

How South Asia Looks at Clinton Impeachment

Do the people of this part of the world view the issues involved in the impeachment issue as a grave crime that should warrant removal of an otherwise able and popular president from his office?

THE timing of the air-strike by the US and UK forces on Iraq, ordered by US President Bill Clinton to retaliate for what he terms Saddam Hussein's defiance of the UN Special Commission is somewhat intriguing. Such step against the Arab nation was not expected, at least, not at this particular hour, although a US-led air-strike had looked imminent some time ago. The attack certainly took many unawares because the focus over the last week had obviously been on the debate at the House of Representatives on whether to impeach and remove President Clinton from the White House.

The Anglo-American attack on Iraq triggered off intense speculation in the United States and around the world over Clinton's motive. Was the air-strike meant to divert the attention from the impeachment issue, many wondered. Cynics tried to establish a link between the two events although they don't seem inextricably linked. The air raids on Baghdad was seen as crucial to the political survival of Clinton.

We, the people of South Asia, are looking at both the issues—the impeachment process and the attack on Iraq—with great interest and concern. Such matters involving the foreign and military contours of a country like the United States, in one hand and the fate of its president on the other top the agenda of discussions in this region for obvious reasons and these de-

velopments constitute important matters around us. While the air strikes on the Arab country by the US and the UK this time has caused rift and divisions on the issue among the leading players in the world politics like France and Germany as well as Russia and China, the impeachment issue appears to have generated more interest in this region.

The development in the Gulf may pose a grave threat to the world stability and security. But the South Asians seem more keen to watch the devel-

opments in the impeachment issue although there is no dearth for concern and even protest against the US action in Iraq. How do the South Asian look at the impeachment issue? How much stake it has on the South Asia as such? To what extent President Bill Clinton attached importance to this region in the foreign policy matters? Do the people of this part of the world view the issues involved in the impeachment issue as a grave crime that should warrant removal of an otherwise able and popular president from his office?

The United States has with India and Pakistan. His wife first lady Hillary Clinton did make a trip to this region covering this country as well.

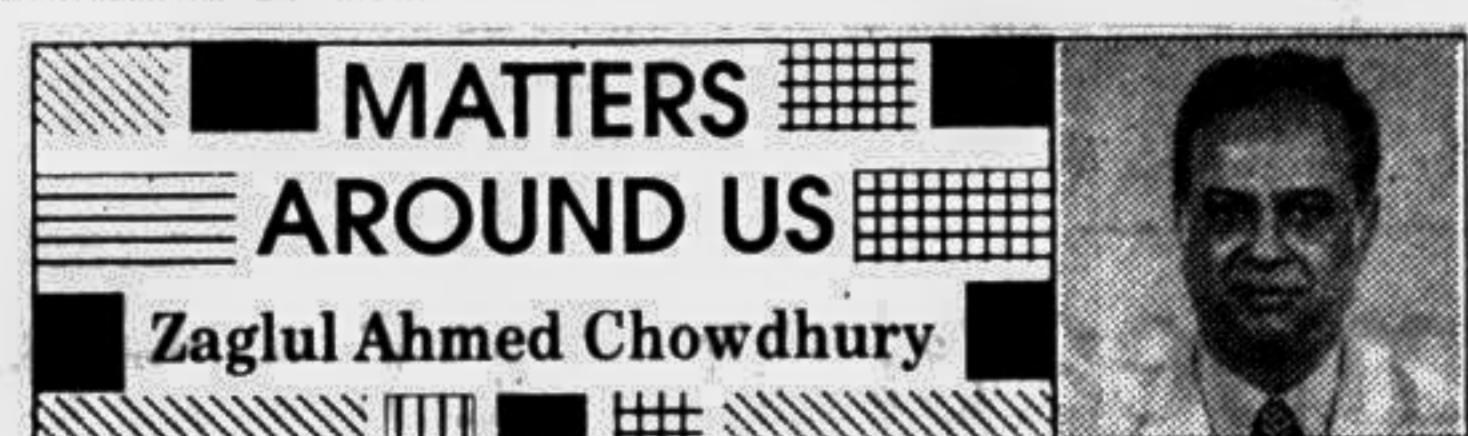
Clinton's relations with Monica Lewinsky and his testimony on the exact nature of the relationship represents mainly the basis of the formation of articles of impeachment since he is being perjured and obstructed of justice. What is the spirit of the impeachment provision in the American constitution? Certainly the question of immorality like what the president has committed

falls within the broad parameters of impeachment.

However, like most American people many South Asians feel that the spirit of the impeachment is to punish a president on much serious charges like acting against national interest and such offences like damaging the democratic institutions what former president Richard Nixon did in the "Watergate" scandal. Undeniably, perjury is a serious offence but once again it is related to a personal matter and the misdemeanours are essentially related to personal issues. This is serious but may not go to the extent to call for such grave punishment.

And here is a president who was elected to office for the second term with a big mandate of the people. Many feel that if he is reprimanded for the offence, that could have been the right thing. Even former Republican president Gerald Ford felt in the same way. This is not meant to say that what Clinton has done can be ignored or overlooked.

The Senate will have the last say on the impeachment issue as two-thirds majority will be required to remove Clinton from his office. It is still a long way to go. As the South Asians look at the on-going development on the matter with great interest, it can be said that if the president is finally ousted, it will have a big impact in international politics.



Muslims Condemn the US Carnage of Iraq

Mohammad A. Auwal writes from Los Angeles

The end does not justify the means. Punishment of the dictator must not be achieved through a high-tech carnage of the Iraqi people. Muslims will appreciate the US leadership only when it abandons self-serving illogic and selective interests in enforcing UN resolutions and only when it develops a justice-based uniform foreign policy character.

weapons in 62 palaces. The UN inspectors later found no trace of weapons in those palaces. Who can certify that Butler did not lie this time?

The attack is illegal:

The attacks on Iraq are a violation of international law. This is why Russia, France and China—the three permanent members of the UN Security Council—immediately condemned the attack on Iraq. The Chinese ambassador to the UN said, "There is absolutely no justification for the attack." The UN did not authorize the US and UK to attack. The attack came as a surprise while the UN Security Council was in session on the situation. The attacks are also a violation of the US constitutional law.

Francis Boyle, Professor of International Law at the University of Illinois, argued that "the war powers clause of the United States Constitution, Article I, Section 8, expressly requires authorization by Congress before the President can engage in acts of war, unless there is a direct attack upon the United States. Clinton has also violated the War Powers Resolution of 1973 that was enacted by Congress over President Nixon's veto in order to prevent a repetition of the Vietnam War scenario, where Americans were misled by repeated presidential lies, misrepresentations, deceptions and falsehoods at every step of the way." Earlier, in an open letter to the Congress, Prof. Boyle called for impeachment of Clinton on charges of the Iraqi genocide that resulted from his administration's wayward actions.

Boyle's call for impeachment of Clinton for killing the Iraqis resonates in many other legal experts including Michael Ratner, who is an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights and author of a forthcoming "American Journal of International Law" article titled "Bypassing the Security Council: Use of Force and the Iraqi Inspection Regime. Ratner said, "Clinton's repeated attacks on Iraq and his bombing of a pharmaceutical plant in the Sudan are impeachable offenses." Yet, the Clinton administration outfoxed his political opponents and deflected public attention from his impeachment debates albeit for the time being.

Much to his comfort, the Congress celebrated his decision to attack Iraq. Instead of having a debate on legality of the attack and its consequences, the Representatives in House rose up one after another in eulogy and support of Clinton's decision. Ironically, they showered prayers for the US military personnel who are shooting cruise missiles into Iraq from the high seas or dropping bombs from high-tech planes that the Iraqis' radars cannot detect. United with a patriotic zeal against a common external enemy, they shed no tears for the Iraqi people who are being subjected to the most brutal bombings in human history. There were a few respectable exceptions, however. A handful of representatives opposed the bill to support Clinton's declaration of war, citing Clinton's violation of US constitutional obligations as outlined above.

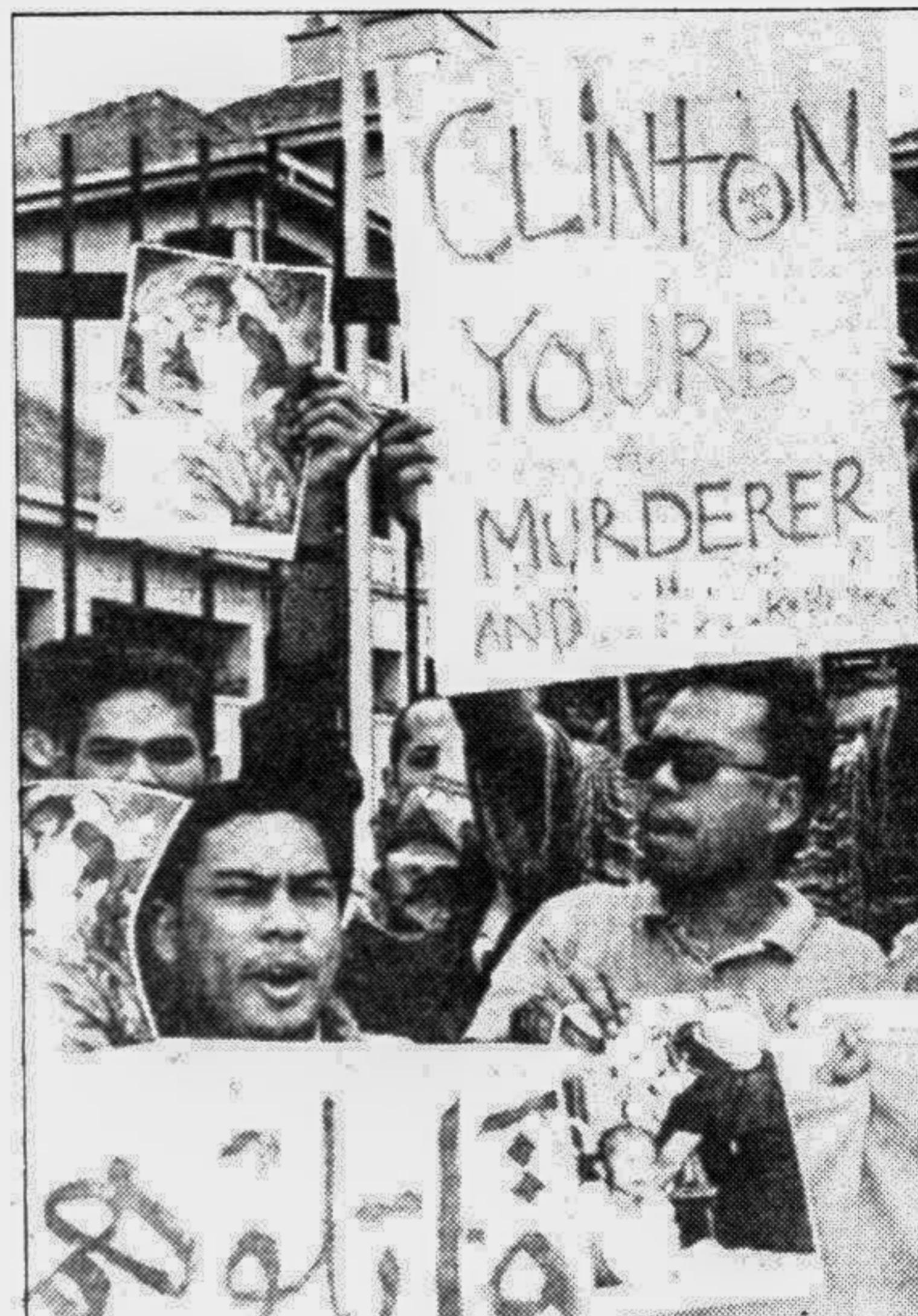
Nevertheless, these voices both inside and outside the Congress are being pushed into the background. Just as the Clinton-cheers in the House, most media pundits and radio/TV talk show hosts have engaged in what Noam Chomsky calls "manufacturing consent." They are giving spins to news stories and government announcements in a way that vilifies the Iraqi regime beyond question and justifies the US action. No doubt, a vicious syndrome of spiral of silence has

The US actions cause cognitive dissonance:

Leon Festinger has become the most widely cited author in the social sciences for his theory that people pursue cognitive consistency. Discrepancy between their thoughts and actions cause dissonance which drives people to change either belief or behavior until they find consistency between them. Humans, he said, are rationalizing, not rational animals. How would you rationalize (make a consistent sense of) the sermon of peace that Clinton gave to the Palestinians in Gaza on December 14 as it contradicts his military action against Iraq? He said, "No matter how sharp a grievance or how deep a hurt, there is no justification for killing innocents." And he justified the ongoing high-tech carnage of the Iraqi innocents with a potential crime that Saddam might do against humanity? How could the president of the only superpower and his hundreds of aides have forgotten what he said just the day ago? My rationalization: It is sheer hypocrisy. In the dictionary of US politicians, it is not terrorism when the Iraqis or other Muslims do bleed. Their bloods are so cheap!

More cause of cognitive dissonance:

The US claim for protecting Iraq's neighbors from Iraqi attacks is self-serving at its best. Not a single country neighboring Iraq has asked for an attack on Iraq, nor do they consider Iraq as a threat. Turkey regularly violates Iraqi borders without any resistance from Iraq. Iraq too easily made at least one recent cross-border excursion into Iraq in search of Iranian dissidents. They faced no resistance from the decimated Iraqi armed forces. Israel, not Iraq, poses the main threat to Middle East peace. Israel has made numerous nuclear bombs and is carrying out the world's most advanced genetic warfare programme in Negev. The recent Muslim car-



Malaysians hold posters denouncing Clinton and photocopied news picture in front of US embassy in protest against the third wave of airstrike by US on Iraq, Saturday, Dec 19, in Kuala Lumpur. (AP photo/Andy Wong)

nage in Bosnia is also fresh in human memory. Except for political expediency, who can forget the slaughter of Srebrenica where innocent Muslims were promised protection under the guardianship of the US and UK? The perpetrators of that holocaust, the indicted war criminals, are roaming the streets at large at times even in front of American troops. Their mentor Milosevic is repeating slaughter of Kosovar Muslims in the same style. Muslims have not seen any US action against them in the magnitude and urgency that guided its actions directed against some Muslim countries. For the sake of fundamental, crude cognitive consistency, it should be stupid to assume that Muslims are stupid enough not to understand the US govern-

ment's hypocrisy.

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Maltreatment of Children in Russian Orphanages

by M. A. Obaydullah

THE international human rights organization "Human Rights Watch" on December released a 213-page report entitled "Abandoned to the State: Cruelty and Neglect in Russian Orphanages." According to the report, children in state custodial institutions of Russia are deprived of basic human rights at every stage of their lives. Thousands of Russian children abandoned to state orphanages are exposed to appalling levels of cruelty and neglect. The report is a year-long investigation providing evidence of malign neglect and inhumanity. The abuse in orphanages cannot simply be attributed to Russia's economic crisis," said Kathleen Hunt, author of the Human Rights Watch report. "The problem of scarce resources does not justify the appalling treatment children get at the hands of the state. It wouldn't take more money for

against the decision. According to official statistics, some 30,000 children are confined to these locked and isolated institutions.

The orphans may be restrained in cloth sacks, tethered to furniture, denied stimulation and are sometimes left to lie half-naked in their own filth.

Among its recommendations to Russian authorities and international community, the human rights organization has called for the state to "immediately take steps to end the gross neglect, and the physical and psychological abuse by staff working in the custodial institutions of the three ministries involved—Health, Education, and Labor and Social Development." The report also urges the state to develop human alternatives to huge custodial institutions by reallocating existing resources to more family-based care.

The Spiritual Context of Fasting

A Synoptic View

by Muhammad Alamgir

For every affair there is an open matter and there is a secret matter. There are things that we observe physically, and there are things that we observe in our mind and soul. The totality of all that is the spiritual context in which Fasting should be observed.

Fasting among the Pillars of Islam

The five pillars of Islam are: Declaration of Faith, Salat, Zakat, Sawn and Hajj.

In the declaration of Faith, viz. *La Ilaha Illallah, Muhammad Rasoolullah* (i.e. nothing worthy of worship except Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah), we become conscious of the individual positions of Allah, the Holy Messenger Muhammad (S) and the rest of the Creation. It signifies that every soul has come from Allah, and every soul goes back to Allah. A successful return back to Allah is only possible through the Message and Guidance given by Allah Himself. As a matter of fact, Allah has appointed the Holy Messenger Muhammad (S) to convey His message to every soul in order to guide them towards the destination earmarked for them. Therefore, when we say Muhammad (S) is the Messenger of Allah, it is not only an assertion of the high status of the Holy Messenger Muhammad (S), it is at the same time a reminder of the functional relationship of the Holy Messenger Muhammad (S) with Allah on the one hand and the rest of the

Creation on the other.

Salat (devotional Prayer), Zakat (minimum Charity), Sawn (Fasting) and Hajj (Pilgrimage) are the mechanics applied for that journey back to Allah. The pre-requisites in these mechanics are the high moral standards of good conduct exemplified by the Holy Messenger Muhammad (S); and the efficiency of these mechanics is a reflection of the spiritual relationship one establishes with Allah.

Briefly, Salat is a vehicle which continually brings the soul in the Presence of Allah. One may say, it is the rehearsal for the soul, before it stands in the Grand Presence at the end of its journey. [A training in the protocol, before visiting the King.]

Zakat is a vehicle which reminds the soul that it is not alone in the journey. The soul has to share the given resources with other souls, so that everyone can have an easy passage towards the destination.

Hajj is a vehicle which brings home the message of the Grand Gathering that will take place at the end of the journey.

Last but not the least, Fasting is a vehicle which brings the

soul closer to Allah by virtue of practising *Samadhyat*, i.e. by emulating the divine attribute *As-Samad*—One who is not dependent on anything.

What is said above about Salat, Zakat, Hajj and Fasting does not do any justice to the extent and depth one can go in describing these mechanics. The idea here is to put Fasting in the picture as a whole, and then look at it in a bit more detail—especially in the spiritual context.

The Unique Role of Fasting

The central theme of all divine worship is to perfect the ability of recognising the greatness of Allah; to glorify Him as He must truly be glorified; and to surrender to Him in the absolute terms. One who has done that to the maximum limits of one's potential is said to have acquired divine qualities. That is exactly what the Holy Messenger Muhammad (S) required of us when he said, *Takhalluq be-akhlakillah* i.e. inculcate in you the qualities of Allah.

Now, in all the other forms of worship, viz. Salat, Zakat and Hajj, the soul achieves a certain measure of purification which determines the measure of its divine qualities. In these forms of worship, attention may not be directly focused on acquiring divine qualities, although the end result is just the same.

In contrast, the primary attempt in Fasting is to emulate Allah in His attribute of *As-Samad*. Allah does not depend on anything for sustenance. He does not need any food drink.

In short, He is free from any biological needs. He is above biology and bio-chemistry. However, our souls are entrenched in our bodies, which are purely organic, i.e. they undergo growth and decay; and therefore, for their biological function they need sustenance; food, drink, sleep and a few other things.

Allah has decreed that the rank or position of *khalifa*, i.e. His deputy or vicegerent, in short, the position nearest to Him, be given to human beings.

The various forms of worship are nothing but the secrets revealed by Allah to man, to help him achieve that rank.

Saddam is hiding in his bunker and it is the innocent people whom the US is killing.

In essence, this attack will further strengthen Saddam Hussein and rally more people behind him. It will further weaken the Iraqi people who had the potential to develop a leadership that could eventually replace the Iraqi regime. The US has tried all measures, covert and overt, spying and brute force, over the past eight years to remove Hussein from power. It is now past time that the US leave the Iraqi people alone. All of the 2000 Muslims who gathered for the Friday prayer at the Islamic Society of Orange County had the same views as above. They prayed for God's protection and mercy for the Iraqi people. And they wished the American service men who include many American Muslims a safe return home. But they invoked God's curse on those who made the political decision for the attack. And as an insider I strongly believe this is the feeling of the 1.3 billion global Muslims of whom 6-8 million are Americans.

Allah has decreed that in a Hadis-e-Qudsi, "as-Saum Lee wa Ana Aaji Behi," i.e. Fasting is for My sake, and it is I who will give the rewards for it.

There are two things in this statement. One, the rewards for all other good deeds will be distributed, as it were, by the Angels; of course, as per the command of Allah. But the reward for Fasting will be given by Allah Himself. Second, the reward for all good deeds has been mentioned in the Holy Quran and the Sacred Hadis.

"There are many who do not gain by Fasting, except hunger and thirst."

5. Restrain eating even the lawful food so much, at the time of breaking fast, that it fills up the belly. The usefulness of Fasting is to remain silent at the time of back-biting.

The Holy Messenger Muhammad (S) has said: "The back-biter and the hearer of back-biting are equal co-sharers of the sin."

4. Restrain your hands, feet and other organs from sins. Save your belly from doubtful things at the time of breaking fast. It is also injurious to eat lawful food in excess.

When you commit a sin, you are drinking poison and destroying religion. When you do a lawful thing, it is like a medicine. The Holy Messenger Muhammad (S) has said:

"There are many who do not gain by Fasting, except hunger and thirst."

6. Restrain eating even the lawful food so much, at the time of breaking fast, that it fills up the belly. The usefulness of Fasting is to remain silent at the time of back-biting.

The soul of one who is fasting should remain in a constant state of fear and hope, because he does not know whether his fast will be accepted or not; whether he will be near Allah or not. This should be the case for every divine service.

Once, the great Hasan of Basra (may Allah be merciful with him) was passing by a party of men who were playing and sporting. He said to them, "Allah has made the month of Ramadan in which people should be running and competing each other for good deeds."

The object of Fasting is to anoint one with one of the divine attributes. That attribute is *Samadhyat*, which means, not only to be bereft of hunger and thirst, but also to free oneself from all passions, like the Angels.

The rank of man is superior to animals, in that he can control his passions using intellect. But he remains lower than the Angels as long as he has not won the trials of his passions.

The Holy Messenger Muhammad (S) has said: "Fasting is a trust. Let everyone of you keep that trust. To explain the point, he read the verse from the Holy Quran, "Allah commands you to give the trust to its rightful owners" (4:58). While reading the verse he (S) placed his hands on his ears and eyes and said, "Ear is a trust and eye is a trust." Had it not been a trust, he would not have said to the person who wanted to pick a quarrel, "I am fasting." In other words, "I have kept my tongue as a trust. I have not spoken it from replying you."

So it appears that for every affair there is an open matter and there is a secret matter. There are things that we observe physically, and there are things that we observe in our mind and soul. The totality of all that is the spiritual context in which Fasting should be observed.

The author writes from Sydney, Australia