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**Random thoughts**

November 9, 2020

**More books**

It is often heard that people have lost interest in reading books. This is only partly true but they are often so busy trying to earn two square meals a day, that there is little time left for reading. The poorer population needs to depend on the limited choices of make-shift libraries while those more well-off often prefer reading English books. Since I have no preference, I write about both.

The first is titled 'Art and Craft of Management', written by Sirajuddin Aziz and published by Paramount Books Pvt Ltd, Karachi. The author – a professional banker – is well-read and knowledgeable in management sciences. He is also a prolific writer on informative books on good governance, a scarce commodity in our country. Some of his other books on the subject are: 'Hot Pot', 'Jauhar-e-Islam' and 'Islam and Social Values'. All of his books contain information on how to be good managers, administrators and successful bankers. Recently he also wrote an excellent article titled 'Many Facets of Leadership' in The News (October 26, 2020).

Being a highly competent and successful banker, he can be compared to any highly specialized physicist, biologist, etc in his own field. Had I been in any position to streamline governance, Sirajuddin Aziz would have been my first choice as an adviser and I would have given him a free hand to form his own team and to go all out to correct and improve the system – the same policy the late Mr Bhutto applied in the running of the KRL.

The second book – a gem – is 'Divine Wisdom' written by Prof Dr Mustageen Khan of Angers University in France and published by Ajmal Publications, Lahore. The book deals with both scientific and philosophical topics, all related to Allah and the creation of the world. Not only is the content of great interest, it is also a source of reference on the Holy Quran due to its regular cross-references and comparisons to renowned English translations of the Quran by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, Muhammed Asad and Mahmood Ashraf. It is a treasure to have for students of Islamic Studies and Quranic Sciences.

The third useful and informative book is 'Asrar-e-Gohar' (Unveiling the Secrets of Sufism and the Terminology of Sufism) written by Goharuddin Ahmad and compiled by Allama Muhamad Shahid Jameel Owaisi Gohari. It has been translated into English by Prof Muhamed Rafiq. It is published by Jamia Owaisia Goharia Sialkot. As the title suggests, the book deals mostly with the various aspects of Sufism and is very knowledgeable and informative on the topic.

The fourth interesting book is 'Time and Eternity – A Study of the Concepts of Time in World Traditions', written by Ananda K Coomaraswany and published by Sohail Academy, Lahore. The book contains chapters on Hinduism, Buddhism, Greece, Islam and Christianity. It gives a good view on the various religions and is useful in cultivating a better understanding between religions.

Being a Sri Lankan/Indian, his work stresses many of the values of Hinduism. It could be a very useful book for students of Comparative Religion. Though we are all familiar with the concepts of time (preparation of tables/schedules of days, weeks, etc) and eternity (usually associated with the everlasting), this book looks into the topic from the point of view that what appears measurable is not so and nothing is everlasting save the Supreme Principle that guides life. It explores the concept of time with acumen and metaphysical insight as perceived in the five major wisdom traditions of the world while showing their underlying unity.

The fifth book is entitled 'Islamic Economic Revolution of the Century', written by well-known ophthalmologist in Dubai, Dr Niaz Ahmed Khan FRCS. It is self-published; for more information: drnakhan1942@gmail.com. He holds a PhD in Economics and Business Administration from the US, and his sole purpose in publishing this book is to make Pakistan self-sufficient and economically independent. I have known Dr Niaz Khan for almost 35 years. He is a very dynamic person and a great lover of Pakistan. He used to come to Pakistan regularly to offer free services to poor patients.

In this book he has suggested a 'Mutual Benefit Bond System' which, he says, will make us free from national debts in the shortest possible time. He also gave many presentations on TV but, unfortunately, it all fell on deaf ears. The system hinges on cheaper prices through bonds bought by the public and issued by the government. This substantially lower price is the incentive for consumers and end users to participate in the scheme.

Discounts are also offered on the bulk purchase of bonds. These discounts would only be offered during the first three months of a financial year, after which normal bond price would be charged. In this way, commodities would become even cheaper to buy. Let us hope someone, somewhere pays attention to the scheme and something materializes for the good of the country.

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