

# THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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**The Fragrance**  
of East

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## Editor's Note

A few years back replying to a journalist who asked Maulana Ali Mian, the highly revered Islamic scholar located at Nadawat-ul-ulema, what he considered the worst evil in society the Maulana said, "man fears man; society has degenerated to such an extent that while on one hand, a potter is willing to fight if anyone broke one small pitcher made by him, there is none to fight against the slaughter of human beings who are the creations of God himself." The same pain and anguish was reflected once again when the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, visited the Maulana on March 28, 1999. Despite his frail health and weakness, the mentally agile Maulana did not miss the opportunity to express his distress and restlessness about the state of affairs in the country to the Prime Minister.

The Maulana told Mr. Vajpayee that communalism had posed a serious threat to the country's social fabric. A reaffirmation and commitment to democracy, non-violence and secularism were the only solutions to the problems of the country. He said "Hindus and Muslims are sailing in the same boat. If the boat sinks, neither would survive, regardless of who sank it. With these words of caution the Maulana emphasised that no political party could continue in power for long if they did not uphold the principles of secularism and democracy. The Prime Minister on his part assured the Maulana that he would protect the basic tenets of democracy at all cost.

Maulana's apprehensions are rooted in his foresightedness and realisation of his deep study of history and culture of the nation. It is indeed painful for him to see in the evening of his life the cracks developing in the huge structure of secularism, the foundations of which were laid by Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Patel, Ambedkar and others. Maulana's forefathers like Syed Ahmed Shaheed, had also laid their lives to fulfil their dream of a secular

and independent India. To achieve independence Syed Ahmed Shaheed had invited the Maharaja of Gwalior to join him in his struggle against Britishers. In his letter to Raja Hindu Rao, a minister of Gwalior, Syed Ahmed Shaheed asserts that whenever we succeed in our efforts and India gets rid of these alien enemies, the ranks of responsibility and honour shall be assigned to those who covet these; and they shall enjoy the real power and glory.

Indeed in a multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual society like India secularism and democracy are the only form of government that can ensure a stable polity.

Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, besides being a spiritual leader is an internationally acclaimed Islamic scholar. His deep knowledge, foresightedness and ability to draw inferences are to be respected. The advice of Maulana Ali Mian with regard to secularism, democracy and non-violence was not new. In fact he has been telling the same to the past heads of the governments as well. He desires that an honest effort be made to create a "fearless" society and ensure the safety and security of all Indians irrespective of their religion, caste or region where they come from.

On our part we should also carry forward the mission of the Maulana in popularising the campaign of "Payame Insaniyat". No doubt with the passing away of Pandit Bishambhar Nath Pandey, a Gandhite and former Governor actively involved in the "Payame Insaniyat" movement the programme has received a jolt. But there is no dearth of non-Muslim leaders of his stature who should be encouraged to help spread the Maulana's message.

# ISLAM AND SERVICE TO HUMANITY

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

*Extracts of speech delivered By Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi while laying the foundation stone of Al-Haj Minnatullah Memorial Hospital at Kanpur on 11th October, 1998.*

Dear Friends: It is a matter of great pleasure and privilege for me and my colleagues, in fact all those present here, that Allah has given us an opportunity to assemble here for the inauguration of a hospital, a welfare institution for the service to humanity. The Holy Qur'an and the life of the Holy Prophet (Sallallah-o-alaih-i-wa-sallam) teach us that every place has its own importance and the place which caters to the benefit of the people has great value before Allah. Allah is pleased with the establishment of such institutions and centers and with the deeds which are intended for the service of mankind and benefit of the people instead of ostentation or selfish gain. Glad tidings are given to those who work towards this end, who establish such institutions where people get medical attendance, physical health and, even better, religious instructions, spiritual light and moral uplift. Allah has blessed us with the faith which leads us on to a life which is in harmony with nature, it is universal and eternal. In its application it extends the entire human race. It is a charity continuously flowing till the Day of Judgement. Any step taken and any centre which is established for the benefit of mankind earns Allah's pleasure as it serves His creatures, His bondmen. The pride of place among such centres of welfare and service to mankind goes to the institutions of religious education so that people, specially the young generation may learn who is his Creator, what are His attributes, what bountiful Blessings He has showered upon His bondsmen; what is it that He demands of us, what are our duties towards Him and what are the principles and method of leading a righteous life which would earn for us the pleasure of Allah and would benefit

our fellow-beings.

We are happy that we have assembled here today to commemorate the memory of Haji Minnatullah Sahib (May Allah bless his soul). Minatullah literally means Allah's favour. His life truly personified his name. He took active part in religious works, in founding and running religious institutions. The Nadwatul Ulema, which I have the honour to represent, owes much to his endeavour. Many educational institutions in and around Kanpur are indebted to him. This institution, too, in laying the foundation you are participating, owes much to his sincerity and piety, all by the Grace of Allah. May Allah accept his services and bless him with high rewards and make these institutions more and more useful and beneficial for mankind. These will fulfil a great need of the society. It is the need of today that our traders and industrialists and others who have funds, build and establish many welfare institutions, charitable institutions and educational institutions for the benefit of Muslims and their coming generations and mankind at large, so that our countrymen may understand the broad-mindedness and large-heartedness of Muslims. History tells us that this approach has always been present in the Muslim mind and prompted them to render great services to humanity, establish hospitals and other welfare institutions. We invoke Allah's Blessings on Haji Sahib in his eternal life and make those institutions more and more useful. We thank you for coming and joining us in laying the foundation of this institution and also congratulate you that you will also share the rewards from Allah for this righteous work just as you have joined us in performing it. May Allah make these institutions stable and prosperous.

Translated by: Zaheerun-Nabi



## ALBANIA

Ismail Adam Patel

My journey to Albania began on Sunday the 4th of August 1996, after Fajar Salaat. I had no initial thoughts or concepts as to how Albania would be. There are very few reports and hardly anyone with an in-depth knowledge about the place. When Maulana Ibrahim saheb first invited me to join him I was rather reluctant but Allah instilled courage in me and accepted me to undertake the journey.

### **HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

Albanians are believed to be descendants of the Illyrians, an Indo European tribe, who began inhabiting the Balkans peninsula about four thousand years ago. The term Albania is thought to have been derived from the name of an Illyrian tribe, Albanoi, who are believed to have inhabited the central part of the present day Albania.

The Romans conquered present day Albania around 300 BC and subjugated its citizens. As Polybius said, 'Rome was beginning to nourish the audacious project of subjugating the whole world to her laws.' Faithful to her tradition, Rome split the country into several units. The Roman policy of cruel oppression provoked a whole series of insurrections. At 4 AD, when Roman Empire was split, Albania was incorporated in the Eastern Empire. Throughout the fifth century they were to undergo successive invasions from Visigoths, the Huns and the Ostrogoths. During the sixth century the situation got even worse, following the invasion by the Avars. The flood of barbaric invasion left terrifying devastation in their wake. In the seventh century weakened Roman Empire opened the gates for the Slaves to occupy Albania. Further occupation by Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Serb were to follow.

According to historians Christianity appeared very early in Albania, around 2 AD. Almost 40 bishoprics were

established to spread Christianity. However the majority of Albanians never accepted Christianity and apart from the slaves and a few beneficiaries joined them.

In 1106 the Albanians suffered a catastrophic onslaught of the first Crusade armies led by Duke of Normandy and Count of Vermandois. They all left devastation of their wake. In 1107 a second wave of Crusaders led by Bohemond, son in law to King of France, Philip I reached the shores of Albania and repeated the savagery, mutilation and destruction of the locals. However victory never came to the Crusaders. A third expedition took place in the middle of twelfth century led by King of Sicily again without any result. A fourth campaign was launched in 1185. A great army of 80,000 men led by William the Good King of Sicily took Durres (city in Albania) which was pillaged and almost completely burnt to the ground. But finally, this attempt also ended in defeat and the Crusaders had to retreat hastily.

In spite of the onslaught from the different Christian religious groups the Albanians never fully incorporated themselves with the outsiders. This is borne out by archaeological findings that even after the Greek orthodox occupation, Roman Catholics and the Slav Christian occupation they maintained their customs and language.

In early 1390's the first light of Islam arrived to nourish the impoverished souls of Albania. The Muslims who first came to Albania did not fight any battles nor occupied their lands. They simply made dawa'ah to the people. With Allah's blessing their success was phenomenal within no time major tribes in the towns and villages accepted the word of Allah. The Muslims after having established Islam amongst the people marched on towards Hungary and back to Turkey. The Turks left behind no administrators or political leaders.

In the intervening years Albania witnessed the onslaught of the Crusaders, as discussed above and later Venetian. The Venetian occupied Albania in 1392 and pillaged the whole country. They controlled a total hold of

the country and Muslims were Subjugated and punished heavily. The Ottoman witnessing the horrors of their Muslims brothers and the possibilities of the Venctian attacking Ottoman mainland marched out in 1415 to defend its territories and rescue Muslims of Albania.

As the might of the Turks fell on Venice they began to retreat. Venice promised the Albanians compensation and support if they fought against the Turks. But the memories of their oppression was too close at hand and the Turks rather being attacked were welcomed. In 1443 the Hungarians with full support of the Pope attacked Muslim positions on Albanian borders and the Turks were completely caught off guard. They had to retreat fast to new positions. During this period an Albanian guerrilla leader, George Kastriote Skanderberg (a much heralded hero in Albania today and heavily promoted by the west) saw his opportunity and began a rebellion against the Turks and Islam. An alliance was formed between Skanderberg, Italy, Venice and Hungary which made sure the Ottomans were defeated. The Ottomans tried several times to liberate the Muslims of Albania but their efforts were not to be successful.

In 1474 after the death of Skanderberg the Turks returned to Albania and were once again allowed to flourish the deen of Islam and the Muslim power was to remain in Albania for several centuries.

As the Ottoman empire began to collapse in the early twentieth century Muslims in Albania were coerced, manipulated to struggle for independence by European countries with vested interest. In 1912 Albania received limited autonomy which later led to full independence.

After a political turmoil and much blood spilling during the first World War (1914-18) and thereafter Zog became the dictatorial leader directly aided by Yugoslavia. He proclaimed to be King and thus King Zog ruled during 1928-39, exercising absolute power.

During second World War (1939-45), the country was first annexed by Italy (1939) and later occupied by Ger-

many. The Allied forces never assisted Albania in freeing it from Nazi's, presumably because they were Muslims. Albania freed itself from German occupation by local Mujahidins and Albanian Communist Party (founded in 1941). After November 1944 Albania was governed by a communist party led by Enwar Hoxia until his death in 1985. Everything was government controlled, local economy, politics, cultural life and social life.

In 1967 Albania became the first self proclaimed atheist country and strictly outlawed all religious practices. At that time over 80% were Muslims and the rest mainly Orthodox Christians. All the religious leaders were imprisoned, no one was allowed to practice in any social activity that had religious connotation. Muslims could not have Nikah ceremony, Janaza Salaat, Circumcision, Muslim names, and those suspected of Islamic affiliation were forced to drink alcohol and eat pigs meat.

After Hoxia's death in 1985, Ramiz Alia became leader of the Communist Party and President of Albania (1985-1991).

In March 1991 the first elections were held and the Albanian Labour Party emerged with an absolute majority, but the government collapsed under pressure of increasing unrest, dissatisfaction among the population. In 1991, a coalition government was formed. New elections were held in March 1992, with the Democratic Party winning a clear majority, this Party appears to have the full backing of the US and the Western governments. Their support is highlighted by the fact that England alone has over 70 registered charities working in Albania and most of them are propagating Christianity.

### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

The warmth, friendliness and open heartiness of the Albanians became apparent very early on. In fact as we were waiting to board the flight at Frankfurt small party of children came upto us and started making salaams. Asalaa'mwa'alikum rang in my years from half a dozen or more children. Not only were they curious but genuinely

excited to see us dressed in Islamic manner. Conversation was limited due to a language barrier but there was no barrier in the exchange of appreciation and gratitude amongst the passengers towards us. We had ascertained very early on that almost all the Albanian companions on the flight with us were Muslims. While we were cajoling with the children and trying to teach them a few essentials about Islam an Albanian expatriate living in America came upto us and enquired in an abrupt way as to who our leader was. Maulana informed him we had no leader and were following the commands of Allah. However the young American was not satisfied and told us we were corrupting the Children and that Islam was a religion for the dark ages. We sat and discussed this issue with him for a long time. We discovered he was originally a Muslim but gave it up in order to go to the USA via missionaries. His mind was filled with hate for Muslims. He believed Muslims were mainly terrorists trying to take control of people's lives and drive them back to the dark ages and all Muslims worked under a leader who controlled them like a dictator. We tried our best to allay his fears and explained to him the true nature of Islam. With Allah's blessing, at the end of our conversation, we did part with hand shakes and hugs-Insha Allah. May Allah open his heart to the true and peaceful nature of Islam.

On flight I sat next to a lady of about sixty five years of age, who promptly made salaams to me. I was rather amazed and delighted to hear this. When we tried to ask her about Salaat and Kalema Shahaadah we hit a blank wall. It was greatly disturbing and profoundly sad that a Muslim Women of around 65 could not read the Kalema nor had any knowledge about the importance of Salaat. Unfortunately this scenario repeated itself again and again throughout Albania. Almost everybody I met proclaimed to be a Muslim. They knew how to make salaams but it is with the greatest sadness and sorrow that I have to report, 99 per cent of them could not read the Kalema Shahaadah.

Our first stop was at Hafeez Shabir's madrassa in Elbasan. Hafiz Shabir and his family moved from Pakistan to Albania three years ago and established the only Hafiz madrassa in the country. At present he has 25 students. He provides lodging and food for all of them. The recitation of Qur'an is of very high standard and beautiful to listen. Alhumdolillah their voices were sweet and melancholy. The level amongst students is variable as expected. Some are just beginning the basic Arabic but they are learning fast and in particular one boy, Abdul Latif, a sixteen year old has memorised 21 siparas of the Holy Qur'an within two years (when he started he could not read alif, baa.....). Insha Allah, he will be the first Hafezul Qur'an in Albania.

Hafeez Shabir has not only sacrificed the comforts of his home, his friends, family and worldly benefits to be in Albania. But he has dedicated a lot of time and effort in a foreign country with a different language, custom and food. May Allah reward him justly and make his stay in Albania fruitful and easy.

We spent our first night outside the mosque gazing at the beautiful array of stars in the sky, it rather brought back to me the memorable night of Muzdalifah. The serenity, coolness and tranquillity of that night need to be experienced. Against this beauty my heart was accumulating burning questions about the state of Islam in Albania.

Initially, looking at the people without the backgrounds of the ruin buildings and dirt roads one might be mistaken to be in any high street in England. The women are dressed like any English women in summer-Miniskirts, shorts, high heel shoes, tea shirts, tight lycra dress etc. - The men are also dressed according to European norms. Alcohol is heavily promoted and every other shop serves alcohol, their homes have satellite dish catching the air waves from Europe. It would be no exaggeration to say almost every home in Albania has a satellite dish. The external appearance of the whole nation appears to be un Islamic. Yet they all profess to be Muslims.

The initial view of horror and helplessness slowly waned out of my head and as I began to converse with the locals and tried to understand their background, reasoning and logic.

Albanians suffered the cruelest form of communism coupled with the total isolation from the rest of the world. No one was allowed to have any religious beliefs and the rulers introduced practices that violated every aspect of Islam. Albanians were not allowed to have Muslim names. All Albanians were provided with meat ration stamps, but the only meat available to them through this was pork. At school they were made to profess in atheism. There was no marriage ceremony of any sort. People were led to believe there was no life after death and hence upon death it was left to the undertakers to dispose of the body. I met a few Albanians who told me, during the month of Ramadhan the communist party officials would invite people who were thought to be religious for lunch. If anyone refused to eat they would be imprisoned. Social gatherings of any nature besides communist propagation was also a punishable offence.

I began to realise that the Albanians were a race of people who have been locked away from the light for over 50 years and put into a dark shed. Now that the shed covers have been blown away they have been blinded by the light. They do not know which direction to take. The Europeans and Americans, indirectly via the TV and directly via the missionaries are dragging them into a direction of personal gratification. Thus opening avenues of alcoholism, western fashion, corruption, pre-marital sex, prostitution and drugs. Many Albanian's are shocked and horrified to witness what the end of communism has brought. For many the independence has been a price too high to pay in lost etiquettes, female suppression and obscenity.

Thus, I came to realise that the majority of Albanians were only playing role models they have seen on TV to express their independence. Many were not even aware

of their own views, but if they looked like the 'girl' or 'boy' on the television from America then they must be looking good. This was a way of expressing their freedom. Unfortunately this method is further being reinforced by images on the media and at the delight of the west.

When you start to converse with the locals, either in the cities or villages then you begin to understand where their loyalties lie. As I stated earlier, every Albanian I met professed to being a Muslim and when you began talking to them about Islam they quickly become engrossed with you. The curiosity and interest is apparent from the facial expression. Everyone wants to learn, know more and understand Islam. There are people hungry for knowledge and are in a midst where Christians, Qadianies, Jehovahs Witness, Baihula and other fringe groups are pouring in efforts and finances as if there was no tomorrow. What is needed quickly is an emergence of Muslim leaders to guide this lost, proud and independent children of Islam back on track. I urge the Ulama's from this country to mobilise an emergency plan in order to assist our brothers and sisters in Albania. If, we the nearest (European) Muslim brothers can not offer them assistance at this, the greatest hour of their need than I have no doubt we will be responsible for any adverse outcome of this, Our Muslim nation. No doubt the final outcome will be as Allah has willed but those who have made no effort will regret their idleness.

I shall quote a few experiences I encountered, from which I hope you will be able to deduce the greater picture of the status of Islam and the people in Albania.

### **MOLLAS**

Mollas is a remote village approximately 25 kilometres from Elbasan. The road to the village is very treacherous and this short distance took us over an hour to travel. All the inhabitants were Muslims. Around three years ago Italian missionaries built a church just opposite a Mosque in this village with 100 per cent Muslim population. The audacity and rudeness of the Christian is beyond belief.



In order to get a permission to build a church they bribed the village Chief by building him a house and promising the poor local villagers with a water supply system. They provide playing facilities to the Children and sewing and knitting classes for the adults. Regrettably 40 families have converted to Christianity including the Chief. According Javeed Mohalla an elderly man of about 60 years when they tried to built a new Mosque the Chief put up a big protest but Alhumdolillah his efforts were thwarted and a Mosque was built on Javeed's land which he donated. We prayed our As'ar Salaat in Mollas carrying on with our journey.

### **MURCHAN**

This is another hill top village where the Italian missionaries have invaded a Muslim village. Here also several families have converted to Christianity. I found it incredible that the west who everyday of the week ram down our throats the freedom to believe and practice are actively bribing our poor Muslim brothers and sisters away from Islam, with promises of material goods. I met an Italian missionary at Murchan who had just received delivery of three 10 ton Van loads of toys, books, electrical goods and accessories. I can challenge anyone to find me a Muslim organisation itself in the heart of a Christian village or city. What the Christians are doing in Albania is obscene and corrupt. It is beyond belief and unthinkable.

### **JEER JAN**

This is on the suburbs of Elbasan. We were invited by a couple who had a 8 year old daughter paralysed. They requested Maulana Ibrahim to pray for her, which he duly obliged. The parents informed us that Christian Missionaries had got to know about their daughters health and had calls around. They offered to take her and the mother to Italy for medical help. However they put a condition and that was, they would first have to change their names from Muslims to Christians. They flatly refused and literally threw them out of the house.

A very similar experience was encountered by a

Policeman we met in Elbasan hospital. He told us that Christian missionaries had approached him and offered to take him and his Child to Italy for treatment on condition they change their names.

What is incredible that the Policeman and the family in Jeer Jan did not know how to pray Salaat or even the Kaleema. All they knew was that they were Muslims. Their Iman and great valour brought tears to my eyes. I felt totally useless and incompetent standing next to this man who had so much love and devotion for Islam. As I looked and held the hands of this man a shiver of uselessness traversed my body and my heart and eyes wept. Here was a financially poor man who was sacrificing the possibility of a cure for his baby only because he knew he was a Muslim. What great feat could he achieve if he was taught the full greatness of Islam. If only I could stay with him and teach what Allah has allowed me to learn. I pray to Allah to forgive me for my inadequacies.

### **BERAT**

This is one of the oldest city in Albania and dates back some two thousand three hundred years. It was also the garden of Islamic culture and prosperity. Before communism Berat had 35 Mosques in the city, 2 Islamic libraries and 6 Darul Uloom. The surrounding villages had 105 Mosques. Unfortunately only 2 Mosques in the city survive and 3 in the nearby villages. Of the 5 Mosques only one has a Wadho khana.

### **HELICOPTER**

Albania is a third world country which has no International Airlines. To my knowledge there is no state helicopters; However on Sunday the 11th we were woken upto the sound of a helicopter. At the time we were staying with the Hafiz Shabir's students, who rushed out of their quarters to witness the strange sound. To my amazement, we saw a helicopter circling the city, dropping leaflets from the air on the inhabitants of Elbasan. The leaflets were from Christian missionaries who were inviting the people to visit them at their Church for drinks, sports

and a chat.

### **JAFFAR ZUHDI**

Jaffar is a young man of about 35 years, who in 1990 (during the communist era) for sheer love and devotion of Islam burst open the doors of a Mosque and started praying Salaat. He said, 'although I did not know how and what to pray I knew I was a Muslim and was supposed to pray Salaat'. He was immediately arrested and tried. He was sentenced for life in prison. He showed us scars on his body where the Police cut him open and poured salt on the wound. At times he was tied up against a pole for weeks and denied food.

His horrors unfortunately typifies the regime's attitude towards Islam. Fortunately after the collapse of communism Jaffer was released from the prison and as his story was circulated as a prisoner of conscience, King Fahad heard of him and invited him to Saudi Arabia for Hajj.

### **MOSQUES**

Alhumdolillah since the fall of communism the Arab brothers have built approximately 300 Mosques. However, most of the Mosques do not have Wadho facilities, nor any toilets. A greater concern than this is the sad fact that most of the Mosques do not have an Imam to lead or teach the locals about Islam. The lack of toilets and Wadho khana brings great hardships to Tabligh Jamats and also gives the locals one more reason not to come to the Mosque. However the greater and more urgent need is for learned individuals to take residence in one Mosque and spend about one year making dawaah, teaching the locals and the children about the tenants of Islam. The access to the Mosque is very easy and the locals are eager and ready to learn, all that is needed are Alims.

We heard and saw some horrific scenes in Masjids. In one place near Tirana the Mosque was used as a stable for Donkeys. I heard that in another place a Mosque was used for a wedding feast, where dancing and drinking took place. The Imam of a Mosque in Labint Fushe

thought drinking alcohol was permissible in Islam.

Hafeez Shabir informed me that in three years he neither heard from anyone nor did he himself perform a nikah ceremony for an Albanian. Even more sad was the report that the majority were buried without Janaza Salaat.

One cannot and should not blame the Albanians for these. They are innocent and not aware of their deen, it is upto us to teach them. It is our shortcomings that we are not educating our fellow Muslim brothers and sisters.

### **UK ISLAMIC AID-ALBANIA**

I accompanied Maulana Ibrahim who is the founder of this organisation. While I was with him he submitted visa applications for 3 students of the South African embassy for Alim course studies in Azadville Darul Uloom. I hope you pray for a successful outcome. He also Insha Allah hopes to bring 6 children to the UK.

He also surveyed the Mosques with the greatest need for Wadho khana and toilets. Attention was given where Tabligh Jamat were working hardest and the need of the facilities greatest.

Before our departure 3 books on the Holy Qur'an, Ramadhan and Iman were translated into Albanian language. These books were distributed for free amongst the people.

Insha Allah I hope the above report will bring to our minds the great need for us in Britain to wake up and assist our fellow brothers in Albania. I took counsel from a few Ulama's and decided the following approach may go some way towards helping the course in Albania:

#### **1. Short Term**

(a) To increase the number of Tabligh Jamats. Especially the Jamats with Ladies. We received reports while in Albania that Jamats from Pakistan and India were being denied entry to Albania. It might be advisable to increase the Jamat from Europe to Albania and get Indian Jamats to come to mainland Europe.

(b) To publish books in Albanian language discussing the essential, fariadh, wajibats and sunnats. Especially books

on the essential belief of a Muslim like, Taleemul Haq, life after death, nikah and other practical issues.

(c) The most important action we can take at present is to send Alims to Albania perhaps on four monthly rota basis to run a Mosque. I humbly appeal to the principals of Darul Uloom to instil in the young Alims the importance of this work.

## 2. Mid Term

To carry on with the above work and:

(a) to sponsor young bright children from Albania to come and study here or some where else in the world. The study could be in Darul Ulooms or secular. If the young Albanian Muslims are supported today Insha Allah they will form the leaders of future generations.

## 3. Long Term

To carry on with the above plus:

(a) To build darul ulooms in Albania. This may initially appear a steep obstacle but this will bear the greatest fruit. With a population of nearly 3 million Muslims, at present there are no Darul Uloom's in Albania and the people are hungry for knowledge. Considering there were 6 Darul Ulooms in only one city of Berat a target of 12 Darul Ulooms by the end of the century should be worked on, half of which should be for girls.

I request you to remember me and the Albanian Muslims in your duaas. As all, as individuals, families, communities and countries are in need of help. However, Albania poses a specific and special dilemma which needs an urgent strategic approach. I hope all concerned Muslims will take on board this great challenge and assist the Albanian cause in every way they can.

Aameen

## ALI MIAN AWARDED THE SULTAN OF BRUNEI INTERNATIONAL PRIZE IN ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP

Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Rector of Dar ul-Ulum Nadwatul-Ulema, Lucknow has been awarded the Sultan of Brunei International Prize for Islamic Scholarship.

Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, one of the leading scholars in the contemporary Islamic world, was born in India in 1914 into a famous family of ulama. He has written extensively in Arabic, Urdu and English (around 50 books). Among his most famous works are *Islam and the World* and *Saviours of the Islamic Spirit* - biographical accounts of the companions of the Prophet and leading scholars of the Muslim history.

Maulana Nadwi has received the King Faisal Prize for Service to Islam (1980) and the Muslim Personality of the Year Award (1999). He is Founding Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, and a member of the Academy of Arts and Letters, Damascus, and of the Higher Council of the Medina University. He is also a founder member of the Muslim World League, Makkah, a member of the executive committee of the Islamic Universities Federation, Rabat, and the Academy of Arabic Language, Amman.

The Prize selection Committee considered a large number of nominations from academics and institutions throughout the world and was unanimous in its choice of Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi as the recipient of the Prize.

The purpose of the Sultan of Brunei International Prize is to recognise and encourage academic excellence in any branch of the arts, social sciences and humanities concerned with the study of Islamic civilisation. The Prize has been awarded in previous years for excellence in "Hadith Studies", "Qur'anic Studies" and "Jurisprudence (Fiqh)". The subject of the current Prize was "Biographical Studies of Major Figures in Islamic Thought".

Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee who called on the ailing Maulana on March 28, 1999 personally congratulated him on this award.

## MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ISLAM

S.M. Rabey Nadwi

Very often we find some of our intellectuals and scholars raising strange illogical objections against Islamic faith and practices without paying any heed to the basic norms for such a critique.

The evils that have crept into Muslim society or the un-Islamic behaviour of certain Muslims are cited by such critics by passing strictures upon Islam and its teachings. This is obviously the result of not undertaking the study of Islam in depth and making conjectures on the basis of their own fallacious concepts or superficial observations. To take an example, the Qur'an contains progressive injunctions in regard to prohibition. At one place it says "*Approach not prayers in the state of intoxication (4:43).*" Supposing someone ignores the words "in a state of intoxication" and says that Muslims offer prayers inspite of the Qur'anic dictum, "approach not prayers", it would amount to a malicious criticism. One of such writers is Mr. Arun Shourie who has written a number of articles on Islam. But the question is how deep is his study of the Qur'an and the Hadith, and how much qualified is he in Islamic jurisprudence deducted from the divine revelations and the practice of the Prophet and his companions? If he has not studied these seriously what is the cause of his ardour for finding fault with Islam?

There are others like Mr. Arun Shourie who have made it their business to publish findings of surveys supposed to have been undertaken by them. These are actually meant for misleading those who have no knowledge of Islam. Recently, a survey given wide publicity by a section of the press claimed that ninety percent of Muslim women approached for the purpose acknowledged that Islam was unjust to women and that its personal laws ought to be rectified. Who were these women and how much were they qualified to give their opinion about Islamic injunctions, the Qur'an and the hadith? Or, were

they non-Muslims made proxy for Muslim women? The things that must be kept in mind for such a survey are the illiteracy in the country and that the ratio of illiterate women is far higher in relation to men. A large majority of India's population belongs to the rural sector whose knowledge is confined to agriculture only. The ratio of illiteracy among Muslims being higher than other communities, the literacy among Muslim women would still be much lower, particularly in the rural areas. Most of these women would have perhaps never heard of Muslim Personal Law and similar other technical terms. Taking all these factors into account, how could the opinion of such women be elicited about Islamic Shariah? It would be like asking the opinion of primary school children about the utility of American concept of political hegemony for India and then presenting the same as an erudite study. This is how these surveys about Islam and Muslim society are undertaken by those having an antipathy towards Islam, perhaps more for their own satisfaction than for any other purpose. They do not possess even an iota of knowledge about the vast corpus of Islamic jurisprudence, yet they continue to pick the Islamic laws to pieces.

A personal experience was narrated to me by a friend in one of the universities of Delhi. A seminar was organised on Muslim Personal Law in which several Hindu girls whom he recognised, were brought as burqa clad Muslim girls. My friend tried to attend the seminar but he was not allowed. He, however, managed to find out who the organisers were. The following day Newspaper reports flashed the observations of the so-called Muslim women. Now if anyone were to contradict such press reports he would be immediately dubbed a Mullah and a staunch fundamentalist unaware of the changing times and its needs. Such efforts not only present a distorted picture of a reality but also mislead the nation. The masses are not expected to go deep into what is reported in the press, they acquire the opinion of the elite section of the society. All of us know the tactics employed by the present day



promoters of consumerism who successfully persuade the people to buy injurious articles by projecting them as being conducive to health. Now what will happen to the nation if a similar approach is allowed to propagate falsehood? The irony is that those who indulge in similar practices never care to know anything about the Muslims who form an important segment of the nation.

It has thus become a convention to find fault with Islam, its teachings and the Muslim society on the basis of customs and usages of illiterate section of Muslim society who are ignorant of the genuine Islamic creed and norms of behaviour upheld by Islam. The customs or usages looked down upon by Islam are cited to disparage it. A number of such practices have been adopted by the Muslims from their neighbours. Take the dowry system which is a curse of the Indian society and as a result of which increasing demands are made from the parents of the brides and sometimes the newly wedded women are burnt to death. The incidences of such occurrences is far less among the Muslims but it is a totally un-Islamic practice. As a matter of fact Islam lays no responsibility in regard to the expenses of marriage on the side of the bride. All the expenses have to be borne by the bridegroom or his parents. The guardians of the bride do not have to bear the expenses, according to Islamic teachings, on even the sweets distributed at the time of *nikah* or the *walima* i.e. repast of the guests invited on the occasion, the responsibility of all such expenses has been specifically laid on the bridegroom or his guardians. The bride becomes entitled to *mahr* or dower as it is usually translated, which is either a substantial amount of money or other form of property, from her husband. The wife does not have to pay or make any contribution. On the contrary, if anything is given to the bride by her parents or guardians, it become her sole property without any right of the husband on it. The wife is entitled to be maintained by the husband according to his own standard of living, to be paid *mahr* and to retain exclusive ownership of the

property given or acquired by her.

The marriage contracted by any man with the intention of not paying the *mahr* is illegal under the Islamic law, nor is such a couple recognised as legally wedded spouses. It is a prerogative of the wife to waive of her *mahr* by her own free will, but it is not permissible for the husband to put any pressure on his wife in this connection. It would thus be seen that under the Islamic laws the woman enjoys all the social and economic rights while the husband is bound to bear all the expenses. Will it be improper, if under such a concept of family as envisaged by Islam, a husband expects his wife to manage the household affairs, remain faithful to him and remain diligent in the up-bringing of their children? The relation of the spouses under Islamic law are so subtle and delicate and require such constant adjustment involving the fate and well-being of the future generation that the Islamic law considers it expedient to allow the voice of the husband more or less predominance over that of the wife. Islam treats them like partners, one senior to the other. If the two are unable to carry on this partnership amicably, it is incumbent on the relatives of both the parties to bring about amity and harmony between them by ironing out their differences. In case such a concord is not possible then the two should separate in accordance with the procedure prescribed for it. The husband should pronounce *talaq* or repudiation of marriage once, and wait for a month during which period the pronouncement of the divorce can be revoked. If the husband repeats this process again and pronounces *talaq* for the third time, the separation would become irrevocable. This process allows two month's time to both the parties and their relatives to bring about accord and harmony between the husband and wife. But if both the parties remain adamant and all efforts to reunite them are unsuccessful, would it be just to ask them to live together and continue quarrelling for the rest of their lives? Such a union of husband and wife would perhaps be analogous to the dispute between two real broth-

ers which sometimes leads to the murder of one by the other. This is what happens when the husbands burn their wives and present the alibi that she caught fire in the kitchen. There can also be circumstances where the wife does not want to live with her husband any longer or both desire instant separation. In such circumstances the Shariah allows irrevocable divorce, that is, pronouncement of divorce thrice at a time, but it also strongly condemns such a separation. There are some jurists who hold such an irrevocable divorce to be impermissible, but nobody can deny that in certain situations it might be the best solution for both the husband and the wife to be separated immediately. That is the reason why some schools of Islamic jurisprudence hold such a divorce as valid and binding on both the parties.

The Shariah concedes to the husband the right to dissolve the marriage. There are people who consider it unjust and want the same right to be given to the women also. They, however, ignore the fact that the Islamic law makes the husband responsible to bear all the expenses from marriage to her maintenance as a wife and to have no claim what so ever on the *Mahr* or any other property given by him to the wife. It is possible, in these circumstances, that a woman may leave the husband with all the money and property in her possession after a brief altercation with her husband. She can also claim, in case she is pregnant, maintenance from an ex-husband till the baby is born and attains the age of two years. She can marry after the expiry of the brief period of probation called *Iddat*, but can claim the expenses for the up keep of the child born as a result of the former wedlock so long as she remains guardian of the child. Re-marriage of a man or woman is not held in contempt under the Islamic law. A divorced woman can easily get remarried without incurring any expenses and attain all the rights of a wife from the second husband, while the ex-husband will have to bear all the expenses again at the time of the two parties. Conceding the right to the woman to dissolve her

marriage at her sweet will might mean encouraging those of lewd character to exploit the situation to their advantage. In such a case a woman may marry for the second or the third time in order to get the mahr and such other benefits as stipulated at the time of getting married, and then still retain the right to repudiate the wedlock whenever she takes a fancy for another man. The man on the other hand, will have to take into account the losses suffered by him at the time of dissolution of his first marriage and the liabilities he will have to bear on the subsequent wedlock. Is it not justified that the right to divorce should be conceded to the party which is at a disadvantage in contracting a marriage? If he is prudent enough, he would have to give careful thought to all the advantages and disadvantages before exercising his right to dissolve the marriage.

There can however be circumstances in which a woman does not want to live with her husband who is unwilling for any reason to dissolve the marriage. The Shariah has the provision of the *Khula* or judicial separation for such cases. The woman would have only to approach a Qazi and prove that she wants separation for genuine reasons. The judge or the Qazi will take a judicial view of the circumstances and if he finds the complaint to be true he can dissolve the marriage. The husband can also confer on the wife the power of pronouncing *Talaq* and thereby dissolving the marriage. Once a husband has conferred such power say as a condition a contracting the marriage he can not afterwards revoke it and it will depend upon the wife whether to exercise that power or not. A judicious balance has been maintained by the *Shariah* between the man and the woman and it has conferred different privileges to both in accordance with their liabilities. It is not harsh or in favour of either party, but if the people do not act on its injunctions, it should rather be called a social evil than a defect in the Islamic law. It is true that Muslim society does not follow these laws meticulously, but being a religiously oriented

community it follows a great many of Shariah's injunctions and at least it is not in any disadvantageous position in this respect in comparison to any other sister community. If one were to make a survey of Muslim society dispassionately, one would find that lots of prejudices against it have been deliberately propagated and the Muslim society is still better than others in so far as family relations, particularly those between the husband and the wife, are concerned. It would be found to have more fraternity and humanitarian feeling it does not have a constricted outlook nor the tensions rooted in certain other communities.

It is to be regretted that certain modern educated Muslim women have come to rely on the anti-Islam propaganda campaign that they have not been justly dealt with. Such Muslim women are undoubtedly educated but they cannot claim to have adequate knowledge of Islam in *Shariah*. They can be compared to a scientist who considers himself equally proficient in law and rushes to offer his opinion on a legal matter without taking the trouble to consult a lawyer or even going through the relevant laws on the subject. It is an acknowledged principle that we seek the advice of an expert in every matter pertaining to that field of life since nobody is expected to form a correct opinion about which he has only a superficial knowledge. Supposing the people do not follow the constitutional provisions of their country or flagrantly violate the laws and legal norms, will it be treated as a fault of the constitutional provisions of their country or law? There are often communal riots in the country, the people are done to death and corruption has become an established practice. Can all these ills be attributed to the Indian Constitution? Our country, or for that matter, the whole world is passing through a phase of moral crisis, human rights are being violated and there is a prevailing trend of individualism, of forsaking one's social and moral obligations. It is difficult to believe how these so-called intellectuals close their eyes to all these evils and instead of trying to

reform the society, they are bent upon carping and condemning a religion with which they have nothing to do. Indian society has taken the road to moral anarchy and cultural deception, corruption is widespread even in the highest official circles and those who contest the elections spend lavishly and then compensate themselves through illegal means on attaining power. The country is reeling down the road to caste and communal prejudices while those in power are more concerned with their party politics and personal games. The scams of our columnists and political commentators seem to be interested only in finding faults with Islam and the Muslims and overlook everything that might be found appreciable in them. They, as a result of it, ignore or minimize the faults and failings of their own society which ought to have first attracted their attention.

# MUSLIM WOMEN IN INDIA : TEXT AND CONTEXT

Meraj Ahmad\*

Islam is basically a humanistic and egalitarian religion. Its equalitarianism becomes manifest from the proclamation of the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith regarding the status and the role of women in Muslim society. Islam accords due recognition to the personality and dignity of women whose existence and status were denigrated and humiliated under other social dispensations.

Buddha decreed about women :-

"Don't see women. If you see them, keep wide awake. Don't have a conversation with them.... Of all the snares the Tempter (Maya) has spread for men, women are the most dangerous."

Manu declared :-

"Women love their beds and ornaments, and have loose desires. They have a bad temper, are frail, irresolute and never straight."

Tulsi Das averred :-

"Animals, Shudras and women belong to one category. They can be kept straight only by strict subjugation and thrashing."

The old Testament (Judaism) proclaimed :-

"Of the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die."

The Christian saints pronounced :-

- (i) "Woman is the organ of the devil".
  - (ii) "Woman is a scorpion ever ready to sting".
  - (iii) "Woman has the poison of an asp, the malice of a dragon."
  - (iv) "Woman is the instrument which the devil uses to gain possession of our souls".
- (St. Bernard, St. Antony, St. Jermome and St. Gregory)

Islam takes a radically different view of woman, recog-

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nises her dignity and status and makes her eligible for important social roles. This will be evident from the text of Holy Qur'an and Hadith.

#### A. THE TEXT (THE PRECEPT)

##### (i) THE HOLY QUR'AN

According due respect to the dignity of woman and sanctity of their personality, the Holy Qur'an ordains :-

*"Revere women because it is they who bore you."*

-Surah 4, verse 1

Granting equal rights to women the Holy Qur'an decrees:-

*"And women have rights vis-a-vis men similar to the rights men have vis-a-vis women. The mutual rights of men and women should be in accordance with the principle of Equality. But men have a degree of advantage over women."*

-Surah 2, Verse 220

Protecting the dignity of women against slander, the Holy Qur'an ordains :-

*"And those who use slanderous language, or launch a false charge, against chaste women and produce no valid evidence in support of their allegations, flog them with eighty stripes for they are wicked transgressors."*

-Surah 14, Verse 4

Establishing woman's right of inheritance in the property of her deceased parents and husband, the Holy Qur'an legislates :-

1. *"From what is left by parents.... there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large -- a determinate share."*

Surah 14, Verse 7

2. *".....In what you leave, the share of your is a fourth if you leave no child. But if you leave a child, she gets an eighth after payment of legacies and debts."*

-Surah 4, Verse 12

As a mark of recognition to woman's dignity and appreciation of her right, the Holy Qur'an makes it obligatory for the husband to pay dower to his wife :-

*"And give the women (on marriage) their dower as*



*a free gift; but if they of their own consent and pleasure remit any part of it to you, take it and enjoy it....."*

Surah 4, Verse 4

The Holy Qur'an enjoins men to be kind, affectionate and faithful to their wives even if they lack in physical charm :-

*"O Believers, you are forbidden to inherit women abainst their will. Nor should you treat them with harshness.... except where they have been guilty for lewdness. On the contrary, live with them on a footing of kindness and equality. If you take a dislike to them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah makes it a blessing in disguise for you."*

-Surah 4, Verse 9

The above cited-documentary (textual) evidence makes it amply clear that Islam revolutionises the position of women by according due recognition to their personality, dignity and rights as equally important members of society and elevates their status vis-a-vis their status in other social dispensations.

#### (ii) THE HADITH

The Hadith (sayings and pronouncements of Prophet Mohammed) are perfectly in tune with the proclamations of the Holy Qur'an regarding the status of women. The Prophet admired the women folk aesthetically saying that they were the most wonderful creation of God. He brought to an end gender gap and discrimination by respecting women, recognising their rights, mobilising them for handling social, educational, political and juridical affairs besides their domestic responsibilities. His exemplary courtesy to women becomes evident from the fact that he used to stand up, welcome and spread his sheet when ladies, his own daughter hazrat Fatima, visited him.

Recognising women's rights to education, the prophet said :-

*"Both men and women are equally eligible for, and should receive, education. The person who forbids them from receiving education is a transgressor."*

The Prophet's concern for the girl child was so great

that he proclaimed :-

"If a person has three or more daughters and he looks after them affectionately, brings them up with due care and eduactes them, God's grace shall abound him and he will be in the Bliss of Heaven."

In his parting speech to the persons around him the Prophet said :-

"I am about to depart and my concern is about the women and attendants who are with you. I exhort you to treat them well and be generous and kind to them."

The above observations of the Prophet of Islam show his concern, regard and respect for women.

#### B. THE CONTEXT (THE PRACTICE)

Unfortunately, the position and plight of women, particularly in the lower and the backward classes of the Muslim society in India, are far from being satisfactory and least in conformity with the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith regarding the status and rights of women. In these segments of the Muslim society in India where culture of poverty and ignorance prevails, women are being denigrated, dehumanised and brutalised. The harsh and unfair treatment meted out to them by their male partners is evidently contextual (class-bound) and by no stretch of imagination it can be regarded as 'textual' as misconstrued and alleged by Bangla Deshi writer Tasleema Nasreen and their protagonists of women's rights and feminist activities. No doubt, the plight of women in the above mentioned segments of the Muslim society is pitiable. They are being treated as domestic and personal servants and coerced into work and toil round the clock. They are being abused and thrashed and divorced by their male counterparts as a matter of personal sweet, will and individual right. Most of the women of lower and backward classes are suffering from one disease or the other. their life is full of afflictions, trials and tribulations. They are living at the verge of animal level of existence. Their personality is being negated, womanhood disgraced, rights violated and freedom restricted. But all this is due

to the economic (poverty) factor and not ideological one. Culture of poverty, and ignorance of women's religious and civil rights and liberties consequent upon the low economic (class) status of the families to which these unfortunate women belong, has been the key factor in the depressed social status of women of the aforesaid critical segments of the Muslim society in India. When we move vertically up on the social ladder, we find the position and plight of the Muslim women better socially, economically and educationally because of greater awareness of their religious and civil rights. This leads us to conclude that not the 'text' but the 'context', i.e., the lower class, both as economic and social category, has largely been responsible for the depressed plight of the Muslim women in India.

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## QUR'AN SPEAKS

Indeed, We sent Nuh to his people. He said, 'My people. Worship Allah. You have no god other than He. I fear for you the punishment of a Great Day. Said the elites of his people, 'Surely, we see you in a manifest error. He answered, ' My people. There is no error in me (of any sort). Rather, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the world. I convey to you the messages of my lord and advise you sincerely, for I know from Allah what you know not. Do you think it strange that a reminder should come to you from your Lord by (the lips) of one of your own men? So that he might warn you, that you may learn to be godfearing, and that haply you might be shown mercy!?' But they gave him the lie, so We delivered him and those with him in the ship and drowned those who gave the lie to Our signs. Surely, they were a people blind. And (We sent) unto 'Ad there brother Hud. He said, 'My people. Worship Allah (alone). You have no god other than He. Will you not fear?' Said the elites of the unbelievers of his people, 'Surely, we observe in you a (kind of) foolishness. Indeed, we reckon you of the liars.' He reply, 'My people. There is no foolishness in me, rather, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds.

al-A 'raf

# DOES ISLAMIC CODE DEMEANS WOMEN

G.Y. Sowani\*

Gender discrimination is even much more practised now a days in our own country. Recent reports in the press and the electronic media have confirmed and brought to light the evil practice of female infanticide in Tamilnadu. Baby girls are being choked with rice gruel regularly and on a massive scale. During Jahliyat, the pre-Islamic era of ignorance-Arabs had similar proclivities and to bury their little girls alive till Islam condemned the practice as a grave sin and ordered the believers to reject and abhor women who sinned like this. (Surah Al-Isra 17:31 and Al-Mumatahana 60:12) The injunction is repeated in Surah Al-Takwir. The poignant lines read:-

"When the infant girl buried, is asked for what crime was she killed; when the records of men's deeds are laid open then each soul shall know what it has done" (81:88-10)

## **MARRIAGE**

Marriage is by far the most crucial point in a woman's life. But in very few societies do maidens have or had any say in the matter. The ancient Hebrews (Jews) routinely took money for their daughters from the husbands-to-be. In the Hindu marriage ritual (Kanayadan), the father gifts away the daughter. He thereby earns the equivalent "punya" as would be obtained by gifting 101 cows to a brahmin.

But Islam does not degrade its daughters to the level of a commodity, to be sold: or regard them as chattel to be gifted away. The whole concept of marriage is different in Islam. It was a contract drawn up by the magistrate himself and duly witnessed. There can be no compulsion. These people have to hear for themselves the bride give her consent. They are also responsible to ensure that neither party breaches the contract in any way while it is valid. A wife is not to be regarded as merely a sexual

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outlet. Her place in the household is one of honour. Chapter 5 commands :-

"Lawful (it will be no sin) to you are free, believing women....provided you give them their dowries (i.e. marry them) and live in honour with them, neither fornication nor taking them as mistresses" (5:5)

Chapter 30 brings out the wives, equal status and the special relationship even more clearly.

Indeed, for the "thinking" man, i.e. Intelligent man, the Qur'an leaves no doubt the marriage can be and will be based only on love, kindness and honour. Incidentally, a dowry is compulsory in Islam; but it is to be given to the woman, and not taken; for a man to expect or accept money is considered to be not only undignified but also as unmanly and a slur on the family honour. As a result, brides do not get burnt in Muslim households.

### **TROUBLED RELATIONS AND HARASSMENT**

However, as in any human relationship, things can go wrong in a marriage. In such cases, Chapter 4 lays down that:-

"If a woman fears ill-treatment or desertion on the part of the husband, it shall be no offence to seek mutual agreement (to separate); for agreement is better (than strife). Man is prone to avarice but if you do what is right....God will know. "(4:128)

Illusory opiates like "A marriage is made in heaven forever, till death does us part" or that it remains "Valid from birth to birth, for seven birth" are not fed to a woman in Islam (so that she is fooled into meekly accepting humiliation and maltreatment because the husband is "as God") Since times immemorial, a favourite ploy used by man to harass a wife is to cast aspersions on her fidelity. Islam does not permit such injustice. Chapter 24 thunders:-

"The adulterer and the adulteress shall each be given 100 lashes. Let no pity for them detain you....Let their punishment be a number of believers. (But) those that defame honourable women but cannot produce four wit-

nesses shall be given eighty lashes.." (24:2)

This is deterrent punishment indeed, for not many can survive beyond 40-45 lashes. The result is that while adultery as such is ruthlessly stamped out, no one dares to level baseless charges of infidelity against innocent women in a Muslim society.

### **DIVORCE**

The unwanted wife has always been a pathetic figure: more so in the olden days. In Persia, they were usually just sold off. In the Roman colony of Syria-Lebanon the prevailing law permitted a husband to even kill a recalcitrant wife. The catholic does not permit a divorce. Since all Europe was only catholic till as recently as the 16th century. Unwanted wives were simply sent off to a convent, to be forcibly made nuns. In India and China, they were just discarded. Unquestionably, woman occupied a very low position on the social scale. It is against this background. When there was no such thing as divorce anywhere in the world that for the first time in human history, Islam introduced the concept of a legal divorce.

At the same time, the fact that it is always a traumatic experience for a woman, was not forgotten. It was accepted but only as a necessary evil, to be avoided if possible. Prophet Mohammed has declared that, "Of all the permitted actions, a divorce is the most detestable before God."

Therefore, various in-built checks, to ensure that a divorce does not result because of a decision taken in anger are inherent to the code. Arbitration is always mandatory, as the first step. Chapter 4 says, "if you fear a breach between a man and his wife, appoint an arbiter from his side and one from hers. If they wish to be reconciled, Allah will bring them together again." (4:35)

Another check is the compulsory waiting period of three lunar months. Many a reconciliation is known to have taken place during the period because the wife is to stay in the husband's home in the waiting period; human na-

ture what it is, difficult to live in close proximity with the woman who was once a wife and yet hold on to the resolve of the divorce, unless the issue is really serious. The Islamic code is a marvellous blend of fairplay and pragmatism. In passing must be mentioned a provision which virtually eliminates the possibility of a crooked divorce, being used only as a ruse to humble the wife. If a man wishes to remarry his divorced wife, he can do so, he says: but only after she has married some one else and has had marital relations with him: This condition puts the male ego under such a severe strain that no one plays a divorce scene. To revert to the subject of divorce, if there is an unborn child at the juncture, all its rights (Patronym, inheritance etc.) are fully divorced woman becomes almost palpable when the commands of Chapter 65 are studied. " If you (believers) divorce your wives, divorce them at the end of the waiting period. Have fear of Allah, your Lord: do not expel them from their homes....when they have reached their prescribed time, either keep them honourable or part with them honourably. Call to witness two honest men amongst you and give your testimony before Allah.....for pregnant women, their term shall be the time they deliver....lodge them in your own homes, according to your means. Do not harass them so as to make life intolerable for them: (65:2-6)

The two honest men are clearly meant to have a final attempt at reconciliation; so is perhaps the hope behind the command to keep the "Wife in your own home" for the full waiting period. A woman pregnant with one's own child, invokes very strong protective instincts in the father and 7-8 months is a very long interval indeed for anger to persist.

However, if it has to be a divorce despite these wise safeguards, the woman is not left destitute. Chapter 2 categorically lays down:-

"Reasonable provision should be made for the divorced woman. This is incumbent on righteous men" (2:241)



In all other cases of inheritance, compensation etc. the code is specific about the exact amount. Only in this case, since a large number of variables are involved (blame for the divorce, dowry, children, age, etc.) the amount has been left to the wisdom of the ummat and the conscience of the man, to be decided on a case by case basis. The only injunction is that it has to be "reasonable and that". "Let the rich man spend according to his wealth and the poor man according to what Allah has given him" (65:7)

The final word on divorce is the ISMA. This is a right given to women to ask for a divorce if they so wish. This right is to be included in the marriage contract and can even be incorporated in it a later date. To the best of my knowledge no other code in the world temporal or religious, has ever conferred such liberal rights on a woman.

### **WIDOW REHABILITATION**

It should have become clear to the reader by now that Islam takes very good care indeed of its women. But the best part is reserved for the widows. Of all the calamities that can befall a woman, widowhood is perhaps the worst. In some civilizations, her presumed 'sins' are held to be the cause of the husband's death. She is considered to be inauspicious. Her head may be shaven or she could be just abandoned at Allahabad or Brindaban. Utterly destitute. The widows distress is real and pitiable. Islam sets out to redress her lot, with a firm hand. A woman is not considered inauspicious if widowed. Her remarriage is assiduously encouraged, even if she is past the nubile age. Rehabilitation of widows particularly war widows, is considered to be repayment of society's debt. The Prophet is regarded by all Muslims to be the role model par excellence, to be emulated wherever possible. When he was a young man he married a widowed lady. Senior to him in age; For the next twenty-four years, till her demise, no other woman entered his life. By coincidence, just then the problem of war widows had, for the first time begun to

look problem before the fledging Muslim community. Widowed during the Abyssinian exile, Sauda was an elderly lady who came back. Widowed in a foreign land, while already a refugee, she was in desperate state. As always, the Prophet set a personal example to the Ummat by marrying her. The first battle of Islam, Badr, now took place. Zainab d/o Khuzaima, who had already been widowed once, lost her second husband at Badr, Widowed twice she was utterly destitute till Islam's survival, Uhad. The Muslim losses were five times those killed at Badr and the problem of war widows became serious. Once again the Prophet showed the way by marrying Hafsa.

### **FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE**

The root cause of misery for most woman is to be found in their financial dependence on others. While most of the so called advanced civilizations in the world have tried to rectify the evil only during the past 100 years or so, Islam has laid down laws of inheritance for woman 14 centuries ago. Under the Sharia Law, a woman will invariably inherit from her parents, (4:7 and 4:11) the husband (4:12) and her own sons (4:11 and 2:180); in certain circumstances she is entitled to a legacy from even her brother (4:176). Besides, no one can lay any claim to what a woman may earn by her own labour (4:32)

### **RESPECT AND COURTESY TO WOMEN**

If the wild and uncouth Arabs of the desert to be taught to respect woman kind, the mother would obviously be the best place to begin. "Paradise lies below the mother feet" the devout are told. Chapter 4 extols mothers thus:

"Fear Allah, in whose name you plead with one another and honour the mother who bore you. Allah is ever watching you. "(4:1)

As the readers no doubt know, if either or both, attain old age with you, show them no sign of impatience nor rebuke them; but speak to them kind words. Treat them with humility and tenderness; and say "Lord, be merciful to them, because they nursed me with great af-

fection when I was but an (helpless) infant". 17:23-24)

Even more praise to mother is Surah Al-Ahqaf. God is speaking:-

"We have ordained man to show kindness to his parents. With much pain his mother bears him and with much pain she brings him into the world. He is born and weaned in thirty months. When he grows to manhood and attains his 40th year, let him say, Lord. That I may give thanks." (46:15)

At 40, a man is at the peak of his adult life; surrounded by his own children, established in life, the battle for survival won, rich and powerful. This is the time when a Compassionate God is telling him, to remember his mother, without whom none of these would have been possible.

#### **ANCILLARY BENEFIT**

There are many benefits that woman derives because of the provisions of the Islamic code. They are not immediately realized because they are indirect. For instance, take the fact that marriage is a contract in Islam. Under this arrangement there is no such nonsense as severing all ties with the parental home after marriage. It may not be known widely but an Arab woman does not change her name or her surname when she marries. Married, separated, divorced or widowed, the rights bestowed on her when she came of age, remain unchanged. She continues to be a member of her clan and those doors are always open to her, if need should unfortunately arise. Compare this with the lot of her woebegone sisters elsewhere, who may not be getting their due respect in the husbands home. They must endure humiliation because they have nowhere else to go. Islam's strict orders on alcohol is another great benefit. I wonder if Mem Sahibs like Ms. Nasreen have even the slightest idea of the hand to mouth existence and the daily beatings that non-Muslims women of the working class have to live with, because the husbands drink.

## **SUMMING UP**

Such then is the Islamic code as applicable to women. It grants a woman full rights as an individual when she comes of age. These remain inviolate whether she is married or widowed. She can not be married against her will. She will get a dowry when she marries. Her entitlements of inheritance from her parents, husbands and sons (even brother in special cases) are clear and specific. No effort is spared to save her from the trauma of divorce. If arbitration and waiting period fail to save the marriage reasonable provision is made for her. She has the freedom to seek separation or divorce. The unborn child's rights are safeguarded. Her earnings cannot be touched and she will not be ill treated. If widowed, remarriage is considered common. Her parental home remains open to her, no matter, what. As an infant she is not killed. As a daughter she is cherished. As a wife she lives in dignity and as a mother, she is respected and honoured. The vital thing to note in all these is that these are not courtesies or privileges extended to her by convention or social ethos. The actual text of the scripture grants her these rights. To Muslims, their scripture is not a basis for (pointless and endless) discussions but the Divine word of God, to be followed to the letter. It is the corner stone of their faith that an Omniscient God is aware of what they do, in thought or deed; in public or in the privacy of their bedrooms.

## **CONCLUSION**

If Ms. Nasreen finds this code repressive or unfair, she has to be either stupid or ignorant. From the record she seems to be foolish but hardly stupid. Therefore, she must be unaware of the heritage. It is intended to send a copy of this article to her in Sweden where she is hiding, in the hope that the irony is not lost on her that a non-Muslim like me should be educating her about what is her's by birthright. We are all aware of the fact that the Muslim woman's lot is far from happy today. But that is not so because she is a Muslim." That is the lot of all the

women on this subcontinent. We live in grinding poverty, ignorance and superstition. These three factors invariably lead to poor quality of life and weakening of the social fabric. Man under pressure do lash out blindly at times and the nearest soft target, always woman, gets mauled, The Muslim poor are no exception. One must also face the fact squarely that there are sinners amongst the Muslims too. The misguided and the weak-willed do sometimes break the law. Besides, Islam has taken roots in many lands, as on this sub-continent. Inevitably, there is an aping (unknowingly) of non-Islamic customs, which are against the Sharia.

## FAST AS A PURIFIER

Fast as a way worship of is common in almost all religions. All prophets exhorted their followers to purify themselves through fast in some way or the other. The Holy Qur'an declares: "O believers, the fast has been made obligatory on you just as it was prescribed for the followers of the prophets before you. It is expected that this will produce piety in you" (Al Baqarah, 183).

The pagans of Arabia before the advent of Islam, also used to fast as a worship. The wife of Prophet Mohammed Aisha Raziallah Anha narrated that the tribe of Quraish used to fast on the day of Ashoora (10th of Moharram) in the pre-Islamic period, and then Allah's apostle enjoined upon Muslims to fast on that day, till the fast in the month of Ramadhan was prescribed. (Bukhari)

In 622 AD, Prophet Mohammed migrated to Madina and he saw the Jews fasting on the day of Ashoora. The Prophet asked them "What is this?" They told him it was a good day, the day on which Allah rescued Bani Israil (Jews) from their enemy, so Musa fasted on this day. The Prophet said "Our claim to Musa is greater than yours." The Prophet fasted on that day and ordered the Muslims to do so. Finally, in the years after migration the verses prescribing the fast in the month of Ramadhan were revealed and it was made obligatory for believers.

Fast means abstaining from dawn to sunset from eating, drinking and sex. But in reality its implications are much more than that. It demands giving up bad habits, ugly manners and all kinds of immoral activities. Prophet Mohammed explained that "Fasting is a shield of protection from the fire and also committing sins." Fasting is the best way to self-control and self-discipline. One who abstains from eating, drinking and sex whole day, even in the hottest days of May and June, when days are long and nights are small, would certainly be able to control himself and purify his soul. This training of fast will enable him to refrain from all unlawful and immoral activities which earn displeasure of his God and pervert his personality.

It is not a ritual, rather it is source of piety and it generates God-fearing and inculcates many virtues in the believers. Once, Umar Farooque, the second Caliph of Islam, asked Kaab Raziallah about piety. He said: "Have you ever passed through a thorny bush, if yes, then how?" Umar said: "When we pass through this kind of bush, we gather our clothes and save ourselves from thorns." Kaab said "just like that you pass through world and save yourselves from sins." The essence of fasting is piety and it can't be achieved without a clear realisation of the significance of the fast. A great Islamic scholar, points this fact when he says, "just as physical strength cannot be obtained from bread until it is properly digested, and be transformed into blood, which spreads through every vein, spiritual strength can't be obtained from fasting until the person who keeps fast is conscious of its purpose and allows it to permeate his heart and mind and dominate his thoughts, motives and deeds."

# ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY SET TO FACE THE 21st CENTURY

Ashish Tripathi

As Darul Uloom Nadawatul Ulama in Lucknow, one of the most important Islamic universities in the world, quietly approaches its 100th year of establishment, people at Nadawa are setting new priorities to face the challenges of 21st century.

According to Dr. Yunus Nagrami, a renowned Islamic scholar and member of the executive council of Nadawa, Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama was founded on the principle of balanced synthesis of the classical education with the modern one and to insulate Islamic culture from relentless accesses of western influences.

"During this period Nadawa has worked more as a movement than merely as an educational institution. It has initiated revolutionary reforms and produced distinguished scholars. We are proud of our legacy and we intend to carry it to 21st century," asserts Dr. Nagrami.

Established in 1898 By Maulana Mohammed Ali Mongeri as a small madarassa, today Nadawa has proliferated into a reputed seat of Muslim theological learning.

Today Nadawa draws students not only from all over India, but also from neighbouring countries -Burma, Tibet, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and as far as UK, USA, Syria, Australia, East Indies, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia and African countries. The institution and its branches had 4000 odd students on its rolls. No fee is charged from the students and large number of them are provided with free boarding and lodging facilities.

Around 1000 odd deserving students are given stipends and scholarships amounting to Rs. 65,000. Some of them are even sponsored by the Islamic institutions of Egypt and Syria.

The Darul Uloom has at present 131 well qualified teachers and 103 non teaching staff. The academic year begins from the 6th of Shabaan followed by the vaca-

tions of Ramadhan.

A student who wants to take admission should have some knowledge of Arabic and Urdu, besides Islamic teachings. The Darul Uloom provides education at all stages-from primary to the university stage -in theological branches of learning and Arabic literature.

**THE PRIMARY STAGE :** It covers a period of six years and provides elementary education in Urdu, English and Hindi as well as Arithmetic, Geography, General Science etc. covering the primary education as prescribed in secular school with a sound religious bias to it.

**THE SECONDARY STAGE :** This is a three years course. Besides English, this stage provides a thorough ground in Persian as well as Arabic grammar, literature and composition.

**HIGHER SECONDARY STAGE :** The two years course comprises of instruction in Persian, English and Arabic besides religious sciences and Islamic history.

**ALIMIYAT (graduation) STAGE :** The four years course offers instructions in the commentary of the Qur'an (tafsir), Traditions (hadith), Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) besides Arabic literature and other branches of Islamic learning. After graduating a student is entitled to be a ALIM.

**FAZILIAT (post graduation) STAGE :** This is a two year course providing instruction in Arabic literature and Islamic branches of learning, the latter comprises of shariah, Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqah and Islamic D'awah.

A student also has to submit a thesis in the subject of his choice. The title of FAZIL is bestowed upon the student who completes this course.

**Takmil (doctorate stage) :** Facilities are provided for undertaking research, known as takmil, in the subjects taught at faziliyat stage.

**SPECIAL COURSES :** Various condensed courses of Islamic sciences are also offered for the students who are already graduates or did not possess the knowledge of Urdu or Arabic. Students who want to memorise the Holy Qur'an are given special instructions. Huffaz have been appointed to impart such instructions. After com-



pletion, the students get the title of HAFIZ.

The management committee of Nadawa comprises of 63 elected members from all over the country. The committee nominates a Nazim (secretary general) who supervises academic affairs. It also nominates several other office bearers who assist the nazim. All the posts are honorary. At present Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadawi is Nazim.

The annual expenditure of Nadawa is well over rupees six million. Since it is not a government sponsored institution, all the expenses are met through donations and endowments made by the Muslim philanthropists.

Classes are held mainly at morning hours. Every student has to follow the code of conduct; he has to offer five namaz daily and abide by Islamic teachings. At evening they are free to enjoy sports and other activities.

The academic standard of the students graduating from Nadawa has earned recognition not only in the Arab countries but also from eminent orientologists of Europe and America and all those universities which offer higher courses of study in Arabic and Islamic subjects.

## THE PERFECT MAN

Last night the Sheikh wandered about the town with a lamp; Saying, "I am tired of demon and beast; man is my desire. My heart is sick of the feeble-spirited fellow-travellers; The lion of God and Rustam-i-Dastan are my desire. I said, "We too searched for him but he could not be found." He replied, "What cannot be found - that thing is my desire."

Jalaluddin Rumi

## THE AWAKENING OF ISLAM IN CENTRAL ASIA AFTER DISINTEGRATION OF SOVIET UNION

Abuzar Khairi

The disintegration of Soviet Union and the formation of newly independent republics in Central Asia is a very significant event in contemporary history. It has brought tremendous changes in geopolitical and economic environment of the region. This has occurred in an area where Islam and Muslims have a long history. It was during the Samanid period, however, that Islam and Muslims achieved a dominant position in the region, a position that was to last until the October Revolution.

This area was an integral part of the Islamic World and more recent times the Turkish influence dominated. Many religions, Social and Cultural manifestations of Islam have not only flourished here for many centuries, but even originated in splendourous cities of Bukhara, Samaraqand, Tashkent, Merv and Khorasan. These ancient cities were great centres of learning. Great scholars and writers like Avicenna, Al-Biruni, Al-Ghazali, Omar Khayyam and Firdausi came from this region and they made great contributions to scientific, historical and literary works.

Today Central Asia comprises five independent republics Kazakhstan, Kyrghystan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Central Asia extends over a vast area of approximately four million sq. km. with a combined population of some 60 million. To the north the region is bordered by the Russian Federation, to the east by China, to the South by Iran and Afghanistan, to the west by Caspean Sea. The entire region has extremely varied climate and natural conditions. In the west and north there are extensive plains; in the east a considerable part of the Kopetdagh in the South-West to the Pamirs and Tein Shan in the east, divides Central Asia from rest of

the continent. The two largest rivers of Central Asia - the Amu-Darya and Syr - Darya or Mave-rannahr, as it was called by the ancient Arabs, the territory was called Transoxiana, meaning 'between two rivers'.<sup>1</sup> There are a number of Island, sea and lakes, the largest being the Caspian Sea in the west, the Aral Sea in the Central and the lake Balkash in the east. The region is rich in natural resources, with very considerable deposits of oil and natural gas, coal, gold, uranium and other valuable commodities.

The geographical location of the Central Asia has been of decisive importance for trade. Before the discovery of Sea routes, all the main trade routes connecting Eastern and Central Asia with Eastern Europe and countries of the Near East lay across this territory.

The history of Central Asian region broadly divides into two groups, the first was nomad and another settled peoples. The urban settlement in Turkmenistan appeared around 1500 BC. Alexander the Great overthrew the Achaemenians and his successors introduced Hellenism in South Central Asia.<sup>4</sup> From the middle of the third century BC., the eastern part (present day Uzbekistan) formed part of the Gracco - Bactrian State, while the western part, (present day Turkmenistan) was incorporated into the Parthian empire, and thus came under different cultural influences. However, the entire region was linked by the so called "Silk Route", the transcontinental trade routes, which was encompassing China, India, Middle East and the Black Sea Basin.<sup>5</sup>

In the third century A.D., Iran ruled by the Sassanids, re-established its hegemony over Southern Central Asia. During this period the political system, cultural activity and the economic condition was in a very good position for many centuries in the region.<sup>6</sup> However, it was itself transformed by the Arab invasions in the seventh century.<sup>7</sup> Islam brought not only a few belief system but also a new social order in a new epistemology.<sup>8</sup>

In 704 A.D., in the time of Caliph al-Walid ibn Abdul Malik, the Arabs ruled Central Asia under the command

of *Qutaybah ibn Muslim ibn 'Amr al-Bahili*.<sup>9</sup> The Arab capital was at Merv, near the present-day Turkmen city of Mary. Around 50,000 Arabs migrated from Busra and Kufa and they settled in Khorasan, Bukhara and other cities.<sup>10</sup> Qutaybah carried out a number of reforms in the army, and he gained the sympathy and the confidence of the locals. Qutaybah built two mosques in Bukhara, one of which was called '*Msajid-e-qutaybah*'. During the communist regime it was transformed into a warehouse, but after the break-up of USSR it was returned to Muslims. The Arab descendents, they were living separately from the locals to preserve their own language. So the locals were reciting Qur'an in Persian language in the initial period.<sup>11</sup> Once the local became proficient in Arabic, the practice was abandoned. These cities were drawn into cultural orbit of the caliphate and within a century had become important centres of Islamic learning under the Arabs and later the seljuk, Turks, until it was destroyed by the Mangols.<sup>12</sup>

After the invasion of Arabs in the Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya region with the new model of faith and way of life, a new type of society came into being in central Asia. The Central Asians embraced their philosophies, and accepted their language for Islamic culture and Islamic teachings. The main towns were Samarqand, Bukhara, Shah Termez, Khwarezm, Merv, Khojent, Urgent and Nisa, which became famous for Islamic thoughts. These cities maintained trade, intellectual and religious contacts with the other Islamic countries. Some of them were *Imam Mohammed ibn Ismail al-bukhari* (Hijri); the great Muhadith, *Hafiz Abu Issa ibn al-Khwarezmi* (484-593 Hijri); The great Islamic thinker *Abu al-Nasr Tarhan al-Hakim al Farabi* (died in 339 Hijri); the eminent encyclopaedist *Abu Rehan Mohammed ibn Ahmed al-Biruni* (262-348 Hijri); and the famous Scientist *Abu Ali ibn Sina* (Avecenna) Avecenna wrote several books on medicine and philosophy.<sup>13</sup> Among his medical works is the famous Cannon of Medical Science which has been translated into Latin in

the twelfth century and used by the Physicians in the East and West.<sup>14</sup>

Mohammed Ibn Musa al-Khwarezmi is considered the founder of Arab Mathematics and from the title of his work "Al-Dgabr" the term Algebra is derived. He was not only a mathematician but also an astronomer, geographer and historian. His work represent a synthesis of Indian Algebra and Greek geometry which form the basis of modern mathematical science. Al-Khwarezmi made use of centuries old Khawrezmian tradition of mathematics, mostly influenced by Indian and Greek culture, which has arisen on the basis of such practical needs as irrigation, travel, trade and construction.<sup>15</sup>

During the Abbassid period the Arab presence was soon withdrawn, however, administratively the region remained under the jurisdiction of Khurasan, thus still very much within the Iranian sphere of influence. The first independent Muslim state in Central Asia, that of Samamids, was founded in 875 AD by an Iranian dynasty from Khurasan, which, having an established power base in Bukhara, built up an empire that at its height, exercised suzerainty over Transoxiana, Khwarezmi, and wide area of Iran and Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> The founder of the Samanid dynasty was *Ismail ibn-Ahmed*, ruled from 875-999 A.D. The Samanid, built up extensive trade links with Europe and China thus regulating the *silk route*. The samanid State (Maveran nahr, Khwarezm, Syr-Darya, Iran and Afghanistan) played a great role in the ethnic and cultural history of the area. During this era Tajik-Persian language became widespread, and it was at this point that the great poets Rudaki and Firdausi wrote their monumental works. The Arabic language however, continued to be the language of science.<sup>17</sup>

By the 16th century, the two centres had emerged as the chief regional powers, the Khanate of Bukhara and Khiva.<sup>18</sup> The Khanate of Bukhara occupied a territory that coincided approximately with that of modern Uzbekistan, but also included part of Turkemenistan, Tajikistan and

Afghanistan. Khiva, somewhat smaller in size, was Kazahks and Karakalpak lands. In the 18th century A.D. a third power base took shape, countries was prevalent these. Among the Turkmen, and Kyrgyz nomads there existed powerful remnants of the tribal-clan system.

### **THE RUSSIAN CONQUEST OF CENTRAL ASIA**

The earliest contact between the Russians and Muslims was in Volga region. The break up of the Golden Horde into rival Khanates of Astrakhan, Kazan, and Crimea, the Horde and the Khanate of the Siberian Tatars provided a golden opportunity to Tsarist Russia to avenge her earlier defeats and subjugation at the hands of Mongol-Tatar conquerors. The earliest gains were in the Volga region. The Russian offensive began with the annexation of Kazan, in 1552, and Astrakhan in 1556. The Khanate of Crimea was conquered in 1771 and annexed 1783. After the annexation of Kazan, Ivan the Terrible built Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow's Red Square to Commemorate the Victory and topped its domes with onion shapes to symbolize the severed heads of the turbaned Tatars.<sup>20</sup>

In 1740 the Russians decided openly to destroy the mosques. During the next three years out of 536 mosques in the Volga region 418 were demolished.<sup>21</sup> This led in 1744 to a spontaneous revolt. So in April, two new mosques were allowed to built in Kazan. When attempts at forceful conversion, destruction of Madrassas and mosques and liquidation of religious leaders did not achieve their goals, the Russian decided to change their strategies and tactics. Hence forth, religious activities were separated from the political. The first orthodox mission was set up by Empress Anna Ioannova (1730-1740) in the Kazan district. The *Kontora Novokreshchinskikh Del* (office of New Christian Affair) was established in September 1740.<sup>22</sup> Kazan, Astrakhan, Nizhniy Novgorod and Voronezh were put under its jurisdiction. In all these regions it has its organs. These organs directly imposed taxes on the Muslims to collect money to run Christian activities in the localities. However, by 1750 state authori-

ties found the situation explosive. The *KND* was provoking open confrontation with the Muslims. Yet it was eventually closed in 1764.<sup>23</sup>

In 1784 the name of *Crimea* was changed to *Tavrida*, and the names of the cities were also changed. The famous city *Aq Mesjit* became *Simfaropol*. In late 18th century "between one lakh - three lakh Tatars, mostly nomads (Nogays) from the steppes of the Central and Northern Crimea, left for Ottoman Empire."<sup>24</sup>

The last Muslim stronghold to be annexed was Turkistan which was divided into Khanates; *Khiva* and *Kokand* and the *Emirate of Bukhara*. The offensive started just after the Crimean war. Uzbeks were the largest nationality in Central Asia, constituting about 3.5 million people in 1860s. In 1876 the Khanate of Kokand was fully annexed, losing all semblance of autonomy.<sup>26</sup>

The ruling principle of Tsarist Policy, that differed from region to region, followed certain general lines such as the complete liquidation of the governing class which was considered the most dangerous enemy of the Russian Empire. Hence, it was physically destroyed or deprived of its feudal rights, dispossessed of its property and altogether ruined<sup>27</sup>.

Muslims were discriminated in various fields. The Tsarist regime considered Islam in Turkistan as its moral enemy because of strong resistance involving several rebellions inspired and led by the Muslim religious leaders. However, as the Russians with the superior fire power succeeded in consolidating their domination a section of Muslim devoted its attention to reforming its traditional system of education in order to mobilize the human resources to challenge the Russian domination.<sup>28</sup> This was led by Ismail Bey Gaspirali (Gasprinsky),<sup>29</sup> the *Jadidist* (Modernists) movement in spite of the resistance of any reforms offered by the *Qadimists* (Traditionalists) who were supported by the Russian Colonial Administration, made great strides in reawakening the national *Jadidists* successfully resisted the policy of Russification and



proselytisation of Muslim to Christianity.<sup>30</sup>

In order to unite the Muslim masses under the banner of Islam and jadidists organised All-Russian Muslim Congress was held in Nizhni Novgorod on August 15, 1905. Ismail Bey Gasprinsky was the chairman of the Congress. The main objective of the union of Russian Muslim (Rusyanin Muslimen Ittifaqi): "The unification of Muslims in Russia within one movement", The establishment of the constitutional monarchy based on Proportional representation of nationalities".<sup>31</sup> A second Congress was held in St. Petersburg in January 13-23, 1906, both Congress were illegal but, because of wide spread upheaval in the country, the government not only took no action against the organizers but allowed them to hold another Congress.

The Third Congress was held in August 16-21 again in Nizhni Novgorod. Its chairman was Topchibashev. The Congress openly discussed many sensitive issues, and formed a 15 man Central Committee. However, it didn't include representations from all major Muslim nationalities. The central Committee had only one Azerbaijan, the rest were Tatars. "The Azerbaijan liberals loosened their ties to the All Russian Muslim movement after the Second Congress leaving the field to the Tatars".<sup>32</sup> Azerbaijan liberals founded their own Muslim Constitutional Party on 17th October, 1905 in Baku. As V.I. Lenin, discussing the Superiority of Tatar Muslims observed that the Kazan Tatar had 'one school for every 100 people of both sexes, while members of the orthodox Church has one school for every 1500-3000 people'.<sup>33</sup>

The ideas of pan - Turkic<sup>34</sup> solidarity were quite popular and many Muslims believed that pan - Turkic and Pan - Islamic Unity was the only way to save the Muslims. Gasprinsky alone published three different Journals. *Alemi Niswan* (Women's World), *Alemi Sibiyan* (Children's World), and *Kha Kha Kha*. A new political group called *Yeni Taterler* (Young Tatar) was formed. "This group was underground at least in the beginning who modelled on young Turks."<sup>35</sup> This group also started publishing a

weekly newspaper, *Watan Khadymy* (Servant of the Motherland), which was closed by Russian authorities in 1908.<sup>36</sup>

### ISLAM ON THE EVE OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

When the Bolshevik revolution took place in 1917, the new educated central Asian Muslims formed a Muslim Council; while the Ulema Jamiyate, headed by Mullah Shir Alilapin. The first Congress was held in April, which was attended by 450 delegates. They also demanded an end to Russian colonization and the return of confiscated land to their rightful owners. The Second Conference of Central Asian Muslims, which was held in Tashkent, ruled by the *Shariah*, which application was to be assured by a *Mahkhamai Shariat* presided by *Sheikhul-Islam*.<sup>37</sup>

Just before the October revolution a Congress of Daghistani Ulema, Sufi and religious leaders was held in the *aul* of Andi in Avaristan. The Congress elected Naqshbandi Sheikh Nalmuddin as the Imam of Daghistan and Chechenia, and proclaimed that his status would be the same as the Late Imam Shamil. No Muslims had the options to disobey his decrees. Sheikh Uzun Haji declared that "If so God wills, we shall construct a Shariyat monarchy in a Muslim land, there can be no republic."<sup>38</sup> These Sheikhs had an army of 10,000 *murids*, and said Beg (grand son of Imam Shamil), and Kaitmas Ali Khanov were the commander. They fought against the Bolshevik army till 1925. When Bolshevik captured Imam Najmuddin in Sept. 1925, one million daghistani Muslims were deported from the centre of the Sheikhs and religious leaders.<sup>39</sup> Soviet official sources accept that at the time of defeat there were 19 *murshids*, and 61,200 *murids* in daghistan, and in Chechenia out of 400,000 Muslims there were 50,000 *sufi adepts*.<sup>40</sup> Even so the Sufis continued operations in the mountain areas; the armed Jihad stopped but a peaceful Jihad started.

Civil war started in all central Asian region, the central communist leaders had no control over the Russian Communists in Central Asia, Thus, during the first two years after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Russian Com-

munists created havoc in central Asia, destroying their mosques Madrassa and humiliating the Muslims by taking away their women. Hundreds of Muslims women were captured by Russian Soldiers on the pretext of emancipating them from the allegedly traditionally enslavement and confinement within the four walls of their homes. Operating from *urda* (Military District) of tashkent the Russian Communists had left loose a reign of terror which gave, birth to a guerrilla type resistance by the natives. The Communists historians later called it *Basmachi* (bandits) movement which continued for more than a decade after the October Revolution. The Muslim population had been reduced by 20% in Ferghana district. How many died in epidemics like cholera, dysentery and typhus and how many were killed, nobody knows. In fact there is no data available, at least one million Kazakhs died during the civil war.

Towards Islam and Muslim there was a brief spell of a liberal attitude from 1919-25. The Socialist government tried to convince the Muslim that under socialist legislation the Muslim religious rights would be far better safeguard than in Tsarist Russia. V.I. Lenin himself was active in propagating such theories allowing Muslims to restore some of the mosques and madrassas destroyed by the Red Army. But such tactical move did not last long. When J.V. Stalin came up with his Policies, a frontal attack was launched against Islam and Muslims. Mosques and madrassas were destroyed or closed down. Some of the historical Mosques which had the finest wood work more famous for their Islamic architecture were burnt down. The property of Auqaf was confiscated the transmission of religious teaching and instruction was banned. The Sharia Courts were abolished. Hundreds of thousands of religious people were arbitrarily persecuted or killed. Even the Jadidist leaders who had been co-opted by the communists were not spared; they were brought to Moscow to face firing squad.<sup>41</sup> By the end of 1920s more than a million Muslims had migrated to Afghanistan alone. Other migration waves were directed at Turkey, Middle East

even in India.

The Muslims of Soviet Russia be cut off from their cultural heritage and religious bonds with *Umma*, the script of their language was changed from Arabic to Latin in 1928 and then to Cyrillic in 1940.<sup>42</sup> The marriage ceremony according to religion was declared invalid. The validity of each and every Islamic practice, such as, Fasts, Prayers, haj, circumcision was questioned.

After Stalins death, Khrushchev (1959-64) launched the second anti-Islamic campaign. Islam was considered as the most dangerous threat to the ideology of Marxism - Leninism. It began with a loud condemnation of Stalin for his softness towards religion and his "deviations from Leninist Legislation". This era was one of the most violent anti-Islamic drives in Soviet history.<sup>43</sup> In early 1960s the Atheist club was established in Historical faculty of the Central Asian university in tashkent. From 1963 anti-Islamic documentary films, plays and features were organised in various Muslim Union Republics. Anti-religious measures were setup in various Central Asian towns. A museum of atheism was opened in Bukhara in an ancient mosque near the tombs of Naqshbandia Sufi order. A virulent campaign to close down the remaining mosques (estimated numbers: 1,500) resulted in the closure of most of the larger mosques and almost all the villages mosques.<sup>43</sup> during 1948-75, 923 anti-Muslim books and pamphlets were published in 21 Muslim languages apart from the anti-Islamic books in Russian.<sup>44</sup> In 1964, a survey conducted by the Soviet-Scholar revealed that despite decline of mosques and other institution, the number of Muslim remained the same. The anti-Islam in propaganda failed to convince the people to give up their faith.<sup>45</sup> The social interaction between Russian and Muslims are nominal. Ethnically mixed collective farms are rarity. Racial Segregation, mostly in rural areas, also exists in towns. The absence of social contact between two races in the towns are separated. Inter-marriages between Muslims and Russians are also very rare. Even marriage of a Mus-

lim male with a Russian female is extremely uncommon.<sup>46</sup>

At the end of 1980s, Mikhail Sergevich Goorbachev came up with his policy of '*Perestroika*' (restructuring) and '*glasnost*' (openness). The chief consequence of this was a more accommodating attitude towards Islam. This Volteface was greets with surprise, but also great enthusiasm, by the indigenous population. It was a cultural, social and religious phenomenon, as people publicly wanted to demonstrate their separateness from the communist system and slavic culture. Several new mosques were opened and informal religious classes were set up in many areas. The ruling elites, although still officially members of the communist party and therefore forbidden to religious ceremonies, nevertheless began to give official encouragement to the Islamic revival. Along with the overall religious revival, there has been a tremendous revival in Sufism, the mystical trend of Islam that originated in Central Asia. For centuries Sufism has been the most tolerant expression of Islam in Central Asia. Even after seven decades an 86 year old woman, Sheikha Safaroper, is the incharge of Sufi Shrine in the Pamirs.<sup>47</sup>

After the collapse of Soviet Union, Islam provided a ready replacement for Soviet ideology. Islamic cultural material has begun to appear on the pages of newspapers and magazines, Islamic and Arabic books are now being printed, Radio and television station are allowing religious leaders to give lecture, and broadcast some religious festivals such as Eid Prayers.

Ferghana is the most densely populated region of Central Asia. The impact of Islam is most obvious in Namangan, a large modern town. The formation and spread of special voluntary '*Adolat*' (justice) groups, whose members are mostly young and are often linked to local Islamic groups are active in Provincial Centres such as Namangan, Andijan and Kokand. In the 20th century Egyptian - based Ikhwan - ul - Muslimeen (Muslim brotherhood) penetrated in Central Asia. The main aim of this movement was the creation of an Islamic state. The *Ikhwan - ul - Muslimeen* created a number of secret cells

in a number of Central Asian cities in the 1930s, and although strictly underground, the movement has come out into the open and flourished since the advent of *Perestroika*. The *Islamic Renaissance Party* (IRP) which exists in all five Central Asian republics is the direct heir to those early Brotherhood groups.<sup>48</sup>

**Muslim Population of the Soviet Union  
January 19, 1989**

Community	1979	1989	Average % Increase
Uzbek	12455978	16686240	34.0
Kazakh	6556442	8137878	24.1
Tajik	2897697	4216693	45.5
Turkoman	2027913	2718297	34.0
Kyrgyz	1906271	2530998	32.8
Azeri	5477330	6791106	24.0
Tatar	6185196	6645588	7.4
Daghestani	1656676	2072071	25.1
Chuvash	755782	958309	26.8
Ossete	541983	597802	10.3
Kara-kalpak	303324	423436	39.6
Kabhardo	321719	394651	22.7
Krim	132272	268739	103.2
Uighur	210312	262199	24.5
Ingush	286198	237577	27.6
Turk	92689	207369	123.7
Karachay	131174	156140	19.1
Kurd	115858	152952	23.0
Uvish	108711	124941	14.9
Abkhazi	90915	102938	13.2
Bulgar	66334	88711	32.8
Donkan	51694	69686	34.8
Cherkess	46470	52356	12.7
Baluch	29091	18997	53.1
Arab	6813	11599	70.2

Note: this is based on national and ethnic bases, because communists authorities do not issue on the basis of religious affiliation this figure do not reflect the actual number of Muslim in the USSR. According to this data the Muslim population approximately 60 million.

### The Soviet Republics with Islamic Majorities

Republic	Area in Km <sup>2</sup>	Population	Percentage	Capital
Uzbekistan	447400	19810077	86	Tashkent
Tajikistan	143100	5490000	88	Dushpande
Turkmenistan	488100	3789000	86	Askhabad
Kazakhstan	27177000	16782000	52	Alma Ata
Kyrgyzstan	198500	4590000	773	Bishkek

In February 1990. The Central Asian Muslims demanded the resignation of Mufti Shamsuddin Khan Babakhan, the chairman of the Muslim Board for Central Asia in Tashkent. They accused him of womanizing and deviating from Islam, and he was forced to step down. At the same time the ambitious Qazi of Alma Ata, Radbek Nisanbai, had himself elected Grand Mufti of Kazakhstan, thus Creating a separate Kazakh Muslim Board without consulting Moscow.<sup>49</sup> People were no longer satisfied that Moscow should determine who should be teaching them religion.

The first sign of this independent spirit in the Islamic revival was the building of new mosques. By October 1990 there were a total 50 Mosques in Kyrgyzstan compared to 5 in 1989, 30 in Turkmenistan compared to 5 before, 40 in Tajikistan compared to 17 before and 90 in Kazakhstan compared to 37 before, In Tashkent city there were 30 new mosques compared to just 2 in 1989<sup>50</sup> By October 1991, there were over 1,000 new mosques in every republic and new mosques was being opened every day. Converted homes, schools and social centres and even abandoned factories were turned into mosques. By October 1992 thousands of mosques had been set up in each republic, The building of new mosques and Madrassahs is financed by Arab Countries. Saudi Arabia

launched a major initiative to woo Central Asia back into Islamic fold as early as 1990. When it sent one million Qur'an to the region and funded Projects to translate the Qur'an into local languages, and the establishment of an Islamic Printing Press at Tashkent. The arrival of the Qur'an created massive public excitement. Saudi Radio Service changed the transmission hours of the religious broadcasting programs "*Nidai Islam*" for Muslims of the Central Asian region, King Fahd invited hundreds of prominent central Asians to perform had in 1991 and again in 1992. In August 1991 the Saudi dramatically improved their image in Moscow by Signing \$1.5 billion loan to the Soviet Union in recognition of Moscow's support during the Gulf War.<sup>51</sup> However, Arab interest has remained at the emotional and religious level rather than at a practical level. In February 1992 Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al Faisal visited Central Asia. The Saudi's see their mission as winning back the people to Islam rather than cultivating economic or trade relation. Even through bank "*Al-Baraka Kazakhstan*", there has been little Saudi investment in the region.

### **Muslim revival in Uzbekistan**

There civil war in Tajikistan became an issue of grave concern to its neighbours, especially Uzbekistan. Its fear is rooted in history and geography. Its Farghana Valley Provinces or Fraghana, Namangan and Andizan lie along its border with Tajikistan. Had the Tajik fighting spilled over into Uzbekistan the Islamic group would have found much support for their cause. Historically, the fertile valley renowned for cotton crop, has been a bastion of Islam. Even during communist era many local Muslims used to have Islamic ceremonies for marriage, nikah and birth-days Sunnat but in secret, according to Abdul Rashid Ibaiddallov. Deputy Mayor of Namangan.<sup>52</sup>

After the Independence of Uzbekistan in December 1991, there has been a revival of Islam in the Farghana Valley, During 1990-92 the number of mosques in Namangan rose from two to 26. Now the province of



Namangan has 130 mosques with 1.5 million population. In 1989 only four Muslims from the Namangan province were allowed to undertake the Haj. In 1992 the number of Haji (1,500) from the Namangan and the total number of Pilgrims from the country were 4,000<sup>53</sup>

President Islam Karimov, aware the popularity of Islamic revivalism, began prefacing public speeches with "*Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim*" (In the name of God, the merciful and the compassionate). During his trip to Saudi Arabia in May 1992, he went to MECCA to Perform Umra. Karimov government appointed a Mullah the head of the Religious affairs Directorate, and declared *Id al-Fitr* and *Al-Adhan* Public holidays.

### CONCLUSION

The Revival of Islam in Central Asia started at the end of the 1980s when Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of perestroika' and 'glasnost' allowed people in the USSR, for the first time in all the years of Soviet rule. The revival of Muslim religious life saw the immediate emergence of two different directions.

After 70 years of suppression of religion and curbs on religious practice, there is a sudden resurgence and revival of Islam in all the republics. During the soviet rule, the Muslims of Central Asia were silent. The majority of the population are Sunni Muslim belonging to the Hanafi Tradition. In December 1991, the fall of communism in Soviet Union unexpectedly has further facilitated the considerable rise of observance of Islamic rites, adoption of the Islamic form of greeting, religious marriages, performance of daily prayers and greater attendance at mosques. There has been a phenomenal increase in the construction of mosques and religious Schools. In 1990-91 the number of open mosques increased from 160 to 5,000. The building of new mosques and madrasahs was financed by Arab countries, and Iran and Turkey, who were competing for the support of the Central Asian Muslims, Saudi Arabia sent large number of copies of the Holy Qur'an. Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia have dispatched

religious missionaries and they offered scholarship to the Central Asian students of theological studies. The strength of Islamic parties is gradually increasing and Islamic Renaissance Parties have been set up in all republics. Tajikistan has created a serious challenge to secular elites, and in the future Islam will have a decisive importance in Central Asia. Because all the Central Asian republics have officially declared themselves Muslims states.

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## MOST GERMANS FAVOUR ISLAMIC STUDIES IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

BONN - Opinion polls, recently carried out in the German capital of Bonn, have shown that the majority of Germans approve of the inclusion of Islamic Studies in the curriculum of the government schools.

The poll, which was carried out by the German newspaper *Die Fuch*, revealed that out of the 1,000 samples polled, 52 percent approved the teaching of Islamic Studies, while 39 percent were opposed to the idea, while the rest were either undecided or had no opinion in the matter.

In some German states, such as Westphalia, Lower Saxony and North Rhine, Islamic Studies is already taught as an optional subject.

## DA'WAH AND CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION REVOLUTION

Khalid-al Mina

The advancement in communication technology, the speed of information, electronic mail, the commercialization of satellite (which were previously for military purpose) and so on has removed all borders. There is now no such thing as cultural or intellectual sovereignty. Now you can receive anything, at any time and anywhere. Thus the censor has become as extinct as the dinosaur, as one Arab intellectual remarked.

### GLOBAL VILLAGE

But what have we done to protect ourselves from this invasion into our culture, way of life, beliefs and ideology? During World war II and at the height of East-West confrontation, there was jamming device. Now they have become redundant and because the world itself has changed. People are viewing the world as a "global village" where there will be an overriding culture- that of Michael Jackson, Madonna, fed by films and books that everyone has to be "familiar with".

And of course we have to be the "receipients" of this culture. This is because, the West with its political, economic and military might feels that it has the right to force down our throats its own culture and brand of life, By using the media, it brings to our doorsteps and right into our living rooms a daily digest of its own soap operas and scandals.

Thus we all know about O.J. Simpson, Lorena Bobbit, Sharon Stone and a lot of things that we have no connection with. This is at a time when the majority of Muslim world cannot name four "Sahabis" (Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), remember the names of the wives of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) or distinguish between the battle of Hittin or Al-Qadisiyah. Yes, I am afraid this is true.

As I said, the communication technology has levelled the world of information. Its Intelligent use and speedy distribution has now become the most important

thing in our modern world. And now the internet is taking root in the lives of millions of people. In the past couple of years it has slowly started taking over the world.

What is the internet? It is computers talking to each other. Thus we have millions of computers around the globe exchanging information through the so-called World wide Web. This is a giant encyclopedia, where people can find any information on any topic in the form of text, graphics, video and sound. The technology provides animation as well. Then of-course there are news groups and discussion groups to which millions of people subscribe. They discuss everything on the Internet, publish their comments free of any censorship and place articles on any topic they choose. They can even start their own news groups.

### **ANTI ISLAMIC MATERIAL**

Already there have been a lot of articles about Islam. Unfortunately the majority of them have been viciously against it.

I will quote something light. "The disassociation of the body and the ego may explain why the public amputation of a thief's hand is tolerated as standard punishment in Saudi Arabia. It also explains why an Arab employer living in a modern house can provide his servants with a room that is a box like cubicle approximately 1.5 meter by 2.5 by 1.5 in size that is not only hung from the ceiling to save floor space but has an opening so that the servant can be spied on."

Dear readers, apart from the Internet this is an obligatory English course for American students at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

However, we should not blame these people for spreading lies and filth about it. We are to blame, and I say it with both sadness and candour, When the Internet technology spread, millions of people the world over started using it. The latest figures show about 45 million people and increasing by 50 percent over six months.

"We should ban It", said a University Professor. I

laughed. The only way you can ban the Internet is by cutting every telephone line in the Arab world, smashing all computers and returning to the Middle Ages.

Why not look on the other side of the fence? Why not use this powerful medium not only to defend our views but also to spread our own values to these spiritually starved people. As we sit and form groups to discuss the Internet, our enemies have gone ahead and placed themselves firmly on the communication and information map of the world. There are many millions of Muslims who use the Internet, and they are disturbed about the false image about Islam. There are some academic sites from the University of Texas and the university of Oregon, However, they are limited and hard-to-find sites.

### **QADIANI ACTIVITIES**

While we wait in unjustified fear and weakness, the Ahamadiyah or Qadiyaniah group, has set a computer generated mosque on the Internet. They have a *site for fatwas* and give negative reporting about Islam. For those who don't know the Ahamadiyah Groups, they believe there is another prophet after Holy Prophet Muhammed (PUBH). They are very active in the United States, Europe and are experts at using information technology.

In the Internet, there are no registered trademarks. If you take a name it becomes yours. The Ahamadiyah Group has taken the word "Islam". Many other have registered names of Islam, so that they can use it for their own nefarious purposes.

But do not blame them. Let us blame ourselves.

Islam is not, as the West would have it, a religion for the Third World, But no wonder they believe this, given our reluctance to spread a message that is as valid for the electronic age as it was when first given by God.

The question is, what can be done about it? Arab governments have thought about setting up their own web sites. However, let me be very blunt. No body likes to visit "official sites" on the internet. They view it as propaganda. The age of a propaganda has died. Information is now

privatized and while many in the Arab world believe they can "hold or even control information", that period will be history soon.

The battle over cyberspace has begun. The Internet has challenged every form of broadcasting known to the world.

The question will arise, who controls the emerging international information highway? The struggle will put government officials of the Internet in order to preserve national authority against these members of an emerging cyber/civil society that refuses to recognize international boundaries.

The battle group in China was defeated for the Chinese government realised that if it were to attempt to impede the spread of computers it would create tremendous resentment in population eager to enter computer age.

I can not say it loudly or heartily. We must carry the true message of Islam to every corner of the earth and the Internet has made it possible. It is time to rise form our self important work and do the work of God.

### **RESPONSIBILITY OF MUSLIMS**

For Muslims, it is now time to start facing the challenge ahead of us. It is good to have your own satellite stations but you have to speak to your own people and with your own language. You are preaching to the converted.

As we ignore the internet, then we are not facing our responsibility to fight moral and religious pollution. If we ignore this medium we will leave the field to individuals and unorthodox sects who unfortunately are playing on the minds of millions.

It was in the light of this that we formed the Arab net which is the largest Website serving the Middle east on the Internet. It means any one wanting to know about the Arab world has to through this site. It is our opportunity to show the world what Arabs, especially Muslim Arabs, can provide in terms of information.

While we were going through the best Internet sites we discovered the names like Allah, Mohammed, Mus-



lims, Jihad, Islam, were grabbed by other intentions. A Serb registered the word Jihad. Can you imagine what he will write? On our own initiative we registered the words: Makkah, Madinah, Haj, Allahuakbar, Muhammed and Moslem. In protocol, this means that anyone using the words to search for information will come directly to these sites.

We can do better. This is a world starved for spiritual comfort. If we are able to project our self in the right manner and in clean and precise language we can fulfil our duties as citizens of the world.

But let us not waste days and weeks discussing how we can support ourselves everyday.

If you have never used the word you will not understand that everyday may mean literally thousands of words written about the very things we believe in.

We have no time for bureaucracy. While we have committee meetings in grand rooms over months at a time, users hold teleconferences in minutes.

Wait and pay for it with the most beloved part of our lives-our faith. Even companies in the Middle East have preferred to go with foreigners rather than be grouped under the umbrella serving the Middle East. I find the disloyalty to our business and social environment appalling. It will also not be very profitable for them. This is just another example of how we are our own worst enemies.

With all the wealthy people in the Muslim world, I have not found one who loves culture that he could help us raise money for an on-line Arabic language course. None.

We accuse the west of spending more money on their pets than on welfare. I accuse myself and my brothers of sometimes having the same wrong priorities.

Next time you go to spend a few thousand dollars on a painting, or a new suit, or a new sound system, or even an ashtray, think of what this could contribute to these spread of the truth. Chances are that you will think again.

If we don't think again, then don't complain about being misunderstood.

Courtesy: Arab News

## The Fragrance of East

continued from page 100.

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(33) Judith Miller, "The Challenge of radical Islam", in Foreign Affairs, Spring 1993, pp. 43-56.

(34) Gassan salame, "Islam and the West", in Foreign Affairs, Spring 1993, pp.22-29

(35) Miller, *Op.Cit*

(36) Leon T. Hadar, "What Green Peril", in Foreign Affairs, Spring 11993, pp.27-42

(37) *Ibid*

(38) *Ibid*

(39) Said Ben Salmane, "The War of Nicknames and Adjectives and the Concept of Fundamentalism between Recitification and Superficiality", "Al Bahith" magazine, No 60, October 1993

(40) *Ibid*

# ISLAMIC TRADITIONS IN PUBLIC RELATION

Alauddin Masood

Contrary to the claims of the Western scholars that public relations is a new science which took shape as a distinct discipline only at the beginning of the twelfth century, there exists strong evidence that the Muslim rulers made use of PR technique for persuasive communication even 1500 years ago. The Muslim caliphs had a separate cadre of officers who were involved in public relations and who were even designated as Public Relation Officers.

## HAZRAT ALI'S EPISTLE

The fourth caliph of Islam, Hazrat Ali's epistle to the Governor of Egypt, Malik Ashtar, bears testimony to the existence of the institutions of the Public Relation Officers during the time of Caliphs. Hazrat Ali's epistle is in the shape of a detailed and comprehensive letter advising the Governor how to manage the state affairs and make recruitment to various offices, keeping in view certain basic qualities and traits in persons who are appointed to man various important official positions. The epistle forms an interesting reading and it is a remarkable document on the techniques of statecraft and management. Allama Rushdi's Turabi has translated this historic document into English and subsequently it has been published by various organizations.

While describing the types of state minios, Hazarat Ali's epistle mentions: "*We have the army formed of the soldiers of God. We have our civil officers and their establishments, our judiciary, our revenue collectors and public relation officers*". Hazrat Ali (R.A.) never claimed credit for having created a separate cadre of Public Relations Officers and this suggests that this position/cadre had emerged as a separate and distinct entity even before the periods of Hazrat Ali (R.A.)

In fact, public relations is linked to the civilization

and competition and whatever we find a semblance of civilization, even during the pre-Christ era, we find traces there of people who carried out functions some of which today form an essential or integral component of the overall job of a public relations practitioner.

### **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Excavations in Iraq have revealed that the authorities in the ancient Iraq put a high premium on communication skills and used them to convince the farmers about the benefits of using the latest techniques of harvesting, sowing and irrigation. The popular mode for the dissemination of messages at that time was through stone tablets which carried and conveyed the messages.

Another form of spreading information-advertising began to flourish around 3200 B.C. in Egypt. After some time, the ancient Romans learnt this art from the Egyptians and started to use advertising for publicity.

In ancient Greece, the politicians commissioned lobbyists to convince their voters. These lobbyists, who were known as Sophists, were renowned for their reasoning and rhetoric and they would extol the virtues of their particular candidates in the amphitheatres or at other places. Not only this, the Greeks used communication techniques to win support of their citizens in their war efforts as early as the times of Julius Caesar (100-4 B.C.) and subsequently it became an essential component of every war effort.

In the South Asia Sub-Continent, the monarchs of the pre-Christ era tried to establish permanent channels of communications with their subjects. The rulers of the day would use several means, including carving on rocks or specially constructed monuments, to highlight their achievements, convey the royal proclamations or keep the people informed about measures entitled by the state for their welfare, progress and prosperity.

One of the decrees issued by Ashoka (300 B.C.) can be seen on a rock near Mansehra, a city in the North-Western Frontier Province of Pakistan. The text of the

carvings portrays the laws in force at that time, measures to make the people abide to the laws, curb racial/class conflicts, public welfare schemes/programmes initiated by the state while at the same time endeavouring to assure the people that new measures/steps shall result in improving the efficiency of the state machinery. Such rock carvings bear testimony to the efforts that the ancient kings made to keep a constant channel of communication and thus mutual understanding with their public.

Another important function of a PR practitioner is to keep the management fully informed about the public reaction to their policies, products or services. The Muslim kings of the South Asia sub-Continent appointed **Waqa-e-Nawees** (scribes/correspondents) for keeping themselves abreast of the public opinion and also their reaction to their various policies/measures, law and order situation, general state of affairs in the country, life style of the functionaries and behaviour of the state ministers with the general public. These scribes were directly responsible to the emperors and kept the sovereign informed about the situation and important happenings in their areas of posting.

#### **QUR'AN THE BEST GUIDE:**

God had told human-beings, from time to time, what is good for them and what is bad for them, what is permissible for them and what is forbidden for them, what gives meaning to their earthly existence and what reduces it an exercise in absurdity. The first prophet to whom God revealed Himself was adam and the last prophet in the series is Mohammed (Peace be upon him).

The holy Prophet (PBUH), like his predecessors, served as a medium for divine communication to the mankind and the Qur'anic communication is positive communication. It lays down definite prescriptions and prohibitions for leading a meaningful and purposeful life. The message and communication of Qur'an has an appeal not only to the reason and understanding but to the whole nature of man by which he is enabled to know and

appreciate the truth and to be in spiritual accord with the planning Will of God. The Qur'an is also the most effective form of communication because it leaves no scope for doubt and skepticism.

Naturally, the holy Qur'an served the Muslims as the best source of guide for drafting massifs for persuasive communication with the public by attempting to follow some of the techniques that God Almighty reveals to the faithfuls. In Qur'an, the messages of vital nature have been repeated again and again lest the human-beings, who have a limited and short memory, forget the fundamental/vital points of the teachings of Islam.

As regards the principles/techniques used in the whole Book, these are varied and numerous and in keeping with the psyche, knowledge, background, environment and the experiences of the person. In addition to the technique of repetition, the principle of "scare tactics" has been used to prevent the masses, who are accustomed to authoritarian education and generally refrain from doing things which carry penalty, from indulging in social vices like adulteration, smuggling, hoarding, grafting, favouritism nepotism, adultery etc. This approach was beefed up with the stories pertaining to those races/nations who benefited by practising good deeds and those who got ruined by indulging in bad/abhorring customs and traditions. This approach, which is based on the experiences of others, is today recognized to be an effective method/technique for preventing people from the vices like drug abuse, gambling horse-racing and other similar habits/rituals.

#### **REASONING AND LOGIC:**

The elite, the educated or the intellectuals can only be brought to one's point of view by argumentation, reasoning and logic and the whole Qur'an uses this approach, particularly while dealing with the topics like there being but only one God, His being the sole and the absolute wieldier of authority, power and might, having no partners or co-sharer of the authority in His scheme of things, His being the only one who provides food to all human-

beings and other forms of living on the planet earth and so on and so forth. Another technique that we find in the holy Qur'an can be called the challenge-the universe and the systems governing it that He has created are unparalleled and cannot be created by anyone else or there is none who can make these systems to deviate from the course prescribed by God Almighty. Qur'an also throws a challenge to all doubting Toms and Dicks: "*Who is more true in statement than Allah.*" (4-87). Commonly used techniques of PR which seems to have been borrowed by the mankind from the revelations by the Allah Almighty. The holy Qur'an promises a very good recompense to the various ones (i.e. those who lead life in this world as ordained by Allah) in the hereafter-the good life for ever in the paradise where they shall have lofty mansions, equipped with all comforts of life in addition to all other necessities in abundance that they may wish or desire. There are numerous other examples of persuasive communication which have been used in the holy Book, but these are not being touched here for brevity's sake.

#### PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY PROPHET:

The personality of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) is a perfect role model for all PROs to come who can draw a lot from his manners, speech, tradition, interaction, directives etc., for establishing a positive and successful channel of communication with their "public" or the target population.

All the biographers of the holy Prophet (PBUH) have described him to be a social being of unusual charms and an embodiment of fine manners-truthful, honest, kind, brave, courageous, forgiving, helpful, hospitable, gracious, compassionate, neat, clean, eloquent speaker, keen listener, champion of justice, equality etc.; whose style of living was, by choice and design, most austere but nonetheless he was high-minded and noble in attitude.

Zakaria Bashir, in his book, "*Sunshine of Madina*", writes that the style of leadership of the holy Prophet (PBUH) "was not that of an overbearing lord, obsessed

by promoting his own image and strengthening his personal grip. Nor was it in the style of an envious professor irritated if one of his students excelled. Far from trying to dim and lessen the merit of his companions, he for ever sought to exalt and improve them and lead them towards the realization of what was best and most noble in them... He would even ask his Companions to convey to him the needs of those who could not convey them in person, saying "whosoever conveys them, God would establish and strengthen him on the Resurrection Day...."

"Far from attempting to mock them or demoralize them he would say things which could help them overcome their vices and weaknesses. In this way, he would rise and foster what was best in them, encourage them to make them want to do good deeds. He honoured them with his gracious hospitality. It was always his habit and concern to please and honour his Companions. He would take great care to especially honour those who had merit or were previously honoured by their own people (even before coming to Islam)...."

*"In return for his kindness and honouring them, they remained for ever captivated by his love and favour. They loved him more than their own partners, more even than they loved themselves, ready to do anything to please him, to die if need be in his defence and in defence of the new faith and society."*

The personality and traits of the holy Prophet (PBUH) are a perfect model for persons engaged in Da'wah or PR profession whose role is to influence the minds/attitudes of the people. The holy Qur'an also carries an advice for all communicators: communicate truth because truthful men and women are deserving of forgiveness and great reward.

#### **OPEN CONFERENCES:**

The caliphs who introduced the concept of Open Conference, another technique of PR which is being widely used these days for motivating the public, both internal and external. Hazrat Ali is on record as having



advised, in his famous epistle, the Governor of Egypt alid to *"meet the oppressed and the lowly periodically in an open conference... having a heart-to-heart talk with them, and let none your armed guard or civil officers or members of the police or Intelligence Department be by your side, so that the representatives of the poor might state their grievances fearlessly and without reserve... Accept the recommendations made by your officers for the redress of the grievances of the clerical staff. See to it that petitions or applications submitted for your consideration are brought to your notice the very day they are submitted, however much your officers try to prevent this. Dispose of the day's work that very day. For the coming day will bring with its own tasks."*

**GLORIOUS TRADITIONS:**

We can say on the basis of the above fact that the Muslims have glorious traditions of PR. They were, probably, the first to use the nomenclature of *"Public Relations Officer"* for a person engaged in PR practice. The personality of the holy Prophet (PBUH) and his behaviour/dealings with various sections of the public, both Muslim and non-Muslim, are the best examples of developing and fostering human relations, changing their orientation and motivating them to strive for achieving the loftier goals in life. These people, some of whom were completely devoid of passion before their conversion to Islam, became not only ardent believers and staunch followers of the new faith but also persons captivated by extreme love for the Prophet (PBUH), ever ready to make any sacrifice on his command and considering no sacrifice too great or supreme while following his dictates.

The Caliphs followed the teachings of the holy Qur'an and the traditions of the holy Prophet (PBUH) both in letter and spirit and widely practised the concepts like participative approach, consultation, open conference etc. while running the affairs of the state. They were also fully conscious of the need to keep the internal public fully motivated and introduced various schemes for their welfare.

The Caliphs also advised the provincial governors to accept the recommendations made by officers for redressing the grievances of the clerical staff.

No doubt, the nature of PR work and also the media and the techniques have significantly improved over the years, primarily due to the rapid strides in the communications, enabling the human-beings to use the latest techniques perfected by the man over the centuries for communications with fellow human-beings. While in the past, PR programmes largely involved interpersonal communication, the choices available to the PR practitioner of today are immense and these are increasing every day due to the innovations in the communication technology and the invention of satellite, P.C.s, telefax etc., which has made it possible to communicate or send messages to the people all over the globe within the twinkling of an eye. However, it is now established beyond any doubt that the growth of PR activities is linked with the growth and development of civilization, affluence and healthy competition.

# A GLANCE AT CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ORIENTALISM

Mazin Salah Matbaqani\*

## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary American orientalism or oriental studies in the United States of America is an extensive, multi-faceted and deeply rooted subject.

The excuse for tackling such a subject is that my Ph.D. thesis dealt with the "Methodology of the Orientalist Bernard Lewis in Studying Intellectual Aspects in Islamic History". Bernard Lewis is British of nationality, Jewish of religion and Zionist of ideology and inclination. He lived in Britain till 1974, thereafter left for the United States to lecture at Princeton University. As early as the fifties, this orientalist had maintained a close working relationship with the United States of America where he taught as a visiting lecturer in many American Universities. He was equally commissioned by the British Foreign Office to conduct a tour of American Universities and lecture on the radio and television.

I had the opportunity of meeting Lewis in 1988 at Princeton University where I also met many of my colleagues while attending some of the activities organized at the time by the Centre of Middle East Studies. I also visited the Ananburg Centre for Junaic and Near East Studies of which Bernard Lewis was then director. I came to know American orientalism through studying Bernard Lewis and reviews of his works, and through the studies of other American researchers who wrote on Islam in general and on the history of Islam in particular.

My involvement with American orientalism continued when I undertook a scientific tour in the summer of 1995, which took me to nine American cities and gave me the opportunity of meeting research workers, heads of research departments and directors of institutes specialized in middle eastern studies, such as the following:

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Georgetown University, University of Indiana, University of California in Berkeley and Los Angeles, Villanova University and Temple University in Philadelphia, Princeton, University of Columbia, and New York University. I also visited the Middle East Institute, the United State institute of Peace, the Brookings Institute and the Institute for Advanced International Studies at John Hopkins University, Baltimore. Other institutions I visited were the Council for Foreign Affairs in New York, the Congress Library and the Institute for Islamic Thought.

My interest in American orientalist studies was equally stimulated by the perusal of periodicals and publications issued by these institutes and Middle Eastern research centres in the United States. In the present article I shall try to tackle some aspects of American orientalism, namely:

- 1- Is orientalism a body of knowledge worked out for the sake knowledge only? And what are the means of employed to gain this knowledge?
- 2- The phenomenon of media orientalism.
- 3- Interest in "fundamentalist" Muslim movements.

### **1- KNOWLEDGE FOR THE SAKE OF KNOWLEDGE? WITH WHAT MEANS?**

In his definition of orientalism, Edward Said had described it most important characteristic as being knowledge with a view of dominating and controlling<sup>(1)</sup>. Among the many who sprang to criticize Edward was Bernard Lewis himself who claimed orientalism was knowledge for knowledge's sake and later confirmed this claim in our own conversation. Lewis added that the western scholar's interest in Islamic matters was similar to the interest of a businessman, the more profits he would like to make, the more knowledge the orientalist would like to collect<sup>(2)</sup>.

Edward Said's opinion, however, does not give rise to protests only. Among its supporters in the American Muslim Khaled Yahya Blancship<sup>(3)</sup> who wrote that the purpose behind establishing this field was to create a means of control through knowledge. Evidence of this

could be established from the audio-visual and written media where hardly a Muslim is ever allowed to speak on Islam. Instead, non-Muslim experts with Jewish, Christian, secular or Arab nationalist backgrounds are invited to extrapolate on Islam. Great care is taken in the choice of individuals from the last group where we find, for example, Fouad Agami, a Lebanese Muslim who, somehow, seems to be defending Israel<sup>(4)</sup>. If knowledge was truly the only purpose behind the orientalist studies, we should not be facing so much bias in Islamic and Arabic studies in the United States. Blanchship maintains that the American and Zionist points of view concur when it comes to Islam. There is no doubt, he says, that the academic policy governing Islamic studies is strongly prejudiced against Islam which is described beyond polite euphemisms, as a discriminatory, sexist, theoretical and totalitarian religion, obstructive and backward.....incapable of analytic thought<sup>(5)</sup>.

Professor Youshaa Sadeq spoke at a conference on Islamic and Arabic studies in American universities and listed the following as being the true objectives of these studies:

- 1- Analysing the phenomenon of the spread of Islam in the United States and other countries, then supplying the US government with this information for use in formulating its foreign policies.
- 2- Providing sufficient information on Islam to understand events taking place in the Islamic world and comprehend the behaviour of Muslims.
- 3- This last benefits mainly missionary organizations. It helps prepare missionaries to "work in Muslim countries and in the heart of Muslim societies and communities". He gave the example of Detroit city where a large community of Muslims dwells and added that courses organized to teach the precepts of Islam are, in fact, aimed at training priests to convert Muslims into Christianity<sup>(6)</sup>.

The keen interest of the American government in

the Islamic matters is revealed in many other ways. The federal government for example grants financial aid to a number of middle eastern study centres in private and state universities. Similarly, university lecturers and specialists in Islamic studies are encouraged to present their findings to Congress committees and even to the CIA. In 1985, three congressional hearings were held to listen to 42 pages of research conducted by a number of specialists on the subject of "Fundamentalism in the Muslim World". Reports on similar hearings held subsequently and conferences organized in various venues are presented to the American Government, as are reports on the University of Chicago's project on fundamentalism.

Apart from these sources of information, there are correspondents to the Congress Library all over the Islamic and Arab world, hunting every new book, publication and newspaper clippings to be supplied later to the American government.

Americans also endeavour to gain information through the Arabs and Muslims studying in American universities, especially those pertaining master's degrees and doctorates in human, social or other sciences. Ahmed Abdelhamid Ghorab pointed to this phenomenon saying that some academic papers resemble intelligence data, particularly those pertaining to Islamic movements. In such cases it is easier for a Muslim student to glean information than it is for foreign research workers since a Muslim student preparing a university degree is above suspicions<sup>(7)</sup>.

Edward Said confirmed this when he met with Lebanese students preparing their degrees on Lebanon and told them to write on Lebanon when they write in Lebenon: "Why don't you write about America? Your are not here to write about yourselves.....You have to take part in the debates taking place in America, on America" <sup>(8)</sup>

Another channel of collecting information is through Arab and Muslim lecturers attracted by American universities to take part in conference and seminars and give

lectures at these universities. On these professors, considered an important source of information Muslim world, Edward Said writes: "Many Arab intellectuals come to the United States to teach or write about the Middle East." He gave the example of Sadeq Jalal Al Adam who, supposed to be a great critic, has spent three years of his life doing nothing more than teaching the Middle East to Junior American students. This is pathetic narcissism on the part of some of our academicians." He added: "They are prisoners of a state of ghettoisation, they write on the Arab world in French when in France, in English when in America and Britain and are looked down on as local informants" (9).

It was observed that professors who were offered teaching position in American universities were in most cases holders of a secular viewpoint or immigrants who in principal lived in a state of admiration for the West. Because some of them necture a certain hatred for Islamic movements, they have no scruples about giving this kind of information, and volunteer to offer it even when unsolicited. Another pertinent remark is that the majority of those who study in French Mission schools (the lycee), in the Victoria College (Britain) or the American College (United States) finish their studies abroad and are sometimes offered chairs or positions in American universities.

I found confirmation of this tendency in many cases. When I was preparing a seminar at the University of New York on the theme of "Media Censorship and National Interests", one of the speakers presented a ten-page long paper when he crammed a huge amount of information on media censorship in the Gulf countries. No attendee could have obtained such information had not this speaker volunteered to present it, which, incidentally, he did with a show of aggression and hostility towards these countries as if they stood for the enemy. Though I myself presented some data on media censorship, I, at the same time, condemned the western intellectual hugemony achieved through Hollywood-controlled live broadcasting.

I referred to the presidential appeal addressed to more than four hundred film directors to reduce the dose of sex and crimes in films. I also referred to the book of Michael Maydavid (America and Hollywood) considered the most violent attack on Holywood. The book caused causes a fury among film directors in the United states, whence the great difficulty I found in locating a copy.

## **RESEARCH CENTRES AND INSTITUTES**

It would be above human capacity to try and keep track of all the academic activities held around the Arab and Islamic world in the United States. I shall instead mention a few but important centres and institutes that are intensely active in the field and of which I had either the opportunity of becoming a member or of reading the academic publications:

A. The " League for Middle East Women's Studies". It is an associated organisation of the centre for Middle East Studies but has an independent membership.<sup>(10)</sup>

B. The United States Institute of Peace: Washington. The Institute was created in 1984 with the help of a grant from the American government. Congress provides the Institute's budget and the government appoints its board of trustees. Yet it is an independent, unbiased institution that falls under no political lobbies but is able to help the executive branch of the US government and other departments by, supplying studies and data analysis. The institute's main objective is to reinforce the American nation's capacity to reach peaceful solutions for international problems.<sup>(11)</sup>

Our interest in this Institute lies in its pursuit of matters relating to the Arab and Islamic world, particularly the Judeo-Islamic conflict. The Institute, which also shows interest in the subject of "Political Islam" or fundamentalism, organized several conferences, seminars and workshops on the subject. I also came to know that the Institute entrusted an Arab lecturer at the American University in Cairo with task of preparing a report on Islamic movements in an Arab country. It is quite revealing that



the budget of the middle east studies department alone totalled for one year (1992) US\$ 2280000<sup>(12)</sup>.

Following is a brief review of some conferences organized by the Institute.

**A. A Stubborn Neighbour: Analysis of the Role of Turkey in the Middle East, 1-2 June 1994.** The conference was co-chaired by Patricia Carl Lee from the Institute and Henry Parket from Lehigh University. The conference was attended by three hundred academicians and politicians from Turkey, Egypt. The Institute decided to publish a detailed report summarizing the most important views and, at a later stage, a compilation of all the papers presented at the conference.

**B. Political Islam in the Middle East, 2-3 June 1994,** prepared in collaboration with the Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, a division of the Foreign Service College in George Washington University. The conference was co-Chared by David Littele, the expert on religions, mores and human rights and Norton Halborn from the Council for National Security. In his opening speech, Littele defined the conference's objectives as being:

- The challenge Islamists present to the West.
- How to differentiate between radical political activity and violence.
- Political and religious mutations and crisis containing.

Among the participants in this conference were Lisa Anderson, Director of the Middle East Institute at Columbia University, Dreek Nandwat from Dartmouth College, Seyyed Walid Nassr who spoke About the Islamic Jamaa in Pakistan, Raymond Baker from the Cairo American University, Robert Satlov, President of the Washington Institute for Middle East Studies, Joyce Davis, Voice of America correspondent, Saul Bakkhad from the United States Institute of Peace, James Higgins, former US ambassador to a Gulf country and Saad Eddine, sociologist at the Cairo American University.

On 16 June 1994 the Institute organized a special workshop to evaluate the results of previous conference. It was attended by Robert Bellatrow, David Satterfied and Bernard Lewis.

## **II-The Phenomenon of Media Orientalism**

Hassan Azzouzi writes under "The phenomenon of Journalistic Orientalism" That this form of orientalism is a result of the contemporary orientalism school which acts as an umbrella to a tremendous number of journalists specialized in Islamic affairs and Muslims. Azzouzi stresses the close relationship between academic and journalistic orientalism. According to him, orientalists have contributed to a great extent in training and forming these journalists who, in the return, derive inspiration and feed on their ideas and spurious theories.<sup>(13)</sup>

I do recall that I was once asked for a definition of orientalism and I fell back on the well known definitions in this field, Ahmed Smailovith's "Philosophy of Orientalism", Hossien Hraoui, Mostapha As-Subai, Edward Said and Ahmed Abdelhamid Ghorab. I realized, however, that some of these definitions limited orientalism to academic research while others judge orientalism through their own definition. I saw fit to add-and that was prior to reading Azzouzi's article-that orientalism could not be restricted to academic activity. The media plays an important and dangerous role in propagating the article of orientalist, especially those with a hostile and aggressive attitude towards Islam and Muslims, and by media I mean written press, radio and television, cinema and even children's cartoons. I also added that orientalism lies equally in the activities carried out by some governments under the cover of their research and study centres and their secret services: hosting conferences and entrusting researchers with the task of preparing and presenting reports of these institutions. Another accessory form of orientalism is what is written by Muslim and Arab researchers following the fashion of western orientalists<sup>(14)</sup>.

The importance of media orientalism lies in the re-

alization by developing countries of how reliable western media could be, the tremendous capacity to hunt news and the huge efforts deployed to cover events all over the world, in addition to data and news analysis. Yet, how credible can we trust the western media to be when it comes to covering political, intellectual, religious and historical matters related to the Muslims world? In a study conducted by Zine Ei Abidine Al Rukabi on the subject, he observed that the credibility of western media becomes very doubtful, to judge by the few following examples: 1- Reporting and propagating untruth on Islam, not out of ignorance- thought that could apply to some cases- but "there are some who lie about Islam in all premeditation and many seek and find the body of their lies in the writings of orientalists, people who made spreading untruth about Islam, the faith, the book, the Sunnah and the language, an art and a profession. Somehow, it appears as if the person has ready-to-use lies in stock, or just numbers his lies first on a table, then sets about filing in the proofs and explanations. "Al Rukabi adds:" Since western media, or a least some of its organs, present a good breeding environment for such untruth, the influence of the latter is reflected in all media forms: books newspaper, radio, television...". He wondered at the closing of his paper:" How can we ascertain or hope for media credibility within this deluge of untruths?" (15).

Al Rukabi's second proof is in how the media presented Salmane Rushdie, Tasslima Nissrine and other similar authors. He asserts that Salmane Rusdie's work is of no academic or intellectual value. As for literary creativity, he says "It is nothing more than camouflage for the real political reasons and purpose, a coverage made up itself of blatant lies" (16).

Among those who showed an interest in western media in general and the American press in particular was Edward Said who wrote about this press saying: "It is difficult to speak of an independent press in the United States, the interdependent commercial and government-

tal interests are tied to the media which they curb: these interests prevent it from setting out freely in the pursuit of facts ambitious and industrious reporters may wish to uncover...". He gave the example of foreign affairs coverage and referred to "the so-called expert elite on Islam which has nearly monopolized the presence of Islam in written and electronic media since the end of the cold war" (17).

Edward Said says that prominent in the elite is Benard Lewis, the retired Princeton professor, Found Agami, head of the Middle East Studies Department at John Hopkins University and CBS consultant, Judith Miller, the "New York Times" journalist, Emerson, producer of "Jihad in America" and Daniel Pipes.

Anti-Islam writers have exploited the press in all its forms, even the financial one. Daniel Pipes writes in the Wall Street Journal a comment on John Esposito's book "The peril of Islam: Fantasy or Reality", and comments on a statement made by Edward Geogain when he was a foreign affairs official to the effect that Islam was not an enemy of the United States, that Islam was a great religion, that western civilization, but the West was against all radicle movements. Papers wrote back saying: "Are they right? Or do they fall within the category of government experts who only see the enemy when they feel his first sting". He wondered about the decline in birth rates European and American societies and the parallel increase in the numbers of immigrants from Muslim countries. "What frightens Europeans is not so much Muslim missiles and hostage holding as does cultural invasion"(18).

Pipes had previously written that radical fundamentalism, especially the Islamic one, is the real peril threatening America and western interests because the presence of radical Islamists in power will most probably prove detrimental to the United States and their allies(19). Commenting on Daniel Pipes, Edward Said says: "Pipes is one of the new generation orientalist whose affinities show in his book" On the path of God: and political power"

(1983). The real issue is not the service of knowledge, but serving the interests of the hegemonist and intervening country, the United States, of which the interest Pipes helps advertise."

Said stresses the estrangement of Pipes intellectual developments in all cultural fields, his well-known and outdated arrogance, particularly when it comes to dogmatic and uncompromising theories that take slight consideration of logic and rational arguments<sup>(20)</sup>. Commenting on Pipes' ways, Said adds: "Pipes frankly and obdurately takes sides with colonialists orientalist such as Snook Horkhroner, and arrogant pre-colonists such as Naipul. He has the opportunity of easily observing Islam and Issuing judgments from his Ivory-tower-seat at the department of foreign affairs or the council for National Security" <sup>(21)</sup>.

Falling within the spectrum of media orientalism was the production and direction by Steve Emerson of the Movie "Jihad in America". The film is based on a series of declarations made by Muslim leaders in the United States over the past seven years. Emerson Claims that these people have taken advantage from the openness and freedom of the American society and plan to create an Islamic empire. Emerson was criticized by Christopher Taylor for not taking into account the diversity of Islamist movements. The credibility of the film was questioned by Taylor who doubts that these small movements could form a fifth squadron that would put in peril American society<sup>(22)</sup>.

It is important at this stage to mention the cooperation between Jewish media in Israil and American media, particularly on Islamic issues, Anti-Islam campaigns in the American media may be no more than an echo of the hostility diffused by Israeli media. This may explain press of which we can mention the "Jerusalem Post" which carried in one of its issues an article on Islamic movements where it said: "In the west, the mode of operation of Muslims was equally devious. They preach cooperation be-

tween religions and tolerance on the surface, while in reality sneaking is their key to drowning the West under a sea of Islamic domination. In Brussels, the capital of the European Union, for example, the number of mosques exceeds that of churches". The "Jerusalem Post" article indicates that of the six million Muslims, 600000 are entitled to vote, which goes to show the extent of influence Islam can have. The author of the article goes on to say: "In their holy war against the infidels, they proclaim that they will defeat the Jews first, and then Islam will triumph over the Christian world": (23). The leaders of the Hebrew state will spare no effort in warning the West against Islamic movements as did Prevez, for example, in his book "The New Middle East".

I would like to conclude this part on media orientalism by saying that the campaign against Islam and Muslims does not take place only on the pages of major newspapers such as the "New York Times", The "Washington Post", the "Los Angeles Times", magazines such as "Time" and "Newsweek", the monthly "Atlantic" and the "New Republic". It exceeds them to publications that usually shy away from religion-related and sensitive subjects likely to give rise to protests and arguments, because of their wide circulation and their translation into many languages, publications such as the "Reader's Digest". This magazine tackled in one of its issues the position of women in the Muslim world and focused on criticizing Islam's prescriptions with regards to women. The author reverently quoted a Maghrebian woman writer who was presented as an expert in the Qur'an and in sociology and also quoted Benazir Bhutto. The Arab author is quoted as saying that "the Hijab was not obtained by Islam, the Holy Qur'an mainly requests man and woman to be virtuous and observe decency<sup>(24)</sup>. In another article titled "A Holy War Heads Our Way", the author presented on the same magazine a host of arguments meant to warn the West against the onslaught of "Islamic fundamentalism" on the United States<sup>(25)</sup>.

Orientalist activities are also carried out by broadcasting stations such as "Voice of America", the "British Broadcasting Corporation", "Voice of Germany", "Monte Carlo Radio" and the missionary stations. These host discussion groups, organize conferences on the Muslim world. In 1992, the "Voice of America" station organized a seminar on "Transition to Democracy in the Middle East" in which participated Marius Deep from Washington University, Clovis Masqsoud from the same university and William Quant the senior expert on the Middle East at Broklyn's Institute and presently lecturer at the University of Virginia<sup>(26)</sup>. The first remark that leaps to the fore is an absence of balance in the opinions expressed since the Muslim side is rarely represented. The absence of Arabs and Muslims from conferences and workshops is probably what Edward Said referred to when he said: "They are unable to represent themselves and therefore should be represented by those who know about Islam more than it knows about itself<sup>(27)</sup>" I wrote to the London station wondering about the imbalance in a workshop it held in collaboration with the Royal Institute of International Affairs on the relations between the Arab world and Europe. I have yet to receive a reply.

Media orientalism is a much more dangerous phenomenon than the academic one for the large masses of audience it reaches. Yet, though academic writings are read only by a limited audience of experts mainly, their danger lies in that the orientalism they represent is brought to the attention of the highest levels of decision markers in the United States and Europe. Furthermore, in some cases, orientalists have become journalists sought after by the media to write about Islamic issues.

### **III-interest in "Fundamental" Islamic Movements**

Observers of orientalism or Arab and Islamic studies believe that interest in Islamic movements has noticeably increased following the Iranian revolution. But in reality, interest in these movements and in the Muslim world has never subsided since orientalism became a full-

fledged study branch. What characterizes contemporary Islamic and Arab studies is the increasingly wide spectrum of specialities pertaining to the Muslim world and the in-depth research some scholars carry out on specific subjects.

If American orientalism had started only as a continuity of European orientalism after world War II the independence of the Arab and Islamic countries, it has never been really absent from these lands. In fact, some of its activities go back several decades in time with missionary schools that strove to raise generations of Muslim Children and prepare them to accept the West and admit it. In 1882, a handful of American missionary associations opened a secondary school in Izmir, Turkey, which became a member of the American Missions Council in 1902 and was renamed the "International Izmir college". In 1936, it was transferred to Beirut to become a preparatory school for the American University. The school took great care of its students and gave many of them the opportunity to finish their university and higher studies in Europe and the United States. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary, the dean of the faculty commented on its creation saying: "In the general college students belonging to various civilizations and nationalities learn to live in harmony understanding. "(28)

This same purpose urged Lord Cromer to open the College at Victoria in order to accomplish England's dream of "giving a generation of modern Egyptians a special education that will bring them closer to Europeans, and the English particularly, in behaviours and in Mind". The students at Victoria were all descendants of wealthy and powerful families. In a speech delivered at the Victoria College in 1936, Loyd, the Honourable Representative Said: "Little time will go by before all of these absorb the British point of view thanks to the close relationship between teachers and students, they will soon be able to understand our methods and embrace them. "(29)

The co-authors of the book "The Politics of Islamic



Resurgence: Through Western Eyes" presented an evolution of western conferences through samples selected from the conferences of The United States Institute of Peace<sup>(32)</sup>. I also pursued reviews of these conferences in the Institute's journal and from these two sources, I was able to draw the following conclusions on the American approach to "Fundamental" Islamic movements:

- 1- Diversity of Islamic movements according to geographical location and other violent or non-violent tendencies.
- 2- American policy needs to ascertain the veracity of the statements saying that the problem facing the West are radicalism and violence, not Islam.
- 3- Many experts have agreed that there is no problem or fundamental conflict between Islam and democracy, but the debate is still fierce on whether the more radical forms of "Political Islam" that have replaced Arab nationalism, do not represent a major threat to plural democracy and American interests.

A recurrent observation one can make is that in spite of the multitude of conferences and seminars held in the west, there is always continuous resort to local experts, either out of principle of faith in their capacities or skills, or for financial considerations since inviting experts from abroad would be much costlier. In addition, some names have acquired certain fame and displayed great charisma, they became a constant feature of all conferences on the Muslim world, and most particularly, Islamic resurgence and Islamic movements.

### **FUNDAMENTALISM AS SEEN BY SOME AMERICAN AUTHORS**

The difficulty of dealing with American orientalism is equalled only by the difficulty of writing on Islamic fundamentalism. In the following paragraph, I will review opinions that have become widely known and accepted in the United States. Judith Miller sees the Arab governments are fighting control of Islamist forces and of the wide re-

sponse of citizens of the prospect of a more "Islamic" society than the present<sup>(33)</sup>.

Gassan Salame, on the other hand, considers that Islamic governments are hesitant to let Islamist movements access power through elections, though, according to him, their reaching power would simply expose their inability to rule, lay economic, political and social policies, or come up with better alternatives to what is implemented by present governments<sup>(34)</sup>.

Many American researchers and published authors have agreed that not all movements should be put together. Miller says that, "armed Islamist groups are distinct as the Arabs themselves and the countries in which they exist". This dissimilarity on their opinion dictates varied methods of dealing with each type of Islamic movements.

In truth, evoking the diversity element is simply a subterfuge used by these researchers with the purpose of conferring a certain objectivity on their studies and proving that they do not perceive these movements from one single outlook.

What I find striking in anti-Islamic writings is the casting of doubt on the credibility of these movements at times when these attempts to enter honest and free elections. Miller wonders: "Why is the adherence of Islamists to truth and democratic style be questioned?", and answers: "In short, the answer lies in the Arab and Islamic history and the nature of emergence of these groups"<sup>(35)</sup>. And Miller is not only one to hold such an opinion. In fact, she quotes the Jewish scholar Martin Kramer, director of the Moshe Dayan Middle East and North Africa Studies Centre, and his mentor Bernard Lewis is saying that Islamic movements in their inherent nature could not be democratic or pro-western, nor accept plurality or equality.

I close this chapter with a positive opinion expressed by Leon Hadar who says "There are some elements who encourage the Clinton Administration to think of Islam as the new peril after the fall of Communism. American for-

ign policy was marked for the last four decades by hostility towards the Soviets, fear from Islam and catapult the United States into a new cold war<sup>(36)</sup>. But Hadar sees that such a policy would be based on hypothetical and wrong assumptions, for Islam is neither a challenging religion, nor does it constitute a threat to United States. If America allows these misgivings to rule its foreign policy, it will end up party to an endless and closely conflict constructed out of diverse and isolated events<sup>(37)</sup>. Hadar explains America's reluctance to encourage the emergence of more democratic or less tyrant governments in the Arab and Islamic world by the fact that these governments would be less inclined to yield to American wishes, hence the vicious circle according to the writer: continues support for these governments and continuous American Israeli alliance which stimulates negative feelings towards the Americans<sup>(38)</sup>.

Whatever attitude American orientalism may take vis-a-vis Islam, it will persist in being a form of hostility kindled by strong lobbies in the United States. According to Said Ben Salmane, this hostility takes the form of a psychological war on which he says: "One aspect of wars and conflicts between civilizations and cultures is the psychological war. The latter's main characteristics is the war of nicknames, adjectives and terms."<sup>(39)</sup> Ben Salmane maintains that fundamentalism, is a Protestant movement that sprang from the 1000-year battle in the 19th century and the Jewish origins because it proclaims the sanctity of the "Holy" texts, meaning the Torah and its explanations and not the "Bible". He affirms that the Torah crusades are not over and will not be so, even if we, true to the spirit of tolerance in Islam, put an end to it, they will never let go of what rancor they have inherited from the Crusades, and whoever thinks the opposite with so many proofs at hand, can only be out of his mind<sup>(40)</sup>.

#### CONCLUSION

I reiterate what I said in the beginning of this paper: studying American orientalism would take volumes and

volumes, many a detailed article. Being directly involved in this phenomenon for a lapse of time, I have tried to give a few excerpts in this orientalism in various fields: the media, conferences and seminars and in the interest shown in the Islamic revival that some of us, and some of them, insist on calling "fundamentalism". If negative opinions are more prevalent in my paper than positive ones, it is basically because they reflect the opinion, held by the majority in the west, though a few voices rise in denial: "we are not enemies of Islam, Islam is a great religion". We need to comprehend the Occident and know it as well as it knows us before we can deal with it.

**End Notes:**

- (1) Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: 1987, p.1
- (2) An interview of the researcher with the orientalist Bernard Lewis in Princeton, 21 October 1988, published as an appendix in his book "Orientalism and Intellectual Tendencies in Islamic History - Annotated Studies of Bernard Lewis's Writings", Riyadh, 1995.
- (3) Khaled Yahya Blancship "Islamic Studies in American Universities", proceedings of the conference on the Islamic and Arab Studies in American Universities, Fairfax (Virginia), undated, pp 24-28
- (4) Islamic Fundamentalism and Islamic Radicalism, Hearing before the Sub-Committee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives of, 990 Congress, June 24, July 15 and September 30
- (5) Khaled Yahya Blancship "Islamic Studies in American Universities", from the proceedings of the first conference on the Islamic and Arab Studies in American Universities, Fairfax (Virginia), undated, pp. 24-28
- (6) Youshaa Sadeq, "Teaching Islamic Studies in American Universities", from the proceedings of the first conference on the Islamic and Arab Studies in American Universities, pp 19-23
- (7) Ahmed Abdelhamid Ghorab, "An Islamic view of orientalism", Birmingham, 1994.
- (8) Edward Said, "Comments on Orientalism", translated and edited by Sobhi Hadidi (Amman 1996), pp 149-150. When the researcher was in the United States pursuing his university studies, he realized that it was vital for him to know the society in which he lived. At the time, George Orwell's novel 1984 was in great demand especially after it was revealed that the FBI had kept files on a great number of ordinary citizens. America was suffering from the Vietnam syndrome and the educational television channel in the university of Arizona was disclosing facts on American society that many citizens were unaware of.
- (9) Edward Said, "Comments on Orientalism", translated and edited by Sobhi Hadidi (Amman 1996), pp.149-150
- (10) The Middle East Women's Studies: The Review, Vol XI, No 1, March 1996
- (11) News Bulletin, the Arab Institute of International Studies, 7th year, Issue No.2, March/April 1994, and United States Institute of Peace FACTS SHEET, September 1995.
- (12) Conferences in the news bulletin of the Arab Institute for International Studies, 7th year, Issue no 2, March/April 1994, pp 3-6
- (13) Hassan Azzouzi, "The Phenomenon of Journalistic Orientalism", "Al Muslimoun"