મિડીયાના માધ્યમથી ત્યાંની હાલત જાણીને કંપી ઉઠીએ છીએ.

આવી પરિસ્થિતિઓમાં ઘણી ચેરિટીઓએ ત્યાં હ્યુમેનીટેરીયન કામ ચાલુ કર્યું છે. અને તેમને ફૂડ પાર્સલ, દવા, કપડા વગેરેની મદદ કરી રહી છે. યુકેની સૌથી મોટી ચેરિટી ઈસ્લામિક રીલીફ છેલ્લા ત્રણ માસથી અફઘાનિસ્તાનના રૂરલ એરિયામાં ફૂડ પાર્સલ, મેડિકલ સહાય, કપડા વગેરેની મદદ મોટા પાયા ઉપર પહોંચાડી રહી છે. આપણી સોસાયટી વર્ષોથી આ ચેરિટીના સાથે મળી કામ કરે છે. પરિણામે ત્યાંની દયાજનક અને કફોડી સ્થિતિને ધ્યાનમાં લઈ સંસ્થાએ ૮૫૦૦ પાઉન્ડની ઈમરજન્સી સહાય મોકલી દીધી છે.

ઉપરાંત અફઘાનિસ્તાન રિલીફની એક અપીલ પણ લોચ કરી દીધી છે. સંસ્થાની ચેરિટી સબ કમિટીએ ચાલુ વર્ષે રમજાન ઈફતાર પ્રોજેક્ટ માટેહત પણ રમજાન અને તે પછી પણ ત્યાંના લોકોને બેઝીક જરૂરિયાત જેમાં ફૂડ પાર્સલ, કપડા, મેડિકલ સહાય વગેરે પૂરા પાડવામાં આવશે. તો આપ સૌ ભાઈ બહેનોને વિનંતી છે કે, તમો આ પ્રોજેક્ટમાં ભાગ લઈ ત્યાંના જરૂરતમંદોની મદદ માટે ઝકાત, સદકાહ, લીલ્લાહ, ફીદીયા વગેરેથી ભરપુર મદદ કરશો. આ અપીલ રમજાન માસમાં પણ ચાલુ રહેશે. તમે તમારી રકમ અલ હિકમાહ સેન્ટર, બાટલીની ઓફિસમાં જમા કરાવી શકો છો. અથવા બેન્ક મારફત ટ્રાન્સફર પણ કરી શકો છો. બેન્કની વિગત નીચે પ્રમાણે છે.

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હવે ભીખ પણ ડીજીટલ:

આમ તો ન જાણે કેટલાયે વર્ષોથી ભારત ખાતે છૂટા પૈસાની મુશ્કેલી જોવા મળે છે. જેના પરિણામે નોટ આપવા પછી બાકી છૂટા પૈસા આપણને મળતા નથી કે પછી કેન્ડી, ચોકલેટ આપીને મનાવી લેવામાં આવે છે. તેવામાં ભિખારીઓ જે ભીખ માંગી રહ્યા છે તેમને પણ છૂટા નથી એમ કહી લોકો સરકી જાય છે.

ભારતમાં બિહાર પ્રાંતના બેતિયા રેલ્વે સ્ટેશન ઉપર નાનપણથી જ ભીખ માંગતા રાજુએ હવે ભીખ માંગવાના ધંધાને પણ ડીજીટલ બનાવી દીધો છે. અને તે માટે તે ગુગલ પે, ફોન પે કે ઈ વોલેટનો ઉપયોગ કરે છે. લોકો જ્યારે કહે છે કે, છૂટા નથી તો તે તરત જ કહે છે મની ટ્રાન્સફર કરી દો. કદાચ આ ભિખારી ભારતનો પ્રથમ ડીજીટલ ભિખારી કહી શકાય. હવે રેલ્વે સ્ટેશન ઉપર ભીખ માંગવાની મનાઈ હોવાથી આ ભિખારીને રોજી રોટી માટે સ્ટેશનની બહાર ભીખ માંગવી પડે છે. તેણે બેંકમાં ખાતું ખોલાવી તેના ખાતા સાથે પોતાનું ઈ વોલેટ બનાવી દીધું છે. અને હવે તે ઓન લાઈન પ્લેટફોર્મ ધ્વારા ભીખ માંગે છે. છે ને દરેક ક્ષેત્રમાં ડીજીટલનો જમાનો !

પહેલાં ઈંડુ કે મરઘી ?

પહેલાં ઈંડુ આવ્યું કે મરઘી એ પ્રશ્ન વર્ષોથી માથાનો દુ:ખાવો બનેલ છે. અને તે માટે અનેક તર્ક વિતર્ક ચાલે છે. આ કોયડો ઉકેલવા અનેક પ્રયત્નો પણ થયા છે. પરંતુ હવે વૈજ્ઞાનિકો આ કોયડો ઉકેલવામાં સફળ થયા છે. બ્રિટનની શેફિલ્ડ અને વોરવિક યુનિવર્સિટીના પ્રોફેસરોએ લાંબા રીસર્ચ બાદ શોધ કરી છે. જે મુજબ વૈજ્ઞાનિક કોલિન ફ્રીમેન જણાવે છે કે, તેમની પાસે હવે પુરાવા છે કે, પહેલાં દુનિયામાં મરઘી આવી.

તેમણે જણાવ્યું છે કે, ઈંડાના છીપલામાં ઓવોકિલડિન નામનું પ્રોટીન જોવા મળે છે. અને આ પ્રોટીન વગર ઈંડાનું નિર્માણ અશક્ય છે. અને આ પ્રોટીન માત્ર મરઘીના ગર્ભાશયમાં જ બને છે. જેથી દુનિયામાં પહેલાં મરઘી આવી અને તેના ગર્ભાશયમાં ઓવોકિલડિન બન્યું ત્યરબાદ આ પ્રોટીન ઈંડામાં પહોંચ્યું.

તુર્કિનું નામ હવે બદલીને તુર્કિયે થયું:

ગયા માસમાં ટર્કીના પ્રેસિડન્ટ રસેપ તેયબ એર્દોગને પોતાના દેશનું નામ તુર્કિ (ટર્કી)થી બદલીને તુર્કિયે કરવાની જાહેરાત કરી છે. અને હવે તે તુર્કિયે દેશથી ઓળખાશે. ઉપરાંત હવે તમામ પ્રકારના વેપાર, આંતરરાષ્ટ્રીય સંસ્થાઓ અને રાજકીય કાર્યો માટે આ નામનો ઉપયોગ થશે.

તુર્કિયે શબ્દ તુર્કિ રાષ્ટ્રની સંસ્કૃતિ, સભ્યતા અને મૂલ્યોને દર્શાવે છે. ટર્કીશ ભાષામાં તુર્કિને તુર્કિયે કહેવામાં આવે છે. ૧૯૨૩માં પશ્ચિમ દેશોના કબજામાંથી આઝાદ થયા બાદ તુર્કિને, તુર્કિયે ના નામથી જ ઓળખવામાં આવતું હતું. સદીઓ પહેલાં બીજા દેશો અને યુરોપીયન દેશો તથા ઓટોમન સ્ટેટ પછી તુર્કિયે નામથી સંબોધિત કર્યું હતું. પછી તેને તુર્કિ (ટર્કી)થી ઓળખવામાં આવ્યું. અને પાછળથી આજ નામ પ્રચલિત પણ થયું.

અમૂક નિષ્ણાંતો માને છે કે, નામ બદલવું એ કોઈ અસામાન્ય વાત નથી. એ દેશની બ્રાન્ડિંગ સાથે જોડાયેલ વાત છે. આમ તો હોલેન્ડે તેનું નામ બદલી નેધરલેન્ડ કર્યું હતું અને તે જ પ્રમાણે ઈરાને ફારસ થી બદલી ઈરાન કર્યું હતું. પશ્ચિમી દેશો પહેલાં તેને ફારસથી ઓળખતા હતા. ફારસીમાં ઈરાનનો અર્થ પરિચય થાય છે. ઉપરાંત બીજા પણ એવા દાખલાઓ છે જેમાં દેશોએ પોતાના નામ બદલ્યા છે.

માતૃભાષા મરણપથારીએ!

□ મહેક ટંકારવી, બોલ્ટન

પચાસ સાઈઠના દાયકામાં અહીં બ્રિટનમાં આવ્યા ત્યારથી આપણી ‘શું શા પૈસા ચાર’ તરીકે વગોવાતી ગુજરાતી માતૃભાષાને શક્ય ત્યાં સુધી જાળવી રાખવા અનેક પ્રયત્નો થતા રહ્યા છે. સામાન્ય લોકોને પણ આમેય અંગ્રેજી ભાષાનું તો થેલું લાગેલું હોય જ છે અને તેમાંયે અંગ્રેજીના પ્રભુત્વવાળા આ મુલકમાં પોતાની માતૃભાષા, પછી તે ગમે તે હોય, તેને લાંબા સમય સુધી જાળવી રાખવાનું કામ ટેકરી ચઢાણ જેવું હોય છે. તેમ છતાં માતૃભાષાનું મહત્વ સમજતા અને ભાષા સાથે સંસ્કૃતિ સંસ્કાર સંકળાયેલાં છે એવું જાણતા કેટલાક ભાષાપ્રેમી લોકોએ ઘરમાં બાળકોને માતૃભાષા બોલવા પ્રોત્સાહન આપીને, ગુજરાતી શીખવાના જ્ઞાતિવર્ગો ચલાવીને, એ માટે જરૂરી પાઠ્ય પુસ્તકો તૈયાર કરી કરાવીને, GCSE પરીક્ષાઓમાં ગુજરાતીને એક વિષય તરીકે દાખલ કરાવીને, ડાયસ્પોરિક સાહિત્યને ઉત્તેજન આપીને તથા અઠવાડિક કે પખવાડિક વર્તમાન પત્રો દ્વારા માતૃભાષાને અત્યાર સુધી સજીવ રાખવા મથામણો કરી છે અને તેમાં વત્તેઓછું અંશે કામચાબ પણ થયા છે.

એ બધામાં જે વસ્તુએ સૌથી મહત્વનો અને નોંધપાત્ર ભાગ ભજવ્યો છે તે ગુજરાતી ભાષામાં યોજાતા મુશાયરાઓ અને કવિસંમેલનોએ. આમાં ૧૯૭૨માં વિધિવત સ્થપાયેલી લેંકેશાયરની “ગુજરાતી રાઈટર્સ ગિલ્ડ, યુ.કે.” નામની સાહિત્યિક સંસ્થાએ એના સ્થાપનાકાળથી અત્યાર સુધીમાં આશરે સોએક મુશાયરાઓ યોજી-યોજાવીને અને એને અનુસરીને અન્ય ટાઉન અને શહેરોમાં સ્થપાયેલી, લંડનની “ગુજરાતી સાહિત્ય અકાદમી”, બાટલી, યોર્કશાયરની “ગુજરાતી રાઈટર્સ ફોરમ” ઉપરાંત લેસ્ટર, બર્મિન્ગહામ, બ્લેકબર્ન વગેરે સ્થળોની નાની મોટી સાહિત્યિક સંસ્થાઓએ પ્રશંસનીય ભાગ ભજવ્યો છે. ખાસ કરીને વતનથી આવેલા પહેલી પેઢીના સીધાસાદા, બહુ શિક્ષિત નહીં એવા ગુજરાતી ભાષી લોકોને મનોરંજનના સ્વરૂપ તરીકે આ મુશાયરાઓનું અને ખાસ કરીને ‘ગિલ્ડ’ના પાયાના સભ્ય મરહૂમ ‘સૂફી’ મનુબરી જેવા હજલકારની ગ્રામબોલીવાળી લોકભોગ્ય હજલોનું એવું તો થેલું લાગ્યું હતું કે એના માટે નિયમિત માંગણીઓ ઊઠતી રહેતી. કેટલાક સખીદાતાઓ તરફથી નાનો મોટો ફંડાળો મળી રહેતો અને સ્થાનિક કાઉન્સિલો તથા સાહિત્ય-કળાને પ્રોત્સાહન આપતી અન્ય સંસ્થાઓ તરફથી નાની મોટી ગ્રાન્ટ્સ પણ મળી રહેતી. આ બધાએ આવા મુશાયરાઓના આયોજન તથા મુશાયરા પ્રસંગોની સ્મરણિકાઓ અને ગજલસંગ્રહો છાપીને વહેંચવા ખાસી સુવિધા ઊભી કરી આપી હતી.

આ બધું અત્યાર સુધી તો ચાલ્યું છે, પણ હવે આ સંસ્થાઓના કર્તાધર્તા અને જેમને મુખ્ય ગજલકારો કહી શકાય એવા વયોવૃદ્ધ કવિઓ એક પછી એક વિદાય થઈ ગયા છે અને થઈ રહ્યા છે. દુ:ખ સાથે એ વાતની નોંધ લેવી પડે છે કે એમનું સ્થાન લે, જે થોડા ઘણાં શોખીનો બાકી રહ્યા છે તેમને આકર્ષે અને મુશાયરા પ્રવૃત્તિને સાચવી રાખે એવા ‘સૂફી’ મનુબરીના “પેંગડામાં પગ ઘાલે” એવા કોઈ હજલકારો અહીં હજી તૈયાર થયા નથી. પરિણામે, હજી કોઈ કોઈવાર યોજાતા મુશાયરાઓમાં શ્રોતાઓને પેટ પકડીને હસવાની કે છૂટા મોઢે વાહ વાહ કરવાની જોઈએ તેવી મજા આવતી નથી અને તેઓ બીજી વાર આવા કાર્યક્રમોમાં આવવાનું ટાળે છે. આમેય ગુજરાતી વાંચવાનું તો ભૂલાય જ ગયું છે પણ હવે ધીરે ધીરે તે બોલવાનું પણ ભૂલાતું જાય છે. આપણા ઘરોમાં અહીં જન્મીને મોટી થયેલી પેઢીના માબાપ ઘરમાં બાળકો સાથે મોટે ભાગે અંગ્રેજીમાં જ વાત કરતાં હોય છે એટલે જે ઘરોમાં દાદા દાદી નથી તે ઘરોમાં આ બાળકોના કાને ગુજરાતી જેમ તેમ અથડાતું નથી. કોઈ ગુજરાતીમાં કંઈ પૂછે તો “એટલે શું?” એવું એમને પૂછવું પડે છે. હજી ગુજરાતથી મોડે મોડે આવેલાં કેટલાંક માબાપો આપણી વચ્ચે છે જેમને

કારણે તેમના ઘરોમાં ગુજરાતીનો થોડોઘણો રિવાજ જોઈ શકાય છે, પણ આ પણ ઝાઝું ટકે એવું લાગતું નથી. સાઉથ આફ્રિકામાં બન્યું છે તેમ ત્યાં પાંચ છ પેઢીઓ પછી ભરૂચી-સુરતી વહોરાઓમાં ગુજરાતી ભૂલાય ગયું તેમ અહીં પણ હજી એક બે પેઢી પછી ગુજરાતીનું કદાચ નામોનિશાન રહેશે નહીં. જો કે આપણે વતન સાથેનો નાતો હજી બરાબર જાળવી રાખ્યો છે અને આપણી નવી નસલો પણ થોડે ઘણે અંશે પણ એ જાળવી રાખે તો, કદાચ ગુજરાતી થોડુંઘણું પણ ટકી રહે. કમનસીબે વતનનું અત્યારનું માહોલ જોતાં એની ખાસ શક્યતા દેખાતી નથી.

એક સમય હતો જ્યારે આપણા લોકલ પુસ્તકાલયોમાં ગુજરાતીનાં પુસ્તકોની અલમારીઓ ભરેલી રહેતી અને એ પુસ્તકો વંચાતાં પણ ખરાં. હવે અલ્પ સંખ્યામાં એ પુસ્તકો તો છે પણ તેમને વાંચનાર કોઈ નથી! અલમારીઓ સાફ કરવા લાયબ્રેરીવાળા એ પુસ્તકોને અવાર નવાર પાંચ દસ પેનીમાં વેચી નાંખે છે. અમારા બોલ્ટનમાં હરિભાઈ નામના એક ભાષાપ્રેમી દુકાનવાળા ગુજરાતી સમાચાર પત્રો, મેગેઝિનો, પુસ્તકો વગેરે વેચતા હતા. એક સમય એવો આવ્યો કે એ બધાં પુસ્તકોનો પાંચ પંદર પેનીમાં નિકાલ કરતાં પણ એમના નાકે દમ આવ્યો હતો. અત્યારે એ દુકાન હવે બંધ થઈ ગઈ છે. ન કોઈ ખરીદનાર છે, ન કોઈ વાંચનાર! આપણા જાણીતા ગજલકાર અદમ ટંકારવી ફરિયાદ કરે છે તેમ “મેં લખી છે ગુજરાતીમાં એક ગજલ, ને હવે એનો વાંચનાર શોધું છું.” આ કોઈ વાંચનાર ન મળે એ કવિ માટે કેટલા દુ:ખની વાત કહેવાય!

મારા મિત્ર ‘સૂફી’ મનુબરીને છેલ્લે છેલ્લે એમણે ગુજરાતીમાં જે બધાં વિવિધ રસરુચિનાં પુસ્તકો વસાવ્યાં હતાં તે પુસ્તકોનું શું કરવું એની મનોમન ચિંતા થતી હતી. એ મજાકમાં કહેતા કે સામાન્ય રીતે બને છે તેમ આપણે અહીંયાંથી અંતિમ વિદાય લઈશું એટલે તરત જ આપણા પુત્રો કે પૌત્રાંઓ ક્યારના નિકાલ માટેનું skip મૂકાવીને આ બધું જ આંખ મીચીને તેમાં નાંખી દેવાનાં છે! અત્યારે અમારી પણ એ જ ચિંતા છે. ઘરમાં આ પુસ્તકોને નથી કોઈ વાંચનાર કે બહાર નથી કોઈ લેનાર! માતૃભાષા જ્યારે મરણપથારીએ પડે છે ત્યારે તેની સાથે સંકળાયેલી વસ્તુઓની આવી અવદશા થતી હોય છે!

આમેય આપણી પ્રજા વારસાને સાચવનાર નથી એટલે એની પાસેથી આ પુસ્તકોને કોઈ સંગ્રહાલયમાં હેરિટેજ તરીકે ભાવિ પેઢીઓ માટે સાચવી રાખે એવી કોઈ અપેક્ષા રાખવી પણ નિરર્થક છે. આપણો કોઈ પ્રયત્ન લાંબા ગાળાનો હોતો નથી, કોઈ યોજના ટકાઉ હોતી નથી, એટલે અત્યારે કોઈ ઉત્સાહ બતાવી એવું કરે તો પણ આગળ જઈને એ ઝાઝું ટકે એમ લાગતું નથી. ત્યાં પણ સરવાળે એ પુસ્તકો ઘૂળ ખાઈને ઉઘઈનો ભોગ બને એવું બની શકે છે.

આવામાં કેટલાકને વળી આપણી ગુજરાતી ભાષા અંગ્રેજી વચ્ચે જીવતી રહેશે એવું અત્યારે લાગે. એટલે કે અહીંનાં પોયરાં ક્યાંતો તૂટક ગુજરાતી બોલતાં વચ્ચે અંગ્રેજી શબ્દો વાપરશે અથવા તેમની લઢણમાં અંગ્રેજી બોલતાં કેટલાક ગુજરાતી શબ્દો પ્રયોગશે. આવું અત્યારે સાંભળવામાં આવે છે કારણ કે આ હજી શરૂઆતનો તબક્કો છે. એ પણ ધીરે ધીરે ભૂલાતું જશે. લખવા વાંચવાની વાત તો બાજુ એ મૂકીએ પણ થોડું ઘણું, ભાંગ્યું તૂટ્યું ગુજરાતી પણ આ પોયરાં બોલતાં રહે તો બહુ સારું. મરણપથારીએ પડેલા મરીઝની આપણે છેલ્લે છેલ્લે જે સેવા કરી લઈએ છીએ તેવી સેવા માતૃભાષાની પણ કરી લઈએ તોયે બસ! અને એટલે જ હજી કંઈક અંશે ગુજરાતી લખવા વાંચવાનું ચાલુ છે. એટલે જ હજી અહીં બાટલીથી છેલ્લાં ૨૫થી વધારે વર્ષોથી નિયમિત પ્રગટ થતા “પયગામ”ના કેટલાક વાંચકો શોખથી ગુજરાતી વિભાગના લેખોને વાંચે છે. “પયગામ”ના અંકો દર મહિને ચપોચપ ઉપડી જાય છે. આ વાંચકવર્ગ છે ત્યાં સુધી ગુજરાતી ભાષાની ઝાંખીપાંખી સેવા થતી રહેશે. એ વિદાય થશે, અને હવે એને ઝાઝી વાર નથી, એટલે ગુજરાતીને પણ આપણે મનેકમને ગુડ બાય કહેવું જ પડશે.

برطانوی وزیر اعظم نے روس کے اہم بینکوں کے اثاثے منجمد کر دیے

دیے

برطانیہ کے وزیر اعظم بورس جانسن نے روس پر پابندیاں عائد کرتے ہوئے روس کے اہم بینکوں کے برطانیہ میں اثاثے منجمد کر دیے ہیں۔ روس کے یوکرین پر حملے کی مذمت کرتے ہوئے بورس جانسن کا کہنا تھا کہ یوکرین 'بھرپور طریقے سے اپنا دفاع' کر رہا ہے اور انہوں نے روس کے صدر ولادیمیر پوتن کو 'خون آلود جارحیت پسند' قرار دیا۔ برطانوی وزیر اعظم نے روس پر اقتصادی پابندیاں عائد کرنے کے سلسلے میں یہ بھی اعادہ کیا کہ وہ اگلے ہفتے سے ایسی روسی کمپنیوں پر بھی پابندی لگانے کی قانون سازی کریں گے جو برطانیہ کی مارکیٹ سے پیسہ اکٹھا کرتی ہیں۔ ان کا مزید کہنا تھا کہ برطانیہ میں روسی شہریوں کے پیسے جمع کروانے پر حد مقرر کی جائے گی۔ ان کا مزید کہنا تھا کہ اس کے ساتھ ساتھ روس کی فضائی کمپنی ایرفلوٹ پر بھی برطانیہ میں پابندی عائد کر دی جائے گی اور روس کو فروخت کی جانے والی ٹیکنالوجی کے لیے سخت برآمدی ضابطے ہوں گے۔ ان کا کہنا تھا کہ اسی طرح کی پابندیاں بیلاروس پر بھی عائد کی جائیں گی۔ بورس جانسن نے برطانیہ کے دارالعوام کو بتایا کہ برطانیہ اتحادیوں کے ساتھ مل کر روسی سرمائے کو ہدف بنائے گا۔

یوکرین میں روسی فوج کے داخلے کے بعد دھماکے اور میزائل حملے

صدر پوتن کے حکم پر جمہرات کو روسی افواج سرحد عبور کر کے یوکرین میں داخل ہوئی ہیں۔ روسی افواج نے اس حملے کے دوران بڑے شہروں کے قریب واقع عسکری تنصیبات کے علاوہ کچھ رہائشی علاقے بھی نشانہ بنے ہیں۔

یوکرین، روس بحران میں اسلامی ممالک کس کے ساتھ کھڑے

ہیں؟

یوکرین کی لگ بھگ ساڑھے چار کروڑ آبادی کا فقط ایک سے دو فیصد مسلمان ہیں۔ یہاں کی آبادی کی اکثریت مسیحی ہے۔ روس نے جمہرات کی صبح مشرقی یوکرین کے خلاف فوجی کارروائی کا آغاز کیا ہے اور روس کے اس اقدام پر مغربی ممالک ناراض ہیں اور اب تک کئی پابندیوں کا اعلان کر چکے ہیں۔ جاپان اور آسٹریلیا بھی 'روس جارحیت' کے خلاف مغربی ممالک کے ساتھ کھڑے ہیں جبکہ بہت سے دیگر ممالک اپنے اپنے مفادات کو مد نظر رکھتے ہوئے متوازن بیانات دے رہے ہیں۔ آئیے ایک نظر ڈالتے ہیں کہ یوکرین کے تنازع میں بڑے اسلامی ممالک یا مسلم اکثریتی ممالک اس وقت کہاں کھڑے ہیں۔

پاکستان

سرد جنگ کے دوران پاکستان امریکی کیپ میں تھا لیکن اب صورتحال بدل رہی ہے۔ دلچسپ بات یہ ہے کہ جمہرات کی صبح جب روسی صدر پوتن نے اپنی افواج کو یوکرین پر حملے کا حکم دیا اس وقت پاکستانی وزیر اعظم عمران خان ہی میں موجود تھے۔ سوشل میڈیا پر کئی تجزیہ کاروں کا کہنا ہے کہ عمران خان نے دورے کے لیے 'غلط وقت' کا انتخاب کیا ہے۔ چند سیاسی اور خارجہ امور کے تجزیہ کاروں کا یہ بھی دعویٰ ہے کہ اس دورے کے لیے منتخب

کردہ وقت عالمی طاقتوں کو یہ پیغام دے سکتا ہے کہ یوکرین بحران میں پاکستان امریکہ کی قیادت میں مغربی ممالک کے اتحاد کے ساتھ نہیں، بلکہ روس کے ساتھ کھڑا ہے۔ پاکستان کے انگریزی اخبار ڈان کے مطابق قومی سلامتی کے مشیر معید یوسف نے عمران خان کے دورے کے وقت سے متعلق ان تمام ترقیاتی آرائیوں کو مسترد کرتے ہوئے کہا ہے کہ 'ہاں، عالمی تناؤ ہے لیکن ہمارا دورہ دو طرفہ ہے اور یہ دورہ چین جیسا ہے۔ ہمارے دورے میں معاشی مسائل شامل ہیں۔ ہم کسی ایک کیپ میں نہیں ہیں۔'

سعودی عرب

23 فروری کو اقوام متحدہ کی جنرل اسمبلی میں سعودی عرب نے روس کی مذمت کیے بغیر اس معاملے کے سفارتی حل کی بات کی تھی۔ سعودی عرب نے دونوں فریقوں سے فوجی کشیدگی کم کرنے کی اپیل کی۔ روس اور سعودی عرب کے درمیان تجارتی شراکت داری حالیہ برسوں میں ڈرامائی طور پر بڑھی ہے یاد رہے کہ امریکہ اور سعودی عرب کے تعلقات بھی اب پہلے جیسے نہیں رہے۔ اس کا اشارہ اس ماہ بھی دیا گیا، جب امریکی صدر جو بائیڈن نے سعودی عرب پر تیل کی پیداوار بڑھانے پر زور دیا۔ اگر سعودی عرب یہ کام کرتا تو اس سے نہ صرف مہنگائی اور گیس کی قیمتیں کم کرنے میں مدد ملتی بلکہ اس سے روس کا فائدہ بھی کمزور ہوتا۔ تاہم سعودی عرب نے اس کی تردید کی۔

ترکی

نیٹو کارکن ہونے کے ناطے وہ یوکرین پر روسی حملے کی تائید نہیں کر سکتا لیکن ترکی کے صدر رجب طیب اردوغان جب امریکہ سے ناراض ہوتے ہیں تو پوتن کے پاس ہی جاتے ہیں۔ میزائل سسٹم لینے پر امریکانے ترکی پر پابندیاں بھی عائد کر کی تھیں۔ ہیں۔ ترک صدر رجب طیب اردوغان نے بدھ کے روز روسی صدر ولادیمیر پوتن سے فون پر بات کی تھی۔ ترکی کے صدر کے آفیشل ٹویٹر اکاؤنٹ سے اس گفتگو کے حوالے سے ایک بیان جاری کیا گیا ہے۔ ترکی نے زور دیا کہ وہ ایسے اقدامات کی حمایت نہیں کرتے جو یوکرین کی خود مختاری اور علاقائی سالمیت کی خلاف ورزی کرتے ہیں اور اس کا موقف اصولوں پر مبنی ہے۔ اردوغان نے فنک معاہدے کے تحت مسئلے کو حل کرنے پر اصرار کیا۔ موجودہ صورتحال کو پیچیدہ قرار دیتے ہوئے اردوغان نے کہا کہ فوجی تنازع سے کسی کو فائدہ نہیں ہوگا، اس لیے ترکی سفارتی ذرائع سے حل تلاش کرنے کے حق میں ہے۔

ایران

یوکرین کے بحران کے بارے میں، ایران کی وزارت خارجہ کے ترجمان سعید خطیب زادہ نے منگل کے روز کہا کہ 'اسلامی جمہوریہ ایران ہر طرف سے صبر کی توقع رکھتا ہے۔ تناؤ بڑھانے والے کسی بھی قسم کے قدم سے گریز کرنا چاہیے۔ تمام فریقین اپنے اختلافات بات چیت کے ذریعے حل کر سکتے ہیں۔ بد قسمتی سے امریکہ نے نیٹو کی مداخلت اور اشتعال انگیزوں سے خطے کی صورتحال کو پیچیدہ بنا دیا ہے۔'

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