

હાથમાં શસ્ત્ર દઈ શરાબીના,  
આપ કરવાના આજે કત્લેઆમ

બેઉમાંથી પસંદ એક જણ પણ નથી,  
આ જીવન પણ નથી, આ મરણ પણ નથી.

દશોનની મુગ્ધતાની હું ફરિયાદ શું કરું ?  
કહેવાનું કહી શક્યો નહીં એવું મિલન હતું.

ખૂલેલા દ્વાર આપોઆપ બંધ થઈ ગયા,  
નિજના જ ઘરથી કોઈથી પાછા ફરાય છે ?

પાછા ફર્યો સિવાય અહીં ક્યાં બીજી ગતિ ?  
કહેવાય છે કે જિંદગી સીધો પ્રવાસ છે.

દઈ દીધું એણે મને, તે પણ મુકદ્દરથી વધુ,  
'મસ્ત' મારે તો દુઆ પણ માંગવી ઓછી પડી !

મંજિલની સરસ વાત અમે સાંભળી તો છે,  
બાકી ચરણના ભાગ્યમાં કેવળ પ્રવાસ છે.

વિરહની વેદનાઓ લઈ હૃદય જંપી ગયું હમણાં,  
અરે, ભારેલો અગ્નિ છે, રખે એને પવન લાગે !

પ્રશ્ન એ છે, કાફલો ક્યાંથી જશે મંજિલ ઉપર ?  
આમ વારંવાર જો રસ્તાઓ બદલે રાહબર.

જીવનના ધૂપછાંવનો બીજો શો અથે હોય ?  
અલ્લાહ, તારું ધ્યાન કદી છે, કદી નથી !

મદભયોં કોનાં નયન, આ જામ છલકાવી ગયાં,  
પાનખરને પણ વસંતી રંગમાં લાવી ગયાં.

તમારા આગમનનું એ પરિવર્તન કે આકર્ષણ-  
જૂના ખંડેર પર મહેલાત સ્વપ્નોની ચણાતી ગઈ.

## ■ EDUCATION: WHERE DO WE SURTI SUNNI VOHRAS STAND?

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To many of our village based Surti Sunni Vohra brothers and sisters we may not sound right or very convincing but we feel and our observations and information seeking very clearly tells us that most of us have not realised and accepted the importance of either religious or secular education. If we try to find out more about progress, we have made in acquiring both religious and secular education all of us will have to admit that we have not made much significant or continues progress. On and off our young people have attended education providing institutions but we feel to have an endogamous group like ours to make progress in acquiring education we must have a steady flow of our young people enrolling with education providing institutions and completing their courses.

In the early 1950's after the Independence of our country from British rule we had many hundreds of our young men and practically no young women joining high schools after completing their primary schooling. We feel the interest shown by our young men in acquiring secular education prompted many from our endogamous group to build schools in some of our Vohra villages. The interest was short lived. Many who enrolled at high schools did not complete their education and those who did so did not go onto colleges to do degree courses and those who joined colleges often ended up by having B.A. degrees in subjects that were not much sought after.

In recent years our endogamous group members have undergone another change in the acquiring of secular education. Without doing a head count we can say with some certainty that we now have more girls from our endogamous group than boys acquiring high school education and a number of these going onto colleges to do degree courses. What is also encouraging is that many of our students are now showing more interest in pursuing I.T. and science subjects.

Whilst we feel happy with the take up of religious and secular education by our girls, we should also feel concerned about this new development. All our readers will agree with us that we also need more or at least a similar number of our young boys to pursue higher education. If we fail to get the balance right the parents of our girls pursuing higher education, we will be faced with problem of getting them married off to suitable partners.

Many of our parents have in recent years started

preferring fee charging English medium schools for their children to those run by the State Government. These schools we feel will help many of our children to acquire good education and learn the English language, but we feel most of these children may not come to have good knowledge of Gujarati and Hindi languages.

Most of our children who attend English medium schools often cannot attend their madressas for their religious education as they have to spend time travelling to and from school and spend the better part of their day at school. Some parents ask a Hafiz or Alim to teach their children after they return from school. This arrangement enables the children to learn about their religion, but it cannot serve the function of a madressa. As we know a madressa helps provide a better learning environment for children, helps them meet other children and helps them learn more about their religion and learn to practice.

Our interest in acquiring religious education too has not been very good. The interest of both our young boys and girls in joining dar-ul-ulooms is decreasing. A few years back we often heard parents talking about their boys and girls who had joined dar-ul-ulooms to do alim or alima courses or joined Hifz classes. If we seek information of the numbers of those boys who have in recent years completed their Hifz we will be disappointed. We have heard of some of our Vohra villages which have not had a new Hafiz during past 8 to 10 years. Our take up of both alim and alima courses is also disappointing. We feel our endogamous group will have to wait for a new upsurge of interest among our young boys and girls in joining dar-ul-ulooms and acquiring qualifications.

It is of no use feeling sorry, angry or disappointed about the lack of interest or poor interest in acquiring religious and secular education by our young endogamous group members and their parents. We feel what we need are not more religious or secular education providing institutions. We feel we have more than what we need and when the need increases, we should provide more religion and secular subjects teaching institutions. What we need more than having more education providing institutions are more male and female students to enrol at the institutions we have.

We feel as an endogamous group we need to pay more attention to help change our people's thinking about both religious and secular education. Having more education providing institutions and

making available more scholarships and hostels for our students is good but these on their own cannot help the take up of education among our people. What we need is more work to pass on the message of the importance of education to both our Vohra parents and their children.

Whilst our people have undergone many social and economic changes most of our Vohras have not yet fully realised the importance of education. Most of us still think that religious education stops at having the ability to read the Holy Qur'an and to have the ability to read and write is having secular education. Unfortunately, these levels of education are no longer enough. What we need is much higher levels of education and a better understanding of the education that is acquired. This we feel will help us practice our religion and represent it with a better understanding.

Several reasons kept our Vohra brothers and sisters from seeking education. Historically we associated education both religious and secular with seeking employment. In other words, only those who needed to work for others as they had no other source of income to live on had to acquire education. As Vohras were landowners/land cultivators they felt no need to seek education as they had no need to work for others.

Migration and the financial benefits it brought for those who migrated also played and continues to play a big part in keeping our Vohras from acquiring education. Most of those who migrated had little religious and secular education, but this did not stop them from earning good money and enabled some to become super rich.

Remittances from migrants stopped their village-based relatives as well as others from seeking education as they had no need to seek paid work which required some levels of religious and secular education.

We can earn a living as well as become wealthy without having much education but our need for having education should not be determined by such considerations. We feel we all need good levels of both religious as well as secular education. Education, both religious as well as secular will we feel enable us to live a more meaningful life as Muslims and as citizens of the country we live in.

The thick stone wall that has historically existed to keep our religious and secular education apart we feel should be re-built with material that would allow both those pursuing religious education and secular education to become familiar with what the others are teaching and what the students are learning. We feel this will help bring about much needed awareness and understanding of both religious and secular education among our Surti Sunni Vohras and hopefully help bring down the artificial barriers which helps keep those with religious and those with secular education away from one another.