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Post Box No. 93,
Nadwatul Ulama
Tagore Marg,
Lucknow – 226 007, U.P. (INDIA)

Ph. No. : 0522-2740406

E-mail: fragranceofeast1998@gmail.com

Fax : (0522) 2741221

E-mail: nadwa@bsnl.in

Rs. 25/-



The Fragrance of East

Founder:

Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (RAH)

Patron:

S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

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Mohd. Hamza Hasani Nadwi

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Asstt. Editor:

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India's Message to the World

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Today India is in search of its Destiny: a message which it can diffuse to the world. But what should after all be the gospel of India—Socialism, Communism or its own civilization of yore? Socialism has already had the opportunity to bloom outside the country. India can at best be a follower in this field but never a leader. As for the ancient culture of India, there is hardly any charm for the world in the relics of the past. Howsoever we may be proud of our ancient customs and traditions, culture and philosophy we cannot convince the world to adopt these simply because of the profundity of our philosophical thought or the past achievements of our deep-rooted culture. We cannot, in the same wise, hope that any nation could give up its own culture and traditions and change-over to our own. Similarly, Indian nationalism cannot be expected to have an attraction for any other people in the world, for the nationalism of every country has an equal claim on the patriotism of its own citizens. None of these has any attractiveness at all. But we can certainly catch the attention of the world if we have a message which can deliver the modern man from the servitude of his fellow beings, liberate his soul from the subjugation of evil desires and demoniacal spells, trappings of power and pelf, raise human beings in the scale of dignity, enjoin the service of humanity as a sacred duty of every man and enforce the equality of human beings as the creation of the one Omnipotent Master and Lord. This is indeed the underlying meaning and content of the worship offered to God.

"Surely pure religion is for Allah only." (xxxix : 3)
A message so sublime cannot suffer injustice nor can it give preference to a country, individual, language or culture over another land, man, dialect or social tradition. This is a message befitting India and it can assure an honourable place to it in the comity of nations. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

"They are the ones who will be rewarded for their patience: lofty palaces will be granted to them, and they will be received with greeting and salutation. Therein they shall abide for ever: how good an abode, and how good a resting place!"

(Al-Qur'ân – 25:75-76)

These *ayaahs* deal with the rewards of patience. The word *cabr* (patience, fortitude) in the Arabic text is used in its most comprehensive sense. Various, it means to endure persecution at the hands of the enemies of Truth with courage and to bear whatever hardships come one's way while striving for the establishment of the true Faith of God.

It also means to remain steadfast against all fears and to refuse to succumb to enticements; to resolutely fulfil one's obligations in spite of Satan's temptations and one's own carnal self; to shun the unlawful and to remain within the bounds of the lawful set by God; to spurn all pleasures and benefits that might accrue from acts of sins, and to cheerfully put up with difficulties and losses in order to follow the Path of righteousness and virtue and to accept every trial and adversity that one might encounter.

In sum, this one word embraces a whole universe of meanings regarding true Faith, a truly religious approach to life, and good moral conduct inspired by religious Faith.

Ghufrāh means a lofty building. It is generally translated as the 'upper chamber' which brings to mind a two-storey building. The loftiest buildings constructed here are mere caricatures of the palaces of Paradise. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

Tamim al-Dari relates that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) observed: "Al-Dîn is the name of sincerity and well-wishing." Upon this we said: "For whom?" He replied: "For Allah, His Book, His Messenger and for the leader and the general Muslims."

(Sahih Muslim)

Nasiha means sincerity and well-wishing. *Nasiha* for Allah implies that man's heart is cleansed from all impurities with regard to belief in Allah, i.e. one should believe in Him as the Creator and Master with all His Attributes and with an earnest desire to obey all His commands.

Nasiha for Allah's Book means that it should be sincerely believed as a revelation from the Lord and be read and understood with utmost zeal and enthusiasm.

Nasiha for the Messenger signifies that his Apostleship must be affirmed with perfect sincerity of heart, and whatever he has vouchsafed to humanity should be respected as the Will of God, and he should be respectfully followed in all his precepts and examples.

Nasiha for leaders implies that they should be respected, obeyed and given support in all those affairs which they conduct according to the Shari'ah. And if they deviate from the path of righteousness, they should be advised and admonished, and sincere efforts be made to bring them back to the right path.

Nasiha for general Muslims is that they should be advised in all matters concerning the good of this world as well as the hereafter.

Nasiha thus covers the whole gamut of religion as its scope is as wide as that of Islam. ■

Existence of God

Often nonbelievers ask the question about the existence of God. They say that how we can convince ourselves without observing the physical presence of someone. Some worship man-made deities like statues made of stone of some imaginary figures, some bow before trees, rivers and even human beings. Prophet Mohammad's declaration of the unity of God and His existence people who worshiped idols asked the messenger of God about the characteristics of his creator. In reply to this question God revealed:

“Say (O Muhammad): He is Allah, (the) One, Allah, the Self-Sufficient Master (Whom all creatures need, He neither eats nor drinks). He begets not nor is He begotten. And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him.”

He also says:

Indeed your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in Six Days and then He Istawa (rose over) the Throne (really in a manner that suits His Majesty). He brings night as a cover over the day, seeking it rapidly, and (He created) the sun, the moon, the stars

subjected to His Command. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of all the worlds!"

He also says:

"Allah is He, Who raised the heaven without pillars that you can see. Then He Istawa (rose above) the Throne (really in a manner that suits His Majesty). He has subjected the sun and the moon (to continue going round)! Each running (its course) for a term appointed. He regulates all affairs, explaining the Aayaat (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) in detail, that you may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord. And it is He who spread out the earth, and placed therein firm mountains and rivers and of every kind of fruits. He made in pairs. He brings the night as a cover over the day ..." until He says: "Allah knows what every female bears and how much the womb falls short (of their time or number) or exceed. Everything with Him is in due proportion. All-Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Most Great, the Most-High." ■

S.A.

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The Final Prophet And The Perfect Religion

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed my favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM.

(Q.5: 3)

This is the first seminar, so far as I am aware, on the topic of Qadianism in this institution of historic importance in which research papers examining its intellectual and religious bases will be presented. Those who would be staying here would be fortunate in benefiting from the scholarly discussions in this seminar. I am sorry that I would miss this opportunity since I would have to beg leave from the organisers of the seminar owing to my pressing engagements elsewhere. I would presently refer to certain aspects of the issue under discussion as a student of the holy Quran, comparative religions and history. I would address myself particularly to those who are preparing themselves for the service of Islam.

A study of the holy Quran shows that the propagation of Islam and its protection from corruption are the two basic requirements—both so important that God has Himself promised to take care of them in the case of Islam— essential for the continued existence of any religion.

The holy Quran contains specific reference in regard to the dissemination of Islam. Says the Quran:

He it is who hath sent His messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all

religion, however hateful this might be to those who associate divinity to other beings beside God.

(Q. 9: 33)

Again it was repeated in another verse:

..... however hateful this might be to all who deny the truth.

(Q. 9: 32)

The words “that He may cause it to prevail over all religion” clearly refer to predominance of Islam over other religions not merely in the administrative and political sense but also in the intellectual domain.

The Prophet of Islam (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him) was promised that:

When Allah’s succour and the triumph cometh

And thou seest mankind entering the religion of Allah in troops,

Then hymn the praises of thy Lord, and seek the forgiveness of Him.

Lo! He is ever ready to show mercy.

(Q. 110: 1-3)

The holy Prophet was a witness, several times, of “mankind entering the religion of Allah in troops”. Subsequently also Islam has received multitudes in its fold on several occasions.

Surat-un-Nur, on the other hand, promised the Muslims that :

Allah hath promised such of you as believe and do good works that he will

surely make them to succeed (the present rulers) in the earth even as He caused those who were before them to succeed (others); and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He hath approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after their fear.

(Q. 24: 55)

“He will surely establish for them their religion” alluded to the spreading of Islam far and wide. This was further confirmed by another revelation which said:

Those who, if We give them power in the land, establish worship and pay the poor due and enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity.

(Q. 22: 41)

The assurances given in these revelations were couched in meaningful, comprehensive and thought-provoking words and history bears a witness to their truth in letter and spirit.

In so far as the preservation of this religion in its pristine state is concerned, the holy Quran guaranteed it in an unequivocal phrase, the truth of which is also attested by history. It said:

LO! We, even We, reveal the Message, and lo! We verily are its Guardian.

(Q. 15: 9)

It was clearly declared, without mincing words, that the eternal care of God shall guard the Divine Message. The responsibility of guarding the Quran through all ages was taken by God upon Himself.

I will not claim that history has unfolded itself in accordance with the Quranic revelations but I will do say that it has furnished a proof of the correctness of

Divine message contained in the Quran. History tells us that there have been religions which achieved great success: some extended their hold to half of the world, others gained a stronghold in a quarter of it, while still others had their adherents spread from one corner of the world to the other. Among the religions which were most widespread and which deeply influenced human thought and society, two are noteworthy. One of it is Buddhism which dominated over the whole of Central Asia—it prevailed from Turkistan and Afghanistan (including Samarkand and Bukhara) to Syria. The excavations of Taxila and Patliputra tell the story of its influence over the region from north-east of India to the north-west now known as Rawalpindi and Islamabad. It exerted influence even over the coastal region of Mediterranean Sea where its effect on the culture and architecture of the region is discernible. Buddhism spread over a large portion of the world and is still a living religion in the countries like China and Japan.

Christianity comes next which, originating in Palestine, reached Europe and assumed the role of official religion of the Byzantine Empire. The countries flanking Mediterranean Sea were swept into its net and Constantinople became its religious and political capital. Thereafter it captured the whole of Europe and America.

But history also tells us, strange though it may seem, that the great and admirable success achieved by these two religions in evangelism was matched by their dismal failure in conserving their inner spirit and teachings. Both fell prey to outside influences and inner conspiracies.

History of Buddhism shows that it

wanted to reform the stratified Indian caste system and to fight the prevalent tendency of intense idolatry but it fell a victim to the passion for worship of Buddha, idol-worship and idol-making. Jawahar Lal Nehru writes in the *Discovery of India*, on the authority of other Hindu historians, that Buddhism succumbed to the very thing it intended to abolish.

Another Hindu historian, C.V. Vaidyas writes in the *History of Medieval Hindu India*:—

“Both—Hinduism and Buddhism—were equally idolatrous at that time. If anything, Buddhism perhaps beat the former in its intense idolatry. The religion started, indeed, with the denial of God, but ended by making Buddha himself the Supreme God. Later developments of Buddhism added other gods like Bodhistavas and the idolatry of Buddhism especially in the Mahayana School was firmly established. It flourished in and out of India so much that the word for an idol in the Arabic has come to be Buddha itself.”

I have myself seen the excavations at Taxila which contain such a large number of the idols of Buddha that one gets disgusted with them. There are hundreds of these idols, if not thousands, of all shapes and sizes, small and big, rough and artistically sculptured. It is really strange that the religion which came to abolish idol worship took it up with such a fascination that the name of Buddha came to signify the idol and the worship of Buddha gave a new term for idol worship to several languages. Hero worship and meditation and contemplation on a human being were the end results of Buddhist system of

thought.

History offers no parallel to aberration of Christianity and the ease with which it strayed from its path in its earliest stage. Within a hundred years of its inception St. Paul (A. D. 10-66) conspired to replace Christian creed, mode of worship and social laws by a new set of ideas and practices which recognised Jesus Christ, but in name only. This new Christianity, a brain-child of St. Paul, accepted Trinity by the end of the fourth century.’ The New Catholic Encyclopedia admits that the doctrine of Trinity was unknown to the early Christians and that it was a later development.

“The formulation ‘one God in three persons’ was not solidly established into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title of the Trinitarian dogma. Among the Apostolic Fathers there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective.”

Another Christian scholar, Ernest De Bunsen, is even more candid in accepting that:

“The doctrinal system recorded in the New Testament is not that which Jesus Christ has solemnly preached by word and deed. Not in Jesus, but in Paul, the Jewish and Christian dissenter, with his hidden wisdom, with his figurative interpretation of the Scriptures as being full of types and prophecies of future things, lies the principal reason for the existing dissension between Christians on the one side, and Jews and Mahomedans on the other. Following

Stephen, the promulgator and developer of Essenic doctrines, Paul has brought the author of Christianity in connection with Buddhist tradition. Paul has laid the foundation to that amalgamation of, antagonistic traditions which can be traced in the New Testament-Scriptures, and which has presented to the world an essentially non-historical image of Christ. Not Jesus, but Paul and the later gnostics, have framed the principal doctrines which during eighteen centuries have been recognised as the foundation of orthodox Christianity.

This clearly shows the miraculous nature of the Quran. Any student of comparative religions, provided he is detached and fair, will have no option but to agree that an extraordinary and verifiable truth was conveyed by an unlettered Prophet by employing the word ad-dhalin i. e., those who go astray for the Christians. This is a chronicled fact which has to be accepted willy-nilly by every historian.

I would invite your attention to linguistics which show that at times, words change their complexion and meanings, Words travel like human beings and shed some of their original flavour or assimilate some of the extraneous influences. There are a lot of Arabic words in Urdu but they have lost their original zest and quality and it is now difficult to find their genuine essence in the new language. One of these words is zalalat which is used to convey unsoundness of creed and action and misconception about anything, big or small. But, the science of languages tells us that the words have temperament, size etc., like all other tangible objects. It is really amazing

how that blessed personage who had never gone through the history of Christianity and had no contact with the followers of that religion except for a few days or even few hours during a journey, could differentiate between the Jews and the Christians by using the word al-maghdhubi 'alaihim (those whom Thou hast condemned) for the former and ad-dhalin (those who go astray) for the latter.

The word used by the Quran for the Christians is alone sufficient to demonstrate its divine origin. There could have been ten words in any language to make a reference to the Christians, or fifty in a language like Arabic, all equally appropriate, but the Quran chose a word to differentiate between them and the Jews. History of the Jews tells us that God's "condemnation" is synonymous with the punishment which the Jews have brought upon themselves by wilfully rejecting God's guidance and exerting a negative, harmful influence on human society. They have, for centuries, been engaged in intrigue, chicanery and double-dealing and flouting the injunctions of God. The way they have cast off divine blessings makes the expression 'those whom Thou hast condemned' the most befitting for them.

Anybody who goes through the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion and Henry Ford's The International Jew will be horrified to know how the Jews have been planning and scheming to degrade humanity by abasing it morally and intellectually. Their nefarious designs will frighten anybody and he will be convinced of the condemnation of Jews by God. We are giving here briefly a few of the Jewish designs mentioned by Henry Ford.

1. To oppose the devout and Godfearing of every religion and to strive to weaken their influence, and lower their estimation in public eye.
2. Preparation of immoral and pornographic literature devoid of all intellect, logic and ethics.
3. To prepare ground for a series of World wars and to create conditions conducive for the same.
4. To get the nobility and heads of governments promote the political interests of the Jews.
5. To promote dissoluteness and debauchery among the youth through literature, novels and films.

We give here an extract from the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion which gives an insight into the intriguing mind of the Jews:

“Our triumph has been rendered easier by the fact that in our relations with the men whom we wanted we have always worked upon the most sensitive chords of the human minds upon the cash account, upon the cupidity, upon the instability for material needs of man; and each one of these human weaknesses, taken alone, is sufficient to paralyse initiative, for it hands over the will of man to the disposition of him who has bought their activities”.

But those who have made an in-depth study of the history of Christianity would confirm that Christians have not lost the way through some misunderstanding or inactivity but taken a reverse direction on their journey. They are like a traveller who gets further away from his destination as

he proceeds ahead on the path chosen by him. As a Persian poet has aptly said:

I fear, you will not reach K’aba, O Bedouin,

This is the road that leads to Turkistan.

It was all in consequence of the Divine Will that these religions which had spread far and wide and saved the souls of millions, were not destined to last till the end of time. Hence, God did not promise to safeguard them from corruption nor the Quran makes a mention of it. The Quran rather holds their priests responsible for preserving their scriptures.

.....and the rabbis and priests (judged) by such of Allah’s Scripture as they were bidden to observe, and there unto were they witnesses.

(Q. 5: 44)

Thus, while God says that He is the Guardian of the Quran; He makes the rabbis and priests responsible for the preservation of earlier scriptures. The Quran nowhere says that God had taken upon Himself the responsibility of safeguarding these older scriptures.

This was also because these religions never got acquainted with the concept of the finality of prophethood. Actually, they never held this creed. The older religions never discountenanced the coming of a new prophet, rather, they foretold advent of a promised messiah with the result that they had to face a pretender, a claimant to prophethood every now and then, and some of whom even had a large following. The Jews and Christians were always torn by religious and mental dissensions by these pretenders.

Anyone going through the history of the Jews and Christians will find that these pretending prophets among the Jews and Christians had continually been causing a crisis for them. They posed a problem which defied a solution. My attention was drawn 'to it by Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal who has written that finality of prophet hood is a distinctive mark and a great blessing for the followers of Islam. He was the first to point out that "in Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot forever be kept in leading strings: that in order to achieve full self-consciousness man must finally be thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Quran, and the emphasis it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality." In other words the finality of prophet hood meant that man ought to depend on himself instead of looking to the heavens for new guidance and employ his energies to make the World a better place to live in and create conditions for a purposeful life in this world and salvation in the hereafter. The concept of finality protected the followers of Islam against dissensions and mental confusion as well as intrigues of the false pretenders.

When I started reading the history of Judaism and Christianity I found the pontiffs and rabbis at their wit's end to find a solution to the recurrent problem of claimants to prophet hood. Their difficulty was that they had every now and then a new pretender claiming to be promised Messiah but without

any criterion or universally accepted frame of reference to judge the truth or falsity of the new claimant. These leaders of Judaism and Christendom seem to be lamenting over their inability to face these pretenders squarely for several centuries.

I will cite here two excerpts from the Jewish and Christian sources. One of these is from Albert M. Hyamson, a member of American and British Jewish Historical Societies, who writes in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics about these pseudo-Messiahs.

"From the final loss of independence of the Jewish State until a few generations ago, Jewish history has known the frequent advent and passing of self-styled Messiahs, prophets of hope in the darkest periods of the Diaspora, self-appointed leaders of the Jewish race; in the return to the land from which their ancestors were exiled. The appearance of a Messiah was often, especially in the case of the earlier ones, accompanied by revolts and uprisings, and these almost invariably occurred at times when, and in localities where, anti-Jewish persecution was prevalent. Moreover, these Messianic movement were frequently, especially in the later cases, of a political nature. The religious aspect of this uprising was, however, seldom absent, and in many instances the new teacher, anxious to signalize his activity and to secure his influence o by religious innovations, endeavored to subvert the basic teachings of Judaism, to which, in consequence, considerable harm sometimes occurred. New sects were created on some occasions; on others wholesale adoption of

Mohammadanism or Christianity took place.”

The threat posed to the existence of the Church by a large number of false prophets has been described by Edwin Knox Mitchell, the then Professor of Greco-Roman and Eastern Church History in the Hartford Theological Seminary in an article on prophecy in Christianity.

“The appearance of these false prophets, pretending superior wisdom, ere long created distrust and aroused the churches and their leaders to the dangers that threatened their welfare, But as yet there was no recognised ‘form of discipline’ adequate for the suppression of those would-be spokesmen and pretentious revealers of the secret counsels of God. There was no specific standard by which to test and try those ‘spirits’. Standards, however, were sure to be found, and, if not found then created, by the churches for their protection from vagaries in doctrines, and aberrations of life”

These descriptions of pseudo-Messiahs encouraging eschatological speculations confusion of thought and religious schisms among the Jews: and Christians help us to appreciate a hadith recorded by Bukhari.

“One of the Jewish Rabbis once said to Caliph ‘Umar: ‘You have a verse in your Scripture, which, if it had been revealed to us, would have celebrated the day of its revelation as a festival’. Caliph ‘Umar asked, ‘Which is that verse?’ The Rabbi replied, ‘It is: This day have I perfected your religion for you, and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM’. Caliph

‘Umar thereupon said, ‘I fully remember the day and the time when this verse was revealed to the Prophet, on whom he peace and blessings. It was Friday, the evening of ‘Arafa.”

Every word of this hadith is noteworthy including the reply given by Caliph ‘Umar who pointed out that the day of ‘Arafa being already a sacred day, it was not necessary to institute any festival for the occasion.

I must also commend the understanding and insight of the Jew Rabbi. What he said was an evidence, an acceptance of the fact that Judaism had nothing of the sort of finality of prophethood. The fact is corroborated by the Jewish Scriptures as well as historical records. Had that Jew been here today we would have easily seen the marks of remorse and dejection on his face. Even his words show his droopiness and disillusionment which also evince his nostalgia for a similar blessing from the Lord for his people. His statement also reveals his envy for Islam which was perfected by God and made the last and final religion for humanity.

It needs to be stated here that both the preaching of faith and its protection against aberrations has always been present in Islam simultaneously, yet preaching did not demand the same amount of care and excellence as required for safeguarding the creed. Islam was propagated in different ways: even the kings and conquerors were at times responsible for the spread of Islam. During the reign of Walid bin ‘Abdul Malik, who was by no means an ideal ruler, tens of millions

embraced Islam since his reign saw the most swift expansion in the realm of Islam. 'Uqbah bin Naf'e took his arms to Egypt, Libya, Tripoli, Algeria, Tunis and Morocco which resulted in the conversion of entire north Africa to Islam. He got his charger to plod into the waters of Mediterranean Sea and exclaimed: "O God, had this sea not come in my way I would have taken Thy message to the farthest end of the globe!" I have seen the place which is still known as 'Asfa', the word uttered regretfully by 'Uqbah b. Naf'e.

Allah may bless those conquerors and founders of empires with goodly rewards for they took the word of God to foreign lands. I am not one of those who ignore their merits and services and attribute their conquests to a longing for material goods and glory. Allah made them serve His cause: the Umayyad and other Muslim kings and Caliphs spread the message of God to the lands far and wide.

But the propagation of Islam did not require the qualities of spiritual perfection and wholesomeness of faith as needed for safeguarding its pristine purity. This was the reason why this delicate task was entrusted to the religious scholars, the deputies of the Prophet. Needless to say that both the kings and the scholars had a share in spreading Islam—Shaikh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani and his followers took the message of Islam to a greater part of Africa while the scholars and traders of Hadarmaut brought the whole of Malaysia and Indonesia within the fold of Islam. The way Khwaja Moin-ud-din Chishti and his spiritual successors made Islam acceptable to a large number of people in India has not been recorded by history, but a secular

historian like Abul Fazl had to acknowledge the pioneering service of these blessed souls.

Those occupying a prominent place in the preaching of Islam in India are: Syed 'Ali Hamdani who caused the whole of Kashmir to embrace Islam Shaikh Ismail of Lahore and Khwaja Farid-ud-din Ganj Shakar. A nineteenth century historian, 'Abdul Ahad writes that at least forty thousand people embraced Islam through Saiyid Ahmad Shaheed.

Protection of Islam now rests with the scholars alone, the products of our religious institutions. A hadith in the Mishkat-ul-Masabih makes a prediction in this regard.

Privy to its knowledge will be those from every race who will be honest and God-conscious: they will protect it from the exaggeration of the credulous, innovations of the un-devout and misinterpretations of the ignorants.

They shall be deputies of the Prophet thus spoken of in the Quran.

(The Prophet) speaks not out of caprice.
This is naught but a revelation revealed.
(Q. 53: 3-4)

Now, this could have been predicted by a Prophet alone. Go through the history of reform and regeneration in Islam and you will find the truth of this prophetic pronouncement. Whatever was done to protect and preserve Islam will be found as the fulfillment of this prophecy. Indeed, the words have both width and depth and those uttered by a Prophet are more wider and deeper in their significance. Nobody else but a prophet of God could have made this prediction so correctly. History of Islamic

revivalist movement is nothing, but a fulfillment this hadith.

Qadianism heads the perils that Islam has had to face so far. I have been interested in the study of trends and movements pertaining to Islamic creed and thought and I can assert in the light of my investigations that the menace of Qadianism is far more dangerous for Islam than the heresies that have so far raised their head. The most dangerous aspect of this new threat is that it claims to be a parallel religion with a corresponding community of believers. Our scholars who have had an occasion to write about Qadianism earlier could not, somehow, examine this aspect of the problem. The reason was that the Qadiani literature had been successful in concealing its real designs and hence no notice of it was taken by the earlier scholars. Those who tried to contradict and confute the claims of Qadianism took it as a sect of Islam and criticized its creed from that angle. But the fact is that Qadianism claims to be a religion in itself and wants to carve out a community of its believers from amongst the followers of Islam. It has, its own sacraments, holy places, a centre and a qibla, a way of thought, books and objects and personages to be loved and respected—all to take the place of those revered by Islam. They have gone so far as to have a new Calendar and new names for the months in order to replace the Hijri Calendar and its months. Limitation of space will not permit me to give all these details here, but you can find them in a number of works on the subject or read the chapter on 'Independent Religion and Parallel Community' in my own book entitled Qadianism, A Critical Study.

We should never lose sight of the fact that Qadianism is an independent religion which endeavours to form its own community of believers. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has rather been accorded a place higher than the prophets of God by the tenets of Qadianism. I would again refer to Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal who clearly perceived the aims and designs of Qadianism. In reply to a question raised by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru as to why Indian Muslims were so agitated about Qadianism, which was, after all, one of their own sects, especially when their reaction was not so intense in the case of Mustafa Kamal Atatürk who had introduced several reforms deemed irreligious in their content. Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal elucidated cultural value of the Islamic idea of finality of prophethood which constitutes the frontier for inner structure of the Muslim community. I consider Iqbal's defence of Islam as a grace from God—a manifestation of the Quranic verse: Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth. Had Iqbal been in two minds at that time or hesitated in confuting Qadianism, it would have become extremely difficult to redeem the younger generation from the snare of Qadianism. It was a blessing from Allah that Iqbal was very clear in his mind about this menace and he made a valuable contribution in combating it at the intellectual level. Perhaps it was due to entreaties and supplications of the godly souls. In reply to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru Iqbal explained: "Islam, as a religion, consists of a uniform belief and the law, but as a social entity its existence rests on the creed of the finality of prophet hood. Islam can subsist on its law but the sense of Islamic unity springs from the belief in the

finality of Muhammad's prophet hood."

Iqbal also succeeded in finding out the inner springs of Qadianism which were embedded in the political subjugation of India for it wanted to provide a revelational basis for justifying the British domination. This is a historical fact substantiated by the writings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who writes in the *Tiryaq-ul-Qulub*:

The greater part of my life has been spent supporting and defending the British Government. I have written so many books regarding the prohibition of jihad and obedience to the British Government that were they to be collected at one place, they would fill fifty almirahs. Some books have been disseminated over all the countries Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Kabul and Rum. I have always endeavoured that Muslims become well-wishers of this Government in a true sense and their hearts are purged of baseless traditions about the blood-thirsty Mahdi and Messiah, and of those fanatical teachings which corrupt the hearts of the stupid".

In a petition submitted by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab on 24th February, 1898, he had described himself and his family, as the most 'faithful servants' and 'self-nurtured seedlings of the British power'. In a language of rare refreshness and beauty Iqbal uncovers the spiritual impoverishment of such a decadent leadership in one of his poems entitled 'Imamat'.

Of the reality of Imamat, thou enquires of me;

May God bless thee with the ken of truth

like me.

A genuine Imam of the age is he
Who makes thee scorn the current and
extant.

The face of beloved he shows thee in
the mirror of death,

And makes thy life still more difficult to
live;

Makes thy blood boil by a feel of thy
wretchedness;

And gives thee the sword of self-
respecting faqr.

Deadly is the Imamat of the man,

Servile to king who makes the Musalman

In another poem having the caption
of Nabuvat (prophet hood) Iqbal says:

Gnostic, renovator, traditionist or jurist,
nothing I am;

What the station of prophets is, I do not
fathom,

Yet, within my sight is the world of Islam;
Secrets of the sky blue, are laid bare to
me.

In the darkest hour of the Modern Age
I catch a glimpse of reality like the
shining moon.

Hemp-leaf is the prophet hood for
Musalman,

Sans the message of authority and
dignity,

This is how Qadianism was described
by the man who had studied at the
Cambridge University. Punjab was fortunate
to have two of its sons (leaving aside Syed
Muhammad Ali Mongeri. Thana Ullah

Batälvi, Anwar Shah Kashmiri, Syed Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari and their Colleagues and disciples as well as Prof. Ilyas Barni and Syed Abul 'Ala Maududi whose invaluable services require to be described in a series of works), Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal and Zafar Ali Khan, the editor of Zamindar. Had both these not taken the field against Qadianism, it would have been extremely difficult to have the ears of our younger generation if only because its upbringing had made it difficult for it to understand and appreciate the idiom and dialectics of the religious scholars. The magical exuberance and appeal of Iqbal's verses and the vigour and fluency of Zafar Ali Khan's rhymes blocked the way of Qadianism reaching our youngmen.

The task of standing guard over our religion is an onerous task, no doubt, but the responsibility devolves on religious scholars, teachers and students of our theological seminaries, who are the deputies of the holy Prophet, for this has been the obligation discharged by them since the first century of the Hijrah. This gathering has thus been convened at the right place and at the time when it was most needed. As I have stated earlier, safeguarding the purity of faith is a more delicate, grave and urgent undertaking than its preaching and propagation. It requires a deeper understanding of the reach and soundness of religious realities, a deep knowledge of Arabic language, Quranic exegesis and prophetic Traditions as well an insight into the history of reform and renovation in Islam. In addition to these one has to be earnest and candid like the earlier men of God.

I can assert on the basis of my own studies that the purity of faith has been safeguarded since the tenth century Hijrah by those blessed souls whose precursor was Shaikh Ahmad Mujaddid Alf-Thani (871-1032 A. we seldom come across any renewer of his calibre after Shaikh-ul-Islam Ibn Taymiah but this task has been performed after the Mujaddid by the religious seminaries which were set up on the lines envisaged by Shah Waliullah through the preceptors coming out of them. This is an obligation now to be discharged by you.

Your responsibility in India of today is to see that true concept and understanding of Islam is kept unsullied and its foundations remain unshaken. This is a bounden duty of the students and scholars of theological institutions for this responsibility can be adequately discharged by them alone. For it you shall have to fight on the fronts indicated by the holy Prophet in the dictum already cited by me. The blessed Prophet has told us of the dangers that will confront Islam. These are 'exaggeration of the credulous', 'innovations of the undevout' and 'misinterpretations of the ignorants.' Anyone of you can collect his thoughts and try to find out other avenues of threat to the wholesomeness of our faith, but I am sure every one of these will be covered by the categories mentioned above. Pretenders to prophethood, impious innovators, godless blasphemers, so called but misguided modernists, followers of unreceived rites and customs, the Batinites and the heterodox sects—all of them come under one or the other classification of dangers to Islam indicated by the holy

Prophet. The famous work of Shahrastani, *Tarikh al-Milal wan-Nahl* is still available and there are other recent books on the subject. You may take any misguided sect or school from these works and you would find they fall either under the category of 'exaggeration of the credulous', or 'innovation of the undevout', or 'misinterpretation of the ignorants'. To expose these dangerous traits is the greatest service -that can be rendered by our scholars today.

What is the background of Qadianism ? , How did it succeed in attracting the attention of the dissatisfied lot of its day? If you were to give thought to these questions you will find that mental confusion, misplaced claims to spirituality and a common fancy for inspiration and beatific visions prepared the ground for its acceptance. People became oblivious to the fact that the renewal and regeneration of true faith has been going on without any break since the earliest times and this task has always required restatement of religious realities as well as fighting the dangerous trends cropping up from time to time. Be careful that you have still to create confidence in Islam, in its latent strength, in its bright future and in the guidance provided by the Quran to the new generations. Dangers not less malevolent than Qadianism are drifting near by the same path. Our modern educated young men do not know that Islam has never lost its vitality; it is still capable, as it has always been, to enrich culture and civilization; the protectors of Islam, the renovators, the scholars and the crusaders have always staked their lives for it; Quarnic and religious realities have never been lost to

the world and the community of believers has never collectively agreed to tread a sacrilegious path. There will be no exaggeration at all if I were to claim that no period of time so short as a year or six months has passed in the world of Islam when there was nobody to point out the truth nor the fundamentals of religion had ever been given up altogether. This confirms the prediction of the Prophet who has said ; "My followers shall never have a consensus on any unrighteousness".

You shall have to shoulder this responsibility. This is a real and positive undertaking. You have to restore the confidence of the new generation on the eternity, puissance and potency of the Quran and the capability of the shariah to solve the new and difficult problems of the time. You shall have to renovate the Islamic sciences for it. Mistaken is the belief that the Muslims have lost their vigour and the Islamic branches of learning are no more of any use: there is darkness all round which has engulfed us since ages. Such a misconception can give rise to another pretender to prophet hood. You shall have, on the one hand, to take defensive measures, which are essential at times, and also to be courageous enough, on the other, to re-interpret the faith in a way that Islam's ability to march with the times, nay, to lead the world becomes clear to all. There may be religions which mould themselves with the times but what befits you is to provide guidance to the believers, solve the new problems of the Age and protect the Muslims against all the perils. This has been the distinguishing quality of our scholars and leaders. ■

The Game of International Politics And Powerplay

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi*

We should see and deliberate on the events and happenings poured on Muslims in different parts of the world, including India. We should consider these in their real perspectives, in their political and historical light. Our period is not a period of political and fiscal contrivances and schemes. To achieve political and fiscal motives, different choice and impressionable headings are used which carry out extortion of the poor people and the object is the attainment of financial interests or strengthening its financial grip or expanding its wider grip. Its example can be seen in the foreign policies of the great countries of USA and Russia. The motive of all those countries is political and financial attainments. If anyone individual or a group of people poses a prevention of these objectives, efforts are made through media to break him or make him ineffectual by declaring him destructor and anti-human. In order to break him or make him ineffectual, the individual sentiment of few particular people of any particular religious action are tossed up and the entire religion is blamed for it. This action of politics and power is running on international level for quite sometime. The motive behind all this is usually political and fiscal exploitation. This phase has reached a level that the world seems to be divided in two parts; one, who carry out the exploitation and the other is that who are exploited. Beautiful idiomatic phrases are used which are supported by selfish motives designed by powerful nations or group of people. For example,

* Rector, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.

the exploiting countries are called "developed countries" and herald of justice, impartiality of human values, and calling the exploited countries as backward, remediable and reformative. Two decades before the clash between USA and Russia was that of two exploiting countries, as to how many exploited countries of the world should be under each of them? The USA got success in this clash and now it is the only world power. Therefore it was felt necessary that it should make regrouping of the exploited countries. For the political and fiscal motives of regrouping of the exploitable countries, which have been given another more attractive name of "regrouping countries", positions of mutual tension and conflicts are always in the making so that chances of intervention would be there and eventually after due intervention the warring sides be brought back under the influence of the exploiting countries and the political and fiscal conditions of the exploited countries be made use of. And if anyone of these combating countries have some growing power which can cause some problems to the exploiting country, it should be reduced and made ineffective.

During the last few decades, this motive and politics can be observed very clearly in the wars of the Eastern countries, it might be Iraq and Iran war or Iraq and Kuwait war, in their backgrounds, the political and fiscal exploitations can be seen. The tension between some Eastern countries against one another can also be witnessed in this context, to some extent.

India and Pakistan have been suffering this calamity and misfortune. If an eye is cast on the perspectives of their clashes, no tangible reason of the clashes and war can be found while both of them are related to each other in conditions and transactions. Basically their social condition and culture are the same. Regarding rivers and supply of water, conditions of both countries are also the same, basically their culture is also the same. As regards religion, expansion of both religion is almost equal. As for the regional conditions and expediciencies, both are travelers for the same destinations, then why this clash and this sort of enmity? The responsible persons of both countries should deliberate whether they are, or not, being targeted by foreign countries for their own exigencies? Not caring for these reasons will be a great mistake. It is a deplorable thing that this trend has penetrated in the minds of the authoritative class of the society that they have to adopt the same methods, for the sake of themselves and for the sake of their party, which are adopted by the exploiting countries and by these methods they become subservient to the exploiting countries and making use of their military engagements or difference in their religious beliefs and creating an enormous cloud of war is really the attainment of the political and financial objectives.

If these conditions of Hindu and Muslims observed in the objective, the slogan of "Ram janam bhumi" will look like a political tug-of-war. And if it is seen with a deep eye only, the religious motive cannot be found in its foundations. It will appear a political or financial adventurism or an attempt to keep the authority. If the historical background of the Hindu and Muslim tension is clearly observed its

beginning will look like attached to the foreign governments. Making aggressive enmity with Muslims in Hindus and enmity of Hindus in Muslims was done under the supervision of foreign governments and then efforts were made to utilize it for political purposes. The events of enmity that happened from partition of the country were put to great use politically. If these are examined and assessed, the cause will not appear religious but its motive will be political or financial.

To keep it hidden, religion seems to have been made a great instrument. Since religion is always a very effective instrument in the Eastern countries, to win public support, therefore the ambitious people try their best to make use of it. And by this method, they make use of their real motive so swiftly and skillfully that they do not receive the blames of selfishness, dishonesty and they get success in their objectives. It can be observed in these moments that the majority of these people, who make use of the religion politically, do not use religion for their own make use of religion for religion and declare everything and every service for religion for their own good while a great number of them part ways with religion in their own life and family life and eventually they do not feel the need to lay any sacrifice for religion and the sacrifice comes to be made by people.

In Afghanistan, USA has waged war with the help of those people who were trained by USA itself. USA needed to arm them and evacuate Russia from Afghan and Turkistan areas and to establish its influence and effects there. So they were good to USA in war with Russia but now when they do not agree and support, they deserve to be extirpated and cleaned. ■

Set Your Own House in Order

- S.M. Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi*

It is generally believed and Western writers give the impression also that the west is free from religious influence, the progress and glamour of the West is the result of freedom from religion. Experience shows that the Westerners whether they are political leaders, social activists, media people or organizations working in the fields of human rights, education etc., are invariably influenced by religious considerations and their thoughts and deeds are rooted in religious considerations. Anyone who has met an European politician, thinker, man of letters, art or science can vouchsafe for their bias. To be influenced by or attached to religion is not a matter of surprise either. Not to be influenced by religion would be rather surprising, Western claim of freedom from religion is a myth which so-called intellectuals believed for quite a long.

It is an established fact, supported by experience that freedom from religion is a false notion and to wean people away from religion would always remain a futile effort.

A recent survey conducted to find out the number of followers of religion and of atheists showed that there were only a handful of persons who did not believe in any religion at all. The wide-spread efforts of propagating the Christian religion throughout the world are clear proof of Europe's devotion to religion. Innumerable

organizations are engaged in spreading the religious message and organizing religious groups all over the world. They draw their financial support from the so called advanced and self styled secular countries. They spend huge amount of money on building Churches, establishing missionary institutions and maintaining the clergy for propagating Christianity. They have no hesitations in expressing their solidarity with their Christian brethren. Europe uses all the resources in the propagation of Christianity and also takes advantage of the economic and social system which are under its influence. These facts are common knowledge and no one can hide them.

When communism gained ascendancy then ideas of divorcing religion from life became a fashion of the day, specially because the leaders of the communist world declared that religion was the first enemy of communism and they were the enemies of religion. But all this tirade against religion was in fact aimed at Islam and the Muslims. Communism targeted only Muslims in their brute persecution. The very same protagonist of communism and opponents of religion (read Islam) extended protection to Christianity. They were supporters and sympathisers of the ethnic European Christians, while they were enemies of Islam and Muslims. They took brutal action to uproot Muslims. They exiled Muslims, curtailed religious liberty, occupied mosques and educational institutions, banned all religious (Islamic)

* *Former Director of Education, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.*

literature. They made life difficult for Muslims. It is clearly established that the communists and their supporters are enemies only of Islam and not of other religions. The surprising thing is that these conditions prevailed not only during the communist regime, even after the collapse of communism oppression continues in the Muslim States which are under the Russian control.

In many countries this selective treatment take the form of persecution against Islam while the same time full protection , support and encouragement is extended to other religions in the name of liberalism and liberty or faith. Europeans have a sentimental affinity with Christianity and a soft corner for Churches and Christian clergy. It grants them full liberty and provides them all facilities. The Christian organizations and institutions freely use religious symbols like the Cross and pictures of Mary and other saints, the European governments patronize these institutions and provide them abundant funds. Missionary schools and colleges and institutions of publication and publicity are running all through these countries. Even in Arab countries, where we find Churches existing without any prejudice against them, in spite of the clear injunction of Shariah expelling the two communities from Arabia.

Anti-Islamic movements are encouraged in the name of liberalism. On the other hand Islamic movements are suppressed in Muslim countries too. So the Christian Missionary, Zionist and licentious activities are freely engaged in Anti-Islamic propaganda spreading hatred against Islam and Muslims.

It is a general practice in Islamic countries to ban Islamic movements and religious organizations while the criminal elements go scot-free and have free play for mischief and crime. Obscene and exciting magazines are freely imported in those countries while Islamic literature and Muslim Ulemas writings are not allowed, since in their myopic view these instigate terrorism; these writings and movement are viewed as opposed to Western culture.

It appears that in all these countries religion means only Islam, for these governments give full liberty to their religions, revival of their old and obsolete doctrines and concepts, languages and culture which have long since become extinct. Such moves are not decried as retrograde or backward, not are they termed as terrorist or racist, narrow-minded organizations and institutions of other religions are granted full liberty to propagate their views and beliefs and to establish educational institutions. All this in the name of freedom of faith and religion. But these very governments are not willing to grant similar liberty to Islamic organizations.

Islam is an eternal faith, since the beginning of human life. It is progressive in nature. It encompasses the wide expanse of human mind and expanding intellectual activity and respects humanity. It has stood the test of times for being more rational and more practical in solving the problems of life, than other religions. And yet it is kept aside from life even in Islamic countries. Preaching and propagation of Islamic teachings is not permitted in these

countries and religious assemblies, even meetings of exponents of the faith for consultations, are legally banned. These are viewed as terrorist activities, and are regarded as fundamentalism, Islam is a stranger in its own home, subjected to injustice and oppression. How can we complain against others? We do not expect that non-Muslims would permit propagation of Islam. The Problem is that even those who call themselves Muslims and proclaim their commitment to Islam, they too look at preaching of Islam with suspicion and when they are heads of governments or at the helm of affairs, try to suppress every effort of spreading Islam. They ban all Islamic movements and think that in this way they are serving the interest of their country. It is surprising that they consider the exponents of the teachings of reform and true guidance as making mischief. It is for such persons that Qur'an says:

“Of a surety, they are the ones who make the mischief, but they realize it not”.
(11:12)

The fact is that by creating such hindrances in the path of Islam they are only helping to prolong the days of imperialism and its control on Islamic countries. They weaken Muslim thinkers, demoralize Muslim youths and squander national wealth. They are still under the spell of the fraud which Europe had spread during Imperial ascendancy. Although imperialism has collapsed these people have not been able to liberate themselves from mental slavery of the West.

Religious faith is a basic need of human beings. It is the fountain head of

peace and tranquility for humanity. Societies which have eschewed religion are deprived of spiritual peace and are passing through turmoil and unrest. That is why we find that religious movements gain popularity quickly while political and economic movements do not catch people's imagination so fast. Today there are movements all over the world for spreading the Jewish, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist religions and the governments of the non-Muslim countries are extending to them patronage and full support in spite of their loud proclamation for being not sectarian and not religious. There is a revival of interest in religion in all the countries of Europe, Asia and Africa. In India too, revivalism is gaining popularity. The organizations who dream of turning the country into sectarian State of a particular faith are gaining ascendancy. The government is effecting changes in the system of education and syllabus in a planned manner to achieve that objective. Government machinery extends full support to these organizations and they are working without any restrictions or restraint within the country. They are extending their activities in other countries all over the world. Unlimited funds are being placed at their disposal from within the country and from external sources.

In contrast to this scenario the rulers of Islamic countries are in clash with the popular sentiments, and are taking steps to nullify and suppress all religious (Islamic) activity which is against the people's natural and legitimate wishes. The rulers oppress their own people but make friends with the real enemies of their respective countries.■

Dutch Former Anti-Islam MP Reverts to Islam

A former far-Right MP who once called Islam “the biggest disease to have hit our country in the last hundred years” has announced he has become a Muslim. Joram van Klaveren was an MP from 2010 until 2017 for the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) led by anti-Islam and anti-immigration firebrand Geert Wilders. Mr. van Klaveren once fiercely advocated Mr. Wilders’ policies of banning the Koran and closing down mosques.

However, he has now said that he discovered out he had more in common with Islam than he initially thought when he started research for a book criticising the religion, which caused him to completely change his view.

Mr. van Klaveren said: “I looked at the Bible on my bookshelf, on the table were books about the Prophet Muhammad. The prior years I had a big aversion to Islam. When you then have to conclude that you were wrong, it is not a fun moment. But while searching for God I always felt a certain unease. And that slowly disappeared. It felt a bit like coming home in a religious way.”

Mr. van Klaveren, who grew up in a reformed protestant family, said he is “very sorry that he contributed to giving people a false image about Islam”.

He said that the manuscript of the Islam-critical book he initially planned to write has since been thrown into the bin and will be replaced by a book in which he will counter the arguments of critics of Islam.

Mr. van Klaveren said that the analysis which he made as a far-Right MP that most problems in the country and the world can be blamed on Islam were false.

He said: “That was just the policy of the Party for Freedom: everything which was not right had to be linked one way or another to Islam.”

The Dutchman said that his wife had accepted his conversion and that he does not plan to force her or their two children to make the same decision as they are free to determine their own life. He said: ‘I never wanted to impose Christianity and I won’t do it with Islam either.

Mr. van Klaveren said he “did not suddenly become a Lefty” and that his conversion is purely a personal religious matter.

‘But we have religious freedom in the Netherlands. He can worship whomever he wants,’ his former VNL co-founder Jan Roos said. Said Bouharrou, who serves on the Board of Moroccan Mosques in the Netherlands, praised Van Klaveren. ‘It is great when somebody who has been so critical of Islam... realises that it is not so bad or perverse,’ he told the Algemeen Dagblad (AD). ‘It is brave that he’s prepared to do it in public,’ Bouharrou said.

Around five percent of the Dutch population of 17 million people or some 850,000 are Muslim, according to the Dutch Central Statistics Bureau (CBS).■ (Radiance)

Maher Hathout

- Mohammad Yacoob

Dr. Maher Hathout, President of the Islamic Centre of Southern California, Los Angeles, was invited by Pope Paul John II, who was visiting Los Angeles for two days – 15th and 16th September 1987 – for an inter-faith meeting between the Pope and leaders from four non-Christian religions. He delivered a short speech urging mutual understanding and respect. The most powerful remark made by Dr. Maher came when he said these are trying times for religious people because half of the world denies God and most of the other half disobeys Him.

Robert H. Schuller, Pastor of the Crystal Cathedral of Garden Grove in southern California, said he especially enjoyed the remarks of Los Angeles Islamic leader Maher Hathout.

Dr. Maher, a modest, humble and simple American leader, was a practising Muslim. He refused to accept fragmented approaches to Islam based on region, territory or division. Instead, he called for unity based on respect and tolerance among various religious factions in Islamic communities in the US, urging them to abandon the ways problems were handled and tackled in the past. He believed leaders in the past eliminated and discarded workable and available approaches to Muslim problems. He was familiar with some of the practices and observed that in some quarters, Muslims continue to

make decisions in rather short, random and haphazard ways, rendering it difficult, if not impossible, to create lasting solutions. He believed those approaches are preventing us from envisioning and raising awareness for the development of a viable Muslim community, and insisted on finding solutions based on mundane and contemporary approaches, within the framework of Islam, that would allow for better interactions with other communities.

Dr. Maher Hathout's farsightedness and good sense helped him understand the pulse of other communities after meeting with the Pope, which led to the founding of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) in 1988. This he felt was needed even though there were various Islamic Centres in existence at that time in southern California. The intent was not only for the interaction with other communities but also to enrich America by the vital contributions of American Muslims. His vision was to make MPAC into the American Muslim voice for policymakers, opinion shapers, and community organisers across the US. He felt Muslims could do this by engaging US government, media, and communities and by promoting the Islamic and American values of mercy, justice, peace, human dignity, freedom, and equality for all.

Working to move our planet in the direction of peace with truth and justice,

he told the truth to the leaders in Washington, including the visiting President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak in the year 2000 meeting at the White House in Washington; devoted time and efforts in providing information about Islam to shape an understanding of Islam in America; confronted those who personally attacked him about his convictions and Islamic values with words that surprised many people in the US; and forced his detractors and others to think, by his utterances, a rear commodity among leaders.

He lectured and chastised Muslims in the United States to inculcate Islamic values and promote them using short and powerful speeches.

“Your country is where your grandchildren are being raised and not the one where your parents are buried.”

“The racists and extremists, while moving from point to point, have been telling us, ‘I don’t like you, I hate you’, but now they are saying, ‘I don’t like you but still I am going to tolerate you.’ What I say to these extremists is: “Don’t tolerate me. Show respect.”

Dr. Maher Hathout confronted Islamophobia practitioners and extremists who are questioning Muslims about terrorism, accusing them for not speaking up against it. He gave very bold response and said, “Like an urban myth, the idea that Muslims have been mute since 9/11 plagues us. Prager knows that

mainstream Muslims have issued condemnations of terrorism *ad nauseam*, and American Muslim scholars even issued a fatwa against terrorism this summer. The organisation I advise (the Muslim Public Affairs Council) last year put together an integrated, grassroots campaign to fight terrorism and extremism. The problem isn’t how loud we are but how deaf some people can be.”

When asked, “Why is only one of the 47 Muslim majority countries a free country?” he responded by saying, “Lest we forget, the good people of Germany were led to their defeat by Hitler. The same scenario is true of Mussolini in Italy, and is true of present-day North Korea. Likewise, some Islamic nations are not free because they are led by tyrants who suppress the will of their people. But let’s not forget that the colonial powers that dominated these countries found it easier to deal with the dictators they installed than with masses intent on creating their own destiny. Our country (USA) is not completely innocent on this score.”

He answered bluntly those who blamed Islam for the acts committed by Muslims: “Yes, criminals are exploiting the grievances of depressed, oppressed and desperate masses in order to try to justify the unjustifiable. But finger-pointing won’t get us anywhere. What we need now is to enable robust, mainstream Muslim organisations to expose this minority, isolate it and rid us of this scourge. Casting doubt about Muslims only adds to the haze

and confusion that allow extremists international prominence. Innuendo only makes it less likely that any religion will be respected or its followers accepted.”

“Why do countries governed by religious Muslims persecute other religions?” What makes you so sure they’re “religious Muslims”? The religiosity of any person or regime that does not respect human rights is dubious. You can’t overlook the fact that these dictators direct the majority of their oppression toward active Muslim citizens who naturally pose a challenge to their religious and/or political authority. Islam isn’t the problem in these countries – it would be the solution if moderate, inclusive leaders could gain international backing.

Dr. Maher Hathout was, first and the foremost, a thinker who cared about the next generation of Muslims. Being a pioneer in the Muslim community, he developed ways to improve the image of Islam in these United States by initiating a working relationship with young Muslims, started listening to their questioning spirit, accepted their courage and urged them to embrace their American Muslim identity. To achieve this, he established and became a senior advisor to the Muslim Public Affairs Council – which is now being managed by young Muslims, and a spokesman for the Islamic Centre of Southern California. His activities with the Muslim community and the Interfaith Network made him one of the most

influential American Muslims of America. He was the first Muslim chairman of the Los Angeles Interfaith Council.

In July 2006, Dr. Maher Hathout was selected for receiving a prestigious human rights award from the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission. But some Jewish organisations vehemently opposed his selection for his political views. He had criticised Israel as an apartheid state and had supported freedom fighters in the Middle East. The interfaith leaders supported Dr. Hathout and praised him as a model of tolerance and moderation. To show their solid support several leaders representing Catholic, Episcopal, Jewish and other religious communities along with other Muslim organisations gathered in September 2006 at the Islamic Centre of Southern California.

“Father Alexei Smith, director of ecumenical and interreligious affairs for the 5-million-member Los Angeles Roman Catholic Archdiocese, praised Hathout’s “profound respect for the life and dignity of every human being.” Smith said Hathout’s long years of interfaith work prompted him to invite the Muslim leader to meet Pope John Paul II during his visit to Los Angeles in 1987 and to deliver a eulogy during the pontiff’s memorial service. Smith said it was understandable that a Muslim leader would be critical of Israel but that such views should not disqualify him for the award. “I’ve repeatedly heard Dr. Hathout denounce violence and the taking of human life by

anyone and everyone,” Smith said. “It’s high time that the county of Los Angeles recognise him.” Hathout, 70, said his positions have been distorted by opponents and that he has long denounced violence by any organisation – including Hamas and Hezbollah – against innocent civilians. That, he said, includes suicide bombings against innocent Israelis. Statements he made in 1998 and 1999 calling Hezbollah freedom fighters referred only to the Shiite militia’s actions on Lebanese soil against Israeli soldiers who had invaded the country, he said.

“I am very proud of my record,” he said. He acknowledged calling Israel an apartheid regime. (Battle Lines Form Over Award for L.A. Muslim, September 09, 2006[Teresa Watanabe | *Los Angeles Times* Staff Writer])

In the third week of September 2006 the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission voted to reaffirm its selection of Maher Hathout for a human relations award ending a bitter two-week battle. Dr. Hathout after hearing the news said, “The vote was a victory for free speech, inclusiveness, and rejection of the tactics of intimidation.” (L.A. Panel Reaffirms Muslim’s Award, September 19, 2006[Teresa Watanabe | *Los Angeles Times* Staff Writer])

Maher Hathout passed away on 3 January 2015. On January 10, a public memorial service was held in Los Angeles to memorialise him. Many religious

leaders honoured him as the Muslim voice of Southern California. Los Angeles police Deputy Chief Michael Downing, right, presents a flag to the Hathout family during the memorial service. He was widely known as a champion of moderate Islam and peace with other religions. “It’s at moments like these that we feel the absence of someone like Dr. Hathout intensely,” said Rabbi Ken Chasen of Leo Baeck Temple in Bel-Air.

Salam Al-Marayati, president of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, told the crowd, “We are standing on his wide shoulders to continue his work.” Niranjan Singh Khalsa, a California Sikh leader, called him one of the “few shining lights” who stepped forward after the 9/11 attacks to tamp down expressions of bias against Sikhs and Muslims. The Rev. Gwynne Guibord, an Episcopal priest, compared Hathout to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., saying he was a “seeker of justice” and “lover of truth.” The Rev. Ed Bacon, the Rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California called Hathout “one of the most important Muslims of the late 20th and early 21st century.” (Irfan Khan and Michael Finnegan, *Los Angeles Times* Staff Writers) ■

[MOHAMMAD YACOOB, former Vice Chairman of the Islamic Center of Southern California, Los Angeles, is a retired industrial engineer and an engineering proposals analyst who lives in Los Angeles, California]

Iqbal's Concept of Khudi And Tasawwuf

- Syed Khalid Husain

Khudi ko kar buland itna ke har taqdeer se pehle / Khuda bande se khud poochhe bata teri raza kya hai. (Elevate the Self to such heights that, before issuing every decree of destiny, God Himself should ask (His) servant tell me what is your wish.)

Ae Tair-e-Lahooti! Us rizq se maut achchhi / Jis rizq se aati ho parwaz mein kotahi. (O bird who flies to the Throne of God, you must keep this truth in sight: To suffer death is far nobler than bread that clogs your upward flight.)

The above couplets in Urdu, the language of some 400 million people in the world, are from the poetry of Mohammed Iqbal, one of the most outstanding and influential poet-philosophers, Islamic thinkers and scholars of the 20th century.

The first couplet highlights the significance of *Khudi* (Self) in an individual as the source through which one can take oneself closest to the Ultimate (Allah Almighty), and the second couplet explains Iqbal's philosophy of the purpose of life, which is effort and struggle, and not passive attitude like that of some mystics.

Both these couplets are from *Bal-i-Jibril* (Gabriel's Wing), one of Iqbal's three books of poetry in Urdu, published in 1935. The other two books are *Bang-i-Dara* (The Call of the Marching Bell), published in 1924, and *Zarb-i-Kalim* (The Rod of Moses), published in 1936.

We would discuss here the twin subjects of *Khudi* and *Tasawwuf* (mysticism) and what Iqbal means by them.

But before that, it seems necessary to give a brief introduction of the poet and his work.

Iqbal was born on November 9, 1877, in Sialkot, a town of the Indian subcontinent that went to Pakistan after its partition in 1947. Educated initially by private tutors in languages and writing, history, poetry and religion, Iqbal became proficient in several languages and the skill of writing prose and poetry. Iqbal studied philosophy, English literature and Arabic at the Government College in Lahore (now in Pakistan) and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1892, graduating cum laude.

While studying for his master's, Iqbal came under the wings of Sir Thomas Arnold, a scholar of Islam and modern philosophy at the college. Sir Arnold exposed young Iqbal to Western culture and ideas, and served as a bridge for him between the ideas of East and West. At Sir Thomas's encouragement, Iqbal travelled to and spent many years studying in Europe.

Iqbal obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Trinity College at Cambridge in 1907, while simultaneously studying law at Lincoln's Inn, from where he qualified as a barrister in 1908. The same year he returned to India. With doctorate in philosophy, Iqbal was knighted in 1922 by King George V, who gave him the title of "Sir". Iqbal died in 1938.

The poetry of Iqbal, who is commonly known as *Shayer-e-Mashriq* (Poet of the

East) and *Hakeem-ul-Ummat* (Sage of the global Muslim Community), in Urdu, Arabic and Persian is considered to be among the greatest of the modern era and his vision of an independent state for the Muslims of British India inspired the creation of Pakistan.

Referred to as Allama (scholar), Iqbal's thoughts in his work primarily focused on the spiritual direction and development of human society and centred on experiences from his travel to and stay in Western Europe and the Middle East. He was profoundly influenced by Western philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Henri Bergson, and soon became a strong critic of Western society's separation of religion from state and what he perceived as its obsession with materialistic pursuits.

SPIRITUAL AND POLITICAL REVIVALISM

Iqbal was a strong proponent of the spiritual and political revival of Islamic civilisation and culture. The poetry and philosophy of Maulana Rumi, a 13th-century Persian poet, jurist, theologian and Sufi, bore the deepest influence on Iqbal's mind. Deeply grounded in religion since childhood, Iqbal would begin intensely concentrating on the study of Islam, the culture and history of Islamic civilisation and its political future.

Iqbal would feature Rumi in the role of a guide in many of his poems, and his works focused on reminding his readers of the past glories of Islamic civilisation, and delivering a message of a pure, spiritual focus on Islam as a source for socio-political liberation and greatness. Iqbal denounced political divisions within and among Muslim

nations, and frequently alluded to and spoke in terms of the Ummah.

Explaining Khudi

In 1915, Iqbal published his first collection of poetry, *Asrar-e-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self), in Persian. The poems delve into the concepts of ego and emphasise the spirit and the Self from a religious and spiritual perspective. Iqbal has gone so deep into the ocean of the Self that it has become difficult for a common person to dive with him to that depth. Various prominent Islamic scholars have defined the complex and complicated concept of Khudi as enunciated by Iqbal in the light of the Quran, Hadith and certain incidents that occurred during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be to him).

To writer and academic Asif Iqbal Khan, the Self by Iqbal is taken to mean a sort of system or unity of psycho-physical experiences. He says: "We may analyse our mental states, at any moment of our life, into certain elementary experiences, which, however, never exist in a vacuum. These experiences are found as parts of an organic unity but this unity does not exist apart from its constituent states."

Prof. Muhammad Munawwar, a prominent Iqbal scholar, notes: "One must think of the highly negative significance in Persian of the word Khudi with its implications of selfishness, egotism and similar objectionable meanings. Iqbal gives this word a new meaning as Self, Personality, Ego in an absolutely positive meaning."

Asrar-i-Khudi, Iqbal's first philosophical poetry book in Persian, deals

mainly with the individual and is concerned with the philosophy of religion. The poems emphasise the spirit and the Self from a religious and spiritual perspective.

Rumuz-i-Bekhudi (The Secrets of Selflessness), his second book in Persian published in 1918, discusses the interaction between individual and society.

In *Asrar-e-Khudi*, considered to be his finest poetic work, Iqbal explains his philosophy of the Self. He proves by various means that the whole universe obeys the will of the Self. Iqbal condemns self-destruction. For him the aim of life is self-realisation and self-knowledge. He charts the stages through which the Self has to pass before finally arriving at its point of perfection, enabling the knower of the Self to become the vicegerent of Allah on earth.

Iqbal believes the answers to essential questions regarding the Self are important in determining morality for both the society and the individual. In *Asrar-e-Khudi*, he says the system of the universe originates in the Self and the continuation of the life of all individuals depends on strengthening the Self:

“The form of existence is an effect of the Self, / Whatsoever thou seest is a secret of the Self,

When the Self awoke to consciousness. / It revealed the universe of Thought.

A hundred words are hidden in its essence: / Self-affirmation brings not-self to light.”

To Iqbal, Khudi is strengthened by Love:

“The luminous point whose name is the Self / Is the life-spark beneath our dust.

By Love it is made more lasting, / More living, more burning, more glowing.

From Love proceeds the radiance of its being. / And the development of its unknown possibilities.”

Iqbal further says that when the Self is strengthened by Love, it gains dominion over the outward and inward forces of the universe:

“When the Self is made strong by Love / Its power rules the whole world.

The Heavenly Sage who adorned the sky with stars / Plucked these buds from the bough of the Self.

Its hand becomes God’s hand, / The moon is split by its fingers- / It is the arbitrator in all the quarrels of the world.”

Iqbal says that the purpose of the Muslim’s life is to exalt the Word of Allah and that the Jihad, if it be prompted by land-hunger, is unlawful in the sight of Islam:

“Imbue thine heart with the tincture of Allah, / Give honour and glory to Love!

The Muslim’s nature prevails by means of love: / The Muslim, if he be not loving, is an infidel.”

VIEW ON TASAWWUF

Looking at his book *the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, a timeless intellectual challenge of the first rank, it appears that Iqbal is inclined to accept mysticism as an experience. It is the nature of mystic experience which has always been a point of discussion among the scholars and Sufis.

Pakistani Islamic scholar Dr Khalid Alavi says Iqbal's treatment of mysticism is twofold. He accepts mystic experience as a source of knowledge and a useful way of approaching reality. Since his concept of Islam is not of a monastic order, and he perceives Islam as a unifying force between the spiritual and temporal world, so he does not accept a passive attitude. To him "the function of sufism in Islam has been to systematise mystic experience; though it must be admitted, that Ibn-i-Khaldun was the only Muslim who approached it in a thoroughly scientific spirit."

Iqbal's philosophy of the purpose of life is Sufi: he defines the human being as *Tair-e-Lahooti* (a traveller to the Realm of the Unknowable and Unlimited). *Lahut* is a Sufi term, and the purpose of our Creation is to know and draw near our Lord. This is pure Sufism.

Iqbal has a critical view of mysticism. His criticism is on two different bases. He believes that life is activity, and a person having communication with God cannot be a passive individual. A human being coming in touch with the Supreme Being is illuminated. He becomes a moving spirit in the society. It seems that such an individual is having a burning fire within him and he is part of God's activity in this world. To him a Sufi is a creative and active agent of Divine will. He criticises those who cause passivity and create inactiveness among the Muslims. He says:

"If a devotee is free, his spiritual stations are self-restraint, self-respect and a shout of joy that "I am the creative truth".

But if he is subjugated and enslaved,

his pantheism shows that he is dead, he himself is a grave, and also a sudden death."

Iqbal differentiates between *Faqr* and *Rahibi*, and condemns monasticism (*rahbaniyat*). He says:

"Your Islam is something else, because in your view Faqr and monasticism are the same things.

(The fact is) that Faqr is disgusted with monasticism's love for peace and tranquillity. Faqr's ship is always in the storms and commotion."

Iqbal criticises those who favour passivity and create inactiveness among the Muslims. As he says in *Armaghan-i-Hijaz*:

"If a devotee is free, his spiritual stations are self-restraint, / Self-respect and a shout of joy that "I am the creative truth.

But if he is subjugated and enslaved, his pantheism show that he is dead, / He himself is a grave, and also a sudden death."

His message to the sufis is very clear:

"Come out of the monasteries and follow the example of Shabbir (martyrdom); for the monastic life is just grief and affliction.

Your religion and morality show signs of monasticism. / This is the state of decay which is the symptom of every dying nation."■

[The writer is a senior journalist based in Singapore; he can be contacted at skhusain@yahoo.com]

Status of Women In Islam*

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Before the advent of Islam women were no better than animals. They were exploited and treated like a commercial commodity. They had no right, no privilege and no status in the society. Above all the birth of a female child was thought to be a curse. The holy Quran depicts this fact in a quite sublime way: "When news is brought to one of them of the birth of a female child, his face darkens and he is filled with inward grief" (16:58). It is Islam which raised their position in the society. According to Islam the world and all things in it are valuable, but the most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous woman. At the very outset Islam bestowed great importance to women.

A prominent journalist says that "In a study it is found that of the thousands of white Britons embracing Islam every year, most are thought to be professionally successful, independent minded women. Islam appears to hold a strange fascination for white British women who are converting to it in large numbers. The study further reveals that of an estimated 50,000 or so white Britons who convert to Islam every year, some two-thirds are thought to be women. Most of them are independent career, women-bankers, doctors, broadcasters- who know what they are doing, and often do so in the face of opposition from family and friends. Study further says, "Profile converts include Lauren Booth, sister in law of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, well known journalist Yvonne Ridley and MTV presenter

Kristiane Backer." He further says, "Prior to the advent of Islam, a cursory view of the past history shows that women were considered little more than commodities, object of desire to be bought and sold like livestock. Greek and Roman Civilization, Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity and others do not offer respectable place to women. Even Arabian in pre Islamic days treated women more shabbily. There it was customary for infant girls to be buried alive at birth. Arabs treated women with contempt. In Islam both the sexes have human rights and duties to an equal degree, and the rewards of the Hereafter are available to men and women alike. Whereas women of other communities have struggled hard to win over some privileges Islam has granted them without asking".

The prophet Muhammad manifests the importance of women as follows: "Heaven lies under the feet of mothers"; "Women are the twin-halves of men; "If a girl is born to anyone... And he does not bury her alive nor ill-treats her nor discriminates her (favours his son over her), Lord shall grant him the bliss of paradise." The holy Quran says: "O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty towards God in whom you claim your rights of one another; and towards the wombs that bore you. Lo! God hath been a watcher over you."(4:1). And again in the Quran: "It is He Who created you from a single soul and

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made his mate of like nature, that he might dwell with her in love.” (7:189). The Holy Quran further Says: “Verily Muslims, men and women, the believing men and women, men and women who are obedient, men and women who are truthful, men and women who are patient, men and women who are humble, men and women who give charity, men and women who fast, men and women who guard their chastity, and men and women who remember Allah much, Allah has promised forgiveness for them and a great reward” (al-Ahzab 33:35)

Women according to Islam, are equal to men in the sight of God but they have in some respects different roles in life to men because of their different natures. They differ psychologically, and biologically from men. This makes them more suitable than men for certain responsibilities and less suitable than men for others. Islam recognizes these differences; however, it does not mean that women are inferior to men.

The distinction between equality and sameness is of paramount importance. Equality is desirable, fair, just; but sameness is not. People are not created identical but they are created equals. With this distinction in mind, there is no room to imagine that woman is inferior to man. There is no ground to assume that she is less important than he just because her rights and roles are not identical. Islam gives women equal rights; but not identical roles. (This Is Islam by Dr. K.K Usman p, 185)

Noted Islamic scholar Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi says “Al-Nisa (Women) is one of the longer Qur’anic Surah. Hindu scriptures by comparison do not give such prominence to women. In Islam women have

equal opportunity with men, as also the same ability and capacity for attaining the highest rank in worshipping, and obeying Allah, winning His pleasure and earning a coveted position in His sight. In short, Women have the potential to do the same as men. The Qur’an speaks of equality among men and women in worship and religious obligations. Women are equally fit to enjoin good and forbid evil. They may enforce the Islamic moral code perfectly in the same manner as male ‘Ulama’ may accomplish it. Allah looks upon women as equal partners with believing men in promoting virtue and good.” (Guidance from the Holy Qur’an p, 99)

Needless to add that Islam granted the share of inheritance from parents and other kindred to women. The following Quranic citation is meaningful in this regard: “Unto the men of a family belongeth a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, and up to women as share of that which parents and near kindred leave, whether it be little or much - A legal share”. (4:7).

It goes without saying that men and women are alike in the sight of God in terms of equality in spiritual duties and responsibilities. The holy Quran states that “The believers, men and women are protectors of one another, they enjoy in what is just, and forbid what is evil; they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and his messenger, on them Allah will pour His mercy, for Allah is exalted in power, wise” (9:71). It further says: “Anyone, male or female, who does what is good and is faithful will enter the garden and will not be wronged at all (4:124).”... So their Lord accepted their prayers, (saying: I will not suffer to be lost

the work of any of you whether male or female. you proceed one from another..” (3:195)

Female Education

In the pre-Islamic era scant attention was paid towards knowledge. It was Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who used knowledge as an essential tool for understanding realities of life. As regards acquiring knowledge of females, it is the same that of males. The prophet said: “Seeking knowledge is a mandate for every Muslim (male or female).” “Seek knowledge from cradle to the grave”. “Seek knowledge even if one has go to China”. “The person who brought up three daughters, embellished them, gave education to them and took care of them even after their marriage, his entry to paradise is ensured by Allah”. A Tradition says: “If a person has a slave girl, then he educates her liberally and trains her in the best manner and culture, then sets her free and marries her, he has a double reward (from his Lord)”. (AlBukhari)”

Sayyid Abul A’la Maududi vividly says, “Women have not only been allowed to obtain education in religious and mundane branches of knowledge, but their education and cultural training has been considered as important as that of men. Women also used to take lessons in religion and morality from the Holy Prophet along with men, though they had separate arrangements for the purpose. The wives of the Holy Prophet especially Hazrat Ayisha, not only taught women, they taught men also. Many an illustrious Companion and follower of the Companions learnt the Qur’an, Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence from Hazrat Ayisha. Besides educating free men and nobility, the Holy Prophet had enjoined the Muslims

to educate their slave-girls, too.(Purdah P, 198)

Scope of Woman’s Progress

A well-known scholar K.A. Waheed says, “The Holy Quran shows that all the roads to human progress have been kept open for women to the extent that even the highest status in the spiritual field can be attained by her. (Of course she is not known to have been raised to the status of a Prophet of God which is no fault of hers because Prophet hood is something which cannot be attained but is granted by God the Almighty). The Holy Quran quotes historical examples of women who have attained the highest status possible in the sphere of the spirit:”

“And Allah narrateth the example of Pharaoh’s wife for (the guidance of) the believers.” (CXVI: II)

“And (also the example of) Mary, the daughter of Imran.” (CXVI: 12)

The Holy Quran has also declared that women have been blessed with Divine Revelation:

“And (remember) when the angels said: ‘O Mary! Surely Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee and chosen thee of all the women of the world (for His special blessings).” (III: 42)

Similarly, the duty of propagating the Faith is allotted to women just as to men:

“And remember (to others) what is recited (by the Prophet) in your abodes of the verses of (the Book of) Allah and of (the words of) wisdom.” (XXHI: 34)

So also the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil is described as one of women’s sacred duties:-

“And as for the believing men and the believing women they are well wishers of one another (for) they enjoin (the doing of) good and forbid (the commitment of) evil.” (IX: 7 1)

M. Iqtedar Husain Farooqi says, “There are authentic reports that during the Rise of Islam, (7th Century to 15th Century AD) Muslim women were active patrons and sponsors of public works. Rich women supported many public fountains, gardens, hospitals, and inns through their own assets and property. All through the period of Islamic rise of Medieval Period it was impossible for anyone to justify any mistreatment of woman by any ruling embodied in the Islamic Law, nor could anyone dare to cancel, reduce, or distort the clear-cut legal rights of women given in Shariah. As a matter of fact the reputation, purity and maternal role of Muslim women were objects of admiration by observers from the West. Female religious scholars were relatively common in Muslim Societies. Mohammad Akram Nadwi has compiled biographies of 8,000 female jurists during Islamic Rise and orientalist Ignaz Goldziher estimated that 15 percent of medieval hadith scholars were women. Women were important Transmitters of Hadith compiled by Sahih Sitthah (Six Collections of Prophetic Traditions). Many Western Scholars have appreciated Islamic recognition of fundamental rights of women.”

Women Legal Rights

Of women's legal rights the Book of Islam gives full details. A general principle is laid down in the following words:

“And for them are rights similar to those (of men) against them,” (II: 228)

The most important thing recognised by the Book of Islam for Woman is that she has an individual personality of her own which is not recognised by any other religious or social system of the world. While in the twentieth century in Europe and America a woman is known by her father's name during her maidenhood and by her husband's name after her marriage like Miss Jones and Mrs. John, in Islam a woman is known by her personal name both before her marriage and after that as Aisha and Fatimah.

“A Muslim girl may marry ten times, but her individuality is not absorbed by that of her various husbands. She is not a moon that shines through reflected light. She is a solar planet, with a name and legal personality of her own.” Next we find that in Islam woman has full right to contract her own marriage and its dissolution. She cannot be married to any man against her own consent and she can obtain divorce from her husband through the court.

So also we see that in Islam woman has full right to inherit, possess and dispose of property just as a man has. She inherits property as wife, daughter, sister and mother. No power is permitted to deprive her of her legal right in this connection. Says the Holy Quran :-

“For men is a portion of what is left behind by parents and (other) relatives and for woman (also) is a portion of what parents and (other) relatives leave behind; whether it is little or much (it is) a fixed portion.” (IV: 7)

A woman can appear before a court of law as a witness to give evidence.

If and when necessary women can take part in all essential services even to

the extent of helping their brethren-in-Faith in the field of battle. The women of the Holy Prophet's house-hold used to do nursing duties on such occasions. It should, however, be noted that women should be called upon to do such duties when men are not available just as they had to do all such duties in Europe during the last two World Wars because all young men fit for military duties were conscripted. But this does not mean that women should be enrolled in the voluntary services to serve the baser sexual needs of male military personnel. (Women's Place In National Life by K.A Waheed p, 6)

Women In The Army

As early as the time of the Prophet, women took part in battle as nurses, transporters of the wounded and the dead cooks, water-carriers, general servants, and in some emergent cases even as actual fighters. In the battle of Qadisiyah (in the year 14H.) women were employed in camps even as store-guards.

In the battle of Qadisiyah a band of lady volunteers, armed with thick sticks, rendered valuable services in an actual fighting and once saved the situation by marching in ranks, giving the impression of the arrival of reinforcements. In this battle one tribe alone had Seven hundred husband less (widow or otherwise) women, from which the number of the whole female contingent may be approximated. In the battle of Jamal, A'ishah commanded the army to oppose the forces of Ali, the Fourth Caliph. (Muslim Conduct of State by Muhammad Hamidullah p, 244-245)

Institute of Marriage

The Marriage is a social institution, as old as the mankind. Right from the

advent of Adam and even till date this custom is in vogue in the society. Unlike other religions, Islam has attached much importance to it. The main reason is that the wedding bondages keep people away from unscrupulous and obnoxious acts and lead to a virtuous life. Islam despises recluse and solitary life.

The holy Quran says: " And of His signs is that He has created wives for you from yourselves that you might find peace of mind in them and He put between you love and affection. He it is who created you from a single soul and of the same he made his spouse, that he might find comfort in her." The holy Quran further says: "They your wives are as a garment to you, and as a garment to them."

Sayyid Abul Aala Maududi' says that, "Islam has closed all the ways leading to sexual anarchy. But for satisfaction of man's animality and propagation of the human race it was inevitable that at least one door, for sexual satisfaction must be kept open. This was done; by giving permission for marriage. Islam ordained that the sexual desire must be satisfied, not by unlawful sexual liaison 'secretly or openly and immodestly, but through the prescribed course so that the whole society comes to know, and it is established beyond doubt, that such and such a man and woman are now meant for each other."

Here are a few sayings of the Holy Prophet that amply illustrate the point: "You should marry, for that is the best way of saving yourself from casting evil eyes, and of safeguarding yourself against sexual immorality. The one who does not possess the means to marry should fast, because fasting curbs sexuality." (Al: Tirmizi)

“By Allah, I am the best among you in the matter of fearing Allah and avoiding His displeasure. But in spite of that I observe fast and break it, offer prayers and sleep at night, and marry women. This is my way, and whosoever shuns my way does not belong to me.” (Al-Bukhari)

“The woman should not observe a non-obligatory fast without the permission of her husband.” (Al-Bukhari)

“The woman who passes a night with a view to evading the desire of her husband is cursed by the angels till she attends on him.” (Al-Bukhari) “When one of you happens to see a woman and is attracted by her, he should go, to his wife, for she has the same as she (the other woman) had.” (Al-Tirmizi)

Dower (Mahr)

It is unfortunate that today lot of money is spent in marriage ceremony. But scant attention is being paid towards dower (mahr). While Mahr is obligatory to bond the relationship between husband and wife. The holy Quran lays great stress on paying the dower. It states: “And lawful for you are all women besides those, provided that you seek them with your property, talking them in marriage, not committing fornication. Then as those whom you profit (by marriage) give them their dower as appointed” (4:24)

Contrary to it dowry has no place in Islam. It is a free gift given by the parents to their daughters at the time of their marriage. But unfortunately this menace has taken the roots of social cancer. Often innumerable nubile girls remain unmarried due to this menace. Parents face hurdles when their daughters reach puberty. Even they have to sell their movable and

immovable property to provide dowry.

It can be said without any hesitation that because of our own doings the dowry has become a gigantic issue. The girls are neglected after their marriage. As they have no share in their parents property. This is the main reason that this menace is increasing a pace.

As regards Islam, it presents a unique solution to solve this problem. Islam has given women their share. The holy Quran says: “From what is left by parents and those nearest related, there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the Property be small or large, a determinate share” (4:7)

Divorce

It would be worthwhile to mention that divorce has been a telling issue of today. Islam strictly prohibits divorce for obvious reason. The Prophet Muhammad said: “of all the lawful things, divorce is the most detestable thing in the sight of Allah” (Abu Dawod). Islam mooted so many ways to avoid this obnoxious practice. The holy Quran says: “ And if you fear a breach between them (i.e. husband and wife), appoint an arbiter from his family and an arbiter from her family. If they seek to set things a right, Allah will cause their reconciliation: For Allah has full knowledge and is acquainted with all things. (4:35) Islam permits to divorce only in critical condition. Needless to add that similar right has also been given to women that is called Khula in Islamic laws. The Holy Quran says: “And it is not lawful for you that ye take from women - of that which you have given them, except (in case) when both fear that they may not be able to keep within the limits imposed by Allah. And if you fear that they

may not be able to keep the limits of Allah in that case it is no sin for either of them if the woman ransom herself'. (2:229) Islam does not allow divorce for sexual enjoyment. Another tradition says: "Allah showers curses on those men and women who move frequent use of divorce for the sake of sexual enjoyment.

Conclusion

Despite the above mentioned facts there is a general feeling that Islam is a great impediment for women's progress and prosperity alleging that Islam orders women to observe purdah and not let them allow to take part in outdoor activities. These allegations are quite contrary to the spirit of Islam. It is Islam's distinction that it placed men and women on equal footing and removed the stigma of wickedness and impurity from women. As regards purdah, it is nothing but a tool of protection of them. Today we see a rise in cases of rape, molestation, eve teasing and a lot of other sexual abuses. No doubt, the mere reason of these menaces is nothing but nakedness and immodesty. It is purdah alone which may stop these menaces and provide safety and security to them. That is why Almighty Allah said addressing prophet Muhammad: "O Prophet! tell thy wives and thy daughters and to women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them when they go abroad. That will be better, so that they may be recognized and not annoyed. Allah is oft forgiving, most merciful." (Al-Ahzab 59)

Strangely, it is generally thought that women's liberation movement began between 19th and 20th century. But the fact is that the last Prophet Muhammad (SWA) favoured the same 1,400 years ago. Islam bestowed upon women all kinds of rights

whether it be social, educational, matrimonial, political or economic. A woman once came to the Prophet and complained: "My father has forced me to marry my cousin in order to raise his own status. The Prophet told her that she was free to dissolve that marriage and choose whoever she wished to marry, she replied: "All right, I concede to my father's choice, but my aim was to let the people know that fathers have no right to interfere in the marriage" (Ahmad).

In Islam the girl has every right to marry the boy of her choice and her parents cannot impose their decision on her. He further said if a girl is forced to marry by her parents or anyone against her wish, she can declare the marriage "null and void."

It should be noted that even if we have stepped on the threshold of 21st century which is considered the century of science and technology but it seems that we are reverting back to the dark age. In ancient time people buried their female infants alive and today we kill them alive in foeticide itself. This menace has been a common practice these days. It is indeed a heinous act. At this juncture we may recall the admonition of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). When this verse of the holy Quran "For what crime she was killed" (81:9) came. The Prophet along with his companions fanned out into the streets of Mecca imploring people to shun the old practice of female infanticide. Then the Almighty God revealed this verse." "We have bestowed the dignity to the children of Adam" (17:70). The accusation that Islam is insensitive on gender issue is absolutely wrong and reflect the ignorance of Quranic dictates and Prophet's sayings.■

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