

Always live in a humble manner

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

On 15 August 1969, India's Independence Day was being celebrated in the Mughal Gardens of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Mohammad Hidayatullah was, at that time, acting President of the country. In his book of memoirs, *My Own Boswell* (pp. 245-246), he recalls the impressiveness of the occasion, with the escort of the military secretaries, aides-de-camp and the President's Body Guard, all in their splendid uniforms. "We made a glittering sight," he writes, and he admits that, "I felt a little pride."

But then immediately he was reminded of the entry of Caliph Umar into Syria. When Muslims conquered Syria and Palestine, the Romans offered the surrender of the city of Damascus if the Caliph came to receive it in person. Thus, Umar bin al-Khattab set off from Medina with one camel and one servant.

After completion of the agreement with the Romans, Umar set off for Jerusalem. He was wearing rough, simple clothes and riding on a lean camel. People presented him with brand new clothes and insisted that he should forsake his camel for a fine horse of Turkish pedigree. The horse moved off majestically, but Umar alighted after travelling a few yards, and asked for his camel back. "Pride is entering my soul," he said, "and the Prophet said that if a man has pride the size of a mustard seed, he will not enter Paradise."

When Mohammad Hidayatullah remembered this incident, his attitude changed. The pride which he had felt immediately deserted him. He describes his feelings in these words: "I felt ashamed of myself and put aside the feeling at once and began thinking of other things."

Islam teaches one never to be proud, and to live among one's fellow men in a humble manner, even if one attains some high worldly position.